

Notes on the *elogium* of a benefactor at Pompeii

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The rediscovery in the summer of 2017 of a large monumental tomb of unusual form outside the Stabian Gate at Pompeii caused an immediate sensation, and the swift initial publication by M. Osanna in *JRA* 31 (2018) of the long funerary inscription fronting the W side of the base, facing the road, has been welcomed gratefully by the scholarly community. The text — at 183 words, by far the longest funerary inscription yet found at Pompeii — records a series of extraordinary benefactions by an unnamed local worthy, beginning with a banquet held on the occasion of his coming-of-age ceremony and continuing, it seems, well into his adult life, up to the final years of the town when the monument was built. As Osanna and others have recognized, the inscription, which seems to allude to an historical event (*Tac., Ann.* 14.17), the riot between Nuceriaans and Pompeians around Pompeii's amphitheater in A.D. 59, provides valuable if ambivalent new information relevant to the demographic, economic and social history of Pompeii that will require full discussion in a variety of contexts over time. The present collection of remarks, a collaborative effort, is offered in the spirit of debate and is intended as an interim contribution toward a more complete understanding of the text.¹

[J.B.] Since our comments focus mainly on interpretation of the benefactions recorded and their implications, it may be useful to set the inscription briefly into context, both physically, on the monument, and conceptually, as a document. Carved across two contiguous marble slabs extending over 4 m in length along the W side of a rectangular chamber tomb resting on a grey tuff base, the inscription (itself crowned by a moulded cornice) sits at about eye-level on a square-shaped platform with concave sides formed into a curvilinear seat and shelf, but it occupies a width too broad to be read by a viewer standing close to the monument. According to the plan of the area drawn by R. Martinelli (Osanna's fig. 1), the tomb stood back from the road to Stabiae, from where a viewer could take in the entire text at a legible scale and could appreciate the interplay of the curvilinear seat and shelf with the flat, rectilinear slabs stretched horizontally above them across the width of the platform. This curious bi-form monument thus evokes and unites the shapes of the semi-circular *schola* tombs positioned on the same side of the street just outside the Porta Stabia (1 and 2 in Osanna's plan) and the more recently discovered cube-shaped tombs (3 and 4) located directly opposite the new monument across the road.² At the same time, the disposition of the inscribed text reflects, on the one hand, the horizontal orientation of the *schola*

1 In what follows, sections of text written principally by one or two authors are marked at the beginning and end with the authors' initials. The text, translation, summary table and unmarked lemmata introductions are collaborative efforts and reflect our majority opinion. Other early comments on the inscription include those of Flohr and Hunink 2019, Maiuro 2019, and Wallace-Hadrill 2019.

2 The *schola* tombs — of M. Tullius (no. 1, identified by a pair of lava *cippi*, one on either side, as having been given by decree of the decurions: *Epigraphic Database Roma* [henceforth *EDR*] 143593 and 143594) and M. Alleius Minius (no. 2, identified by his name carved in large letters around the back of the bench as the recipient of a place of burial donated by decree of the decurions: *AE* 1891. 166 = *EDR* 071603) — belonged to leading figures of the Augustan town and date from the first two decades of the 1st c. (Emmerson 2010). See Flohr and Hunink 2019, 30, on the prominence of the tomb's location; also Emmerson 2010, 83.