

Elizabeth Forbis
Municipal Virtues in the Roman Empire

Beiträge zur Altertumskunde

Herausgegeben von
Ernst Heitsch, Ludwig Koenen,
Reinhold Merkelbach, Clemens Zintzen

Band 79



B. G. Teubner Stuttgart und Leipzig

Municipal Virtues in the Roman Empire

The Evidence of Italian Honorary Inscriptions

Elizabeth Forbis



B. G. Teubner Stuttgart und Leipzig 1996

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Forbis, Elizabeth:

Municipal virtues in the Roman Empire:
the evidence of Italian honorary inscriptions /
von Elizabeth Forbis. – Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996
(Beiträge zur Altertumskunde; Bd. 79)
Zugl.: Chapel Hill (NC), Univ., Diss., 1988

ISBN 3-519-07628-4

NE: GT

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.

Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechts-
gesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar.

Das gilt besonders für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen,
Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung
in elektronischen Systemen.

© B. G. Teubner Stuttgart 1996

Printed in Germany

Druck und Bindung: Röck, Weinsberg

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	vii
Preface	viii
Introduction	1
 I. Generic Vocabulary of Praise: Fostering Patronage	
through <i>Exempla</i>	9
<i>Honor</i>	10
<i>Merita</i> and <i>Beneficia</i>	12
Honorary Epithets: <i>Optimus</i> , <i>Dignissimus</i> , <i>Praestantissimus</i> ..	21
 II. Financial Generosity	29
Descriptions of Private Munificence	31
<i>Munificentia</i> , <i>Liberalitas</i> and <i>Largitio</i>	34
<i>Benignitas</i> and <i>Bontias</i>	42
 III. Personal Motivations for Patronage	45
<i>Amor</i> and <i>Adfectio</i>	46
<i>Benevolentia</i> and <i>Spes</i>	50
<i>Voluntas</i> and <i>Studium</i>	52
<i>Obsequium</i> and <i>Reverentia</i>	53
<i>Honorificentia</i>	55
<i>Pietas</i>	56
 IV. Administrative Virtues	61
Administrative Integrity	
<i>Fides</i>	62
<i>Innocentia</i> , <i>Abstinencia</i> and <i>Integritas</i>	64
<i>Iustitia</i> and <i>Moderatio</i>	68
<i>Honestissimus</i> , <i>Honeste</i> and <i>Honestas</i>	69
<i>Sanctissimus</i> , <i>Excellentissimus</i> and <i>Clementissimus</i>	71
Civic Service	
<i>Industria</i>	72
<i>Sollicitudo</i> , <i>Diligentia</i> , <i>Cura</i> and <i>Labor</i>	74
Political Influence	
<i>Virtus</i>	77
<i>Dignitas</i> and <i>Dignatio</i>	79
<i>Gratia</i> and <i>Consilium</i>	81

V. Virtues and Epithets of Personal Character	83
<i>Modestia</i> and <i>Verecundia</i>	83
<i>Pudicitia</i> , <i>Castitas</i> and <i>Probitas</i>	85
<i>Singularis</i> , <i>Incomparabilis</i> , <i>Rarissimus</i>	88
Conclusion	
Virtues in Action	91
Choice of Vocabulary	92
Virtues and Social Context.....	96
Regional and Chronological Observations.....	99
Appendices	
1. <i>Corpus</i> of Inscriptions	105
2. Regional Distribution of Inscriptions.....	233
3. Chronological Distribution of Inscriptions.....	235
4. Social Make-up and Distribution of Honorands.....	239
5. Social Make-up and Distribution of Dedicators	245
6. Attribution of Terms of Praise by Type of Dedicator.....	251
7. Chronological Distribution of Key Terms of Praise	255
8. Comparative Virtues from the Literary <i>Exempla</i> and the Coins of Antoninus Pius and Septimius Severus	257
Bibliography	261
Indices	273

Abbreviations

References to ancient authors and their works are abbreviated according to the conventions of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Secondary literature is cited by the author's last name and the date of publication if necessary for clarity. Full references appear in the Bibliography. Other abbreviations are as follows:

AE=*L'Année Épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité Romaine*

BMC=H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (London 1923-)

CIL=*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1863-)

Eph. Epig.=*Ephemeris Epigraphica, Corporis Inscriptionum Latinarum Supplementum* (Berlin 1872-)

FOS=M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre senatorial (I^{er}-II^e siècles)* (Louvain 1987)

ILS=H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. in 5 (Berlin 1954-55)

Not. Sc.=*Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*

OLD=*Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1968-82)

Pflaum, Carrières=H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire*, 4 vols., (Paris, 1960-61)

*PIR*¹=*Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. I, II, III*, 1st ed. (Berlin 1897-98)

*PIR*²=*Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. I, II, III*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1933-)

RE=*Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung*, ed. by G. Wissowa et al. (Stuttgart 1893-)

TLL=*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig 1900-)

Preface

This work is an expanded and revised version of my doctoral dissertation which I completed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1988. Many thanks go to my dissertation director, George Houston, and to Jerzy Linderski for their guidance and encouragement throughout the various stages of this project. I also acknowledge Dennis Kehoe for his helpful comments on several parts of the manuscript. With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities I was able to travel to the University of Helsinki in summer of 1992 to consult with Heikki Solin on his additions to the tenth volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. I thank Professor Solin and his assistant Mika Kajava for their willingness to share their work in progress with me. A semester research leave awarded by the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame and a summer research grant from the College's Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts provided me valuable uninterrupted time to devote to writing the manuscript. A generous grant from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts has also made possible the publication of this work. For their technical expertise in helping me to prepare the final version of the manuscript, I wish to thank Cheryl Reed, Sherry Reichold and David Klawiter of the University of Notre Dame. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my husband, Tadeusz, who read tirelessly through many drafts of the manuscript and whose virtues of patience and equanimity greatly supported me throughout the entire project.

South Bend, Indiana

January 1996

Introduction

Virtue and the ancient Roman ethos--the two concepts were practically synonymous to the Roman way of thinking. As Cicero expressed it, "non est querendum in hac civitate, quae propter virtutem omnibus nationibus imperat, virtutem plurimum posse" (*Verr.* 2.4.81), a sentiment echoed later by Pliny the Elder, "Gentium in toto orbe praestantissima una omnium virtute haud dubie Romana extitit" (*HN* 7.40.130). The Romans' fascination with and reverence for virtue appears in all aspects of their culture from elaborate cult worship of personified Virtues, to literary *exempla virtutis*, to virtues on coins and inscriptions. All Romans and non-Romans living within the Empire's borders, therefore, were eventually exposed to the dissemination of the *virtutes Romanae*, even if only through the odd coin or family epitaph.

The present study of virtues and terms of praise in Italian honorary inscriptions and *tabulae patronatus* of the early Empire offers a unique and valuable body of evidence for the understanding of Roman virtues. By analyzing the Roman vocabulary for virtue outside the more traditional contexts of literature¹, imperial propaganda², and funerary epitaphs³, this study serves to increase our comprehension of everyday Roman values and Latin idiom, while expanding our knowledge of municipal life in Italy during the first three centuries A.D. It also provides for the field of Roman epigraphy the most comprehensive collection of a coherent group of Latin honorary inscriptions and the first systematic analysis of the praise language and rhetorical purpose of such inscriptions.⁴

Roman honorary inscriptions and *tabulae patronatus* have indeed received some scholarly attention commensurate with their importance for the study of Roman society. Prosopographers, social historians, and historians

¹The scholarship on virtues in Roman literature falls into three broad categories:

1) comprehensive treatments of Roman virtues in several different authors and genres, e.g. Fuchs, Hellegouarc'h, Meister, Earl (1967), Lind, Pöschl (1980); 2) studies limited to one or only a few virtues in several authors and genres, e.g. Fraenkel, Burck, Eisenhut, Wagenvoort, Manning; 3) studies focusing on virtues in the work of a single author, e.g. Pöschl (1940), Vielberg, Moore.

²The best introduction to the imperial virtues and their political and religious influence is Wickert. See also Charlesworth (1937), Béranger, Fears, whose bibliography is invaluable, and Wallace-Hadrill. Other works focusing on specific imperial virtues include Liegle, Charlesworth (1936), and Kloft.

³See, for example, Lattimore 285-300, Curchin (1982), and Curchin (1983).

⁴Useful introductions to and discussions of the form and language of Latin honorary inscriptions are provided by Kajanto and Cagnat 257-63. Neither of these studies, however, aims to assemble or analyze a clearly defined group of honorary texts, nor do they give much consideration to the inscriptions' praise vocabulary beyond mentioning its appearance within the larger context of the honorand's family name and public offices.

of the Roman economy rely especially on the biographical and quantitative data recorded so routinely by these documents.⁵ Other scholars focus on the important information provided by certain inscriptions about the custom of erecting honorary statues and monuments to which these texts were often attached.⁶ It is only the recent work of Werner Eck that begins to address the representational importance of the language itself in honorary texts. His analysis, which draws primarily on the evidence for honors given to members of the senatorial order, stresses the necessary contribution of the text to the rhetorical power of the monument, especially its ability to persuade the public of the honorand's social and political preeminence.⁷

What remains to be examined, however, is one of the most important features of honorary texts as concerns their function in society, namely their recognition and memorialization of worthy character. In many examples it was not enough merely to publicize the name and family of the honorand and to enumerate his or her benefactions; the virtues prompting such commendable behavior were equally deserving of mention. This kind of recognition, however, was neither automatic nor entirely generic. Looking at the evidence from Ostia, for example, we discover that of the roughly sixty honorary inscriptions found there only twenty-three, that is, much less than half, record any language of praise.⁸ But in these twenty-three texts, the variety of gestures, virtues, and qualities memorialized is considerable: e.g., *merita*, *munificentia*, *amor*, *fides*, *industria*, *optimus*, *dignissimus*, to name just a few. To underscore the multitude and diversity of the Romans' praise vocabulary in honorary inscriptions, one can compare the words discussed in this study, which number almost fifty, with the

⁵Honorary inscriptions and *tabulae patronatus* comprise a significant portion of the primary material in the following studies of the Roman economy and municipal patronage: Andreau, Nicols (1980b), Duncan-Jones, Jouffroy, Mrozek, Wesch-Klein.

⁶See especially Alföldy (1979) and Alföldy (1984). Note that Alföldy's evidence includes funerary epitaphs as well as honorary examples. See also Lahusen.

⁷Eck's first article on this topic (1984a) argued expressly for further investigation into this area, 211: "Eine systematische Bearbeitung von Ehreninschriften entweder bestimmter Regionen oder auch einzelner sozialer Gruppen...ware jedenfalls eine wünschenswerte und wohl auch ergebnisreiche Arbeit." Two fuller discussions of the topic by Eck (1984b, 1991) have thus far followed.

⁸Texts of these inscriptions are provided in Appendix 1, ns. 59-81. Examples of those inscriptions without any such language include: *CIL* 14.153, 14.155, 14.160, 14.161, 14.163, 14.168, 14.172, 14.296, 14.298, 14.303, 14.325, 14.350, 14.363, 14.400, 14.431, 14.4447, 14.4620, 14.4622, 14.4656, 14.5347, 14.5351, 14.5352; *AE* 1955.168, 1955.179, 1969-70.87, 1988.207, 1988.214. Using Alföldy's collection of statue-base inscriptions from Venetia and Histria (1984) 77-146 as a comparative sample (excluding funerary epitaphs and inscriptions dedicated to divinities and emperors), we find that out of the approximately sixty-six texts concerning municipal dignitaries in that area only thirty contain any language of praise.

rather limited selection of virtues cited in Greek honorary decrees.⁹ Praise of virtue in Roman honorary inscriptions was, therefore, the result of careful consideration, not habit, and thus deserves our close attention as well.

Who exactly was honored with such praise, and under what circumstances? These two questions are central to our discussion and concern important issues of municipal patronage, economics, politics, and social structures.¹⁰ Indeed, the honorands in this study represent all social classes from senators to freedmen, both men and women. Many of these were formal patrons, many more were not. The majority have been honored for their financial contributions to municipal life, such as the funding of public building projects or public entertainment, but several have gained recognition for other types of civic involvement, such as administrative integrity in public office. Even the groups granting these honors--*ordines, populi, collegia, Augustales*, private individuals, or some combination of these--depict a cross-section of municipal interests. So many social, economic and political factors contribute, in fact, to the formulation of any given honorary text that its language becomes a metaphor for their interaction in municipal life; and in the process, it even comes to define them. Wallace-Hadrill's observations about the role of language in the related context of imperial propaganda can be applied here:

...the role suggested here for language is not merely subordinate. Power does not exist without the language in which it is conceived and presented and argued over. Language defines power as well as reflecting it.¹¹

The power defined and reflected in the praise language of our inscriptions, while not of the same magnitude as that of the emperors, was every bit as crucial to the inhabitants of Roman municipalities; it involved the ongoing exchange between the benefactor class and their beneficiaries as both parties attempted to assert their expectations and aspirations in relation to the other. To be sure, any honorary inscription, even one without praise language, ensured the gratitude of the honored benefactor who then might

⁹See especially Henry 42-44, who outlines a rather small group of core virtues--*arete, dikaiosune, philotimia, eunoia*--to which only a few variants are occasionally added such as *andragathia, eusebeia, epimeleia* and *philotechnia*. See also Payne 34-36, whose list of virtues is nearly identical to Henry's.

¹⁰These issues have become the focus of several studies of municipal Italy in the last decade: e.g., Nicols (1980a), Duthoy (1984-1986), Dyson, especially 147-179. See also the essays by Wallace-Hadrill, Garnsey and Woolf, and Johnson and Dandeker in Wallace-Hadrill, ed., *Patronage in Ancient Society* (1989), in which the Italian evidence is prominent. Aside from a brief comment by Nichols 369, none of these studies takes into account the role of client-communities' honorific vocabulary.

¹¹Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 147.

be moved to make further benefactions in the community.¹² Those texts with praise language, however, went one step further by illustrating exactly which virtues, achievements, and gracious acts would earn others similar recognition and prominence. Justification of public honors through citation of virtues, therefore, became a very important tool by which honorands could claim authority for their privileged status and dedicators could encourage and even influence specific, desired types of behavior in other potential honorands.¹³

The descriptive nature of honorary inscriptions, which were not legally binding documents, permitted rhetorical influence and, perhaps in more than a few cases, some embellishment of the facts. At times, honorands themselves had input into the wording of their honorary texts, particularly concerning their official careers.¹⁴ Indeed, one example in our study states explicitly that the honorand was to dictate what type of inscription he thought fitting for his honorary statue.¹⁵ The text does not specify, however, that this honorand actually chose the virtues appearing in his inscription, nor does it indicate that others regularly had control over the form or content of their honorary texts.¹⁶ It does suggest, however, that dedicators were at least sensitive to the preferences of benefactors and tried

¹²See also Nicols (1979) 243: "Die Gemeinden verewigten individuelle und killektive Leistungen, belohnten oder ermutigten ihre Wohltäter und versicherten sich des guten Willens der Mächtigen."

¹³For other discussions of honorary inscriptions and statues being used to influence behavior see Alföldy (1984) 59 and Kajanto 5-6. Compare the *lex collegi* from Lanuvium dating to A.D. 136 (*ILS* 7212), lines 21 and 22 of which state that all magistrates of the *collegium* who have fulfilled their administrative duties faithfully will receive one and a half times the normal amount of food and wine at banquets, "ut et reliqui recte faciendo idem sperent."

¹⁴Eck (1991) argues that high-ranking equestrians and senators with atypical careers would most likely have been consulted as to the proper wording and ordering of their offices, a practice which allowed these men to develop their own individual *curricula vitae* distinct from the formulaic *cursus honorum*. Occasionally honorands might also be consulted about the location of their honorary monument. Flory 288 discusses Pliny's account (*HN* 34.11.25) of the semi-mythical Vestal Virgin Taracia Gaia who was granted the privilege of choosing the spot for her public statue, the first known example to have been dedicated to a Roman woman.

¹⁵See example n. 296 in Appendix One, dedicated to a municipal magistrate and town patron by decree of the *decuriones* of Forum Sempronii who state: "Quod superest, voluntati nostrae consule et, qualem inscriptionem dandam putas, petentibus facito notum."

¹⁶Eck (1991) suggests that honorands would not have chosen the praise in their inscriptions. In his discussion of *CIL* 8.24094, an inscription in honor of the equestrian procurator Salvius Iulianus whose quaestor salary Hadrian had doubled *propter insignem doctrinam*, Eck thinks this phrase would have been too presumptuous for Iulianus to state publicly about himself and, therefore, must have been copied by the dedicators from imperial documents.

to honor them with appropriate praise. This sensitivity would certainly be true of municipal *decuriones* whose wealth and power put them in a position both to receive and decree public honors.

The ability of Roman honorary inscriptions and *tabulae patronatus* to encourage virtuous behavior with the promise of public recognition flourished in a society whose privileged members were raised and educated on moral *exempla* and very much preoccupied with *gloria*. *Gloria*, as defined by Cicero (*Phil.* 1.29), was the renown that resulted from public praise of one's deeds and achievements;¹⁷ it could even bring one immortality in the conversations and memories of future generations. As Pliny observed (*Ep.* 3.21.6), "Tametsi quid homini potest dari maius, quam gloria et laus et aeternitas?" In educated Romans the desire for *gloria* was instilled early, largely through the literary tradition of moral *exempla* which occupied an especially important place in the Roman school *curriculum*.¹⁸ The influence of this *exempla* tradition should not be underestimated. Livy, for example, himself a popular author in the rhetorical schools, stated clearly in the preface to his history (*praef.* 10) that his purpose in writing was to provide examples for others to observe and imitate. Pliny similarly claimed that his Panegyric to Trajan was partly intended to instruct future *principes* by providing an excellent example (*Ep.* 3.18.2-3).¹⁹ Even beyond literature and the classroom, the *exempla* tradition was reinforced by the many public buildings, monuments and, of course, inscriptions which effectively perpetuated Roman standards of public achievement and *gloria*.²⁰ Illustrating an awareness of such purpose, certain inscriptions in our own

¹⁷Note that in *De Inventione* (2.178) when outlining a method for epideictic oratory, Cicero indicates a man's virtuous character, more than his background, physical characteristics or social status, to be the most effective vehicle for praising one's subject.

¹⁸Quintilian (*Inst.* 12.4), for example, stresses the importance of teaching both historical and mythical *exempla* to the young orator in order to enrich his rhetorical repertoire. Bonner 261-62 and 283-84 argues that Valerius Maximus' *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilia* was composed primarily as a source-book for use in the rhetorical schools. On the numerous works of moral *exempla* and their importance generally to the moral climate in Rome see Litchfield.

¹⁹In another letter addressed to Trajan, Pliny again employed the rhetorical device of citing an emperor's virtue, in this case Nerva's generosity, in order to incite others to the same behavior (*Tra.* 10.8.1): "Cum divus pater tuus, domine, et oratione pulcherrima et honestissimo exemplo omnes cives ad munificentiam esset cohortatus..." See also Burgess 137-38 and Born 35, who terms Pliny's and the later panegyrist's objective as "correction through flattery."

²⁰Both Maslakov 441 and Mayer 147 observe that the Romans' fascination with *exempla* was not just a product of their literary education, but also a result of their moral upbringing to which public monuments and inscriptions greatly contributed. On the significance of imperial monuments as moralizing *exempla* see especially Zanker and D'Ambra.

study proclaim the honorand to be an individual of *maximi*, even *eminentissimi et singularis exempli*.²¹

Some scholars would argue that within this environment of *exempla* and emulation inscriptions played the most important role. According to Susini, "...it was through inscriptions more than through any other medium that political concepts were propagated and the historical memories of country and family perpetuated."²² We must, therefore, remove the epigraphical evidence from the metaphorical shadows of literary monuments and place it in the forefront. From this perspective, we can examine more productively how aristocratic competition for *gloria* cooperated with public expectations for free municipal amenities and fair government, and how both of these concerns interacted with the larger vision of empire as expressed by the imperial power base in Rome.²³

This study is based upon a *corpus* of 482 honorary texts commemorating men and women of all classes in Italy, excluding Rome, and dating from the last years of the Republic to the late third century; they represent only those examples which contain language explicitly praising the honorands for their virtues or benefactions.²⁴ This epigraphical *corpus* is the first collection of its kind. The Italian evidence is worthy of individual study for several reasons. First, it can best demonstrate what influence, if any, the literature and imperial propaganda coming out of Rome had on its closest neighbors. It also provides a necessary foundation for enquiry into the form and language of honorary inscriptions from other parts of the empire; examination of the degree to which honorific language in the provinces resembles that in Italy would tell us much about provincial levels of Romanization. And finally, this study contributes an original perspective to ongoing discussions of Italian municipal society specifically.

The chronological parameters for this study are practically defined by the inscriptions themselves; that is, the honorary inscription did not become a regular feature of municipal life in Italy until the mid-first century, achieving its peak in the late second and third centuries.²⁵ Another impor-

²¹See inscriptions ns. 101 and 441 in Appendix One.

²²Susini 52-53.

²³On the issue of aristocratic *gloria* under the emperors, Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 152-169 points out that Republican honorific traditions, which were essentially unregulated, needed to be modified with the advent of an imperial power structure. The Romans thus adapted aspects of the Greek honorific tradition since its bureaucratic and hierarchical nature was capable of reinforcing the emperor's preeminence while still recognizing the official status of those bodies granting honors.

²⁴These inscriptions, the full texts of which are provided in Appendix One, have been gathered from the following epigraphical collections: *CIL* vols. 5, 9-11, 14; *AE* 1888-1990; *Not. Scav.* 1884-1983, *Eph. Epigr.* vol. 8.

²⁵For the chronological distribution of inscriptions in the *corpus* see Appendix Three. The earliest dateable examples (ns. 134, 193) belong approximately to the late

tant factor recommending this time period is the high level of uniformity and stability in municipal government in the West, especially between the *lex Iulia municipalis* of 45 B.C. and the accession of Diocletian in A.D. 284, at which point extreme military and economic conditions undermined municipal autonomy in favor of central imperial control.²⁶ As a result, the environment for the granting of public honors to municipal dignitaries quickly evaporated as representatives of the emperor usurped the public spotlight.

Approaching the language of praise in these inscriptions through a series of word studies, I begin in Chapter One with an examination of those terms that are generic to Italian honorary texts; these occur regularly in inscriptions from all parts of Italy in all time periods to describe diverse types of benefaction and honorands of various social position. By far, the most universal of these generic terms is the noun *merita*, a word denoting favors exchanged between patrons and clients which indicates the widespread perception of honorary inscriptions as a functional part of a system of public patronage. The other virtues and epithets I have divided into four groups which constitute the remaining four chapters of the book. These divisions, although made artificially for the purpose of discussion, do correspond to distinct fields of activity with which certain virtues were associated and represent groups of words of relatively similar meaning. Chapter Two discusses virtues pertaining to financial generosity (e.g. *munificentia*), Chapter Three virtues describing the motivation for patronage (e.g. *amor*), Chapter Four administrative and political virtues (e.g. *fides*, *industria*), and Chapter Five virtues describing personal and moral character (e.g. *modestia*). The large amount of evidence for Chapters Two and Three, when compared to that for Four and Five, demonstrates that honorific language in Italy was aimed primarily at the wealthy who might be prompted to make more and similar benefactions in their respective communities, particularly in the late second and third centuries when affluent decurial families were dwindling in number.

In each individual word study I apply the following method of analysis. I first define the virtue or term of praise by considering its meaning in literary sources and in the inscriptions. In the latter case, I cite other virtues that regularly accompany the word in question and the benefactions or activities with which it is most often associated. I also outline a social context for the word by examining the different classes of honorands to which it was attributed, pointing out any affinities it may have had with particular social groups. For the sake of clarity, I distinguish here between two basic social classes represented in the inscriptions: 1) the imperial aristocracy, including senators and equestrians whose careers in the imperial administration surpassed municipal confines; 2) the municipal elite, including honorary equestrians, local magistrates and dignitaries, women

Republican period, and the latest examples (ns. 259, 344) to the years 270-275. All dates are A.D. unless otherwise indicated.

²⁶On the development and decline of municipal government in the western Empire see Abbott and Johnson 56-68 and 197-231.

benefactors and freedmen.²⁷ Finally, I document the word's regional and chronological distribution, noting any specific areas or time periods in which it was particularly popular.

The conclusion compiles the findings from these individual word studies and addresses them in the broader context of Italian municipal society in the early Empire.²⁸ The major issues considered here include the multiplicity of virtues and their applicability within different spheres of municipal life, the relationship of the inscriptions' vocabulary to that found in analogous literary works and imperial propaganda, and the ways in which this vocabulary united diverse parts of municipal society in the common cause of municipal affluence and stability. Regional and chronological analyses of the inscriptions also reveal their role in consolidating Italy around this municipal ideology. Having thus gained a clearer picture of the Italians' perception and articulation of their own place--the place of their specific social, economic and political concerns--within the larger empire, we can better appreciate the importance of honorific language to ordinary Romans. Perhaps more than any other phenomenon of municipal life, it gave voice to their collective, yet distinctive identity.

²⁷I have adopted this useful distinction from the method of Alföldy (1984) 62-63. For the social make-up and distribution of honorands in the *corpus* see Appendix Four. For the social make-up and distribution of dedicators see Appendix Five.

²⁸Further Appendices highlight the data discussed in the conclusion: Appendix Six shows the distribution of virtues and terms attributed by various dedicating groups, Appendix Seven compares the chronological distribution of certain key terms, and Appendix Eight provides comparative data of the virtues appearing in the literary moral *exempla* and on imperial coins.

I. Generic Vocabulary of Praise: Fostering Patronage through *Exempla*

To provide a framework for understanding the language of praise in Italian honorary texts, this chapter focuses on those terms that were intrinsic to the inscriptions' concept of honor. As such, it begins with an examination of the word *honor* itself, examples of which in the *corpus*¹ are relatively rare given its basic meaning of gratitude and respect. The rarity of *honor* demonstrates that the primary function of the inscriptions' honorary language was to present the honorand as an *exemplum* of virtue, rather than to express appreciation for his or her achievements. Next, we will consider *merita* and *beneficia*, two terms commonly employed in honorary inscriptions to denote various benefactions from honorands. In the Romans' literary vocabulary of patronage these words specifically describe favors exchanged between formal patrons and their clients. In honorary inscriptions, however, they refer to benefactions from patrons² and non-patrons alike and thereby indicate a prevailing perception of the honorary monument as a reciprocal token of thanks which implied an ongoing patron-client relationship, whether formal or informal, with the honorand. Moreover, the term *merita*, which highlights the honorand's worthiness, was far more prevalent than *beneficia*, thus illustrating the inscriptions' concern to motivate others to earn similar recognition. Finally, we will discuss three epithets typical of honorary texts, *optimus*, *dignissimus* and *praestantissimus*, which together compliment honorands of all ranks for a variety of benefactions and virtues. *Dignissimus* and *praestantissimus* appear in somewhat more limited contexts, referring primarily to financially generous patrons and more often in the third century. The more popular *optimus* is applied both to the financially generous and the morally virtuous, both patrons and non-patrons, from the early empire through the late third century. It is also the only epithet of the three to appear in imperial titulature, a fact which may have contributed to its popularity in municipal inscriptions. Overall, the evidence for these generic terms of praise reveals that the main rhetorical objective of honorary texts was to flatter honorands to be even more generous while enticing other potential benefactors seeking recognition.

¹ I will refer to all examples from the *corpus* by citing the numbers I have assigned them in Appendix One.

² Unless otherwise specified, the term *patron* throughout our discussion embraces all types of formally recognized benefactors such as *patroni municipi*, *patroni collegi*, and private *patroni*. For a breakdown of all the different classes of formal *patroni* in the *corpus* see Appendix Four below.

Honor

In essence, each inscription in the *corpus* along with its monument represents the great respect felt by its dedicator(s) toward the honorand. Each epigraphical text, in other words, is in itself an expression of *honor*, a term implying virtue in the dedicators as much as in the honorand.³ For this reason, one might expect to find such phrases as *honoris causa* and *in honorem* all throughout the *corpus*. A dedicator's expression of *honor*, however, was seldom explicitly stated in Italian honorary inscriptions. *Honoris causa* type phrases occur in only twenty-seven examples, or about 5% of the *corpus*.⁴

These examples illustrate a broad range of settings within which the articulation of *honor* was deemed appropriate. Those receiving tribute *honoris causa* (or *in honorem*) represent a true cross-section of the wealthier Roman municipal population, from town patrons of the imperial aristocracy to non-patron freedmen.⁵ Those explicitly articulating *honor* in their dedications comprise official bodies, such as *ordines*, *collegia*, and *Augustales*, and the public at large, as well as a few private individuals.⁶ These examples come from several regions throughout Italy and range in

³OLD, s.v., definition 1, "High esteem or respect accorded to superior worth or rank, honour;" s.v. definition 6, *honor* in certain contexts can refer to a quality within a person by reason of which he or she deserves homage. For examples of the latter definition see ns. 326 and 425 in Appendix One. See also Drexler 135-57, and Hellegouarc'h 386, particularly note 2, who interpret *honor* as a word denoting both the objective recognition of a worthy person and the moral worth of a person who receives such recognition. The epigraphical evidence under consideration, however, corresponds more to Klose's definition of *honor*, 96, as an expression of appreciation which concerns honorands only in so far as they try to gain such appreciation through their achievements.

⁴See note 7 below. Those texts in which *honor* functions as a purely objective term to denote political office (e.g. n. 309) or the honorand's acceptance of the honorary gesture (e.g. *honore contentus*, n. 96) are excluded from the present discussion.

⁵Senators and high-ranking equestrians: patrons--ns. 135, 402, 476; non-patron--ns. 99, 430, 472.

Equestrian municipals, municipal magistrates and dignitaries: patrons--ns. 18, 237, 277, 308, 328, 400 (woman coopted *patrona collegi* in recognition of her patron-husband), 425, 481; non-patrons--ns. 9 (an inscription dedicated to a woman in honor of her father), 48, 212, 227, 229, 361, 389, 427.

Women: non-patrons--ns. 105, 326 (a decree to coopt her son as patron of the *collegium* in recognition of her).

Freedmen: non-patrons--ns. 23, 260, 330.

⁶*Ordines*: e.g. ns. 23, 330, 481. *Collegia* and other civic organizations: e.g. ns. 277, 425. *Augustales*: e.g. ns. 229, 389. Public at large: e.g. ns. 18, 260. *Senatus populusque*: e.g. ns. 9, 227. Private individuals: e.g. ns. 99, 105, 427. See also Appendix Six.

date from the early first to the late third century.⁷ The evidence suggests that formulas such as *honoris causa* or *in honorem* bestowed no special prestige upon the honorand, but rather demonstrated the dedicators' conformity to a longstanding tradition of honorary rhetoric.

Often these inscriptions give no further explanation for the tribute, stating simply that it was enacted *honoris causa* and even abbreviating this modest phrase to *h. c.* (e.g. ns. 18, 229). One has to deduce from the honorand's career and his or her connection to the dedicators what experience or personal quality has produced the *honor*. In the case of the *primipilus* and municipal magistrate Gaius Valerius Clemens (n. 481), honored at Taurini by his fellow *decuriones* who served with him in the Jewish war under Vespasian, one might reasonably associate the phrase *honoris causa* with Clemens' past military valor.⁸ In a few instances, a more detailed description of the honorand's activities and virtues is given, an examination of which reveals that the honorand typically aided his or her dedicators financially. Marcus Iulius Ulpus Cleopatrus (n. 308), a *patronus civitatis et collegi* at Oriculum during the mid-third century, gave 10,000 sesterces to the *amatores Romulorum* as their patron and also distributed money amongst them at the dedication ceremony, for which generosity they commemorated him *honoris gratia*. The *decuriones* of Interamna Lirenas (n. 48) granted a public funeral to a young woman in honor (*in honorem*) of her two brothers and especially her father, Marcus Fadius Crispus, who earned this privilege for his family by his ample and zealous support of the community: "plenissime quicquid re[i pu]blica opus fuisset ultro semper e[t po]llicitus sit et praestiterit cupidiss[i]me neque cessaverit unquam." These and other examples⁹ support the notion that *honor* often represents the public's settling of accounts after receiving a *beneficium*.¹⁰

⁷Region 1: ns. 9, 18, 23, 48, 99, 105, 135. Region 3: ns. 212, 227. Region 4: ns. 229, 237, 260. Region 5: n. 277. Region 6: ns. 308, 326, 328, 330, 361. Region 7: ns. 389, 400. Region 8: n. 402. Region 9: n. 425. Region 10: ns. 427, 430, 472, 476. Region 11: n. 481.

The earliest dated example is n. 23 from the year 31, and the latest n. 328 from 261.

Other first century examples: ns. 99, 135, 402, 472, 481. Second century examples: ns. 18, 105, 430. Third century examples: 277, 308, 326, 361, 389, 400. Second or third century examples: ns. 9, 48, 237, 425. See also Appendix Seven.

⁸For the function of *honos* in military contexts, particularly with *virtus*, see Bieber. See also the discussion of *virtus* in Chapter Four.

⁹See also ns. 23, 260, 361. Examples 135, 326, 328, 400, and 430 all note the honorands' devotion and hard work on behalf of their beneficiaries, but do not mention any specific projects or exact sums of money donated. Example 476, although fragmentary, makes reference to a *theatrum* which the honorand in this case may have helped to build with his own money.

¹⁰See Hellegouarc'h 384, particularly note 4; Klose 87, "Die öffentliche Anerkennung ist an gewisse Voraussetzungen geknüpft, an die *virtus* und die *merita*."

As already noted, however, the settling of such accounts was most often inferred from the honorary monument itself, whether it was a statue, shield, or plaque, for the accompanying text seldom focused attention on the dedicators. Even in the case of Cleopatrus above (n. 308), the description of his benefactions greatly overshadows mention of the dedicators' *honor*. The opportunity afforded by praise language in honorary inscriptions was not used to embellish the beneficiaries' grateful posture, but rather to highlight the benefactor's services and virtues. Gratitude was expressed in unadorned and often abbreviated *honoris causa* formulas so as not to detract from praise of the honorand's virtues and achievements. As integral parts of public monuments experienced by many passersby, honorary texts capitalized on circumstance by focusing attention on the honorand as an *exemplum* of virtue to be admired and, more importantly, to be emulated.

Merita* and *Beneficia

Many honorary texts not only present the honorand as an *exemplum* of virtue, but also depict him or her as a patron, even if no formal patron-client relationship between honorand and dedicator apparently exists. This facet of Roman honorary language is best illustrated by the term *merita*, a standard word for favors exchanged between patrons and clients¹¹ and the most frequently used term of praise in honorary inscriptions. The formulaic *ob merita* phrase and its various grammatical variations occur in 173 of our examples, or about 36% of the entire *corpus*. The customary use of this word to explain and justify gestures of public honor suggests that dedicators often wished to clarify succinctly what was implied by the monument itself, namely that they perceived of themselves as good *clientes* who were faithfully reciprocating the good deeds of their "patrons." Such a perception in many cases presumably fostered expectations of more patronly *merita* from the honorand in the future. Since patronage itself was a social institution, not a legal one, there were no laws regulating who could become a *patronus* or what exactly were the responsibilities of a *patronus* or *clientes*.¹² Within this deregulated environment, there was certainly room for honorary inscriptions to act as items of exchange in order to establish informal patron-client relations. It should be noted that this tendency in honorary rhetoric contradicts Paul Veyne's view of public benefactions as a civic duty of the wealthy elite, that is, acts not automatically deserving

For example, Cicero, *Phil.*, 5.38: "Atque etiam M. Lepido pro eius egregiis in rem publicam meritis decernendos honores quam amplissimos censeo."

¹¹For discussion of *meritum* within patron-client relations as described by Latin authors, see Saller. Hellegouarc'h 169-70, also discusses *meritum* within the social context of *amicitia* as a kindness or favor that requires a response in kind from the recipient.

¹²See, especially, Nicols (1980a) 366-67, who argues for a moral sense of *pietas*, *fides* and the fear of losing public prestige as the major motivation for patrons and clients to uphold their respective side of the relationship.

recognition.¹³ The prevalence of the *ob merita* phrase in inscriptions, not to mention the pervasive phenomenon of the honorary monument itself in Roman society, indicates that more often than not beneficiaries at least felt compelled to articulate their part in a reciprocal relationship, regardless of benefactors' expectations.¹⁴

Use of the term *merita* to emphasize or suggest patron-client relations can be seen in inscriptions honoring all classes of people. The following table of such inscriptions illustrates, however, that *merita* appears less often in texts honoring senators and high-ranking equestrians; it also shows that the term more often describes the benefactions of imperial aristocrats if they are, in fact, formal patrons of the group conferring the honor.

People Honored for *Merita* by Rank¹⁵

	Patrons	Non-Patrons
Senators & High-ranking Equestrians	10, 25, 102, 110, 120, 135, 163, 175, 221, 222, 279, 286, 357, 397, 438	295, 303, 433, 442, 477, 471, 482
22 Total	15 Patrons	7 non-Patrons
Equestrian Municipals, Municipal	7, 15, 18, 28, 29, 30, 31, 47, 60, 72, 75, 94, 96, 103, 116	11, 26, 48, 52, 71, 77, 107, 119, 166, 167, 201, 204, 246,

¹³Veyne (1976) 310.

¹⁴For further discussion of public benefactions, or *euergetism*, as one side of a reciprocal relationship between the wealthy and their client communities, see Schmitt-Pantel, especially 184. See also Duthoy (1984) 151, who illustrates the difference between Veyne's definition of *euergetism* and municipal patronage in which patrons and their client-communities exchanged very real favors, including honorary inscriptions.

¹⁵Only those inscriptions are included in which the individual's rank, his or her status as patron, and the word *merita* or some grammatical variation are clearly indicated. Additional examples not considered here due to their fragmentary state are: 56, 207, 334, 430, 474. Further examples of *merita* too fragmentary to be included in the *corpus* are: *CIL* 5.7040, 9.216, 9.1178, 10.683, 10.4593, 11.4404, 11.5678a, 11.5679, 11.5721, 14.4178b.

Magistrates, Dignitaries	121, 155, 178, 196, 197, 203, 215=216=217, 225, 236, 237, 238, 240, 242, 247, 262, 270, 275, 296, 305, 308, 322, 323, 324, 328, 331, 335, 336, 339, 340, 344, 356, 359, 365, 375, 381, 416, 417 420, 424, 425, 429, 465, 467, 478	267, 268, 276, 283, 299, 313, 314, 319, 321, 341, 343, 347=348, 355, 361, 363, 369, 376, 382, 384, 396, 403=404, 451, 466, 478 ¹⁶
97 Total	59 Patrons	38 non-Patrons
Women	243, 265, 266, 311, 449	13, 17, 32, 43, 93, 167, 184, 189, 190, 199, 218, 223, 224, 257, 281, 284, 287, 294, 329, 333, 342, 346, 351, 368, 426, 439, 440, 445 ¹⁷
33 Total	5 Patrons	28 non-Patrons

¹⁶Although the honorands in ns. 276, 319, 396, and 478 are patrons, they are not formal patrons specifically of the group granting the honor.

¹⁷Inscriptions 13 and 93 commemorate non-patron women whose husbands happen to be patrons. Inscriptions 43, 199, 218, 224, 287, 342, and 346 were dedicated to women for the *merita* of their male relatives.

Freedman	20, 38, 45, 254	3, 92, 160, 248,
260,		325, 349 ¹⁸ , 364

12 Total

4 Patrons

8 non-Patrons

The evidence clearly indicates that Italians were more inclined to emphasize the benefactions of their local patrons than those of senators and high-ranking equestrians with the term *merita*.¹⁹ Was this because there were simply more patrons from the municipal elite than the imperial aristocracy? As far as municipal patrons are concerned, there were nearly as many from the aristocracy as there were from the municipal elite,²⁰ which leaves us with the question of why the Italians more often acknowledged the *merita* of the latter group. Quite likely the social and political preeminence of aristocratic patrons was sufficient reason for their receiving public honor; the mere fact that they were illustrious *patroni* proved that they deserved such recognition. Public honors for patrons from the local elite, on the other hand, appear to have required more explanation, which would indicate that local patrons frequently had to compensate for any deficiency in their prestige with tangible *merita*.

Looking at non-patrons honored for their *merita*, we see that the Italians felt quite comfortable in representing their municipal peers as informal patrons. This descriptive technique was especially useful in the case of wealthy women and freedmen who by reason of their marginal social status were seldom coopted formally as patrons. The inscriptions conversely indicate a greater reluctance to presume patron-client relations with the imperial elite. In fact, several of the examples concerning non-patrons from the imperial aristocracy give a limited context for these aristocrats' *merita* which precludes any suggestion of ongoing reciprocity: two were dedicated by single individuals who clearly had a special relationship with the honorand (ns. 433, 471); one appears to honor the person posthumously since it mentions a *locus sepulturae* (n. 303); one gives specific

¹⁸A patron, but not specifically of the group dedicating the inscription.

¹⁹Dedicators who regularly used the term *merita* to honor their patrons and benefactors include *ordines* (n. 335), *populi* (ns. 197, 313), *collegia* and other civic organizations (ns. 72, 449), and private individuals (ns. 333, 471). See also Appendix Six.

²⁰See the data gathered by Duthoy (1984-1986), especially 127-29. Duthoy's data can be divided into two main groups: municipal patrons from the imperial aristocracy (Duthoy's groups 1-2.3) = 47.8%; municipal patrons from the local elite including freedmen (Duthoy's groups 3.1-5) = 51.6%. The evidence in Appendix Four, however, suggests that more often patrons of *collegia* came from the local elite.

details about the honorand's contribution to the town grain supply (n. 295). In contrast, inscriptions to non-patrons from the local elite often cite their *merita* without further explanation²¹; the unlimited definition of such favors suggests that more and different ones could be forthcoming.²² Moreover, several of these texts even record the honorand's additional generosity on the occasion of the dedication of the honor, thereby confirming his or her capacity for future *merita*. A good example of this practice is provided by the statue-base inscription to Marcus Gellius Servandus Senior, a *sevir Augustalis* from Capena, who was honored *ob merita* by several organizations in the town, including the *decuriones* (n. 364). Responding to their acknowledgment of his *merita*, Servandus Senior established an ample fund in the community from which his birthday could be celebrated in future years with cash distributions and decoration of his statue.²³

Those inscriptions that do contextualize the honorand's *merita* illustrate the word's basic definition as those things, be they innate virtues, noteworthy actions, or both, by reason of which a person deserves recognition. We have examples of honorands who have financed public works projects, produced public entertainment at their own expense, contributed to a town's grain supply or made other financial donations, established private foundations for annual celebrations in the community, and administered their political power responsibly, all of whom are honored for *merita*.²⁴ Note, however, that despite the energy and organizational skills required for many of these undertakings, the basic

²¹See, for example, ns. 3, 32, 71, 77, 93, 119, 204, 257, 325, 351, 363, 440, 445, 448.

²²Nicols (1980a) 369 states it even more frankly: "Inscriptions protest (perhaps too much) that the honor had been won by merit, but it was probably an all too frequent occurrence that communities bestowed the honor as an incentive in the hope that it would eventually be deserved."

²³For further examples of non-patrons honored *ob merita* who respond with *sportulae* or other generous gestures see ns. 284, 325, and 448. For examples of local patrons praised for unspecified *merita* who respond generously see ns. 28, 31, 236, 323, 324, 331.

²⁴Public works projects: ns. 7, 120, 222, 348, 365, 375, 384, 439. The woman honored *ob merita* in n. 265 seems also to have financed public works since we have evidence of her name on lead *fistulae*. See Torelli 55-57.

Public entertainment, *sportulae* and feasts: ns. 92, 94, 157, 166, 240, 246, 260, 262, 308, 313, 349, 357, 376, 429.

Aid to *annona* or other financial contributions, including the financing of the honorary monument itself: ns. 107, 295, 296, 355, 405 (donation of land), 478 (financing of public funeral tax).

Private foundations: ns. 30, 215, 216, 240, 254, 281, 308, 335.

Responsible administration of public office or imperial connections used advantageously: ns. 43, 60, 102, 163, 246, 348, 359, 384.

prerequisite was wealth.²⁵ Even the abstract virtues associated with *merita*, although they include qualities of discipline and integrity,²⁶ most often denote generosity.²⁷ Thus, contextualized examples of *merita* indicate that whenever the term lacked a clear framework in an inscription, it had primarily financial connotations for its Roman audience.

As a comprehensive term for patronly favors, *merita* understandably appears in inscriptions from all parts of Italy, although with slightly greater representation in the north; regions 4 through 11 account for nearly 60% of the 173 total inscriptions, and regions 1, 2 and 3 for the remaining 40%.²⁸ The earliest dateable example belongs to the early first century (n. 429) and the latest to the years 270-275 (n. 344), thus showing the popularity of the term from the first through the late third centuries.²⁹

²⁵ See also Bossu, who discusses the several inscriptions concerning Megonius (= ns. 215-218 in the *corpus*) in an attempt to "get a better idea of the reality that is hidden behind a general and stereotyped formula like 'ob merita eius,'" 161. As Bossu demonstrates, Megonius' many *merita* all comprise substantial financial benefactions.

²⁶ For example, *merita* cited with: *industria* (n. 359), *diligentia* (n. 60), *constantia* and *provisio* (n. 163), *fides* (ns. 43, 384), *fides* and *innocentia* (ns. 416, 424).

²⁷ The virtues *munificentia*, *liberalitas*, and *amor*, all of which signify financial generosity in the *corpus*, appear frequently in association with *merita*. See, for example, ns. 11, 72, 92, 135, 225, 247, 328, 478, 482.

²⁸ Region 1: ns. 3, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 38, 43, 45, 47, 48, 52, 56, 60, 71, 72, 75, 77, 92, 93, 94, 96, 102, 103, 107, 110, 116, 119, 120, 121, 135, 155, 157, 160, 163.

Region 2: ns. 166, 167, 175, 178, 184, 189, 190, 196, 197, 199.

Region 3: ns. 201, 203, 204, 207, 215, 216, 217, 218, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225.

Region 4: ns. 236, 237, 238, 240, 242, 243, 246, 247, 248, 254, 257, 260, 262, 265, 266, 267, 268, 275.

Region 5: ns. 270, 275, 276, 279, 281.

Region 6: ns. 283, 284, 286, 287, 294, 295, 296, 299, 303, 305, 308, 311, 313, 314, 319, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 328, 329, 331, 333, 334, 335, 336, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351, 355, 356, 357, 359, 361.

Region 7: ns. 363, 364, 365, 368, 369, 375, 376, 381, 382, 384, 396, 397.

Region 8: ns. 403, 404, 405, 416, 417, 420.

Region 9: ns. 424, 425, 426.

Region 10: ns. 429, 430, 433, 438, 439, 440, 442, 445, 448, 449, 451, 465, 466, 467, 471, 474.

Region 11: ns. 477, 478, 482.

²⁹ Other first century examples: ns. 3, 11, 43, 135, 243, 299, 303, 334, 403, 404, 405.

Second century examples: ns. 18, 56, 60, 93, 94, 96, 102, 103, 110, 116, 155, 157, 160, 184, 196, 207, 215, 216, 217, 218, 221, 225, 246, 265, 270, 275, 276, 279, 281, 286, 294, 295, 296, 305, 311, 313, 314, 339, 347, 348, 349, 351, 357, 363, 364, 365, 375, 376, 420, 426, 430, 433, 439, 467, 477.

Third century examples: ns. 10, 13, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 45, 71, 75, 77, 163, 175, 178, 197, 201, 222, 223, 240, 247, 262, 266, 308, 328, 331, 341, 342, 343, 344, 355, 359, 361, 368, 381, 382, 440, 438, 442, 465.

Beneficia, another general term denoting favors exchanged between patrons and clients, appears in Italian honorary texts as well, although remarkably less often than *merita*; whereas the latter occurs in 173 examples, *beneficia* occurs in only twenty-seven. This clear preference for *merita* in inscriptions contrasts significantly with the literary language of patronage in which *beneficia* is the term more commonly employed to describe a patron's gifts.³⁰ In his analysis of the literary evidence, however, Saller concedes that he can see no distinction in the way the two words are used.³¹ A comparison of the application of *merita* and *beneficia* in honorary inscriptions reveals that here, too, they describe essentially the same types of favours bestowed by the same types of benefactors.

First of all, *beneficia*, like *merita*, appears in texts honoring all classes of benefactors, both patrons and non-patrons, as the following table of inscriptions illustrates.

People Honored for *Beneficia* by Rank³²

	Patrons	Non-Patrons
Senators & High-Ranking Equestrians	175, 288	66, 278, 380, 463, 468
7 Total	2 Patrons	5 non-Patrons

First or second century examples: ns. 260, 324, 474.

Second or third century examples: ns. 7, 15, 38, 48, 72, 119, 120, 166, 189, 190, 203, 236, 237, 242, 254, 267, 268, 319, 329, 335, 340, 356, 369, 416, 417, 424, 425, 471, 478. See also Appendix Seven below.

³⁰See Saller 17-22; Hellegouarc'h 163-69. Pöschl (1980) 12-13 also mentions the important role of *beneficium* in Roman foreign policy, particularly in Rome's treatment of her allies.

³¹Saller 20-21. As an example of the interchangeability between *meritum* and *beneficium* he quotes Seneca, *Ben.* 1.1.8.

³²Only those inscriptions are included in which the status of the honorand and the term *beneficia* are clearly indicated. Other fragmentary examples not considered here are ns. 164 and 430.

All these examples were dedicated by a variety of municipal groups and individuals: e.g. *decuriones* (ns. 96, 468), *municipes* (ns. 33, 289), *collegia* (ns. 66, 97), private individuals (n. 463). See also Appendix Six below.

Further examples of *beneficia* too fragmentary to be included in the *corpus* are CIL9.2462 and 10.1820 (*insignia continua beneficia*).

Honorary	33, 61, 96, 97, 197,	292 ³³ , 348, 383
Equestrians &	289, 302, 328, 344,	
Municipal	415	
Magistrates, Dignitaries		
<hr/>		
13 Total	10 Patrons	3 non-Patrons
Women & Freedmen	266, 400 ³⁴	27, 209 (freedman), 346
<hr/>		
5 Total	2 Patrons (both women)	3 non-Patrons

As for the types of benefactions termed *beneficia*, a few concern the honorand's imperial connections or responsible fulfillment of public duties (ns. 288, 468), while others consist of generous acts such as public works projects or private foundations.³⁵ In several examples a financial framework for the honorand's *beneficia* can be construed from the citation of other virtues such as *munificentia* or *liberalitas*.³⁶ By itself, however, *beneficia* could signify either political or financial achievement.³⁷

As does *merita*, *beneficia* appears in inscriptions throughout Italy, with greatest representation in regions 1 and 6.³⁸ Although we have one

³³Not a formal patron of the group dedicating the inscription.

³⁴Coopted patroness in recognition of her husband's *beneficia*.

³⁵See ns. 164, 289, 415. Inscription n. 380 praises the honorand simply for his *beneficia*, but we know from other texts (*CIL* 11.1433, 11.1433a--a lead pipe) that he provided a water supply for the public baths. Inscription n. 348 details the *beneficia* of an honorand who both undertook a public works project and used his imperial connections to relieve the community from heavy taxes.

³⁶See ns. 27, 97, 197, 292, 328, 415. Looking to the literature for comparison, we find that *beneficium* often served as a synonym for *liberalitas*, even in a pejorative sense (e.g. Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.94, *Sest.* 24.54).

³⁷Hellegouarc'h 163-69 sees similar versatility in the use of *beneficia* by late Republican authors, particularly Cicero for whom the word could mean legal protection of one's clients (e.g. *Ver.* 2.4.37, *Fam.* 7.30.3) or financial bribery (e.g. *Ver.* 2.3.94).

³⁸Region 1: ns. 27, 33, 61, 66, 96, 97, 197.

Region 2: ns. 164, 175.

Region 3: n. 209.

Region 4: ns. 266.

example of *beneficium* dated to the years 41-43 (n. 463), the remaining inscriptions belong to the second and third centuries.³⁹ Despite the increased number of occurrences of *beneficium* in second and third century inscriptions, it still remained a much less popular term than *merita* during this period.

In order to understand the overwhelming preference for *merita* over *beneficia* in honorary inscriptions, we need to return to their basic definitions. In *De Beneficiis*, Seneca defines *beneficium* as purely an act: "(Beneficium) non enim res est, sed actio" (6.2.1); "Non est beneficium id quod sub oculis venit, sed beneficii vestigium et nota" (1.5.6). Following Seneca, Hellegouarc'h remarks:

Mais il (*meritum*) se distingue nettement d'eux en ce qu'*officium* et *beneficium* expriment une action, conformément à leur étymologie; *meritum* marque le résultat de cette action et la situation que en résulte pour son auteur.⁴⁰

This literary distinction between *beneficia* and *merita* is, in fact, corroborated by the epigraphical evidence, particularly in the following example. Aetius Ferox, an ex-legionary from Tuficum (n. 348), was honored by the local *ordo* for helping to establish a much needed road tax in the community, and his effort is described with the singular *beneficium*. When the *ordo* decrees its statue for Ferox, however, they do so *secus merita eius*. In other words, the recognition and honor accorded Ferox, the *résultat* of which Hellegouarc'h speaks, come under the heading of *merita*, while his praiseworthy deed amounts to a *beneficium*.⁴¹

Also noteworthy is the recurrent phrase *ob beneficia conlata* which clarifies that the *beneficia* in question were specific acts that have already been accomplished;⁴² such a phrase differs significantly from the open-ended *ob merita* formula in that the former makes no suggestion about future *beneficia*. A noteworthy variation on *beneficia conlata* appears in in-

Region 5: ns. 278.

Region 6: ns. 288, 289, 292, 302, 328, 344, 346, 348.

Region 7: ns. 380, 383, 400.

Region 8: n. 415.

Region 10: ns. 430, 463, 468.

³⁹Second century examples: ns. 61, 66, 96, 164, 278, 288, 289, 292, 348, 380, 430, 468.

Third century examples: ns. 97, 175, 197, 209, 266, 302, 328, 344, 400, 415. Inscription n. 383 is either second or third century. See also Appendix Seven.

⁴⁰Hellegouarc'h 170.

⁴¹See also n. 328, in honor of Corelius Fuscus and his family who receive a bronze plaque in recognition of their patronage (*pro meritis*) of the *collegium centonarium* of Sentinum which cites their actual gestures of generosity under the heading of *crebra beneficia*.

⁴²See ns. 61, 209, 266, 289, 292, 383. *Beneficia* also appears with the verb *conferro* in n. 468.

scription n. 302 dedicated to a local patron and magistrate of Interamna: "v(iro) b(ono) et quidquid in egregium hominem laudis dici potest in hoc sit beneficio naturae conlatum." This use of *beneficium* with *natura* to describe the honorand's generous nature rather than a specific gift is unique among occurrences of *beneficium* in the *corpus*. Also unique is the dedicators' assertion that by their gesture of an honorary monument (*in hoc*) they have compensated the honorand for anything praiseworthy that can be said of him. The force of *conlatum* in particular suggests that these clients view their obligation to their patron as duly fulfilled.

Overall, the remarkable frequency of *merita* in the *corpus* is best understood in terms of the inscriptions' rhetorical purpose, namely, to translate the commemoration of actual virtues and achievements into public models of inspiration. The prevalence of *merita* over *beneficia* reinforces this purpose by focusing attention on the concept of *earning* recognition rather than on the benefactions themselves.

Honorary Epithets: *Optimus*, *Dignissimus*, *Praeantissimus*

A customary feature of all Roman honorary texts is the use of superlative adjectives as complimentary epithets for honorands. Here we will discuss the three most common and widely applicable of these epithets in Italian inscriptions: *optimus*, *dignissimus*, *praestantissimus*.⁴³ Taken together, all three epithets described patrons and non-patrons of various rank who benefitted their respective communities in assorted ways. *Optimus*, however, was by far the most prevalent of the three, occurring more than twice as often as *dignissimus* and three times as often as *praestantissimus*.⁴⁴ The emergence of *optimus* as an imperial epithet in the late first and second centuries may have contributed to its popularity in a variety of municipal inscriptions. *Dignissimus* and *praestantissimus*, on the other hand, never became part of imperial titulature and adorned almost exclusively the honorary monuments of wealthy and influential local patrons. Perhaps it was precisely the absence of these epithets from imperial rhetoric that encouraged the municipal aristocracy to adopt them for their own public image.

Optimus essentially refers to those who possess and manage considerable wealth (*opes*), and who, therefore, usually assume the role of

⁴³Other superlative adjectives, such as *liberalissimus*, *fidelissimus* and *innocentissimus*, whose noun forms predominate and whose application is more specific according to their definition, will be discussed under the rubric of their noun forms in the following chapters. For a list of some of the epithets commonly associated with Italian patrons specifically see Soffredi 158-59.

⁴⁴*Optimus* appears in sixty-one examples, whereas *dignissimus* and *praestantissimus* appear in only twenty-five and fourteen examples respectively.

benefactor. It can also describe individuals of high moral quality.⁴⁵ These two aspects of *optimus* are often combined in honorary inscriptions where the epithet is frequently applied to honorands whose generosity is framed within their moral virtue. For example, the *ordo* of Abellinum characterized the senator Marcus Antonius Rufinus as a *patronus optimus* (n. 120) not only because he built the town a *basilica* with his own money, but also because his *labores* and *studia*, his virtuous character, that is, prompted him to do so.⁴⁶ Another indication of the moral dimension of *optimus* is its use with several nouns other than *patronus*, particularly *civis* and *vir*. Gaius Faesellius Rufio, a patron of Ariminum (n. 415), was honored by the *vicani vici Dianensis* for several financial benefactions, particularly his donations to their grain supply and a foundation for annual distribution of *sportulae* on his birthday; he is praised, however, as an *optimus et rarissimus civis*. Rufio's generosity, in other words, is to be understood as just one manifestation of his unique civic virtue.⁴⁷ *Optimus* also commonly modifies the noun *amicus* in honorary texts dedicated by private individuals.⁴⁸ The frequent use of *optimus* within the more intimate context of *amicitia* particularly underscores this epithet's moral connotations.

Praised as *optimi* are patrons and non-patrons of all ranks;⁴⁹ thus, this epithet is not an exclusive term designating social status, such as *claris-*

⁴⁵For discussion of these meanings of *optimus* in the literature see Hellegouarc'h 495-500. Although Hellegouarc'h distinguishes between *optimus* and the related *bonus*, claiming that the latter more often identifies political groups, he concedes that *optimus* in its moral and social sense is often a synonym for *bonus*. Compare Taylor 11-12.

⁴⁶Other examples of *optimi* who receive praise for benefactions made within the framework of moral virtue are: n. 148 (finances public building project--*probissimus, pietas*), n. 206 (finances public entertainments--*innocenter*), n. 263 (finances public works--*obsequentissimus, cura, sollicitudo*), n. 308 (donation to *amatores Romuli--innocentia*), n. 359 (*statum reipublicae auxerit--industria*), n. 455 (provides for *annona--innocentia, labor*). The honorand in n. 359 is termed *optimus iustissimus*, reminiscent of the unofficial imperial title *optimus ac iustissimus princeps* appearing in inscriptions to Tiberius following the Sejanus conspiracy (*CIL* 6.93, *CIL* 11.3872=ILS 159).

Compare ns. 7, 107, 130, 254, 385, 423, where *optimus/optime* is applied to honorands who are cited solely for their generosity, and ns. 58, 301, 372, 422, 424, 454, where *optimus* characterizes honorands who are recognized primarily for their civic devotion or personal virtue.

⁴⁷Further examples of *optimus* modifying nouns other than *patronus*: *civis*--ns. 77, 148, 263, 406, 422, 428; *dominus*--n. 461; *femina*--n. 245; *filius*--ns. 130, 198; *homo*--n. 424; *iuvenis*--n. 383; *maritus*--ns. 353, 473; *praeses*--ns. 301, 454; *praefectus*--n. 413; *socer*--ns. 24, 470; *vir*--ns. 58, 219, 308; *uxor*--n. 280.

Examples of *optimus* modifying the noun *patronus* or *patrona*: ns. 69, 112, 120, 206, 274, 297, 298, 324, 345, 350, 352, 362, 372, 373, 374, 385, 391, 392, 398, 409, 455.

⁴⁸See ns. 83, 100, 106, 250, 431, 456, 457, 462. Other fragmentary examples of *amici optimi* include *CIL* 11.971 and *CIL* 14.2768.

⁴⁹Examples of *optimus* including the adverb *optime* (e.g. *optime merito*):

simus or *perfectissimus*. Its universal application is further evident in its wide geographical distribution; with the exception of regions 2 and 11, the northernmost and southeasternmost parts of Italy, it appears in inscriptions all throughout Italy.⁵⁰ The earliest of these can be dated to 22 B.C. (n. 423) and the latest to 261 (n. 362), with a majority of dateable examples belonging to the late second century.⁵¹

The burgeoning popularity of *optimus* in the second century probably occurred as a result of its adoption as an official imperial epithet by Trajan, a *princeps* much admired among his subjects.⁵² Although Trajan may have chosen the epithet *optimus* in a calculated effort to align himself with Stoic values and thereby ingratiate himself with the Roman senate, the beneficiaries of his generosity outside Rome more likely associated it with

Senatorial and high-ranking equestrians: patrons--ns. 83, 102, 112, 120, 130, 297, 298, 345, 362, 372, 374, 385, 409, 422, 454=456, 455; non-patrons--ns. 24, 100, 106, 301, 413, 431, 457, 461, 462, 470, 473.

Equestrian municipals, municipal magistrates, dignitaries: patrons--ns. 7, 69, 198, 206, 263, 271, 274, 308, 324, 352, 359, 373, 391, 406, 415, 424; non-patrons--ns. 77, 107, 148, 219, 250, 383, 428.

Women: patrons--ns. 350, 392; non-patrons--ns. 93, 245, 280.

Freedmen: patron--254; non-patron--58. Additional examples too fragmentary to determine the honorand's status are ns. 398, 423.

These inscriptions were dedicated by a variety of municipal organizations and individuals: e.g. *ordines* (ns. 120, 372), *plebs* (ns. 383, 422), *collegia* (ns. 398, 424), private persons (ns. 100, 250). See also Appendix Six.

⁵⁰Region 1: ns. 7, 24, 58, 69, 77, 83, 93, 100, 102, 106, 107, 112, 120, 130, 148.

Region 2: n. 198.

Region 3: ns. 206, 219.

Region 4: ns. 245, 250, 254, 263.

Region 5: ns. 271, 274, 280.

Region 6: ns. 297, 298, 301, 308, 324, 345, 350, 352, 353, 359.

Region 7: ns. 362, 372, 373, 374, 383, 385, 391, 392, 398.

Region 8: ns. 406, 409, 413, 415.

Region 9: ns. 422, 423, 424.

Region 10: ns. 428, 431, 454, 455, 456, 457, 461, 462, 470, 473.

⁵¹First century examples: ns. 83, 219, 250, 280, 297, 298, 428, 462, 470, 473.

Second century examples: ns. 93, 100, 102, 148, 198, 245, 271, 274, 350, 352, 353, 398, 406, 409, 431, 454, 455, 456, 457, 461.

Third century examples: ns. 24, 58, 69, 77, 112, 263, 301, 308, 359, 362, 372, 385, 415, 422.

First or second century examples: ns. 324, 413.

Second or third century examples: 7, 106, 120, 254, 345, 374, 383, 424. See also Appendix Seven.

⁵²For discussion of *optimus* in the official and unofficial imperial titulature of the first and second centuries see Frei-Stolba 21-31. See also Hammond 42-47, who focuses on Trajan's formal adoption of *optimus* as a way of signifying his philosophical and moral qualifications as emperor.