Claudia Aster and Curtia Euodia: Two Jewish Women in Roman Italy

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Abstract

This paper looks at two epitaphs from Roman Italy which commemorate identifiably Jewish women. The deceased are probably the two earliest Jewish women from Roman Italy to have left any individual record. One epitaph was discovered in the eighteenth century, but the other has only been published recently. Claudia Aster was possibly taken prisoner at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, brought to Italy as a slave, freed, and commemorated as a Roman citizen with a Latin epitaph. Her husband, not necessarily a Jew, was an ex-slave of the emperor Claudius or Nero, and most likely gave Aster her freedom. Marcia Curtia Euodia died at 48 after 32 years of marriage. Her epitaph describes her as a “Hebrew” but otherwise follows the conventions of Latin commemoration. Her husband was also a relative, so presumably also a Jew. Her epitaph in all probability dates from the second or early third century CE, and she appears to a descendant of a Jewish family which had been in Italy for several generations.

There was a substantial Jewish population in Italy from at least the first century BCE. Jews came to Italy, especially to Rome, both as free immigrants and as slaves. Some were no doubt assimilated, but Jews formed a distinct enough element in the population of Rome to excite comment from writers such as Cicero and Juvenal. There is evidence for their presence in other Italian cities too, including Puteoli, Naples, Capua, Venosa and Milan.

Roman literature has plenty of comments on Jews who lived in or visited Italy, but only on famous individuals such as the family of Herod the Great or on “the Jews” in general, who were likely to be stereotyped and dismissed. It provides very little information about the real lives of ordinary Jews. Such people can only be known from their epitaphs: the Greek or Latin inscriptions on their tombs which gave some details about their age, their relatives and (sometimes) other aspects of their lives.

The Italian population as a whole produced epitaphs in vast quantities, and those published in the great nineteenth-century (but still being extended) collection the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL) number many tens of thousands. These date primarily from the first to third centuries CE. A typical epitaph names the commemorator, the deceased and the age at death. Some go into more detail about matters such as place of origin, length of marriage or occupation. Roman names can often be studied to provide further information about legal status and background.

However, what shows that an epitaph commemorates a Jew rather than a pagan or Christian? The distinctive features which are generally accepted as identifying a Jewish epitaph include: Jewish symbols (particularly the menorah); writing in Hebrew; reference to Jewish institutions such as the synagogue; provenance from a known Jewish burial area such as a Jewish catacomb; the use of a designation meaning ‘Jew’; the use of distinctively Jewish names. All of these except perhaps the last assume that whoever composed the epitaph wanted to indicate the deceased’s Jewishness; it would be perfectly easy to compose an epitaph for someone who was a practising Jew which gave no indication at all of their religious affiliation.
A further problem is that many of the features by which a Jewish epitaph can be identified did not become common in Italy until the third century CE. That was when Jews at Rome started to be buried in separate catacombs, and when the menorah became the standard Jewish symbol which was regularly inscribed or painted on tombs. The use of Hebrew for anything more than a very conventional phrase (“peace upon Israel”) is at least two centuries later still. Consequently there are very few identifiably Jewish epitaphs from Italy which can be dated before the end of the second century CE. Most Italian Jews had names such as Publius Catilius Hermias or Domitia Felicitas which in themselves give no clue to the bearer’s Jewishness. Almost certainly there are many epitaphs for Jews, especially from the first and second centuries CE, which cannot be identified as such because they contain none of the distinctive features.

This paper will look at two epitaphs from Roman Italy which commemorate identifiably Jewish women. The deceased are in fact probably the two earliest Jewish women from Roman Italy to have left any individual record. One epitaph was discovered in the eighteenth century, but the other has only been published recently.

When Jerusalem fell to the army of Titus in 70 CE, death or enslavement awaited most of its inhabitants. For women and children, enslavement was more likely, as at the capture of Japha and Machaerus. So many captive women and children were sold during the siege of Jerusalem that the market was “flooded.” Many of the prisoners were brought to Italy by the workings of the slave trade. Along with the anonymous victims of war whose grim fate was chronicled by Josephus, a little of the life-story of one individual can be reconstructed from a Latin epitaph which shows that, even if her story did not have a happy ending, the ending was at least happier than its beginning.

The epitaph has been known since 1761, but scholars had not seen it since the nineteenth century until Giancarlo Lacerenza rediscovered it recently in the Naples Museum and published a new edition. The stone, a blackened, rectangular travertine stele measuring 65 x 35 x 9 cm., seems to have come from a tomb near the ancient Puteoli-Naples road, in an area which was under the jurisdiction of Puteoli (rather than Naples) at least from the time of Vespasian (69-79 CE). The inscription has been published many times, but the text below follows Lacerenza’s new edition which corrects some small errors in the eighteenth-century copy which were repeated by previous editors.

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[Cl]audia Aster
[Hi]erosolymitana
[ca]ptiva. curam egit
[Ti(berius)] Claudius Aug(usti) libertus
[Pro]culus. rogo vos facite] per legim ne quis
[mi]hi titulum deiciat cufra[m agatis. xixit annis
XXV.
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“Claudia Aster, prisoner from Jerusalem. Tiberius Claudius Proculus, imperial
freedman, took care (of the epitaph). I ask you, make sure through the law that you
take care that no-one casts down my inscription. She lived 25 years.”

The deceased woman has the two-part name which was used by female Roman
citizens, but as a “prisoner from Jerusalem” she must have been a war-captive who
was enslaved and subsequently freed. Manumission was an integral part of the
Roman slave system, and ex-slaves are very heavily represented in epitaphs, since
possession of a Roman name and of the means to commemorate it on stone was in
itself a statement of success. It is not specifically stated that the woman was Jewish,
but it seems highly unlikely that anyone else would have been described in this way.
The Romans took prisoners at Jerusalem earlier (e.g. Pompey in 63 BCE, and the
forces supporting Herod against the Parthians in 37 BCE) and later (during the Bar
Kokhba revolt), but the dating indicated by the commemorator’s name is not
consistent with this (see below), so there can be no doubt that she was a casualty of
the revolt of 66-70. She was probably captured at the city’s fall in 70, although it
could have been earlier in the siege. The epitaph can thus be dated fairly closely. The
latest possible date is 95 CE, if Claudia Aster was a baby when Jerusalem fell. It is
unlikely to be earlier than the mid-70s, to allow time for her transfer to Italy and
manumission.

The name Aster is a Latin word for a flower, but more likely represents a latinisation
of the Hebrew Esther, and was a fairly common name among the Jews of Rome. The
commemorator, whose name has partly been lost through damage to the
inscription, was possibly called Tiberius Claudius Proculus. He was an imperial ex-
slave (Augusti libertus) whose name shows that the emperor who freed him was
Claudius (41-54 CE) or Nero (54-68 CE). He was not, therefore, a prisoner from
Jerusalem himself. His relationship to Aster is not stated, but the wording of the
epitaph indicates that he was her husband. He is also likely to have been the origin of
her name Claudia. As a freedwoman, she would take the feminine form of the name
of the owner who freed her. Claudius/a is an extremely common name, but the most
likely explanation of its occurrence here is that she was owned as a slave by Proculus
and freed by him so that he could marry her. That would explain how she was a
freedwoman at 25 when the Lex Aelia Sentia of 4 CE made 30 the normal minimum
age for manumission. The jurist Gaius mentions manumission for marriage (along
with kinship and other close personal relationships) as a reason for not enforcing the
age limit.

Nearly half the inscription is taken up by an appeal that it, and by implication the
whole tomb to which it belonged, should not be violated. It is to be protected
“through the law”, but it is not clear whether this means Jewish or Roman law. As
Lacerenza notes, it depends on whether the tomb was in a Jewish burial area or, as
seems more likely, a general one. There was certainly a Jewish community in Puteoli
in the first century CE, since St Paul found fellow Jews there, as did someone
pretending to be Alexander son of Herod the Great, but there is no literary or
archaeological evidence for separate Jewish burial areas anywhere in Italy at that
date. There is no other indication of the nature of the tomb, or of whether the burial
involved cremation, as was normal in Italy at the time, or inhumation, as might be
expected for a Jew.
There is also nothing to indicate whether Proculus was a Jew himself. The ransoming of fellow-Jews was a duty for the pious, but in the world of Roman slave-owning, manumission in order to marry a female slave was quite normal. The fact that he chose to record Aster’s connection with Jerusalem is striking. To record someone’s place of origin was common in Latin epitaphs, but to indicate that they had come from there as a captive was not. It is difficult to assess the frame of mind in which Proculus had it inscribed: did he hope to evoke sympathy, admiration or solidarity? The epitaph might be read by other Jews who lived in the area, as well as by non-Jewish visitors to the cemetery. Any reader would have been struck by such an exceptional inscription, but Jews and non-Jews would no doubt have reacted differently to it.

Claudia Aster’s epitaph enables the reader, with a little interpretation, to reconstruct much of her life story, in a fuller way than is usually possible with Roman epitaphs. The rest of this paper will deal with another inscription which has only recently been published, which provides a less dramatic biography of a Jewish woman. Similarities to and differences from Claudia Aster’s epitaph can help to interpret it.

The new inscription is on a stone now on Capri at the Villa Raskovic, via Grotta delle Felci 16, where it is fixed on a wall at the entrance. It is a marble stele (40 x 24.5 cm.) with a rounded tympanum and acroteria containing a crude foliar design, shaped like this: . The right-hand side is badly weathered and the base is partly broken. The inscription is written in increasingly compressed letters, and the last two lines (written in another hand from et) are outside the rectangular inscribed frame which was intended to surround the text. It was first published by Elena Miranda (with a photograph). She does not discuss the inscription in any detail, and what follows here is an attempt to put it in the context both of Jewish epitaphs and of epitaphs in Latin from Italy. Miranda dates it to the first or second century CE, and thinks it is most likely to come from Rome, both apparently on stylistic grounds. It certainly has no similarity to any other inscription from Capri and does not appear to originate there.

\[
\begin{align*}
M(\text{arciae}) \text{ Curtiae} \\
E\text{uoediae Hebrew}\ f(ecit) \ C(\text{aius}) \ V\text{etuolenus Melissus} \\
coniugi et co\{n\}-
\text{gnate b(ene)m(erenti). \ vixit} \\
\text{una an(nos) XXXII, tu-} \\
l(i<\text{t}>) \ \text{secum an[os]} \\
\text{(vac.) XLVIII. et} \\
C(\text{ai(o) Vetuleno Euhod(o) \ fil(i{o) qui vix(it) annis XXII.}}
\end{align*}
\]

“For Marcia Curtia Euodia, a Hebrew, Gaius Vetulenus Melissus had (this) made for his well-deserving spouse and relative. She lived together (with him) for 32 years,
The text contains many of the standard elements of a Latin epitaph: the deceased is named first, followed by the commemorator, the deceased’s age (all similar to Claudia Aster’s epitaph) and length of marriage. Another family member was added later. The most obviously unusual feature is the description of the woman as a “Hebrew”. If that word had not been used, nothing else would have suggested that the deceased was Jewish, so the commemorator made a deliberate decision to identify her as such.

A Roman male name normally consisted of praenomen (usually abbreviated as, e.g., M. for Marcus or C. for Gaius), gentilicium (an inherited “surname”) and cognomen (which for most people was a personal name, although in some families it was inherited). A female name usually consisted only of gentilicium and cognomen, like Claudia Aster’s. Roman names often contain elements which are suggestive about their bearers’ background, as was the case with both Claudia Aster and Tiberius Claudius Proculus.

In this inscription the initial M. stands for Marcia, which was regarded as the female equivalent of the praenomen Marcus. Female praenomina were always unusual. Marcia was the third commonest in the imperial period after Gaia and Lucia. Two other comparable examples are M. Antonia Thallusa and M. Fontea Artemisia, both from Rome. Female praenomina occur in inscriptions throughout the first to third centuries CE, and were usually feminine versions of a woman’s father’s praenomen, so Euodia’s father was probably called Marcus Curtius. Epigraphy shows that Marcus Curtius was in fact a very unusual combination of names, found mainly in inscriptions from Rome and Ostia, some of which are dated to the late second century CE. It is found at Ostia in combination with a Greek cognomen in the name of M. Curtius Sotericus, but most of its bearers have Latin cognomina.

Marcia Curtia had the cognomen Euodia, which is more commonly spelled Euhodia. There was also a rarer masculine equivalent, Eu(h)odius. The Greek word euodia means “a good journey” (Liddell & Scott, s.v.), and it seems that the noun was used as a feminine name, with a masculine version occasionally being created. As usual with Greek names in Italy, most occurrences are for people of uncertain or slave/freed status; only one is listed by Solin as freeborn in his exhaustive study of Greek cognomina.

Marcia Curtia Euodia’s name shows that she was of free status. She is likely to have been the daughter of a man called Marcus Curtius, and therefore freeborn rather than an ex-slave. Her Greek cognomen does not necessarily indicate that she originated in a Greek-speaking area or used Greek as her first language herself. However, as it is unusual to find the name M. Curtius/a followed by a Greek cognomen, it seems likely that Euodia’s father or an earlier ancestor came from the Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire and acquired Roman citizenship from someone called M. Curtius, probably through manumission, and the family continued to use Greek names.

Euodia’s designation as Hebreae (a normal spelling in inscriptions for the dictionary form Hebraeae) shows that her commemorator wanted to indicate her Jewishness. He chose to do it with this term rather than Iud(a)eae, which is an alternative term in...
in inscriptions. In Italy outside Rome, *Hebraeus/a* is found in inscriptions only at Naples, with the spellings *Ebreus* and *Ebreu* in epitaphs from the fourth or fifth century CE. At Rome, it occurs only in Greek and not in Latin, although sometimes with the equivalent spelling (rather than the standard *Hebraios*): *Hebreōn*, *Hebreos*, *Hebreoi*. Most of these are from the Monteverde catacomb, and probably from the third or fourth century CE. The Greek form with the spelling is also found at Beroea in Macedonia: *Hebreou*, *Hebreōn*; these epitaphs are probably from the fourth century CE or later.

There has been considerable debate about why people were designated as “Hebrews” rather than “Jews”. Possibilities include people who used Aramaic and/or had a close association with Palestine, and particularly pious and traditional Jews. Most discussion has, however, concentrated on its association with the term “synagogue”, e.g. *synagōgēs Haibreōn* and *[syna]gōgē Hebr[aion]*. The former is from the third or fourth century CE, and the dating of the latter is very uncertain. It is not at all clear what self-designation an individual Jew writing in Latin would have used earlier than the third century CE, since there is so little evidence: *Iudaeus* (Aquileia, first century BCE) and *Hierosolymita* for Claudia Aster are the only other examples.

In Latin literature of the late first and second centuries CE, *Iudaeus* was also commoner than *Hebraeus*. Tacitus uses *Hebraeus* once when he mentions one of the possible origins of the Jews, whom he normally calls *Iudaei*: “There are some who say that they were Assyrian refugees, a people lacking land, who seized part of Egypt, and soon dwelt in their own cities and the Hebrew lands (*Hebraeasque terras*) and the nearer parts of Syria.” Feldman thinks he may have known the supposed derivation of “Hebrews” as coming from “beyond” (*me-eber*) the Euphrates. If Tacitus chose his term carefully, he must have given it a geographical rather than ethnic sense, because otherwise “Hebrew lands” would be any which the Jews happened to occupy, not the specific places he had in mind. Statius, writing in the late first century, also uses the term in a geographical sense: “Palestinian and Hebrew liquids together” (*Palaestini simul Hebraeique liquores*) in a list of funerary spices, meaning balsam. Tertullian refers to “Hebrews back then, who now (are called) Jews,” implying a change of usage not known to the other Latin writers.

The Greek term *Hebraioi* was mentioned by the second-century writer Claudius Charax of Pergamum as deriving from Abraham. The term is found in use in Greek by a Jewish writer in 2Maccabees. Josephus seems to see *Hebraioi* as encompassing all the descendants of Abraham, including Samaritans, but *Ioudaioi* as being the descendants of Judah. He defines himself as a *Hebraios* at one point, but does not differentiate consistently between *Hebraioi* and *Ioudaioi*, except that *Hebraioi* are always “good Jews”. Among the other Greek writers of the late first and second centuries to use *Hebraioi* are Plutarch, Appian, Pausanias and Lucian. Pausanias regularly refers to “the land of the Hebrews” for geographical purposes, writing the officially correct form for his period, *Palaestina*, only once.

Walter Ameling discusses the appearance of the designation in inscriptions from Asia Minor; he says that is not attested as a self-designation in the Diaspora before the late third/early fourth century CE. He believes that the inscription from Philadelphia in the province of Asia that refers to “the most holy synagogue of the Hebrews” is more likely to be of a fourth rather than a third century date. However, his arguments...
appear to be circular because he says that the inscription mentioning a “grave of the Hebrews” cannot be earlier than the fourth century because of the use of the term “Hebrews”.  

Thus, although it has normally been argued that the term “Hebrew” in an inscription suggests a date of late third century CE or later, its earlier appearance cannot be ruled out, and it was clearly normal in second-century literature. It would add to the circularity of the argument to date Marcia Curtia Euodia’s epitaph on the basis of the use of “Hebrew”. After the province of Judaea was renamed Syria Palaeolina (135 CE), and the term Iudaeus may have acquired negative connotations through association with the revolts, the use of an alternative would not be surprising, even if previously unattested in inscriptions. Claudius Proculus in the first inscription discussed here commemorated Claudia Aster as a “Jerusalemite” rather than a “Jew”, perhaps for similar reasons. In view of the way in which Tacitus and Statius used the term, it is possible that someone reading the word Hebreae in the second century might think of geographical origin rather than religious affiliation, as they would with Aster the Jerusalemite, but its use in an epitaph would surely be intended as a statement of Jewishness. In fact, it might indicate Jewishness without any geographical connotations at all: in the inscriptions from Naples and Rome, a “Hebrew” could clearly be a follower of the Jewish religion unconnected to Judaea, or someone who was considered to be of entirely Jewish (in the racial sense) ancestry.

Marcia Curtia Euodia’s husband had the gentilicium Vetulenus, which was even more unusual than hers, especially with the praenomen Gaius. There was one distinguished C. Vetulenus: C. Vetulenus Civica Cerealis, who was suffect consul a little before 77 CE, legate of Moesia Inferior in 82, and proconsul of Asia shortly before 88, when he was killed by the Emperor Domitian. This man was the father or more probably brother of Sex. Vet(t)ulenus Cerialis, who commanded Legio V Macedonica under Vespasian in Judaea, and was then the first senatorial governor of the province after the fall of Jerusalem in 70-1 CE. He is mentioned a number of times in Greek by Josephus, who evidently misunderstood the correct form of his name (which is attested by inscriptions) as Sextos Kerealios Ouetilianos or Ouitellianos, i.e. treating him as someone whose Roman name was Sex. Cerealius Vitellianus. Given the rarity of the name Vetulenus, a connection between the family in the inscription and the two well-attested individuals is likely. Someone who acquired Roman citizenship from the governor of Judaea would have had the name Sex. Vetulenus, so it is more likely that the family of C. Vetulenus Melissus owed its citizenship (most probably acquired originally through manumission) to the proconsul of Asia, or to an otherwise unattested member of the same family.

The husband’s cognomen Melissus is also rare in the masculine form. Like Eu(h)odia, the origin is a Greek feminine noun, melissa (“bee”). It has a direct Hebrew equivalent, Deborah (hrvbd), but this is probably no more than coincidence. An ossuary from Israel records the name h>lm, which has been understood as a nickname derived from >vlm, “kneading-trough”, but might more plausibly be interpreted as an Aramaic version of Melissus. The son C. Vetulenus Euhodus, whose death was recorded in a postscript to the original inscription and must therefore have come after his mother’s, had the same praenomen and gentilicium as his father, which suggests that he was freeborn and legitimate, rather than being born to a slave mother; this is a further indication that Marcia Curtia Euodia was probably freeborn herself.
His abbreviated cognomen is probably Euhodus, which is much commoner than the other possibility, Euhodius. Thus, although Euhodus was presumably named after his mother, his cognomen was really a different one, since the name is euodos in Greek, meaning “easy, without trouble, simple”.

C. Vetulenus Melissus refers to his wife in the epitaph as both spouse (coniugi) and relative (con/nate). This word was originally inscribed as con/nate, but when the error was noticed, a G was added in front of the second N. The use of the two terms to refer to the same person is very unusual. Can it be assumed that Melissus and Euodia belonged to the same family, or could cognatus/a be used more loosely just to mean a fellow-Jew? The term is not otherwise found in a Jewish epitaph. In the Vulgate, it has a family sense, although it often designates someone who is not a blood-relative, e.g. Jethro is the cognatus of his son-in-law Moses; Orpah is the cognata of her sister-in-law Ruth. The standard Latin dictionaries do not give any usage parallel to the meaning of “fellow-Jew”. In Latin epitaphs too, cognatus/a always seems to mean a relative. That is almost certainly its sense here, so Melissus was actually a relative of Euodia — therefore probably a fellow-Jew as well, but that is not what the epitaph says. In towns where there was a relatively small Jewish community, it would of course not be surprising if Jews married their own relatives.

The language used to give Euodia’s age and length of marriage is unusual and slightly ambiguous. The phrase vixit una, “lived together”, seems to need something to complete its sense, such as “with me”, the wording actually found in a similar inscription from Rome. The expression tulit secum (literally “passed with herself”) is rare in epitaphs too. The nearest parallels are an epitaph from Rome where the commemorator says that his wife “lived with me” (vixit mecum) 2 years 11 months 13 days, tulit autem secum 35 years 13 days, and one from Verona where the deceased wife “lived with me” (vixit mecum) 18 years 2 months 9 days, and tulit secum 36 years. These expressions could theoretically comprise either length of marriage + length of life before marriage or length of marriage + total length of life. It would be very strange for a Roman epitaph to give two numerals of which neither represented the age at death: military epitaphs often give length of service as well as age at death, and many epitaphs give age at marriage and age at death, but age at death is always given as one of the figures. Therefore the second suggestion is much more probable than the first: the figures represent the length of Euodia’s marriage and her age at death. Secum does not have any implication of “alone”, but is just used to contrast with mecum.

Euodia was therefore married at 16. It is very unusual to be able to calculate the age at marriage from a Jewish inscription, but there are cases of Jewish women at Rome married at 15 (two examples), 15/16, 16/17 and 24. The one man whose age can be calculated was 22. Such ages may be atypical, since the length of a marriage is most likely to be recorded when the wife died fairly young, but it seems that Jewish women were at least considered marriageable from their mid-teens, as other women in Roman Italy were. Her son must have been born some time after her marriage: if he died at 22 after she died at 48, which must be the case as his epitaph was added as a postscript to hers, she must have been at least 26 when he was born. There is no indication of how many other children she may have had.
Most Jewish epitaphs from Roman Italy are in Greek rather than Latin; Hebrew only began to be used in the fifth and sixth centuries. The fact that Euodia and Melissus had Greek cognomina does not in itself mean that their first language was Greek, but the choice of language in an epitaph in any case does not necessarily reflect the linguistic habits of the people concerned. The shape of the stele shows that it was meant to be fixed into the ground or some sort of base, not to a wall as in a catacomb, house-tomb or columbarium. It is therefore most likely to be from an open-air burial area, and probably, as with Claudia Aster, not one used exclusively by Jews. The language of a Jewish epitaph would therefore be governed by the language of nearby epitaphs, and in most parts of Italy that would dictate the use of Latin.

Miranda thinks that Euodia’s inscription probably comes from Rome. It is certainly not from Capri originally, but it may be from Rome, or from the area of Naples and Puteoli like Claudia Aster’s. There is no firm dating evidence, unlike Aster’s inscription. The possibility that Vetulenus’ family got Roman citizenship through a connection with (most likely manumission by) the family of Vespasian’s general suggests a date no earlier than the late first century, and more likely somewhat later. When compared to Jewish epitaphs from Rome, which primarily belong to the third and fourth centuries, Euodia’s epitaph has one feature, the use of praenomina, which is rare at Rome, and lacks one feature, the menorah, which is very common at Rome. The names and the form of the inscription are therefore consistent with the second or early third century CE, and that is the most likely dating.

Claudia Aster’s epitaph, dating from c.75-95 CE, is the earliest one from Italy which records a Jewish woman. It spells out, in very objective language, a dramatic life-story: a war captive who was enslaved, and probably freed by and married to an ex-slave of the emperor. There is some similarity with a second- or third-century epitaph from Roman Britain in which a veteran soldier originally from Palmyra named Barathes commemorated his wife and ex-slave Regina of the Catuvellauni tribe who died aged 30, with an epitaph in Latin and Palmyrene. Barathes used his own native language, but made a point of recording his wife’s British connections. Similarly, Ti. Claudius Proculus used the form of commemoration which was presumably natural to him, a professionally inscribed Latin epitaph – at Jerusalem at this date, burial was normally in ossuaries and epitaphs were no more than a name roughly scratched on the outside of the ossuary. He chose to give details about his wife’s background which would have seemed nearly as exotic to passers-by at Puteoli as Regina’s Palmyrene epitaph would have done to people in Britain. Barathes’ background was as different from his wife’s as it was possible to be within the Roman Empire, so there is no need to suppose that Proculus’ decision to record his wife’s origins means that he shared them. Both men may have been motivated by any or all of: affection and admiration for their wives, a desire to excite sympathy or recognition from readers of the epitaphs, and a desire to have their own role in raising their wives’ status acknowledged.

Marcia Curtia Euodia’s epitaph, probably dating from the second or early third century CE, gives more information about her immediate family but less about her background. She married at 16, died at 48, and had a son whose death at the age of 22 must have come after hers. Her husband was also her relative. These are the sorts of details which are recorded in thousands of Roman epitaphs. Her ancestors and her husband’s may have come to Italy by the route of capture and slavery which brought...
Claudia Aster there, but if so they were well integrated into their surroundings by the time of her death. Her epitaph would look like a perfectly normal one for a pagan Roman citizen, perhaps with immigrant or slave ancestors, if it was not for the word *Hebreae*, inserted to show that she was not only a Roman but also a Jew. Her husband must have chosen the term which seemed most appropriate to indicate his wife’s religious affiliation, something which appears to have been very unusual at the time.

Claudia Aster’s relatively short life took her from Jerusalem to Puteoli, and she was commemorated in a style completely different from the one used in her homeland. Marcia Curtia Euodia’s longer life was probably spent entirely in Italy, and she was commemorated in the style normally used there. In both cases their husbands chose to add a statement about their wives’ background which shows that it was quite possible to be Roman and Jewish simultaneously. These two epitaphs enable twenty-first-century readers to understand a little about the lives of Jewish women in Roman Italy.

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**Abbreviations**

CIL  
*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ed. T. Mommsen et al. Berlin: Reimer, 1862–.

IJudO i  

IJudO ii  

JIWE  

Liddell & Scott  

Neue Pauly  

PIR  
*Prosopographia Imperii* Roman, ed. E. Groag et al. Berlin : de Gruyter, 1933–.

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1 CIL vi contains inscriptions from the city of Rome.
4 Lacerenza 1999.
5 Recently as JIWE i 26, which provides a full bibliography. Although the inscription has often been referred to, only JIWE and Lacerenza have discussed it in detail. Their discussions are summarised in what follows here.
6 Square brackets indicate missing text which has been restored by the editor. Round brackets indicate the expansion of words which were written as abbreviations in the inscription. Triangular brackets indicate editorial corrections of omissions in the inscription. Curly brackets indicate letters inscribed by mistake which should be ignored. Dots beneath letters indicate that the reading of the letters is made clear only by the context.
7 Read: legem.

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8 Jiwe ii 91, 140, 278, 552, 596.
9 Some editors have suggested the much rarer name Masculus instead. Jiwe and Lacerenza both restore it as Proculus.
10 Gaius 1.19. However, someone manumitted before the age of 30 without a legally valid reason took the status of a "Junian Latin", a step towards full Roman citizenship, and would be able to use the same form of name as a full citizen; it is therefore not certain that Claudia Aster was a full Roman citizen rather than a Junian Latin.
12 Noy 1998.
13 Noy 2000:5.
15 Literally "passed with herself"; discussed further below.
16 Kajava 1994:166-76. Kajava studies the use of female praenomina, which are found only in inscriptions and not in literature.
18 CIL vi 1591, 6894.
20 CIL vi 3884: M. Curtius Mesticus from Venafrum served in the 12th Urban Cohort, 197/8 CE. CIL vi 3587: a soldier called M. Curti[us] Maro[...] was buried in a columbarium (a tomb for large numbers of cremation burials, unlikely to be later than the second century CE).
21 CIL xiv 251: the corporation of small boat-owners in 192 CE included among its 258 members M. Curtius Victorinus q(uin)q(uennalis) (I 25), M. Curtius Victorinus (IV 26), M. Curtius Victor (V 25), M. Curtius Felicissimus (VI 4), M. Curtius Arrianus (VIII 17). CIL xiv 1900: the Christians M. Curtius Victorinus and Plotia Marcella inscribed their names on a sarcophagus while still alive.
22 CIL vi 899. He had as fellow-dedicator the girl’s mamma (perhaps her natural mother, or his wife) Livia Acte.
23 CIL vi has 51 examples of Euhodia and 10 of Euodia.
24 Solin 1982: iii 1311-12 gives 89 occurrences of the feminine form and 8 of the masculine.
26 Jiwe ii Index Va shows that the two terms were equally common at Rome, but Jiwe i Index Va shows that Iudaeus/a was much commoner elsewhere in Italy. Kraemer 1989 discusses the use of Iudaeus in detail.
27 Jiwe i 33, 37.
28 Jiwe i 35.
29 Jiwe ii 2, 33, 579.
30 Jiwe ii 44 (a plaque of unknown provenance, tentatively dated to the second-fourth century CE).
31 Jiwe ii 561.
32 IudO i Mac8.
33 IudO i Mac9.
34 Harvey 1998 discusses the question in depth. He rejects the former suggestion and argues in favour of the latter.
35 Rome: Jiwe ii 578.
36 Corinth: IudO i Ach 47.
37 Jiwe i 7.
38 Tacitus, Hist. 5.2.3.
40 Statius, Silv. 5.1.213; Lewis & Short, s.v. Hebraei
41 Tertullian, Apol. 18.6: Hebraei retro, qui nunc Iudaiei.
42 Stern 1980 ii, no.335. This derivation was also made earlier by Artapanus, a writer from Ptolemaic Egypt: Eusebius, Pr.Ev. 9.18.1; Stern 1980 ii: 161. Harvey 1998:139 notes the link with Abraham, the "first Hebrew", in biblical usage. Both Charax and Artapanus are only known through quotations by much later writers.
44 Josephus, Ant. 11.343-4, interpreted by Feldman 1993:132-3.
45 Josephus, B.J. 1.3; Harvey 1998:142.
48 IudO ii 15.
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49 IJudO ii 49.
50 IJudO ii 244.
51 Harvey 1998:146.
52 Also written Vettulenus, but -t- is commoner in CIL vi than -tt-: 18 examples against 4.
53 PIR i V352; Suetonius, Dom.10.2; Tacitus, Ag. 42.
54 PIR i V351. PIR calls him the brother and Neue Pauly the father.
55 Solin 1982: ii 1139-40 has 10 cases of Melissus at Rome and 26 of Melissa, and Lörincz & Redő (1994) list 6 examples of the masculine form and 9 of the feminine.
56 Rahmani 1994: no.610, h>lm rb yvl.
57 The child of a free woman who was not married to its father would take her gentilicium. An ex-slave would take the gentilicium of whoever freed him/her, regardless of his parents’ gentilicia if they were also freed.
58 Lörincz & Redő (1994) have 24 examples of Euhodus and only 1 of Euhodius. Solin (1982) treats them as two different names. He has 84 examples from Rome of Euhodus (ii 922-3), and 8 of Euhodius (iii 1311-12).
59 Liddell & Scott, s.v.
60 There is one other example from central Italy, in an epitaph from Ostia, CIL xiv 1285: D(is) M(anibus) L(ucius) M(arcus?) Faustinus fecit sibi et coniugi suae Anniae Mariae cognate suae et libertis libertabusque. “To the Di Manes. Lucius Marcus(?) Faustinus made (this) for himself and his spouse Annia Maria his relative, and for (his/their) freedmen and freedwomen.”
61 Ex. 18.1; Ruth 1.15.
62 It is theoretically possible to take una not as an adverb but as a nominative singular meaning “as one”, i.e. unmarried; however this sense would be unparalleled.
63 CIL vi 35863, a cippus found in the S. Zosimus cemetery, Via Labicana: vixit una mecu [sic]. This is the only example from Rome of the use of vixit una, which is rare in epitaphs although it is conventional Latin.
64 CIL vi 12178.
65 CIL v 3496.
66 Noy 2000:63-6 discusses the recording of ages and other figures in Roman epitaphs.
67 JIWE ii 205, 308, 349, 79, 416.
68 JIWE ii 179.
69 Shaw 1987.
70 JIWE ii, Index Ib.
71 Roman Inscriptions of Britain 1065.

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