

Formulae used in funerary inscriptions in Algeria in the Roman period

Formules utilisées dans les inscriptions funéraires en Algérie à l'époque romaine

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The abstract: The Latin inscriptions discovered in Algeria represent very important documents to study the African societies during the Roman period. The Latin gravestones, including pagan and Christian ones formed the biggest number; they vary between the simple forms, dedicated generally to *Manes* (death gods) to another defined and carefully chosen, especially the poetic funeral epigraphy "*carmina*". The selected examples presented in this paper concern only Ancient Algeria, hence the choice of the title. However, we brought some remarks on the specific funerary formula in other African provinces.

We notice that the society of African Roman cities followed the trend of Romanization, with various formulae and expressions that we find in different regions of the Roman Empire, but with some peculiarities. Among the most important features and differences are the extensive use of some expressions in pagan funeral inscriptions that may not fulfill the expected meaning in its narrow sense. Moreover, some formula very common in Christian gravestones gradually replaced the previous ones common during heathenism.

An attempt to understand and to deal with the study of the African society of the Roman through the funeral epigraphy period is necessary, but could be very difficult.

Key words: Latin, Formula, funerary, inscriptions, Carmina.

Le résumé de l'article : Les inscriptions latines découvertes en Algérie représentent des documents très importants pour étudier les sociétés africaines à l'époque romaine. Les pierres tombales latines, y compris païennes et chrétiennes, formaient le plus grand nombre; elles varient entre des formes simples, dédiées généralement à *Manes* (dieux de la mort) à une autre définie et soigneusement choisie, en particulier l'épigraphie poétique funéraire « *carmina* ». Les exemples sélectionnés présentés dans cet article ne concernent que l'Algérie ancienne, d'où le choix du titre. Cependant, nous avons apporté quelques remarques sur la formule funéraire spécifique dans d'autres provinces africaines.

On remarque que la société des cités romaines africaines a suivi la tendance de la romanisation, avec diverses formules et expressions que l'on retrouve dans différentes régions de l'Empire romain, mais avec quelques particularités. Parmi les caractéristiques et les différences les plus importantes figurent l'utilisation intensive de certaines expressions dans les inscriptions funéraires païennes qui peuvent ne pas remplir le sens attendu dans son sens étroit. De plus, certaines formules très courantes dans les pierres tombales chrétiennes ont progressivement remplacé les précédentes courantes pendant le paganisme.

Une tentative de comprendre et d'aborder l'étude de la société africaine des Romains à travers la période de l'épigraphie funéraire est nécessaire, mais pourrait être très difficile.

Mots clefs : Latin, Formule, funéraire, inscriptions, Carmina.

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Introduction :

Algerian cities that knew the Roman presence had the chance to have their huge number of Latin inscriptions discovered, hence studied and protected by the Germans, and most of them have been published in various epigraphic works (129-123 :2019 ,مهنتل).

Funerary inscriptions are the most numerous, as almost every person gave tremendous importance to have a gravestone carrying a writing that perpetuates his name, so that there were people who prepared them during their life. Their names, their social rank, their culture and the degree of their “romanization” were of great interest to the historian/archaeologist and even the sociologist in understanding the mentality and the way of thinking of people. The gravestones carried a huge amount of information that gives us an image of the African society during the Roman period.

The funeral text was tightly linked to the funeral rites and death ceremony. The practice of the cremation method made people use more funeral urns to contain cremains (ashes and other elements of the deceased that remain after cremation). Even though the urns were small, tiny surfaces were devoted to immortalize the names of the defunct.

With burial and entombment, the gravestones developed and varied depending on the culture and the social rank of the deceased.

These grave markers generally contain texts of different styles engraved or painted on various monuments including mausoleums, graves, especially graves that take the form of “*cupula*” boxes, which were in a so large number in African provinces that they are considered an African specificity (FEVRIER, 1964: 112-115; LASSERE, 1973:11).

Among the monuments that we also frequently find, gravestones, most of which end in a triangular front and altars bearing beautiful decorations showing the great degree of the “romanization” of the person, considering that the use of the altar is a Roman characteristic. We also find funeral tables “*mensae*” and statues. Simple gravestones occupy the largest proportion and we note that many graves did not bear any special writing in the latest period.

The funerary inscriptions are divided into two main groups: pagan and Christian ones

1. Heathenism:

The first approaching is about different examples of typically pagan funerary inscriptions that present various formula and phrases used before the Christian era, in general.

1.1. Formula:

Before talking about the formula, we refer to the author of the text and the Latin words that he used. There is "lapicida" or "lapidaries", which means the craftsman who engraves the stone only, and the word "sculptor" for the one who carves stone, wood and even metal and "lapidarius" takes the title "scriptor titulorum", meaning the writer of inscriptions.

The presence of many inscriptions, especially poetry ones, confirms the existence of the engraver's workshop. They had a record containing various formulae and phrases that were proposed to customers and this is confirmed by the writings that often carry the same phrases. The writer was so ambitious to satisfy the desire of the customer that he was not embarrassed from stealing texts from other inscriptions (PIETRI, 1997:1410).

In general, the simple formula formed the largest number of funerary texts, usually beginning with the phrase "dedicated (*sacrum*) to the gods *Manibus* always in the plural (*Diis Manibus*) in the case of the **dative** and it was written in abbreviated form (*D.M.S*), especially in the second century AD. Then we find the name of the deceased in the case of the subject **nominative** or the **genitive**, or even the **dative**, and mention the period that the deceased lived. After, the dedicators who are often the parents of the deceased (husband or wife or children and brothers), and mention the characteristics of the defunct that are the most important part of the text that usually ends with the phrase "here is present" (*Hic Situs Est*) written briefly.

An example of a stele (BENSEDDIK, 1977-1979: 41) inscribed over a "cupula" tomb with the erasure of perhaps the last phrase, which is the simplest type of writing. (Fig:1)

S(acrum) L(ucius) Pompeius Vena Tor
V(ixit) A(nnis) LXV D(iis) M(anibus)
To the gods *Manas, Cius Pompeius Venator* lived to the year 65.

The simplicity of the formula often made the gravestones similar and frequent, and Gauckler.P (GAUCKLER, 1896: 39) expressed that by saying that "these steles are the black point in the Latin epigraphy in Africa".

1.2. Development of the formula and its most important elements:

1.2.1. Dedication to the *Manes* gods:

The formula of dedication to the deities of *Manas* appeared in the second half of the first century AD, and spread in the African provinces, especially Carthage, in the second century AD or the end of the first century AD. Then it became more generalized during the era of the Severan dynasty,

while it appeared later between the second and third centuries AD, for example in the city of Sétif(*Sitifis*) (FEVRIER.GASPARY, 1966:44-50).

This formula constitutes an important element of historiography, but it cannot be reliably attested (LASSERE, 1973:7-151).

Manas is generally considered to be the gods of death, the guardian deities of each grave and the soul of every deceased connected to his ancestors, a kind of personal devil that disturbs the soul of the defunct (BOYANCE, 1960:69-72).

In a philosophical explanation, *Virgile* says that everyone bears his own “*manas*,” and confirms this individual peculiarity by praising one of the ladies “*matrona*,” where he said (VIRGILE,*Eneide*: 743): “*Te di manes tui utquietampatianturatqueita. Tueanturopto.*”

Meaning: I hope that they (your gods *Manes*) will leave you at ease and protect you.

We sometimes notice the emphasis on these deities by using the phrase “*qui sunt manes*”, meaning whom are *manas*. (CIL, VIII,1151)

As for the position of the phrase in the text, it is usually at the beginning of writing but sometimes it is found in the middle of the text and it appears abbreviated as follows *DD.MM.*(AE, 1987,280)

In many cases, the consecration to the gods *Manas* is accompanied by the word *memoria*, which in some cases takes a double meaning, as it refers to the grave and to the entity of the sacred memory of the dead that is associated to the gods *Manas*.

The following example shows the duality of the meaning of this word, which spread especially in the third century AD and was used instead of *D.M.S* in many times, but this latter did not completely disappear but was found even in the sixth century AD in Tlemcen (CIL, VIII, 1151), for example.

Sétif (*Sitifis*)(AE, 1984, 940):

Memoria Fl(avi) Reginia/nicor(nicularii) Cimb(rianorum) vix(it) an(nos) / XLIII mense(m) un(un) dies / XXIII (h)oras VII a(d)m<i=E>n/<i=E>strav<i=E>t an(nos) XVIII actarius an(nos) III co(r)/nicularius an(nos) XIII / memoria(m) fecit (A)em/ilia Ulpiola dulcis[s]im/a coniux

The first word “*memoria*” performs the meaning of remembrance in the case of the subject **Nominative**, the memory of *Flavius Reginianus* ... a soldier-clerk of control for the Cambrians (*cimbrii* was a military division found in the late period in Africa). While the word “*memoriam*” which comes in the case of the **accusative** in the third line gives the meaning of the grave: *EmiliaOlpiola*, the very gentle wife, completed the grave. We note the zeal of the dedicator to accurately record the age of the deceased in the number of years, months, days and even hours, as well as indicating the years of his military service, which are eighteen of them, as a military

commissioner who kept the registers “*actarius*” for a period of four years. Also as an officer writer set *Cornicularius* for a period of fourteen years (169-141 :2019 ,مهنتل).

1.2.2. Name of the deceased:

Usually the name of the deceased comes after the dedication to the deity *Manas* and is in the case of subject, the genitive, or the dative.

According to J.M. Lassere, if it is in the **nominative** state, the name breaks the syntax, and may express other forms as in “To the gods *Manas*. So-and-so lived...” in the case of the **genitive** to which it expresses the supremacy of the gods and conceives them as the individual soul of the dead,” To the gods *Manas* so-and-so” However, in the case of the **dative**, it equates between the gods and the deceased by placing gifts to both (LASSERE, 2007: 237).

In the first century AD the triple name was used with patriarchal lineage and tribal affiliation, and the latter two disappeared from the second century AD, when the fashion for placing other titles (nickname) *signum* appeared and *agnomen* besides the person’s surname. As we find sometimes the person’s full name with mention of his status, rank and titles, especially in the latest period.

In addition, acrostic style was widely used to indicate the name of the deceased person, especially in poetic writings by giving a comment or a charade. The writer used to say for example “to find my name think of the first month,” so the name of the deceased is *Januarius* (PIETRI, 1997: 1415).

1.2.3. The person’s age:

The age of the deceased is referred to by the phrase “*vixitannis*” from the verb “*vivere*” lived years and sometimes the phrase “*valuitannis*” from the word “*valere*” meaning: estimated years ... or by using verbs such as “*complere*” “*excedere*”, “*decedere*” (KAJANTO, 1968:11). Some texts refer to years by adding the word *N (umero)* meaning a number and in other cases the word is preceded by the phrase “*p (lus)*” “*m (inus)*”, which is written abbreviated *P.M* meaning at most or at least, as well as the phrase “*C (irciter)*” meaning around. In the later period, the use of the formula *plus minus* became automatic and had no longer an indicative meaning. There are also those who suggested that the phrase might lead to meaning if it is not wrong (BOVINI, 1972: 72), which is a very acceptable opinion.

There are gravestones indicating the number of years of marriage rather than the age of the person, and the most famous phrase used is “*vixit mecum annis*” : who lived with me for years. Other words indicate the cohesion of the couples “*vixit cum ea sine querella*” lived with her without a quarrel. However, the person’s age and marriage years cannot be used as a basis for studying the demographic side (CLAUSS, 1974: 796-855).

Some inscriptions specify the age of the deceased precisely in terms of years, months, days and even hours. Most of the time they come in the case of a time reference (circumstantial complement of time) or the case of the **accusative**, or both together (LASSERE, 2007: 237).

Example of **Setif (Sitifis)**(AE,1985, 00899):

D (is) M (anibus) s (acrum) / L (ucius) Domitius Pa / riator v (ixit) a (nnos) XII / m (enses) VII d (ies) VIII h (oras) XI / Emineusfilio / dulcissimofecit

Meaning to the gods *Manas, Caius DemetiusBarriator* (the name came in the case of the subject-**Nominative**) he lived twelve years, seven months, nine days and eleven hours (it came in the **Accusative** case) *Aminius* accomplished (the tomb)for his very meek son.

According to our opinion, the father carefully recorded the period that his son lived, perhaps because he was ill. The presence of the nickname “*pariator*,” which leads to the meaning of liberation and relief in general, suggests that death may have released him (152:2019, مهنتل)

1.2.4 . The dedicator:

The people who accompany the deceased to his final resting place in general, where the dedicator who was keen to have the phrase “*posuit*”, meaning put (singular) or “*posverunt*” (plural) and sometimes they indicate that they put it by themselves “*de suo*” meaning himself or “*de sua*” herself and with their money” *suo, sua, pecunia*”. Moreover, we understand in this case that the heirs have not yet undertaken the inheritance procedures to finance the construction of the grave, since in this case we find the term “*ex testament*” meaning a “by a will.”

Regarding the order of the person who presented the dedication in the text, it usually comes after the name of the deceased, but sometimes it takes the first place. Of the words that denote kinship relationship comes, of course, “*patri*” meaning to his father, “*filio*,” meaning to his son, and the verb” *facere*” is attached to it, which comes in the past tense “*fecit*” meaning: accomplished/ made it . Sometimes with the verb (*dedicare*) that comes in the past tense “*dedit*” or “*dedicavit*” meaning “offer” or “the one who offered”.

There are steles in which the owner of the dedication is the deceased himself, as he states that he established it in his life, as indicated by the phrase “*sibivivusfecit*” meaning that it was accomplished in his life.

People who make dedications may wish rest for the dead by using various words that we find abundantly in many areas, such as “*ossa tibi bene quiescent*”, which we often find abbreviated *OTBQ*, meaning “may your bones relax “. Alternatively, phrases indicating his sadness such as “*contra votum*” meaning against his wish and other phrases derived from literature. It comes in prose writings like “*infelix*”, meaning unhappy or unlucky and “*miserrimus*”, which is an adjective

in the sense of being very unfortunate. Other expressions indicate the status of the deceased to the dedicator, such as: “*carissimus*”, “*carissima*” meaning very dear (male and female), “*dulcis*”, “*dulcissimus*” , “*dulcissima*” : gentle/ a very gentle(male and female), *rarissimus-rarissima* meaning : very rare (male and female), *amantissimus-amantissima* : so beloved (for male and female) and *incomparabilis* that means incomparable. Other words greet the passer: “*vale, ave*”, or ask him to stop and read the gravestone: “*resta viator et lege*”

Some researchers define certain characteristics according to the age of the deceased as follows:

“*Dulcissimus*”, for very young children especially infants, “*Carissimus*”, for children in general “*Piissimus, optimus*”, for men in general (HARROD, 1909:36.37).

Roman cities were distinguished in the African provinces, with the spread of some phrases more frequently about women, such as, “*carissima, pia, optima*” meaning very dear, pious, the best, and others indicating her obedience to her husband, such as “*obsequens, obsequentissima*”, meaning obedient “*obsequens*”, very obedient. Regarding a man, we find *pius, piissimus, carissimus, dignitus* that mean: pious, very pious, very dear, honorable.

Regarding the word “*pius*”, “*pia*”, which is associated with the verb “to live” that refers to the age of the person “*piusvixit*”, Lassere.J.M believes that despite its simplicity, it is difficult to translate it, its meaning may seem related to everything sacred.

Nevertheless, if we return to its signification with the Greeks, then it is (he lived without things to be blamed for) that is, he performed all his duties towards his family (LASSERE, 2007: 231) and that could be more probable.

The phrase “*bene merenti*” is also widely found, which denotes the meaning of “which deserves regret” in general.

1.2.5 . The final phrases:

The gravestone carries phrases indicating the presence of the dead that come at the end of the text in general and the simplest and most used one is: “here is present” *H.S.E* and the word *SITUS* are derived from the verb “*sinere*” which means to put or leave. Other verbs perform a meaning of rest or rest assured, such as the verb “*quiescere*” which is associated more with the word “*ossa*”. Or phrases such as “*securusquiescit*” or “*securaquies*”, meaning (sleep without anxiety) and we sometimes find a combination of the two phrases, also the phrase “*hic iacet*” meaning here to lie down, meaning sleeps.

The use of the word “*sepultus*” and “*sepeletus*” explicitly refers to the tomb (FEVRIER, 1964:121), as in the following inscription of Sétif (*Sitifis*) (AE, 1967, 00626):

D (is) M (anibus) s (acrum) / L (ucius) Fab / ius Mu [s] / vix (it) an (n) is / XXV h (ic) s (e) p (ultus)

Meaning to the gods *Manas*, *Lucius Fabius Mes* ... he lived 25 years here in his grave

Other phrases refer to the final resting place of it, "haec domus or domus aeternalis", meaning eternal or permanent home (GRIMAL, 1943: 342).

An example of **Timgad (Thamugadi)(EDCS,46400260)**

D (is) M (anibus) s (acrum) / Aemilia N / ovella v (ixit) a (nnos) / [3] XX Q (uintus) Servil / ius Fidus / [m] atricari / [ssi] maefec (it) // D (is) M (anibus) s (acrum) / Q (uinto) Servilio Ca / lo v (ixit) a (nnos) LXXV Ser [vil] / ius Fidus patri / fecit in his d / omo (a) etern [o] / ossa quiesc [unt

Meaning to the gods *Manas*. *Emilia Novella* lived 20 (incomplete figure) years, *Quintus Servilius Vidus* established (this tomb) for his very dear wife. To the gods *Manas* and to *Quetinus Servilius Calus*, he lived 75 years. *Servilius Phaidus* completed the tomb for his father. In this eternal home his bones rest. We note that the name of the deceased in the first part of the writing came in the case of the **nominative**, while the name of the second deceased came in the case of the **dative**.

As for the nature of the monument, the presence of the verb "fecit" or "construixit", to indicate a funerary monument. Also some steles specify the quality of the monument, including "locus" meaning the place of burial in general, "locus monumenti" meaning the place of the monument, "cupula" meaning a funeral box, "mensa" meaning funeral table and others in Timgad(EDCS,46800169)

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / L(ucius) Lurius L(uci) fil(ius) Pap(iria) / Victor omnium / amicor(um) semper con/siliotutorvix(it) / annis LXVII filii et / her(edes) eiusfec(erunt) / h(oc) l(oco) s(itus) e(st

Meaning to the gods *Manas Lucius Lurius Victorious son of Lucius* from the tribe of *Papiria* has always been a defender of all his friends in the council. He lived 67 years. His sons and heirs accomplished (his tomb). Here is his place.

Constantine (Cirta)(CIL, VIII, 07202):

D (is) M (anibus) / Antonia / Monnica / v (ixit) a (nnos) LXI o (ssa) t (ibi) b (ene) q (uiescant) / Volumnius / Felix maritae / carissim (a) e sta / tuam et aras / duas uno nomi / ne scriptas me / renticonstitu / it

To the gods *Manas*. *Antonia Monica* lived 61 years, so that your bones could rest well. *Flumnus Flex* built (here he wrote the verb *constituit*) for his very dear wife a statue and two altars, one of which is deservedly written in her name.

We note here the identification of the type of monuments and it is likely that the other altar was prepared it for himself.

The African provinces, like Rome, were also known as the so-called “hereditary grave”. The right of the freedmen was given the right to preserve the family grave after the death of the heir, as shown by the following phrases that we sometimes find in funerary writings:

Sibi et suis libertis.posterisqueeorum ... nec in hoc monumentumexteruminferrilicebit

The following examples give us an idea of the various expressions used by the dedicators and they are the most important part of the stele, given that the reference to the age of the deceased, as well as the dedication to the gods, *Manas*, is used almost automatically in all writings.

Guelma (Calama)(EDCS,47400289):

D (is) M (anibus) s (acrum) / Callinic [us] / piusvix [it] / ann (os) XXX [3] / m (enses) III Vibia / Ianuaria / marito me / rentifec (it) / [6] / [6] / s (it) t (ibi) t (erra) l (evis)

Meaning to the gods *Manas*. *Calinicus*, the godly man, lived 30 years and 3 months, *VibiaIanuaria* set the tomb for her husband who deserves, so let the earth be light on you.

Constantine (Cirta) (CIL, VIII, 071174):

Memoriae / Sex(ti) AemiliFeli/cianiamatori(s) / sanguinis sui et / remuneratori(s) fa/miliaesuae / AemiliaGargilia / fratriamantissi/mo v(ixit) a(nnos) LXV h(ic) s(itus) e(st)

In memory of *Sextus Aemilianus Felicianus*, the friendly the one who rewarded his family with his blood. *AemiliaGargilia* did (this grave) for her very beloved brother. He lived 65 years here, he is.

We understand from the text that this person was very attached to his family, which he might redeem with his blood, like what his gifted sister was keen to confirm.

Constantine (Cirta) (MEHENTEL.FILAH, 2019 : 503-508) : (Fig :2)

D.M.S ?

Memoriae ?.Rupiliae/Margaridis/Nutricis/RupiliorumOptim(ae)/Femin(ae)/ V(ixit)Annis LXX / H(ic) S(ita) E(st) Fecit

Rupius/ Zosimus/ Socrui /Piisim(ae)/ Percantissim(ae) Ei Quid Quid In Genere.Nusquam

Meaning: dedicated to the *Manes* gods?] For the memory? Of [*Rupilia ?*] *Margaris*, wet nurse of the *Rupilii*. The best woman. She lived 70 years. She is here. *RupiusZosimus* did for his mother-in-law very pious and very holy. There can be no such gender anywhere (that is) more virtuous than her.

This is a text full of praise: best woman, very pious or very devoted, very holy all these qualities go well with her noble duty and it shows his great attachment to his mother in law who must have been full of affection for him.

Djemila (Cuicul)(ILAlg-II-01, 01100): (Fig :3)

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / m{a}emoriaeIul(iae) / Matronae Q(uintus) Iul(ius) Quietus / coniugiarissim(a)e s<e=I> vivo / fec(it) ob insigne eiusobsequium / v(ixit) an(nos) LXXX cur(antibus) Iul(is) Q(uinto) Iul(io) Condidio / et Crementio et Q(uinto) Iul(io) Quieto / Candidiano fil(iis) eorum / cum Iulia Vitalicasorore

To the gods *Manas*, to the memory of *Julia Matrona*. *Quintus Julius Quietus* established this tomb in his life in gratitude to his wife's very rare obedience. She lived 80 years with the care of *the Julians*, *Quintus Condidus* and *Crementius* and *Quintus Julius Quietus Condidianus* their sons with *Julia Vitalica* their sister.

Djemila (Cuicul)(MEHENDEL.KACHA, 2020 : 57-67)(Fig :4)

01- *D(iis) M(anibus) s(acrum). / Fortu/natae/ et Inge/nuae fil(iae),/ lib(ertae) Hila/rae fil(iae)/ et nep(o)/tis.*

Dedicated to the *Mânes* gods. To *Fortunata* and *Ingenua*, (her) daughter, (respectively) daughter and granddaughter of *Hilara* the freedwoman.

02- *D (iis) M(anibus) s(acrum). /Hilarae/ matri/ Hono/ratae/orna/tricis/ Gargi/liarum/ lib(ertae) pro/meri/tis.*

Dedicated to the *Mânes* gods. To *Hilara*, mother of *Honorata*, chambermaid, freedwoman by the *Gargiliae*, for her merits ».

03- *D (iis) M (anibus) s(acrum). / Honoratae /bonaepu/ellae, Hi/larae fil (iae), /quaeuixit/ annis XV, s(upra) s(criptae) / Gargiliae/ Victoria/ et Extrica/ta C(aii) f(iliae) Prae/toriana/ ornatrici/ et lib(ertae) suae/ fecerunt/ dedicauerunt/que.*

Dedicated to the *Mânes* gods. To *Honorata*, a good girl, daughter of *Hilara*, who lived 15 years. The *Gargiliae Praetorinae*, *Victoria* and *Extricata*, daughters of *Caius*, did (this) and dedicated it to their chambermaid, their freedwoman.

04- *D(iis) M(anibus) s(acrum). / Felici/tati/ Hilarae /filiae/ quaeui/xit an/nis/ XXX/ curante/ exsupera/te fratre.*

Dedicated to the *Mânes* gods. To *Felicitas* daughter of *Hilara*, who lived 30 years. (gravestone) erected by the care of (her) elder brother.

Here we have a unique example today of a *stemma* of freedwomen with the indication of the profession of chambermaid.

Timgad(Thamugadi):(EDCS ,47200377) :

D(is) M(anibus) / Sentia Sa/tura qua/e vix(it) an(nos) XXXVIII / L(ucius) Aelius Do/natus con/iugimeren/tissimae / cum qua / an(nos) XXI m(enses) / VIII d(es) XI securusvixi(t)

To the gods *Manes*, *SentiaSatura* lived 39 years, *Lucius Aelius Donatus* lived very peacefully with his wife 21 years, 9 months, 11 days, she deserves to be missed.

Detailing the precise period of living together shows here the emotional bond between the spouses.

Some gravestones are distinguished by particular expressions that are not found in all inscriptions very close to poetic writings, such as:

Guelma (Calama)(CIL, VIII, 05372):

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Sei{f}ia Honorata in floredecessitprudens / demandatnat[os] maritokarissimo / lucemquecaruitvixitannisviginti / sex

To the gods *Manas*, *SeiiaHonorata* died in the prime of life (an expected death according to the term *prudens*). She leaves her children under the protection of her beloved husband, her flame is extinguished, she leaved 20 years, 6...

In addition to simple funerary inscriptions, there are very beautiful poetic texts written in a poetic style that have aroused the interest of specialists in epigraphic studies(BUCHELER,2 volumes,1895-1897;. GALLETIER, 1922)

Some African provinces have been studied, the most important of which are the inscriptions of the eastern province of *Numidia*(EVRE, 2011). The study by Christine Hamdoune (HAMDOUNE, 2016:41.224) and Dorothy Pikhaus are of great importance as they were interested in studying the social origins of the owners of poetic texts (PIKHAUS, 1981: 637-654).

Pagan poetry inscriptions constitute three quarters of the number, spread more and flourished during the second and third centuries AD and it is mainly funerary poetry.

According to Lassere.J.M (LASSERE, 2007: 247); the presence of poetic writings may indicate the existence of the profession of the poet, or poetry was a financial resource for teachers who used to write for some clients for money. The fact that the same phrases were sometimes found on the same site, suggests that there were poetic phrases ready for use and it was enough to add the name

of the dead. For example, the writing in Annaba (*Hippo. Regius*) (A.E, 1931:00112) confirmed by the following phrase:

Hic corpus iacet pueri nominandi = Here lies the child's body which will be called.

One of the most important rules for writing a poetic text is what is known as *Praescriptum*. It begins with the dedication to the gods *Manas*, then the name of the dead, his age, the owners of the dedication, then the poetic text. As for *Subscriptum*, it is when the consecration comes after the poetic text or the dedication comes between two parts of prose (LASSERE, 2007: 248).

The acrostic, which was used to refer to the name of the deceased, as the selection of the initials of poetry, so that when reading it from top to bottom, it forms his name as indicated by an inscription in M'Daourouch (*Madauros*) (LASSERE, 2007: 248).

The poetic text was also specialized in expressions urging passers-by to the grave, to respect its owner or ask to present him with flowers, lamps and perfumes and to hold banquets on the anniversary of his death (CUMONT, 1949: 47). Here we refer to the existence of funeral associations allocating their revenues to funeral rites, including the holding of funerary banquets on the anniversary of the person's death.

The poetic writing represented a kind of dialogue between the dead and the living (ROBERT, 1961, 453-497), and it expresses the culture that derives from the Greek culture (CHEVALIER, 1972: 40.49).

From a beautiful example of a poetic text, here is a selected one belonging to a girl in the spring of her life whose gravestone was found in Constantine (IL.Alg II: 809).

Constantine (*Cirta*):

D (is) M (anibus) / memoriae / Iulia Sidonia Felix / de nomine tantum / cui nefas ante diem / ruperunt <a = E> mina Par / caequamprocusheu / nuptiis Hymenaeos con / tigit ignes in gemuere / omnes Dryades doluere puellae / et Lucina facis demersolumi / ne flevit virgo quod et so / lum pignus fuerat que paren / tum memphidoshaec fu / erat diva eistrata {e} sacer / dos hic tumulatasilet / aeternomuneresomni / v (ixit) a (nnos) XVIII m (enses) IIII d (ies) XIII / h (ic) s (ita) e (st)

Meaning: to the gods *Manas*, and to the memory of *Julia Sedonia Felix* happy in name only, who cut the thread of her life when she was about to marry, who is the torch of the marriage gods, all the forest nymphs moan, all girls regret her death, and (*Lukina*) herself cried the light of her extinguished torch. She was the Virgin who was the only token of love for her parents; she was the priestess of the goddess of *Memphis* (*Isis*, where the writing refers to a “*sistrum*”, which is a

musical instrument-representing one of the symbols of *Isis*). Under this tomb, she is silent and burdened with eternal sleep. She lived 19 years, 4 months and 14 days, here she is present.

The writing indicates the great sadness of her parents, who expressed their suffering in carefully selected and very beautiful terms and the inscription indicates the oriental origins of the girl. Her name is *Sidonia*, referring to the city of *Sidon* in *Phenicia*, and she was also a priestess, of an oriental goddess, which is *Isis*.

2.Christian era:

If we look at the oldest Christian funerary writings, we notice that they do not contain any specificity or symbolism indicating Christianity. After converting, the Christians did not immediately feel the need to renew the vocabulary usually used in pagan funerary inscriptions. They continued using the pagan expression (*DMS*) for the deity *Manas* until a very late period, especially in the province of *Caesarean Mauritania*(CARLETLI, 1988: 115-135).

Most of the texts were carved on funerary tables next to the *Cupula* (box-like) tombs and in the fourth century AD, the system of graves began to be used on the tiles bearing a cover of books with the text on it. The mosaic was also used as a field for writing the funerary text(.2012, حمزة). Also inside the hypogea and engraved or painted on.

2.1.Formula:

First, the writings began with the dedication to the gods *Manas* (MARCILLET, 1969: 217;FEVRIER,1964: 163)or ended with it.Sometimes the name was written only surrounded by decoration such as the anchor, the pigeon, and phrases found in the pagan inscriptions were also used, and the name of the dedicator and his kinship position were mentioned as mother or son and others (PIETRI, 1997: 1439).

The word “*pax*”, meaning peace, is clearly considered the beginning of the Christian form, and it is a word derived from the Bible and the Torah (PIETRI, 1997: 1441).

Africa was distinguished by the use of the name of the deceased in the case of the **nominative**, followed by the word in *pace* (ENNABLI, 1975: 60-69) and sometimes the name may be in the case of the **genitive** or the **accusative**, often in the case of the **dative**. The form “*in deo pacem*” also appeared to denote the safety of Christ. The phrases *in pace vixitorvixitinpace* related to a person's life before death were also used a lot. This formula had great success in Africa, especially in light of the tensions that the Church knew due to the donatism, the same with the formula “*fidelis in pace*” that accompanies the verb “*vixit*”, which is a special African characteristic starting in the year 360 AD (DUVAL, 1975: 459).

Other phrases such as “*in deo meo et christo*” and sometimes only the symbol with the meaning “*in*” such as in “*In deo vivas*” famous in Africa or “*Vive in deo*”, or “*Vive in deo*”, meaning: May God live or God live.

2.2. Evolution of the Formula:

At the beginning, inscriptions did not differ much from the pagan texts then they developed in the form that was more evident in the fourth century AD, when the text became contained three verbs, including verbs that have the meaning of residing in the grave. Such as the compound verb – “*positum esse*”- (to be placed) Or the verb – “*iacere*”- (to lie down) or with – “*quiescere*” - and – “*requiescere*” - mentioned before. Also the meaning of the period of life that the deceased spent, using the verb – “*vivere*”- (to live) and finally the sense of burial with the name of the meaning – “*depositus*”- (deposited in the soil); especially with the verb-“*obire*”- (die) and the verb- “*transire*”- (go to the other side), and – “*spiritumreddere*” -. These verbs were generally followed by the date of the death day in particular and sometimes the year was mentioned in various forms (calendar year, judgment, etc (LASSERE, 2005: 275)). In addition to some verbs referring to the rest of the dead “*dormivit*” that appeared in the middle of the third century AD also “*hic quiescit*” and “*Requiescit*” that spread widely in Caesarian Mauretania (FEVRIER, 1964: 122).

The Christian formula began to be clearer as terms such as “*Hic*”, “*locus*”, “*memoriadeposite*” “and the phrase “*BM (bonaemoriae)*” were in the beginning of the text. Others derived from the Bible such as “*in nomine domini*” meaning in the name of the Lord (God), and words praising the dead and focusing on the links between him and the Church. Like the good man “*bonus vir*”, the blessed “*benedictus*” The date of a person’s death is placed at the beginning or at the end and the place of burial is referred to as in paganism, and the word “*memoria*” also expresses the grave (FEVRIER, 1964: 125).

2.3 .Symbols and expressions that indicate faith:

The fish symbol is among the oldest symbols of belief in the Christian religion. Some inscriptions have been attributed to Christianity through only this symbol, which was so widespread that it is difficult to understand its first meaning. Does it have a meaning related to the afterlife (eschatological), or is it like the main food in the Christian banquet (VOGEL, 1970 : 83-116). This symbol is often attached to a drawing of an anchor to denote hope in eternal life. And after the reign of Emperor *Constantinus* (307-337 AD), the symbol of the cross appeared, which was incorporated into a sentence and expresses the word Christ, which is often written in the case of the Genitive - *Christi* - or in the case of the Dative - *Christo* - or without any grammatical suffix.

As for expressions indicating faith, the first inscriptions consisted only of the name of the deceased followed by the phrase –“in *pace*”- (in peace.). The meanings of this phrase varied later, so it was used with the name of the dead or with one of his qualities, especially – “*fidelis*”- (loyal), to fulfill the meaning of the grace that a person was in upon his death. With the verb - *vixit*- (to live), it meant that the deceased had been blessed in his life. Moreover with other verbs that express death, such as the verb – “*recedere*”- (move away or withdraw), the verb – “*quiescere*”- (stop) or the verb –“*requiescere*- (relax.) It meant peace in the afterlife (BEN ABED- BEN KHADER et DUVAL, 1997: 188).

Christians also introduced expressions denoting the love and affection of the living for the dead, such as the phrase – “*dignissimus*”- (very majestic) and – “*sanctissimus*”- (very holy), in addition to the word – “*dulcissimus*”- (very meek) and – “*carissimus*”- (very dear). The latter two are also abundant in pagan funerary inscriptions.

What can be said about the formula used in Christian writings is that it witnessed a gradual development that was not subject to clear rules, and it varied and distinguished according to regions and people. These are examples of some Christian funerary writings:

Guelma (Calama):(CIL, VIII, 05488)

[In hoc] tumulo / [3] adeodatus / miserabiliscorpu (s) / et in Chr (ist) o fidelis / vixit in pace an (nos) XVII / m (enses) III d (e) p (ositus) sub d (ie) Id (uum) Iul (iarum) ind (ictione) I

Meaning: In this tomb, there is the body of the unfortunate, *Adiodatus* loyal to Christ; he lived in peace for 17 years and 3 months, placed on the day of Ides in the month of July.

The writing refers directly to the grave at the beginning of the text and it is a characteristic of Christian writings.

Sétif (Sitifis):(FEVRIER, 1964: 163)

Memoria Mariae / Equitiolaequae et Sili / qua [e] vixitannis XX / VIII praecessit in pace / die pridie Idus Ma / rtias an (no) p (rovinciae) CCCLIII

The grave of *MariaEquitola*, who is called *Silica*, lived 29 years, died peacefully on the eve of Ides in the month of March, the year of the province 353, 392 AD.

The reference at the beginning of the text to the tomb of the deceased, as indicated by the word “*memoria*”, which did not take here the meaning of the usual remembrance. Its name came here in the case of the **Genitive**, as it was referred to the use of an *agnomen*, which spread widely in Africa, especially in the later period.

The following example gives us an idea about the diversity in the formula used, because it has a great connotation for Christianity, as it concerns the ritual of the Christian martyrs, which we have previously touched upon (17-09:2017, مهنتل).

Constantine(Cirta) (DUVAL, 1982: 186):

The inscription is carved on a white limestone slab (now in the garden of National Museum of Cirta). It dates back to a late period, as indicated by the shape of the letters, especially the writing of the letter –“z” - to denote – “di”, as is evident in the fourth and fifth lines. The text of the inscription contains two important expressions, namely – “*memoria*”- (remembrance) and – “*redditio*” - taken from the verb –“*reddere*”- (return), a funerary form that widely spread in the later period. What draws attention in this inscription is the presence of the term – “*memoria*” - at the end of the writing and not at the beginning of it, as the usual, and without a formula indicating the dedication.

This is a collective tombstone belonging to four people, namely, a monk named *Januarius* and two deacons *Januarius* and *Siddin* (a local name) and the fourth one named *Gaius*; who might also be a monk. The three first died the same day on 14th September; but the fourth who joined them died a few months before on February 18th. The fact that they died the same day may lead to the conclusion that they are martyrs, but they may be victims of an epidemic or something else, because the gravestones of martyrs often carry more details about the circumstances of their death. On the other hand, the phrase – “*memoria*” - here means – “*mensa*” - meaning the table of the Saints. This interpretation seems acceptable, especially since the pillar on which the inscription is carved is a slab suitable for being a funeral table.

Conclusion:

The examples that have been taken are limited and do not enable us to develop a comparative study (that requires the review of a very large number of inscriptions, which is impossible to deal with within one paper) and among the most important observations:

- The society of African Roman cities followed the trend of romanization, with various formulae and expressions that we find in different regions of the Roman Empire, but there are some peculiarities, including:
- The status of the deceased person, which generally comes in the nominative case, so that a discontinuity occurs in the sentence and it seemed to us that the use of the first phrase *D.MS* became so automatic that the funerary text actually begins with the name of the deceased, which is in the case of the subject. Of course, this presumption remains personal, because it is difficult to

understand the way of thinking of the ancient period society, and we may get into philosophical debates.

- The extensive use of some expressions such as the word “*pius_pia*” in pagan funerary inscriptions with the verb “*vixit*”, which may not fulfill the meaning of pious in its narrow sense. However, more widely indicates that the person performed his duty towards his family and why not his city or village, and did not leave anything bad that he may be blamed for after his death.

-A significant use of the phrase “*fidelis in pace vixit*” in the Christian funerary writings, which convey the meaning that the person died while he was loyal to the Church and fulfilled his religious duty.

We note that the two expressions may have the same meaning but, in the first, duty is towards the family, thus the reward is in this world .Whereas in the second, the duty is towards the Church and Christ, as the reward in the hereafter.

- An extensive use of the phrase”*plus minus*”, especially in the later period, whose placement in the text became automatic and its meaning was no longer an evaluative sense.

- The formula “*bonaemoriae*” that we find in Christianity may have replaced “*bene meritus*” that we find in pagan writings.

- The presence of the demonstrative name *hic* at the end of the pagan funerary text, while we find it at the beginning of the Christian funerary text.

- The double meaning of the word *memoria* as a grave or remembrance in pagan and Christian funerary inscriptions.

- The prominent difference remains between Christian inscriptions and pagan ones, is that the latter refers to the age of the dead, while Christian ones refer to the date of the death of a person, which is considered as the day of his birth, and links him to Jesus, peace be upon him, especially among the Christian martyrs.

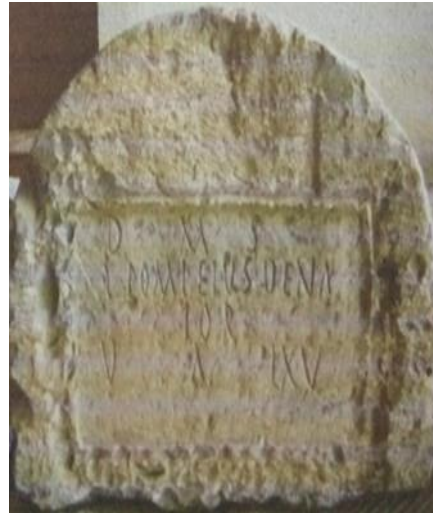
Some differences frequently used in a particular area and not in others gives some regional peculiarities that require to carry out individual studies of the regions, such as the work done by Mustafa Khenoussi (KHANOUSI.MAURIN, 2002)in *Dougga*. These studies will certainly give us a comprehensive view and enable us to conduct a comparative study.

We cannot conclude in an intervention due to the huge amount of writings that require a long time to study and a special attempt to understand the deep meaning of some words whose signification

may change for people. An attempt to understand and to study the mentality of the members of the Roman period society is necessary, but could be very difficult, and may get us into mazes.

Annexes:

Pic 1. Example of simple formula
(National Museum of Sétif)



Pic: 2. Epitaph of *Margaris*(Constantine)
Source: DjahidaMehentel.Dj et M.
Filah,2020 :504



Pic3. Epitaph of members of the same family
(Epigraphic garden of Djemila)
Source: AzzouniKhellil



Pic 4. The four faces of the funeral *cippus*
Source: Said khacha



Pic:5. The epitaph of *Sidonia*- (National Museum of Cirta)
Source: Djahida Mehentel



Abbreviations :

Ant.Afr : Antiquités Africaines

ANRW : Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt

B.A.A : Bulletin d'Archéologie Algérienne

C.I.L : Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum

Coll.Ec.Fr : Collection de l'Ecole Française de Rome

EDCS : EpigraphikDatenbank Clauss-Slaby([WWW.MANFREDCLAUSS](http://www.mnfi.uni-wuerzburg.de/edcs/))

I.L.Alg : Inscriptions Latines de L'Algérie

Mel.d'Arc.His : Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'histoire.

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