

## Roman Funerary Inscription Project

### Altars Dedicated by Anicia Caecilia

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**Description of Monument 1 (on left):**

This funerary altar, currently housed in Rome at the Baths of Diocletian Museum in Rome, is dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. It is a free-standing, solid white marble rectangular grave monument that has a depression in its gabled top where a cinerary urn containing the deceased's ashes once stood (now lost). The dedicatory inscription ( *CIL* 14.2057) fills the entire face of the monument, inset in a simple frame formed by incised lines. The words are separated by medial dots. The letters are square and deeply incised, carved in the earlier monumental style of the late Roman Republic. The irregular spacing of the words and the unevenness of the lines could be attributed to the haste or lack of skill of the stonecutter.

The altar was dedicated by Anicia Caecilia to her husband, Quintus Sittius Flaccus, whose threefold name indicates that he was a Roman citizen. Anicia Caecilia, his wife, was a freeborn Roman citizen, as is indicated by her inclusion of her filiation (**MF**), daughter of Marcus Caecilius. As a sign of their status, freeborn Roman women incorporated the name of their father on inscriptions and official documents, typically in abbreviated form, between their *nomen* and *cognomen*. We know that Anicia Caecilia and her family were of the equestrian class, as the *Primus Pilus* or chief centurion of the first cohort, a one-year position her husband held, gained equestrian status after holding the position of *Primus Pilus*. Flaccus was then promoted to the 10<sup>th</sup> cohort of the Praetorian Guard, most likely under the emperor Marcus Aurelius, given the date of the inscription. Praetorians were permanent guards of the emperor who were always in or near Rome to protect against an uprising. They became a very powerful force in maintaining the imperial regime, sometimes even choosing the emperor. To be selected for the Praetorian Guard was a great honor for a soldier, as is indicated by the central placement of his title in the inscription. Each cohort of the Guard was comprised of 1,000 men and commanded by a tribune. It is possible that Flaccus died while holding this position, or that it was the highest position held in his lifetime. Since Roman inscriptions do not usually record the cause of death, it is not certain how he died. Marcus Aurelius fought off German invasions; Flaccus may have seen intense military action while protecting the city or the emperor himself. Also, during Aurelius' reign Rome suffered from a smallpox epidemic known as the Great Pestilence that resulted in a multitude of deaths, perhaps Flaccus's among them.

**Inscription 1:**



[http://www.vroma.org/images/raia\\_images/altar\\_aniciaCaecilia2.jpg](http://www.vroma.org/images/raia_images/altar_aniciaCaecilia2.jpg)

**Transcription of Inscription 1**

D M  
Q SITTIO FLAC  
CO · P · P · TRIB  
COH · X · PR  
ANICIA · M · F  
CAECILIA  
MARITO  
OPT · FEC

**Resolution of Inscription 1**

D[is] M[anibus]  
Q[uinto] SITTIO FLAC[co]  
C[enturi]O[ni] · P[rimo] · P[ilo] · TRIB[uno]  
COH[ortis] · X · PR[aetoriae]  
ANICIA · M[arci] · F[ilia]  
CAECILIA  
MARITO  
OPT[imo] · FEC[it]  
[hoc monumentum]

**Translation of Inscription 1**

To the Spirits of the Dead  
For Quintus Sittius Flaccus,  
Centurian Primus Pilus, Tribune  
of the 10th Praetorian Cohort,  
Anicia Caecilia,  
daughter of Marcus,  
set up this monument  
for her most excellent husband

## Lexical and Interpretive Commentary

Line 1

**Di Manes** m. pl. *The spirits of the dead, the divine spirits. By the end of the first century BCE, it became customary to dedicate altars to the D[is] M[anibus]. This heading is regularly found on tombstones until the end of the 2nd century CE.*

Line 3

**P.P.** = *Primus Pilus, the title of the chief centurion of each company. The Primus Pilus held office for a year and then could be promoted to the office of tribune over one of the urban groups, which included the Praetorian Guards. Those who served as a Primus Pilus gained equestrian status after holding this position.*

**Tribunus**, -i m. *Here, a military tribune.*

Line 4

**Cohors**, -ortis f. *Company, cohort.*

Lines 5-6

**Anicia Marci Filia Caecilia:** *The full formal name of the wife of Quintus Sittius Flaccus who dedicated this monument to her husband after his death.*

Line 7

**Maritus**, mariti m. *Husband.*

Line 8

**Optimus** -a -um *Best, most excellent.*

**Facio**, facere, feci, factus, -a, -um *Make, do; in funerary contexts: dedicate, set up.*

Line 9

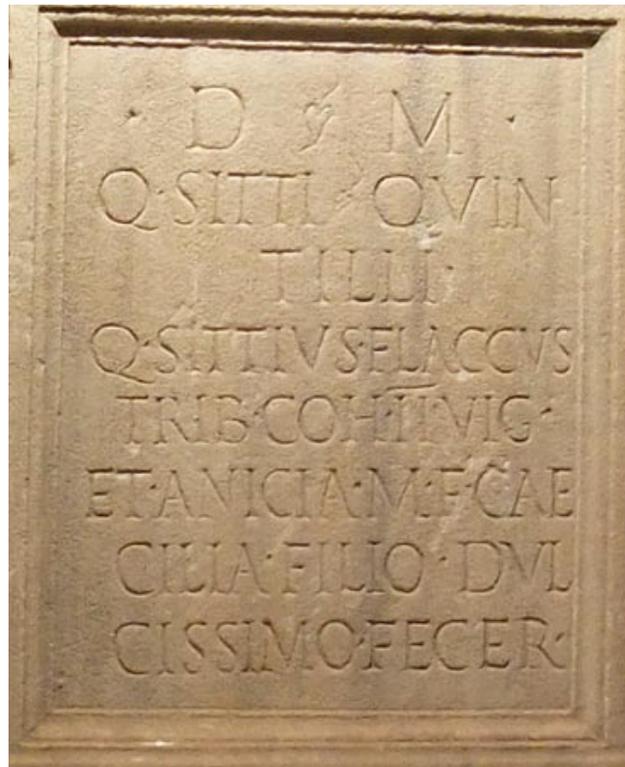
**[hoc monumentum]:** *conventionally omitted, it is the understood direct object of the verb of dedication.*

**Description of Monument 2 (on right):**

This funerary altar can currently be viewed at the Baths of Diocletian Museum in Rome, located next to the funerary altar of Quintus Sittius Flaccus. It, too, is made of white marble and dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, but seems to have been dedicated prior to first monument and to have served as the model. It is a free-standing, rectangular grave monument that has an indentation in its gabled top where a cinerary urn containing the deceased's ashes once stood (now lost). The dedicatory inscription fills the entire face of the monument, framed with simple, incised lines. While medial dots (interpuncts) separate the other words in the inscription, the heading (**DM**) and the *nomen* and *cognomen* of the deceased (**Sitti Quintilli**) are separated by a heart-shaped ivy leaf, a symbol that was very common from the latter part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The letters are square and deeply incised, carved in the earlier monumental style of the late Roman Republic. Unlike the previous inscription, each line of the inscription is straight, indicating a stonecutter of greater skill or care. This monument was costly, as is indicated by its size and the quality of the material and carving. It is a mark of the affection that the parents had for their son, the grief they felt at his death, and the wealth of the family.

This altar was dedicated to Quintus Sittius Quintillius by his parents, Anicia Caecilia and Quintus Sittius Flaccus, who was clearly still living at its dedication. The *cognomen* (**Quintillius**), an endearing term meaning "little Quintus," most likely died while his father served as tribune of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cohort of the *Vigiles*, since Flaccus is proudly identified by this title in the inscription. Before a man served as tribune for the Praetorian Cohort, as we learn from Flaccus's grave stone that he later did, it was common for him to serve first as a tribune for a city troop, of which the *Vigiles* formed a part. *Vigiles* served as watchmen, a combination of policemen and firemen. Each cohort of *Vigiles* was made up of about a hundred men, each under a centurion, with a tribune over the entire cohort. We have no idea of the age of Quintillius, who may well have died of the smallpox epidemic that spread through Rome at this time.

**Inscription 2:**



[http://www.vroma.org/images/raia\\_images/altar\\_aniciaCaecilia3.jpg](http://www.vroma.org/images/raia_images/altar_aniciaCaecilia3.jpg)

**Transcription of Inscription 2**

· D ♥ M ·  
Q · SITTIV ♥ QVIN ·  
TILLI ·  
Q · SITTIVS · FLACCVS  
TRIB · COH · II · VIG ·  
ET · ANICIA · M · F · CAE  
CILIA · FILIO · DVL  
CISSIMO · FECER

**Resolution of Inscription 2**

· D[is] ♥ M[anibus] ·  
Q[uinto] · SITTIV[us] ♥ QVIN  
TILLI[us] ·  
Q[uintus] · SITTIVS · FLACCVS  
TRIB[unus] · COH[ortis] · II · VIG[ilum] ·  
ET · ANICIA · M[arci] · F[ilia] · CAE  
CILIA · FILIO · DVL  
CISSIMO · FECER[unt]  
[hoc monumentum]

**Translation of Inscription 2**

To the Spirits of the Dead  
For Quintus Sittius Quintillius  
Quintus Sittius Flaccus,  
Tribune of the 2nd Cohort of the Vigiles,  
and Anicia Caecilia,  
daughter of Marcus,  
set up this monument  
for their sweetest son

## Lexical and Interpretive Commentary

Line 1

**Di Manes** m. pl. *The spirits of the dead, the divine spirits. By the end of the first century BCE, it became customary to dedicate altars to the D[is] M[anibus]. This heading is regularly found on tombstones until the end of the 2nd century CE.*

Line 4

**Quintus Sittius Flaccus** m. *Husband of **Anicia Caecilia** and father of Quintillus; together with his wife he dedicated this monument to his deceased son.*

Line 5

**Tribunus Cohortis II Vigilarium** *Tribune of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the Vigiles.*

Line 6

**Anicia M F Caecilia** f. *The name of the mother who dedicated the monument to her son after his death.*

**M[arci] F[ilia]** *Daughter of Marcus.*

Lines 7- 8

**Dulcissimus**, -a, -um *Sweetest; superlative form of the adjective dulcis, dulce*

Line 8

**Facio**, facere, feci, factus, -a, -um *Make, do; in funerary contexts: dedicate, set up.*

Line 9

**[hoc monumentum]**: *conventionally omitted, it is the understood direct object of the verb of dedication.*

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