



Freedmen: new citizens

Tombs & commemoration

Some of the most important evidence we have for status in the ancient world is the funerary monuments that people constructed to be remembered by. We have thousands of inscriptions, monuments, tombstones, altars and sarcophagi dedicated by and to ex-slaves.

Source 1: Monument to three ex-slaves

The image shows a rectangular stone relief sculpture. At the top, there are three figures wearing togas. The figure on the left is a man, labeled 'A' with a small box. The figure in the middle is a woman, labeled 'B' with a small box. The figure on the right is a man, labeled 'A' with another small box. Below the figures is a row of Latin inscriptions:

SEX[tus] MAELIUS	VESINIA C[aia] L[iberta]	SEX[tus] MAELIUS
SEX[ti] L[ibertus] STABILIO	IUCUNDA	SEX[ti] L[ibertus] FAUSTUS

Below the inscriptions, English translations are provided:

Sextus Maelius Stabilio freedman of Sextus	Vesinia Caia Iucunda freedwoman	Sextus Maelius Faustus freedman of Sextus
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Funerary monument, early 1st century AD (North Carolina Museum of Art, US).

A. Wearing of a toga denotes freed status (only adult male citizens could wear a toga); B. the joining of right hands shows married status (only citizens could have a legal marriage); C. Vesinia's name suggests she is a freedwoman, though not of Sextus as her husband is; D. the abbreviation "L" can stand for **libertus** or **liberta** (freedman or freedwoman).

Looking at this monument, what do you think
the people who created it were proud of?

Source 2: Tomb of Eurysaces the baker, Rome

This is the tomb of Eurysaces, a baker in the 1st century BC. His monument is one of the most elaborate still found surviving, with detailed scenes of baking around all sides, and standing at over 10 meters tall. It was later incorporated into the Aurelian Wall.



EST HOC MONIMENTUM
MARCEI VERGILEI EURYSACIS
PISTORIS REDEMPTORIS APPARET

*This is the monument of
Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces,
baker, contractor, public servant.*

*The cylindrical holes in the tomb might
represent grain measures or mixing bowls.*



From right to left: A. receiving grain; B. state officials note grain receipt; C. grinding grain to flour on round flour-mill (powered by mule); D. sieving of flour; E. checking quality.

Tomb of Eurysaces the Baker, Rome, 1st century BC (Rome, Italy).

The inscription on the tomb does not mention that Eurysaces is a freedman (there is no "L" for *libertus*). It is still generally believed he was a freedman, based on his Greek-sounding cognomen, nor is there any reference to his father, which is usual in inscriptions of free-born citizens. It may also be considered unusual to celebrate so publicly in one's funerary monument the rather mundane profession of baking bread.

Why do you think Eurysaces designed this monument in the way that he did?

To what extent do you think he was proud of his status as ex-slave?

Source 3: Epitaph from tomb of Marcus Petacius Severus

Marcus Petacius Dasius, freedman of Marcus.

To Marcus Petacius Severus, son of Marcus, of the Menenian voting-tribe, his son;
to Petacia Vitalis, freedwoman of Marcus, freedwoman.

Epitaph from Pompeii, 1st century AD.

This inscription shows a marriage between two ex-slaves; Dasius and Vitalis, both freed by the same master. They are described as *libertus* and *liberta*. Their son is Marcus Petacius Severus - he is not listed as a *libertus*, but styled as a freeborn citizen, with his father's name recorded, as well as his voting-tribe (only freeborn citizens could vote; freedmen did not have this right).

Source 4: Monument of Naevoleia Tyche & Munatius Faustus



The monument shows highlights from Faustus' life.

Left: front of the monument showing ceremony of some sort, Faustus handing out grain/money to the people perhaps? Above it is the inscription, and above that Naevoleia's head looking out a window.

Bottom left: on the side a ship is pictured. On the other side a bisellium (not pictured).



Inscription:

Naevoleia Tyche, freedwoman of Lucius, for herself and for Gaius Munatius Faustus, *Augustalis* and Country District Dweller, to whom the town councillors with the consent of the people decreed an honorific chair (*bisellum*) for his merits. Naevoleia Tyche had this monument made in her lifetime for her own freedmen and freedwomen and those of Gaius Munatius Faustus.

Naevoleia Tyche's monument, Herculaneum Gate, Pompeii.

An *Augustalis* was a member of the a priesthood that looked after the worship of the imperial cult. Most priesthoods were only open to freeborn citizens, but freedmen could be *augustales*, and so it is likely the priesthood was mainly made up of freedmen.

Considering all four monuments:

In which ways can you tell from looking at a monument and its inscriptions that you're looking at a freedman or freedwoman's tomb, rather than a freeborn citizen's?

What attitudes to the status of freedman or freedwoman do these monuments display?

Do you think the stories of the people who set up these monuments would have been exceptional?

Further reading:

Stabilio & Vesinia's monument:

- <http://artnc.org/works-of-art/funerary-monument-sextus-maelius-stabilio-vesinia-iucunda-and-sextus-maelius-faustus>

Eurysaces the baker's tomb:

- Petersen, Lauren Hackworth. "The Baker, His Tomb, His Wife, and Her Breadbasket: The Monument of Eurysaces in Rome." *The Art Bulletin*, 2003 www.jstor.org/stable/3177343.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Eurysaces_the_Baker

Naevoleia Tyche & her husbands monuments:

- <https://freshandrosyfingered.wordpress.com/pompeii/the-tombs-of-munatius-faustusnaevolia-tyche/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=De36tGKPgEU>

For more information about the *augustales*, you may wish to look at the College of the Augustales in Herculaneum.