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## INDEX

EUGENIO AMATO	<i>Note esegetiche e testuali alla Descriptio orbis di Dionisio d'Alessandria (I)</i>	7
MIKA KAJAVA	<i>Minimum Corinthium</i>	19
UTA-MARIA LIERTZ	<i>Kybele bei den Matronae Vacallinehae? Eine Fallstudie aus der Germania Inferior</i>	31
MARIA NIKU	<i>Aspects of the Taxation of Foreign Residents in Hellenistic Athens</i>	41
MASSIMO PIERPAOLI	<i>P. Volumnius Eutrapelus</i>	59
ARI SAASTAMOINEN	<i>On the Problem of Recognising African Building Inscriptions</i>	79
OLLI SALOMIES	<i>On the Origin of Die Inschriften von Prusa ad Olymum No. 52</i>	97
WERNER J. SCHNEIDER	<i>Laetinus' Fieberkurve. Zur Textüberlieferung von Martial 12, 17, 9/10</i>	103
HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Analecta epigraphica CIC–CCVI</i>	107
HOLGER THESLEFF	<i>Intertextual Relations between Xenophon and Plato?</i>	143
	<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	159
	<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	216
	<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	218
	<i>Index scriptorum</i>	221

# ON THE PROBLEM OF RECOGNISING AFRICAN BUILDING INSCRIPTIONS\*

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## Introduction

It is well known that defining the function of inscriptions without sufficient data on their context is sometimes difficult. For instance, it is not always clear whether an inscription should be regarded as a *titulus honorarius* or *sepulcralis*.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, resemblances between building and votive inscriptions may cause problems<sup>2</sup> when the building project is not

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<sup>1</sup> W. Eck, "Senatorial Self-Representation: Developments in the Augustan Period", in F. Millar, E. Segal (eds.), *Caesar Augustus. Seven Aspects*, Oxford 1984, 132–133; I. Calabi Limentani, *Epigrafia latina*<sup>4</sup>, Milano 1991, 221.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., G. Alföldy, *Römische Statuen in Venetia et Histria. Epigraphische Quellen*, Heidelberg 1984, 23. Cf., however, O. Salomies, "Some Observations on Consular Dating in Roman Inscriptions of the Empire", in H. Solin, O. Salomies, U.-M. Liertz (eds.), *Acta colloquii epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.–6. Sept. 1991 habiti* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 104), Helsinki 1995, 276: "But in many cases it would, at least at first sight, seem to be somewhat difficult to distinguish building inscriptions from votive ones ... However, this is not really a problem, for building inscriptions always refer in some way to the work done, and have usually the form of *tabula*. On the other hand, *tabulae* with votive formulas, but no reference to building, probably for the most part come from the votive monuments..." – I agree with Salomies that most of the *tabulae* which contain votive formulas but do not refer to building come from the votive monuments, but I think that there are many building inscriptions which do not refer to the monument (this is quite common on honorary arches, for instance) and the formulations of which resemble closely those used in the honorary or in votive inscriptions. Thus, for instance, *CIL* VIII 17852, which is carved on an *epistylum*, is phrased exactly as *CIL* VIII 17855, which has been affixed to a base. Both are fragmentary: the surviving width of the former is 4.10 m and the latter 4.54 m (it is

mentioned (the text is either fragmentary or the object is omitted) and when it cannot be specified on grounds of the archaeological context (the data is either lost or insufficiently transmitted). Let us look at the following fragmentary inscription:

*Victoriis Au[gustis] / [Imp(eratoris) Ca]es(aris) M(arci) Claudi Taciti Pii, Felicis, Aug(usti), pont(ificis) ma[x(imi)-----]. / [Q(uitus) N]jumisius Primus aedilic(ius), du(u)mvirali[c(ius) ----- quam] / [ex] (sestertium) XVI mil(ibus) n(ummum) facere promiserat, mult[iplicata pecunia cum] / [Num]jisiis Praetextato et Primo, fili(i)s et Nonia[----- coniuge perfecit?] / [et cert]amina pugilum edidit. Quam et [-----].<sup>3</sup>*

What was the activity described in the missing part of the stone? The erection of a statue or the building of a temple? Scholars disagree. Wesch-Klein supports the latter alternative while Lepelley and Duncan-Jones favour the former.<sup>4</sup> In this article I shall consider how one could determine the function of some ambiguous inscriptions such as this one, and I will discuss what aspects could be useful in the identification process.<sup>5</sup>

An attempt to interpret the purpose of such inscriptions is not without significance because these definitions will affect our views on the quantity and the nature of ancient building. Moreover, even if the interpretation turns out difficult or impossible in many cases, it will have its own importance too, since this means that we must be even more cautious than before in our estimations on the amount of building activity.<sup>6</sup> More important than these

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probable, however, that the *epistylum* has been the wider of the two).

<sup>3</sup> *ILPBardo* 389 (= *CIL VIII* 25836 = *ILS* 8926). Membressa, AD 275–276.

<sup>4</sup> G. Wesch-Klein, *Liberalitas in rem publicam. Private Aufwendungen zugunsten von Gemeinden im Römischen Africa bis 284 n. Chr.* (*Antiquitas* 40), Bonn 1990, 139; C. Lepelley, *Les Cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire II*, Paris 1981, 141; R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies*, Cambridge 1974, 94, n. 99. I shall return to this inscription at the end of this article. – Another example of the problem is *AE* 1909, 6 which is considered as a base by S. Turrenc, "La dédicace du temple du Génie de la colonie à Timgad", *AntAfr* 2 (1968) 218 no. 9 and as a building inscription by Y. Le Bohec, *La Troisième Légion Auguste*, Paris 1989, 386–387.

<sup>5</sup> For practical reasons, I will limit this study to the material from Roman North Africa, that is, inscriptions coming from the provinces of Africa Proconsularis, of Numidia and of both Mauretaniae.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Y. Le Bohec, "L'armée et l'organisation de l'espace urbain dans l'Afrique romaine du Haut-Empire", *L'Africa romana* 10 (1992) 314 on the results of the vagueness of the inscriptional evidence for the defining of the extent of building activity of the *Legio III*

aspects are, perhaps, historical considerations: it is easily deduced from the sources that building inscriptions were seen as an important instrument for self-advertisement. Public *tituli* – and building inscriptions among them – were read and admired;<sup>7</sup> sometimes they even aroused violent anger or contempt, as happened to Pliny the Younger, who wrote in his letters how he lamented the corruption of the Senate which had granted, as he found out, honours to Pallas, the emperor Claudius' financial secretary, and had even got the decree on the matter affixed to the statue of Julius Caesar: *parum visum tantorum dedecorum esse curiam testem: delectus est celeberrimus locus, in quo legenda praesentibus, legenda futuris proderentur.*<sup>8</sup>

Eck collected some documents with which he was able to demonstrate convincingly how valuable public inscriptions really were as an instrument of propaganda. He has noted that the *senatus consultum* issued in 46 BC decreed that the name of Julius Caesar should be carved on the Capitoline temple in place of that of Catulus;<sup>9</sup> two years afterwards Caesar was praised because he gave away both the glory due to the construction of Rostra and its building inscription to Antonius;<sup>10</sup> also Augustus emphasized in *Res Gestae* that he restored the Capitol and the theatre of Pompey without inscribing his own name on them: *sine ulla inscriptione nominis mei.*<sup>11</sup> "So great", Eck comments aptly, "...was the significance of having one's name on public buildings such as the Capitol that the credit could still be gained even from abstinence."<sup>12</sup>

Ammianus, on the other hand, has left us an example of the opposite behaviour when he described the vanity of the urban prefect Lampadius and

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*Augusta*: "...il devient illusoire de chercher à établir des statistiques."

<sup>7</sup> Cf., e.g., Hor. *carm.* 4, 8, 13–15, in which he talks about *incisa notis marmora publicis / per quae spiritus et vita redit bonis / post mortem ducibus*; Hor. *sat.* 1, 6, 15–17 mentions the *populus* which *stupet in titulis et imaginibus*. I owe these references to Eck (above n. 1), 155.

<sup>8</sup> Plin. *ep.* 8, 6. "It was not deemed sufficient that the senate-house should be witness to this complicated disgrace; the most frequented spot in all Rome was chosen to display the inscription to that and future ages." The translation is taken from W. Melmoth (ed.), Pliny, *Letters* II (Loeb Classical Library), London – Cambridge 1915, repr. 1963. See also Plin. *ep.* 7, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Dio 43, 14, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Dio 43, 49, 1–2.

<sup>11</sup> *R. Gest. div. Aug.* 20.

<sup>12</sup> Eck (above n. 1), 131–132.

stated that *per omnia enim civitatis membra, quae diversorum principum exornaverunt impensae, nomen proprium inscribat, non ut veterum instaurator, sed conditor. Quo vitio laborasse Traianus dicitur princeps, unde eum herbam parietinam iocando cognominaverunt.*<sup>13</sup>

One could continue almost indefinitely, noting, for instance, the legal restrictions on having one's name carved on a building,<sup>14</sup> but I think that these examples are sufficient for stating the obvious: the effort to assign as many inscriptions as possible to their proper context is an important task from a socio-historical point of view.

## 1. On the definition of a building inscription

Since my purpose is to deal with ambiguous texts that are not self-evidently either building or votive inscriptions, some words on the definition of building inscriptions are appropriate. It seems that there is a widespread consensus among epigraphists on the definition of building inscriptions. If one checks, for instance, the entries on the subject in epigraphic handbooks, one soon notices that, in most cases, the building inscription is said to be a text carved on the building itself, or on another monument in the immediate

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<sup>13</sup> Amm. 27, 3, 7. "In all parts of the city which had been beautified by the generosity of various emperors he had his name inscribed, not as the restorer of ancient buildings but as a founder. This is a fault under which the emperor Trajan is said to have laboured, and it earned him the satirical nickname of 'wallflower'." The English translation is taken from W. Hamilton (ed.), *Ammianus Marcellinus, The Later Roman Empire (A.D. 354–378)* (Penguin Classics), Harmondsworth 1986, 335.

<sup>14</sup> See Ulp. dig. 50, 10, 2, 2: *Ne eius nomine, cuius liberalitate opus exstructum est, eraso aliorum nomina inscribantur et propterea revocentur similes civium in patrias liberalitates, praeses provinciae auctoritatem suam interponat*; Mac. dig. 50, 10, 3, 2: *Inscribi autem nomen operi publico alterius quam eius, cuius pecunia id opus factum sit, non licet*; Mod. dig. 50, 10, 4: *Nec praesidis quidem nomen licet superscribere*. See also J. Kolendo, "L'activité des proconsuls d'Afrique d'après les inscriptions" in *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio I* (Tituli 4), Roma 1982, 358 (366, Jacques, Discussion); M. Dondin-Payre, "L'intervention du proconsul d'Afrique dans la vie des cités", in *L'Afrique dans l'Occident romain (I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C. – IV<sup>e</sup> ap. J.-C.)*. Actes du colloque, Rome 1987 (Coll. EFR 134), Rome 1990, 342–343; M. Corbier, "L'écriture dans l'espace public romain" in *L'Urbs: Espace urbain et histoire I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C. – III<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.* Actes du colloque, Rome (Coll. EFR 98), Rome 1987, 47; P. Veyne, *Latomus* 26 (1967) 746 n. 1.

vicinity in order to immortalize the name of the builder.<sup>15</sup> The classical formulation of this definition is given by Cagnat: "Lorsqu'un particulier, une ville, une corporation, un empereur, faisait élever ou réparer un monument destiné à l'usage de tous ou même de quelques-uns seulement, on avait coutume de graver une inscription destinée à garder la mémoire de celui ou de ceux auxquels était due la construction ou la réparation de l'édifice."<sup>16</sup>

Some scholars have not accepted this definition. Gast, for instance, thought that all texts that begin with a dedication to the gods should be considered as "Weihinschriften", votive inscriptions.<sup>17</sup> The same view was shared by Susini who stated that the *titulus sacer* "consisteva nell'offerta e nella dedica del monumento stesso, si trattasse di una semplice arula, o di una base ... o di un intero edificio, di una *aedes* o di un *templum*, del quale si celebra nell'iscrizione la *dedicatio* e la *consecratio*".<sup>18</sup>

The classification on grounds of dedication is, however, an artificial one. The main purpose of a building inscription was to eulogise the builder. He had benefited his *patria* by his building activity, and the building inscription was one of the ways by which he himself got benefit from his euergetism.<sup>19</sup> Votive texts, on the other hand, are more closely and

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., P. Battle Huguet, *Epigrafia latina*<sup>2</sup>, Barcelona 1963, 81–83; R. Bloch, *L'épigraphie latine*<sup>4</sup>, Paris 1969, 78–88; esp. 78–79; E. Meyer, *Einführung in die Lateinische Epigraphik*, Darmstadt 1973, 59–61. Cf. also J. E. Sandys, *Latin Epigraphy. An introduction to the study of Latin inscriptions*, Cambridge 1927, 118–142; esp. 118–119 and *DNP* 2, s.v. "Bauinschriften".

<sup>16</sup> R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*<sup>4</sup>, Paris 1914, 263.

<sup>17</sup> G. K. Gast, *Die zensorischen Bauberichte bei Livius und die römischen Bauinschriften*, Diss. Göttingen 1965, 41. I must note that at the time when I was writing my first article on building inscriptions (A. Saastamoinen, "Some Remarks on the Development of the Style of Roman Building Inscriptions in the Roman North Africa", *L'Africa romana* 13 (2000), 1685–1693) I was following Gast more closely and consequently I excluded many texts which are here classified as building inscriptions. As a result of this, some of my previous estimations on the incidence of certain stylistical phenomena have changed (most notably those on the frequency of the mention of the object).

<sup>18</sup> G. C. Susini, *Epigrafia romana*, Roma 1982, 112. Cf. also Calabi Limentani (above n. 1), 254 and L. Braccesi, *Appunti di epigrafia latina*, Bologna 1966, 29–30.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, G. Fagan, "The Reliability of Roman Rebuilding Inscriptions", *PBSR* 64 (1996) 91: "The commemorative inscription was a vital element in the social contract of euergetism. Since it was often set up by the beneficiaries (that is, the local community), it represented the means by which the social prestige earned by the benefactor for the act of benefaction was publicly recognized." For the concept of

unambiguously related to religious practices. Setting up a votive stele or building a temple are, of course, both religious acts; but the difference is that the building of a temple is also a euergetic act in way that erecting an altar is not, and I tend to think that the euergetic aspect is here more important than the religious one.<sup>20</sup> It is not useful to equate an inscription describing, let us say, the building process of an expensive temple with a simple votive text carved, e.g., on an altar or on a stele and which mentions only the god to whom the dedication is made, the name of the dedicant and the formula *v.s.l.m.* – Of course it is true that texts on some altars and statue bases do closely resemble formulations used in building inscriptions,<sup>21</sup> but this is not significant. It would be as erroneous to consider a text written on a tombstone to be a building inscription because it happens to use the phrase *faciendum curavit*<sup>22</sup> as to consider an altar using similar phrases to be a building inscription as well. The original purpose of an inscription is important, not the wording of text.

Calabi Limentani has also stated that those building inscriptions which begin with a dedication to an emperor should be considered as honorific or even dedicatory,<sup>23</sup> but I find this even less acceptable. During the Empire, it was very common indeed to begin a building inscription either with a dedication or with some adulatory formula, such as *pro salute* with the name and titulature of the emperor in the genitive.<sup>24</sup> Surely this is a

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euergetism, see P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique*, Paris 1976. About the euergetism in general, see, e.g., *Actes du X<sup>e</sup> Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Nîmes, 4–9 octobre 1992* (Série Histoire Ancienne et Médiévale 42), Paris 1997. About euergetism in North Africa, see Lepelley (above n. 4); Wesch-Klein (above n. 4); M. LeGlay, "Évergétisme et vie religieuse dans l'Afrique romaine", in *L'Afrique dans l'Occident romain* (above n. 14) 77–88.

<sup>20</sup> A telling detail is that texts on altars mention very often the completion of a *votum*, but in the building inscription this seldom happens (for exceptions, see n. 70). Salomies (above n. 2), 276, has also noted that "many building inscriptions, not only those referring to the building or restoration of temples and the like, but also others, begin with votive formulas..." – Cf., however, M. Le Glay (above n. 19), 84–85.

<sup>21</sup> For examples, see n. 62–65.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. *CIL* VIII 21161.

<sup>23</sup> Calabi Limentani (above n. 1), 254: "Nei templi può apparire al dativo il nome della divinità cui esso è dedicato e si tratta allora di dediche del tipo visto tra i *tituli sacri*; al dativo può essere anche il nome dell'imperatore, e si tratta allora piuttosto di un *titulus* onorario o sacro."

<sup>24</sup> Saastamoinen (above n. 17), 1687.



sign of political loyalty,<sup>25</sup> but it does not mean that all those texts in which these expressions are included are honorific. The purpose of an honorific inscription is to honour someone, and often for some specific reason; the honoured person is receiving the main attention whereas the dedicators stay in the background.<sup>26</sup> In most building inscriptions just the opposite is true: despite the dedication to an emperor, the builder is the *actor primarum partium*. There are, however, cases where clear-cut classifications are not possible; the texts carved on honorary arches, for instance, can well be classified either as honorific or as building inscriptions.

On the other hand, I think that all those inscriptions that are set up to honour someone for the sake of his building activity are honorific.<sup>27</sup> These texts should be considered as honorific because the building activity is the reason for honouring someone whereas in building inscriptions, the building activity is the main subject. It is also important – and this is what Cagnat did not underline enough in his definition quoted above – that in a building inscription the composer advertises his own building activities while in honorific ones the dedicators praise the works of the honorand.

## 2. On recognising building inscriptions

The problem of 'recognising' building inscriptions, i.e., deciding whether a given text is a building inscription or not, arises from insufficient data on the context. This in turn is due either to a defective description of the stone (in older epigraphic publications the description is frequently omitted altogether) or to the nature of the object itself. A stone slab, for instance, might have been fixed to an altar or to the wall of a temple;<sup>28</sup> there are relatively few cases where the potentially ambiguous inscription is still *in situ* or the archaeological context is unambiguous. Despite these problems, however, one can resort to many other criteria in order to

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Le Glay (above n. 19), 87–88.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. O. Salomies, "Observations on the Development of the Style of Latin Honorific Inscriptions during the Empire", *Arctos* 28 (1994) 86.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., *CIL* VIII 23888; *CIL* VIII 24095; *IL Afr.* 276; *IL Afr.* 454; *IRT* 543; *IRT* 615. – Cf. Calabi Limentani (above n. 1), 221: "... quando la benemerenza ricordata è relativa ad un'opera pubblica, l'iscrizione può essere attribuita alla classe delle opere pubbliche."

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Eck (above n. 1), 132–133.

determine the function of an inscription. In this article, I will consider following aspects: first (related to the stone): monument type, line division, letter size; secondly (related to the contents of the inscription): terminology describing the setting up an altar or a base, and the price of the monument and, finally, the social standing of both the builder and the dedicator.

## 2.1. The stone

Most of building inscriptions were originally placed on the building itself: they were usually carved either on an architrave or on a slab fixed to the wall. For various reasons other types were used as well. Occasionally one can find altars,<sup>29</sup> bases<sup>30</sup> and even steles<sup>31</sup> bearing building inscriptions. A very common type, inscriptions carved on an architrave,<sup>32</sup> is the only unambiguous one; almost all<sup>33</sup> such texts are to be classified as building inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes difficulties may arise if the archaeological context is inadequately transmitted. Thus, for example, neither the tenor<sup>35</sup> nor the description<sup>36</sup> of the inscription edited in *ILTun.* 684 seem to suggest anything other than an ordinary building inscription. In reality, we are dealing here with a funerary text.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 4291 (= *ILS* 3063); *IAM* 2, 824.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 828 (= *ILS* 5713); *CIL* VIII 18328 (= *ILS* 5520); *CIL* VIII 23991 (= *ILS* 5776); *IRT* 467.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., *IRT* 338.

<sup>32</sup> Architraves and slabs are the most common types, as I stated above, but their frequency in this material is not exactly estimable since epigraphic publications frequently omit the description of the stone. Cf. Salomies (above n. 2), 276: "building inscriptions ... have usually the form of *tabula*".

<sup>33</sup> See, however, *ILPBardo* 250 (= *ILS* 9015) which is an exception – an honorary inscription carved on a lintel.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Lepelley (above n. 4), 208: "Il s'agit de deux fragments d'un entablement, remployés dans le fort byzantin, donc de la dédicace d'un édifice."

<sup>35</sup> *M(arcus) Tuccius M(arci filius), vet(eranus), Lib(eralis?) Felicio s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit).*

<sup>36</sup> "Linteau : 0<sup>m</sup>, 32 x 3<sup>m</sup>". Cf. e.g. *IL Afr.* 196: *C(aius) Cornelius Saturninus, L(ucius) Petronius Vi[ctor] por(ticum) d(e) s(uo) f(ecerunt).* It is also "linteau" with following measurements: "0<sup>m</sup>, 20 x 0<sup>m</sup>, 35. Lettres : 0<sup>m</sup>, 055".

<sup>37</sup> A. Chausa Sáez, *Veteranos en el África romana* (Instrumenta 3), Barcelona 1997, 156, no. 263.

If an inscription is carved on a slab, matters become much more complicated. The problem is that such slabs were affixed to buildings, to altars and to bases. The shapes of slabs vary considerably. As a general rule, the greater the breadth of a stone is in proportion to the height, the more likely it is that it is a building inscription. If the slab is very tall in proportion to its breadth, it almost always belongs to an altar or base.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, this rule does not apply in the reverse: some very broad slabs were fixed on bases. *CIL* VIII 17870 (= *ILS* 446), for instance, is almost four metres wide but it has been affixed to a huge *basis*.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that statue groups<sup>40</sup> or equestrian statues might have stood on such bases though Alföldy has pointed out that the inscriptions on the bases of equestrian statues can be normally found on the front, which was the shorter side.<sup>41</sup> Eck has suggested that sometimes the base might have been for a *biga* or *quadriga*.<sup>42</sup>

The situation is no better if the text is inscribed on a block. Some building inscriptions were carved on a single block<sup>43</sup> and, on the other hand, sometimes several blocks were used in a single base.<sup>44</sup> All in all, the monument type is not – except in the obvious case of an architrave – a very good indicator of the larger context to which it once belonged.

## 2.2. The line division

The length of the lines in proportion to their number or the breadth of the stone in proportion to the height is a criterion that has been sometimes used to determine whether a given text is a building inscription or not. Some scholars have based their assessment of the purpose of the inscription on this aspect. E.g., Kolendo writes on *ILAlg.* I 3636 (= *CIL* VIII 27953): "Des environs de Theveste ... provient une autre inscription gravée sur une pierre

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Alföldy (above n. 2), 25.

<sup>39</sup> The commentary in *CIL*: "... tabula ... rep(erta) ... iuxta basim suam." Cf. also *IRT* 117.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *CIL* VIII 17726; Eck (above n. 1), 147–148.

<sup>41</sup> G. Alföldy, "Beiträge zur Prosopographie von Concordia", *Aquileia nostra* 51 (1980) 273–274.

<sup>42</sup> Eck (above n. 1), 162, n. 127. Cf. *IRT* 33: "... a large base, possibly for a quadriga ..."

<sup>43</sup> E.g., *AE* 1968, 586.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., *IRT* 33. – Quite often in epigraphic publications, the word "block" is used to denote a reused base (e.g., *AE* 1969–70, 697–702), which can be potentially misleading, especially if the text is fragmentary.

de 2, 37 m de longueur et 0, 30 m de hauteur. C'était donc une dédicace d'un édifice."<sup>45</sup> In this case, since the breadth of the stone is so much greater than the height, this conclusion seems justified.<sup>46</sup> Quite often, however, the line division does not offer any help since in some honorific or votive inscriptions the breadth exceeds the height by two or even three times. These inscriptions have been dedicated to emperors,<sup>47</sup> to gods,<sup>48</sup> and even to private persons.<sup>49</sup> Though in most honorary and votive inscriptions the height is clearly greater than the breadth, there are exceptions.

On the other hand, few building inscriptions are tall and narrow. Exceptional texts on bases apart,<sup>50</sup> the number of lines in building inscriptions generally do not exceed ten<sup>51</sup> and breadth is usually greater than height. I think that a *titulus* is not to be classified as a building inscription if the stone is very tall in proportion to its breadth or if the lines are short or if their number exceeds ten.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> J. Kolendo, "Le culte imperial et la faute de lapicide : à propos d'un inscription des environs de Theveste (*ILAlg.* I 3715)", *L'Africa romana* 4 (1987) 334. Cf., e.g., Salomies (above n. 2), 276, n. 24: "...*CIL* III 3384 = *ILS* 4232 ... the *ordinatio* of the inscription, nine rather short lines, seems to imply that this is an *ara* or a *basis* rather than a *tabula*." Lepelley (above n. 4), 86, on *CIL* VIII 23878: "La formule convient mieux à la dédicace d'un édifice qu'à celle d'une statue, mais l'extrême brièveté des lignes exclut, semble-t-il, cette possibilité."

<sup>46</sup> The description given by *CIL* is completely different: "epistylum latum (altum?) m. 0.60, longum m. 1.20." It is probable that the description in *ILAlg.* is the more reliable of the two because S. Gsell, the editor, himself saw the stone, whereas the editor of *CIL* VIII 27953 did not.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 17855; *CIL* VIII 17870 (= *ILS* 446): 3.89 × 1.03 m; *CIL* VIII 17871: 2.14 × 1.04 m; *AE* 1909, 6: 4 × 0.85 m. The measurements of *AE* 1909, 6 are taken from Turrenc (above n. 4), 218, no. 9. I give the dimensions in this order: breadth × height × depth. All measurements record maximum surviving dimensions.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., *IL Afr.* 254: 0.90 × 0.36 m; *CIL* VIII 17726: 2.0 × 0.50 m.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 2392 (= *ILS* 1178): 3.50 × 0.82 m; *IRT* 117: 3.16 × 0.70 m.; *IRT* 335: 0.59 × 0.07 m (only two lines).

<sup>50</sup> E.g., *IRT* 467. Another example is the bilingual *IRT* 338 (25 lines of Latin and 4 lines of Neopunic) which is carved on a stele.

<sup>51</sup> Some exceptions: *IRT* 427 (15 lines), carved on a wall; *AE* 1913, 225 (14 lines), no description; *IL Afr.* 525 (12 lines), slab; *ILAlg.* II 6225 (11 lines), slab.

<sup>52</sup> Some examples of the texts which are not to be classified as building inscriptions on the grounds of their *ordinatio*: *AE* 1934, 66: *Iovi Aug(usto) / sacrum. / Cultores / Iovi<s> / de suo fe/cerunt et d(edi)c(averunt)*; *AE* 1907, 158; *CIL* VIII 12247.

### 2.3. Letter size

The validity of letter size as a criterion has been partly based on the legibility of an inscription. Eck has stated that if the inscription in question is written in very small letters, it was meant to be seen from approximately the eye-level of the viewer,<sup>53</sup> which seems to exclude the possibility that it could come from an architrave. Vice versa, it has been argued that an inscription carved in large letters belonged to a building.<sup>54</sup> The latter argument seems more reliable. I think that *tituli* written in letters over 11 cm high throughout the text can be classified as building inscriptions<sup>55</sup> since honorary inscriptions having letter size as great as this are exceptional.<sup>56</sup>

The small size of the letters, on the contrary, does not prove the purpose of an inscription. The size of the letters varies greatly both in building<sup>57</sup> and in honorific inscriptions and many building inscriptions had actually smaller letters than honorific inscriptions did. It is more likely, of course, that a slab carved in small-sized letters was intended to be placed on a base rather than on a wall of a building. But the easy legibility of the text was not always taken into consideration, however. One can find many *epistylia*, architraves or lintels which were written in tiny letters. Some examples: *ILAlg.* II 2106, letter size 4.5 cm; *CIL* VIII 6048: 4 cm; *AE* 1968, 593: 3.5–4 cm; *AE* 1968, 599: 3.5–4 cm; *ILAfr.* 195: 3 cm; *AE* 1993, 1715: 2.5–3 cm; *ILPBardo* 328: 2–3.5 cm; *AE* 1968, 596: 1.8–4 cm. I have expressly presented letter sizes from *epistylia* because they were surely elevated some metres above the ground and were thus difficult or impossible

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<sup>53</sup> Eck (above n. 1), 147.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., the commentary on *CIL* VIII 18511: "in fragmentis permultis humi iacentibus ... iuxta arcum ... Titulus litteris pergrandibus scriptus ... ad arcum ipsum procul dubio pertinuit." Lepelley (above n. 4), 387 on *ILAlg.* II 622: "Les lettres ont dix centimètres de hauteur, ce qui permet de supposer une inscription gravée sur un façade de monument plutôt que sur une base de statue."; other instances: 142, 185, 442.

<sup>55</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 8809, 18226, and 18511; *IAM* 2, 390; *ILAfr.* 265 and 271; *ILTun.* 821; *IRT* 232 and 269.

<sup>56</sup> An example of a fragment which can be classified as a building inscription on the ground of the letter size (14.5–16.5 cm): *ILPBardo* 377: [----- *invictissim*]orum prin[cipum -----] / [-----] proprio sumtu c[onstruxit? -----]. Further examples: *AE* 1980, 956; (the letter size is 34 cm); *CIL* VIII 976 (the letter size is 25 cm).

<sup>57</sup> Two examples: *ILPBardo* 520 (= *ILS* 9367): 0.7 – 0.85 cm; *CIL* VIII 26528a: 35 cm.

to read, but one can find similar letter sizes in other types as well.<sup>58</sup> Since the letters carved on many bases were actually bigger<sup>59</sup> than in building inscriptions, it is clear that letter size is not a certain criterion if the letters are small in size.

#### 2.4. The terminology describing the setting up of an altar or base

Usually one can easily tell – the exception being the above-mentioned texts dedicated to an emperor – whether a *titulus* should be classified as an honorific or a building inscription.<sup>60</sup> In the case of inscriptions dedicated to gods, this is much less clear because many building inscriptions do not mention the building project<sup>61</sup> (this was thought to be obvious from the context) and because the phrasing of some votive texts is undistinguishable

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<sup>58</sup> E.g., blocks: *IRT* 359: 4–5 cm; *ILPBardo* 167: 3–5 cm; *ILPBardo* 240: 3–4 cm; slabs: *CIL* VIII 51 and *ILPBardo* 1: 4 cm; *ILAlg.* II 6094: 2.5–3.5 cm; *ILPBardo* 362: 1.5–4.8 cm.

<sup>59</sup> Some examples: *CIL* VIII 12379: 7–16 cm; *CIL* VIII 863: 7–13 cm; *AE* 1985, 876c: 10.5 cm; *CIL* VIII 959, *CIL* VIII 960, *CIL* VIII 17862, and *CIL* VIII 24584: 10 cm; *ILTun.* 250: 5–9.5 cm; *ILPBardo* 72: 7.5–8.5 cm; *ILTun.* 247: 7–8.5 cm; *IRT* 381: 7–8.5 cm; *ILAlg.* I 1298: 8 cm; *CIL* VIII 12288: 6–8 cm; *IL Afr.* 119 and *CIL* VIII 1439: 5–8 cm; *CIL* VIII 14364: 7 cm; *CIL* VIII 7970: 5–7 cm; *CIL* VIII 32 and *CIL* VIII 2742: 6.5 cm; *IL Afr.* 92: 6 cm.

<sup>60</sup> Cf., e.g., Lepelley (above n. 4), 203: "L'inscription I.L. Afr., 274 ... se présente sous la forme d'une dédicace à Valentinien, Valens et Gratien ; toutefois, elle était gravée sur une plaque de marbre et non sur un socle. Ce texte est beaucoup plus vraisemblablement la dédicace de travaux publics que celle d'une statue impériale ; les trois empereurs sont mentionnés conjointement, ce qui rend très invraisemblable l'hypothèse d'une inscription sur la base d'une statue."

<sup>61</sup> E.g., *CIL* VIII 1471 (= 15513 = M. Khanoussi, L. Maurin (eds.), *Dougga, fragments d'histoire. Choix d'inscriptions latines éditées, traduites et commentées (I<sup>er</sup> – IV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Bordeaux 2000, 87, no. 31): *Iovi Optimo Maximo, [I]uno[n]i Regin[a]e, Minervae Aug(ustae) sacrum. Pro salute Imp(eratorum) Cae[s(arum)] M(arci) [A]ureli [An]tonini A[ug(usti)] et L(uci) Au[r]eli [V]eri Aug(usti) Armeniacor(um) Med(icorum) Part(hicorum) max(imorum) to[tiusque div]ina[e] domu[s]. L(ucius) Marcius S[imple]x [et] L(ucius) Marcius Simplex Regillianus sua p(ecunia) f(ecerunt)*. The inscription was carved on the architrave of the Capitol in Thugga; *IRT* 269: *Cereri Augustae sacrum. C(aius) Rubellius Blandus co(n)s(ul), pont(ifex), proco(n)s(ul) dedic(avit). Suphunibal, ornatrix pat[ria]e, Annobalis Rusonis d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. The inscription was carved on 10 blocks in the cavea of the theatre of Lepcis Magna.

from that employed in building inscriptions.<sup>62</sup> The similarities themselves are not problematic: many votive texts which imitate expressions or phrases peculiar to building inscriptions (like *a fundamentis*, for instance<sup>63</sup>) do mention the object as well.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes, however, one can find inscriptions which do not mention the object and which are written in a style very similar to that used in building inscriptions. A good example is *CIL VIII 12379* (= 861):

*Patrici Liberi. / Plutoni Aug(usto) sacr(um). / Q(uintus) Cervius Tertullus / Celeris fil(ius) Pap(iria tribu) Felix Cele/rianus et P(ublius) Cornelius / Marcelli fil(ius) Pap(iria tribu) Dati/vus, aediles, sua libe/ralitate fecerunt et / ob dedicationem epu/las decurionibus / dederunt. L(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*<sup>65</sup>

Only the last phrase, *l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)* distinguishes this text from a building inscription because building inscriptions only rarely employ it.<sup>66</sup> Thus, we must keep in mind the votive texts of this type since every now and then one encounters inscriptions with phrases which seem at first to justify their classification as building inscriptions<sup>67</sup> but which in reality are not classifiable on grounds of their phraseology.

The most typical verb describing the setting up of an *ara* or a *basis* is *ponere*. Now this is very useful as a criterion since this verb is very rarely used in building inscriptions – and when it is, the erection of a statue or a column is normally included in the building process, as the following examples show: *cellam cum p[o]rticib[us et columnas lapi]deas posuerunt* and *statuam et aedem ... posuit*.<sup>68</sup> – Of course other verbs were also used to describe the setting up of an altar or base, but they were frequently also used in building inscriptions (*fecit*, for example) and they are thus useless as a

<sup>62</sup> Two examples: *CIL VIII 797* (= *ILS 6798*); *ILAlg. II 6866*.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., *AE 1913, 154*. Cf., however, Lepelley (above n. 4), 257 on *CIL VIII 16457*: "Les mots *a solo* montrent que le texte évoquait la construction d'un édifice public."

<sup>64</sup> E.g., *CIL VIII 840, 858, 958, 1321, and 20145*; *ILAlg. I 185 and 1236*.

<sup>65</sup> Other examples of bases written in the style similar to that used in building inscriptions: *CIL VIII 859, 863, 885, 4202, 14791, 14792, and 27374*; *ILTun. 714*.

<sup>66</sup> E.g., in *CIL 23991* (= *ILS 5776*), which is carved on a *basis*.

<sup>67</sup> E.g., the above-mentioned *ILPBardo 389*.

<sup>68</sup> *CIL VIII 26464*; *ILTun. 611*.

criterion.<sup>69</sup>

Often the *tituli sacri* omit the predicate describing the construction of the monument. In these cases, the predicate is usually related to the completion of a vow. Mentions of the *votum* are made in wide variety of ways and they appear very often in an abbreviated form (like *v.s.l.a.*). In building inscriptions, however, such expressions are rare,<sup>70</sup> but not quite rare enough that all inscriptions mentioning a *votum* could be classified as *sacri*.

## 2.5. The monument's price

The inscriptions found in Africa Proconsularis and in Numidia mention with exceptional frequency the prices of both buildings and statues.<sup>71</sup> Since so many inscriptions contain the mention of building costs, it would be tempting to use the price of the monument as an indicator of its type. This is a bit complicated, however. The reason for this is that many buildings cost less than the most expensive statues. Thus, for instance, an arch<sup>72</sup> from Castellum Celtianum cost 3,000 sesterces, while a statue of Fortune<sup>73</sup> from Timgad was priced at 22,000 sesterces. To give another example: in Magifa a temple dedicated to the local gods<sup>74</sup> was constructed for the price of 8,000 sesterces, whereas a statue of Caracalla<sup>75</sup> in Cirta cost

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<sup>69</sup> An example of a *titulus* that can probably be classified as a *sacer* on grounds of the predicate: *ILAlg. I 867: Iovi Opt(imo) Max(imo) Statori et Iunoni Aug(ustae) Reg(inae). / M(arcus) Gargilius Syrus, v(ir) e(gregius), f(lamen) p(er)p(etuus) et Iul(ia) Victoria eius / liberalitate et pecunia sua / posuerunt*. The measurements are: 1.50 × 0.55 m and the letter size is 7.5 cm. The inscription is carved on a slab and framed by a *tabula ansata*, which is more common on architraves than on altars (for parallels, see *IAM 2*, 358 and *IAM 2*, 359). Cf., however, Wesch-Klein (above n. 4), 326: "Wohl Bauinschrift."

<sup>70</sup> Some building inscriptions which mention a *votum*: *CIL VIII 993 (= ILS 4433): aedem, quam ... voverat; AE 1973, 646: v(otum), quo[d] ... promiserat ... solvit; CIL VIII 26464: voto susc[ep]to; CIL VIII 20251 (= ILS 4496): v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo); *ILTun.* 868; *ILAlg. I 2977; AE 1994, 1885*.*

<sup>71</sup> Duncan-Jones (above n. 4), 63.

<sup>72</sup> *ILAlg. II 2095*.

<sup>73</sup> *CIL VIII 17831 (= ILS 5400)*. This is an exceptional case since it records a much higher price for a statue (HS 22,000) than for an *aedes* (HS 4,400).

<sup>74</sup> *ILAlg. I 2977*.

<sup>75</sup> *ILAlg. II 570*. The total cost could have been higher since the inscription is fragmentary.



12,000 sesterces. If we look at the table of building costs in Africa compiled by R. Duncan-Jones,<sup>76</sup> we can calculate that 48.5 per cent of buildings cost between 3,000 and 50,000 sesterces, while 12.3 per cent of statues were priced between 9,000 and 33,000 sesterces. The cheapest price of a building mentioned by Duncan-Jones is 3,000 sesterces and if we encounter a price below this limit, we can safely assume that the object in question is a statue.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, if the price is higher than 33,000 sesterces, we are very probably dealing with a building<sup>78</sup> since the statue prices above this limit are exceptional.<sup>79</sup> This means that the costs between 3,000 and 33,000 sesterces can relate to either a building or a statue and are accordingly worthless as a criterion. If we would apply this criterion to the building inscriptions collected by Duncan-Jones, we should be able to determine the function of a given inscription in about half of the cases.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.6. The social standing of the builder and the dedicator

One might think – remembering that even a funerary inscription, let alone the erection of a building and having one's name inscribed on it, was an unaffordable luxury for most of the people in Antiquity<sup>81</sup> – that the social standing of a donor of an inscription could be an useful criterion for distinguishing building inscriptions from votive ones. Thus a low social

<sup>76</sup> Duncan-Jones (above n. 4), 75.

<sup>77</sup> For an arch, 3,000 sesterces is exceptionally cheap. For possible explanations, see Wesch-Klein (above n. 4) 283–284.

<sup>78</sup> One must note that inscriptions mentioning the lowest prices come from outside the large centres which means that the above-mentioned criteria could perhaps be refined by taking into account the origin of a given inscription.

<sup>79</sup> There are still some higher prices (the highest price is mentioned in *IRT* 706: 100,000 sesterces for 16 statues from Lepcis Magna), but they seem to be inflationary or at least very exceptional. Duncan-Jones (above n. 4), 78.

<sup>80</sup> Four examples of *tituli* which can be classified as building inscriptions on the grounds of the price: *ILPBardo* 358a: [-----] *sac(rum)*. / [*Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caesaris* -----] *G]erm(anici) M[ax(im)i, tr(ibunicia) pot(estate) X]VI, Im[p(eratoris) -----] / [----- totius]que div[inae do]mus [-----] / [-----] ex IS cen[tum mil(ibus) n(ummum) -----] / [-----].; *ILAfr.* 489: [-----] / [----- *avoru]m suorum secutus exempla qui adsidu[e -----] / [----- am]orem civium ex HS C mil(ibus) n(ummum) solo p(ublico?) PI[-----] M M[-----].; *CIL* VIII 4364 and 4365.**

<sup>81</sup> D. Lengrand, "Les inscriptions votives païennes des esclaves et des affranchis d'Afrique du Nord romaine", *L'Africa romana* 12 (1998) 959.

status would automatically mean that the inscription in question cannot be related to the building process. This is not the case, however. Private euergetism in Roman North Africa was concentrated in, but not confined to, the upper strata of society: the social status of the builders ranged from slaves to senators.<sup>82</sup> Though the number of votive inscriptions erected by slaves and freedmen is modest<sup>83</sup> and though the number of building inscriptions attributed to them is still smaller<sup>84</sup>, the latter are nevertheless common enough to prevent us drawing certain conclusions from the social standing of a builder. If a given inscription is set up by a slave or a freedman, it is probably to be classified as votive, but that is far from certain.

To move to the opposite end of the social scale, it is common knowledge that the proconsul played an important part as a dedicator of public monuments,<sup>85</sup> though it was very common, too, that a builder performed the task himself.<sup>86</sup> Since it is likely that the proconsul or his legate was personally present at the dedication ceremonies,<sup>87</sup> we might suppose that he or his subordinate would dedicate only important monuments,

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<sup>82</sup> About slaves and freedmen as builders of temples, see the list compiled by Lengrand (above n. 81), 966, n. 47. One must note, however, that there are two mistakes: *AE* 1957a is in reality *AE* 1957, 92b and *CIL* VIII 17050 and *ILAlg.* I 863 are editions of the same text. This text, by the way, has had the misfortune to be found in Oued Cherf, in the border zone between Proconsularis and Numidia. When it was edited in *CIL* VIII 10827, it was located in Nattabutes, in Numidia. The re-edition in *CIL* VIII 17050 placed it at Hr El-Hammam, in Proconsularis. This location was maintained in *ILAlg.* I 863 but when the text was re-edited by mistake in *ILAlg.* II 6138a, it was again placed at Civitas Nattabutum in Numidia. This mistake led H. Jouffroy, *La construction publique en Italie et dans L'Afrique Romaine* (Études et Travaux 2), Strasbourg 1986, 210, 256 to regard *ILAlg.* I 863 and II 6138a as different inscriptions and so she located them according to *ILAlg.* and even dated them differently.

<sup>83</sup> Lengrand (above n. 81), 959 mentions that she has found 82 persons (slaves or freedmen) who had donated "inscriptions votives".

<sup>84</sup> Lengrand (above n. 81), passim, mentions 19 examples where a slave or freedman has acted as a builder. It is noteworthy that slaves were also able to build with their own money. See, e.g., *ILTun.* 868; *CIL* VIII 12314; *ILPBardo* 345.

<sup>85</sup> Kolendo (above n. 14), 357–358.

<sup>86</sup> To give but three examples, see *ILPBardo* 3; *ILTun.* 148; *IRT* 321. Sometimes the honour of the *dedicatio* was given to some other person enjoying a high esteem in the community where the building process took place, see, e.g., *Dougga* (above n. 61), no. 24 (= *CIL* VIII 1478 = 15503 = 26519).

<sup>87</sup> Kolendo (above n. 14), 357; Dondin-Payre (above n. 14), 342.

triumphal arches, theatres, temples, baths, and so on.<sup>88</sup> Generally speaking, this is true, but some exceptions do exist. Thus *CIL* VIII 994 records the dedication of a statue by a proconsul and *IRT* 318a likewise mentions the dedication of an altar by the same official. Despite these exceptions, I think that the *dedicatio* performed by the proconsul is a rather good indicator of the importance of the monument and accordingly of its function. Therefore, if a given inscription mentions that a proconsul made the dedication, we can suppose that the dedicated monument was a building.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusions

We have now looked at some ways by which one can try to determine the function of the inscriptions which record the erection of a monument without specifying its character (the text is either fragmentary or the object is omitted) and which are undefinable on the grounds of their archaeological contexts (the data is either lost or insufficiently transmitted). It was shown that while some criteria are indeed useful in distinguishing building inscriptions from votive and honorary ones, some others are more problematic than has been previously thought.

First, the line division or the shape of the stone are not usable criteria if the *ordinatio* is approximately square. If the lines are not very long or if the breadth of the stone is less than three times greater than its height, the inscription might also have come from a *basis*. On the other hand, if a *titulus* is very tall in proportion to its breadth or if the lines are short or if their number exceeds ten, it is unlikely to be considered a building inscription. Only an *epistylum* indicates clearly the purpose of the inscription carved on it.

Second, the small size of the letters does not necessarily mean that an inscription could not have been carved on the building, but in the reverse case, if the height of the letters exceeds 11 cm, it can be classified as a building inscription.

Third, if the predicate describing the building process is *ponere*, it is very likely that text was related to the setting up of a statue or an altar.

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. a list compiled by Kolendo, (above n. 14), 356–357.

<sup>89</sup> In my view, e.g., *ILAlg.* I 1230, 1231, and *AE* 1987, 989 should be classified as building inscriptions for this reason.

Mentions of a *votum* are rare in the building inscriptions, but still too common to allow their use as a criterion.

Fourth, the price of the monument is usable as a criterion if it is less than 3,000 sesterces or more than 33,000 sesterces. Inscriptions mentioning costs below HS 3,000 are to be classified as votive texts, while the *tituli* in which the sum exceeds the latter limit can be regarded as building inscriptions.

Fifth, the low social standing of a donor suggests that the object of his euergesies was probably not a building whereas the mention of the dedication by the proconsul means that we are very probably dealing with a building inscription since almost all inscriptions that record the *dedicatio* by the proconsul were related to edifice construction.

In the spite of the positive results that can be achieved by applying these criteria, there remain many cases where one – or at least I – cannot determine the function of an inscription. Let us return to the inscription cited at the beginning of this article (*ILPBardo* 389 = *CIL* VIII 25836). In *CIL*, it is described in the following way: "alta m. 0.53, lata m. 1, litteris cm. 6–5". The right-hand portion of the inscription is broken away and the text is divided onto six rather long lines. This means that it could just as well have been fixed on a *basis* as on a wall of a building. The size of the letters is 5–6 cm, which applies equally well to a building inscription or to an honorary or votive one. The predicate describing the actual building process is lost, but the phrase containing the promise to set up a monument can be also found on some bases.<sup>90</sup> The original price of the monument, 16,000 sesterces, is considerably more than average for a statue, but not exceptionally high.<sup>91</sup> The social status of Q. Numisius Primus, who built the monument, does not offer any clue since he was a member of the local aristocracy. These features seem to suggest that the text is more probably a building inscription than not, but that is not certain. In the *ILPBardo*, however, the inscription is described as a "linteau" which means that it can be classified as a building inscription. Without the information on the archaeological context or a sufficient description of the stone, this inscription, like many others, must remain unclassifiable.

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<sup>90</sup> E.g. *CIL* VIII 4202: ... *statua(m), quam ex IS VIII (milibus) n(ummu) promiserat, faciend(am) dedicandamq(ue) curavit.*

<sup>91</sup> Duncan-Jones (above n. 4), 78. The median average price was HS 5,000.