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Paper proposal:

The importance of being commemorated: Men and women in Roman funerary iconography.

Suggested panel:

1. Images , Text and Reality

Abstract

This paper will focus on people in Roman society not normally known to us from literary sources, i.e. not from the top social layers, but rather from what may be labelled a "middle class". These people were part of the working strata as tradesmen, artisans or moderate landowners etc. Some were born as free citizens, others were manumitted and they made an important part of Roman society and economy. Partly, or perhaps mainly, through work they had been financially successful enough to have the economic means of commissioning a costly memorial by which they were commemorated.

A memorial is often very likely to be the only document left of people, men and women, from the "middle class" but through numerous preserved examples the memorials still contain important information about the commissioners and their time and society. The location and the size of a monument is an act of displaying status and ambitions which can be further accentuated in more detail in the iconography of the monument, and in epigraphy. Images and inscriptions convey aspects of gender structures and pervading social values and identities in Roman society and may contribute to our knowledge of the past.

This paper will deal primarily with the iconographic evidence and how this kind of source can be used as a reflection of norms and ideals of people in the social groupings only rarely documented in the written sources but still with the ambition of being commemorated.