

**THE EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES
OF THE WRITINGS OF GAIUS
SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS,
A DISSERTATION; PP. 28-70**

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by Walter Dennison

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WALTER DENNISON

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THE EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES
OF THE WRITINGS OF
GAIUS SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN IN 1897

BY
WALTER DENNISON

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indirect discourse, from writers and historians, some of whom are obscure, others well known. Of those who are not known to us from other sources, or whose writings have entirely or almost entirely perished, may be mentioned Aquilius Niger (*Aug.* 11), Iunius Saturninus (*Aug.* 27), C. Drusus (*Aug.* 94), Iulius Marathus (*Aug.* 79, 94), Cordus Cremutius (*Aug.* 35), Cassius Severus (*Vit.* 2), Tanpsius Geminus (*Caes.* 9), M. Aetorius Naso (*Caes.* 9, 52), Titus Ampius (*Caes.* 77). Well-known authors quoted are Cicero, — *de Officiis* (*Caes.* 30), *Epist.* (*Caes.* 49, *Aug.* 3), *ad Brutum* (*Caes.* 55, 56), three quotations being without definite reference to his works (*Caes.* 42, 50, *Aug.* 94); Cornelius Nepos (*Aug.* 77); M. Antonius (*Caes.* 52, *Aug.* 2, 4, 7, 10, 16, 63, 68, 69, 70); Asinius Pollio (*Caes.* 55, 56); Hirtius (*Caes.* 56); Plinius Secundus (*Cal.* 8).

Suetonius made much use of the letters of the emperors in writing the history of their lives. The letters of Augustus are quoted *orat. rect.* fourteen times,¹ several times at length. Some peculiarities² in Augustus's handwriting and language are noted by the historian (*Aug.* 87, 88). So, too, in the case of the letters of Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, extracts³ are made or peculiarities noted. But Suetonius was familiar with different books and pamphlets published by the Caesars, as well as with their correspondence. He quotes a *laudatio* delivered by Iulius Caesar (*Caes.* 6), mentions other works of his (*Caes.* 26), and discusses his Commentaries and their authorship (*Caes.* 56); he quotes directly an edict of Augustus (*Aug.* 28), and was acquainted with five of his works (*Aug.* 85); he made an extract from the autobiography of Tiberius (*Tib.* 61); used the histories written by Claudius (*Claud.* 21), as well as a certain pamphlet of his (*ibid.* 2), some orations (*ibid.* 38), and others of Claudius's works (*ibid.* 33, 38, 41, 42); he was familiar with a *carmen* written by Nero (*Nero*,

¹ *Aug.* 51, 71 (3), 76 (3), 86, 92; *Tib.* 21; *Cal.* 8; *Claud.* 4 (3).

² See below (p. 44), where passages are quoted proving that Suetonius had access to autograph letters of Augustus.

³ *Caes.* 26, 56; *Tib.* 67; *Cal.* 23; *Nero*, 23, 41; *Dom.* 13.

24); and he mentions a history composed by the grandfather of Galba as *multiplicem nec incuriosam* (*Galba*, 3).

Mention is made also of the *acta publica* and *acta diurna* (*Tib.* 5, *Cal.* 8, *Claud.* 41), as sources of information, and of the *acta senatus*¹ (*Aug.* 5). A part of *Aug.* 58 seems to have been taken verbatim from the *acta senatus*.

Suetonius is careful to indicate the source when he relates the story told by his grandfather (*Cal.* 19), or recounts the events of which his father (*Otho*, 10) or he himself (*Dom.* 12) was an eyewitness.

There are also passages which indicate that Suetonius often took pains to consult different sources of information in regard to the same question, and that, after examining them all carefully, he formed his own opinion in view of all the evidence. This is observed in his treatment of the origin of the Octavian family (*Aug.* 2), and of the various accounts of the birthplace of Caligula (*Cal.* 8). We may here notice, too, the expressions *ut equidem mirer* (*Aug.* 3); *omitto senatus consulta quia possunt videri vel necessitate expressa vel verecundia* (*Aug.* 57); *nec ego id notarem, nisi mihi mirum videretur tradidisse aliquos . . .* (*Aug.* 88); *Scio vulgo persuasum. . . . Ne illud quidem ignoro aliquos tradidisse. . . . Adduci tamen nequeo quin existimem . . .* (*Tib.* 21); *unde credo* (*Cal.* 51); *unde existimo* (*Claud.* 1); *ipse ne vestigium quidem de hoc, quamvis satis curiose inquirerem, inveni* (*Vesp.* 1). He presents matters of small importance (*Claud.* 1), *ne praetermitterem quam quia verum aut veri simile putem*.

In the light of this brief survey, we are able to understand to what extent Suetonius has expressly made mention of the writings and documents which he used as sources. If, therefore, he has referred so freely to the writers to whom he is indebted, and to the works from which he has made extracts, we may reasonably expect that he will as freely refer to the inscriptions, if he really used these as historical material.

¹ Cf. E. Hübner, *De Senatus populi que Romani actis*, in Fleckeisen's *Jahrbücher f. klass. Phil.* (suppl. Band, fünftes Heft), 1860, pp. 559-631.

THE MONUMENTUM ANCYRANUM AND SUETONIUS

In the discussion of the epigraphical sources, especially of the life of Augustus, we must consider, as of prime importance, the Monumentum Ancyranum. Suetonius's indebtedness to this inscription has been treated, other than by those mentioned above (p. 27), by Mommsen in his edition (pp. ix, 1, 31, 50, 91, 132).¹ That it may be better understood how far the language of Suetonius corresponds to that of the monument, I have subjoined the following table, in which I have introduced the text of the inscription so far as it deals with subject-matter transmitted also by Suetonius:

MONUMENTUM ANCYRANUM	SUETONIUS
<p>1. Rerum gestarum divi Augusti, quibus orbem terra[rum] imperio populi Rom(ani) subiecit, et impensarum, quas in rem publicam populumque Ro[ma]num fecit, incisarum in duabus aeneis pilis, quae su[n]t Romae positae, exemplar sub[i]ectum.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>M.A. I, 1-3</i></p> <p>2. Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam [d]iminutione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindica[vi].</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>M.A. I, 6, 7</i></p> <p>3. Res publica n[on]ne quid detrimenti caperet, me] pro praetore simul cum consulibus pro[videre] iussit].</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>M.A. I, 10-12</i></p> <p>4. Qui parentem meum [interfecer]un[t, eo]s in exilium expulsi iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum [faci]en[us, e]t postea bellum inferentis rei publicae vici b[is] a]cie.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Augustus, 101</i></p> <p>... indicem rerum a se gestarum, quem vellet incidi in aeneis tabulis, quae ante Mausoleum staterentur.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aug. 8</i></p> <p>Atque ab eo tempore exercitibus comparatis... solus rem p. tenuit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aug. 10</i></p> <p>iussusque comparato exercitui pro praetore praeesse et cum Hirtio ac Pansa, qui consulatum susceperant, D. Bruto opem ferre.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aug. 10</i></p> <p>nihil convenientius ducens quam necem avunculi vindicare tuerique acta, . . . Brutam Cassiumque . . . legibus adgredi reosque caedis absentis deferre statuit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aug. 13</i></p> <p>Philippense quoque bellum . . . duplici proelio transegit.</p>

¹ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Berol. 1883.

<p><i>M.A. I, 13</i> 7. B]ella terra et mari c[ivilia exter]naque toto in orbe terrarum s[uscepi].</p>	<p><i>Aug. 9</i> Bella civilia quinque gessit.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. I, 21, 22</i> 8. Bis] ovans trium- pha[vi, tris egi c]urulis triumphos.</p>	<p><i>Aug. 22</i> Bis ovans ingressus est urbem, post Philip- pense et rursus post Siculum bellum. Curulis triumphos tris egit, Delmaticum, Actiacum, Alexandrinum, continuo triduo omnes.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. I, 24, 25</i> 7. Ob res a [tunc aut per legatos] meos auspiciis meis terra m[arique] pr[o]spere gestas, etc.</p>	<p><i>Aug. 21</i> Domuit autem partim ductu par- tium auspiciis suis Cantabriam, Aquit- aniam, etc.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. I, 31, 32</i> 8. Dictatura]m et apsent[i et praesenti mihi datam . . . a populo et senatu M. Marce]llo e[st] L. Ar- runtio consulibus non accepti.</p>	<p><i>Aug. 52</i> Dictaturam magna vi offerente populo, genu nixus deiecit ab un- ris toga nudo pectore deprecatus est.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. I, 32-35</i> 9. Non recusavi in summa fru- menti p]enuri[a c]uratio[ne]m an- [nonae, qu]am ita ad[ministravi, ut . . . paucis dieb]us metu et per[ic]ulo quo erat populu]m uni- v[ersum meis impensis liberarem].</p>	<p><i>Aug. 41</i> Frumentum quoque in annonae difficultatibus saepe levissimo, inter- dum nullo pretio viritim admensus est tesserasque nummarias dupli- cavit. Cf. also <i>Aug. 42</i>.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. I, 35, 36</i> 10. Con[sulatum tum dat]um annum e[st] perpetuum non ac- cepi].</p>	<p><i>Aug. 26</i> treats of the consulships of Augustus, but nothing is said about the consulship for life being offered him.</p>
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<p><i>M.A. Gr. III, 14-19</i> 11. τῆς [τε σ]υνκλήτου καὶ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων ὁμολογ[ο]ύντων, ἐν[α ἐπιμε]λητῆς τῶν τε νόμων καὶ τῶν τρόπων ἐ[πι τῇ με]γίστῃ [ἐξ]ου[σί]α μ[ε]τ[ε]νοσ[το]ν ἀρχὴν οὐδε- μ[ία]ν παρὰ τὰ πά[ρ]α τ[α] ἐ[θ]η δεδομένην ἀνεδέξαμεν.</p>	<p><i>Aug. 27</i> Receipt et morum le- gumque regimen aequè perpetuum . . .</p>
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<p><i>M.A. Gr. III, 19-23</i> 12. ἃ δὲ τότε δὲ ἐμοῦ ἢ σύνκλητος οἰκονο- μείσθαι ἐβουλεύετο, τῆς δημοκρατικῆς ἐξου[σί]ας ὡν ἐτέλη[σα. Κ]αὶ ταύτης αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς συνάρχοντα αὐτ[ὸς] ἀπὸ τῆς συνκλήτου π[ερ]ι- κισ αἰτήσας [ἐλ]αβον.</p>	<p><i>Aug. 27</i> Tribuniciam potesta- tem perpetuam recepit, in qua semel atque ite- rum per singula lustra collegam sibi cooptavit.</p>
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