
THE MEMORY OF SULLA IN EPHEBUS

ERGÜN LAFLI
MAURIZIO BUORA

*To the victims of four earthquakes
on February 6, 20 and 26, 2023
in Kahramanmaraş, Hatay and Malatya
in southern Turkey*

ABSTRACT

In this brief paper, we focus on the monument of C. Memmius and its inscription in Ephesus in western Turkey. C. Memmius was the grandson of Sulla and was mentioned in the inscription of this Ephesian monument as the epigraph of the dedicatee. After discussing the monument's function, dating and inscription from different perspectives, in the concluding part, we refer to the positive memory of Sulla in Asia Minor, especially in Ephesus.

REZUMAT: COMEMORAREA LUI SULLA LA EFES

În această scurtă notă, ne concentrăm asupra monumentului lui C. Memmius și inscripția acestuia din Efes, în vestul Turciei. C. Memmius era nepotul lui Sulla și a fost menționat în inscripția acestui monument efesian ca epigrafă a dedicantului. După ce am discutat despre funcția, datarea și inscripția monumentului din diferite perspective, în partea de încheiere, ne referim la memoria pozitivă a lui Sulla în Asia Mică, în special la Efes.

KEYWORDS: C. Memmius, the monument of C. Memmius, Ephesus, Asia Minor, first century BC, Late Republican period, Roman East, Latin epigraphy, Roman history.

CUVINTE CHEIE: C. Memmius, monumentul lui C. Memmius, Efes, Asia Mică, secolul I î.Hr., perioada republicană târzie, Orientul roman, epigrafia latină, istoria romană.

Introduction

In 1957 and 1958 a monument of particular importance was excavated in Ephesus in western Turkey¹ (**fig. 1**), which over the course of time had to undergo renovations until the Byzantine period. Called the monument of C. Memmius, it has been the subject of numerous papers by Austrian, Italian, Greek² and Turkish³ scholars. Gaius Memmius (c. 99-c. 49 BC) was a Roman politician, orator and poet, and is most famous as the dedicatee of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, and for his appearances in the poetry of Catullus. He erected this monument to honour himself and three generations of his family. The monument originally had the form of a four-sided victory arch, and there were three sets of stairs between the columns holding an arch. The memorial had four facades depicting Sulla's army and reliefs symbolizing the virtues of the dictator. Sulla, his son Gaius Memmius, and his grandson (also Gaius Memmius) are depicted on the reliefs of this monument of ancestral glory.

Unfortunately, not all authors are aware of studies carried out in other countries, so some contributions that appeared in Turkey completely ignore the Italian literature. Within all of these researches, the studies of Marcello Spanu in 1988 and 2008 and Mario Torelli in 1988 and 1997 stand out and have allowed us to see the monument in a new light compared to the initial editions. It has been studied especially by some art and architectural historians, therefore its pertinent epigraphs have had less attention.

¹ Alzinger 1971, 9.

² Mallios 2010.

³ Şimşek 2014.



Fig. 1. Ephesus and other places referred to in the text (by S. Pataci, 2023).

Function

The monument of C. Memmius in Ephesus seems to be established in its most ancient phase, characterized by three large semicircular niches, as a funerary monument, located in the most crucial street of Ephesus, on the site where in ancient times extended a vast cemetery area.⁴ The choice of its location in a privileged position and in the highest place in Ephesus reveals that it had to be loaded with very broad meanings. But similar choices were made in other cities of Asia Minor, e.g. in Sagalassus in Pisidia as regards the so-called northwestern heroon.⁵

Dating

On the basis of other scholars Timothy Wiseman had already clearly reaffirmed in 1967 that in Rome there were two gentes denominated as Memmii who were belonging to two different tribes.⁶ The fact that in the Ephesian monument, there was a dedication to C. Memmius C. f. has identified these with the homonymous *consul suffectus* of 34 BC, who, according to Attilio Degrassi, could be son of L(ucius).⁷

The dating proposed in an earlier publication, i.e. the Augustan age,⁸ was anticipated independently by two Italian scholars, Spanu and Torelli, at the end of the 1980s. Spanu then further refined the analysis, finding elements typical of Italic art,⁹ as if the client had come from a native of the peninsula. Torelli also returned to the subject, seeing in the monument of C. Memmius a “masterpiece of nobiliar ideology”.¹⁰ Today there is a general agreement to date the monument to around the mid-first century BC.

The epigraph of the dedicatee

The inscription of the monument of C. Memmius in Ephesus referred to Sulla's capture of the city after the Mithridatic Wars in the first century BC and is generally believed to read “to Gaius Memmius, son of Gaius

⁴ Spanu 2010.

⁵ See Waelkens, Vandeput, Berns, Arıkan, Poblome, Torun 2000.

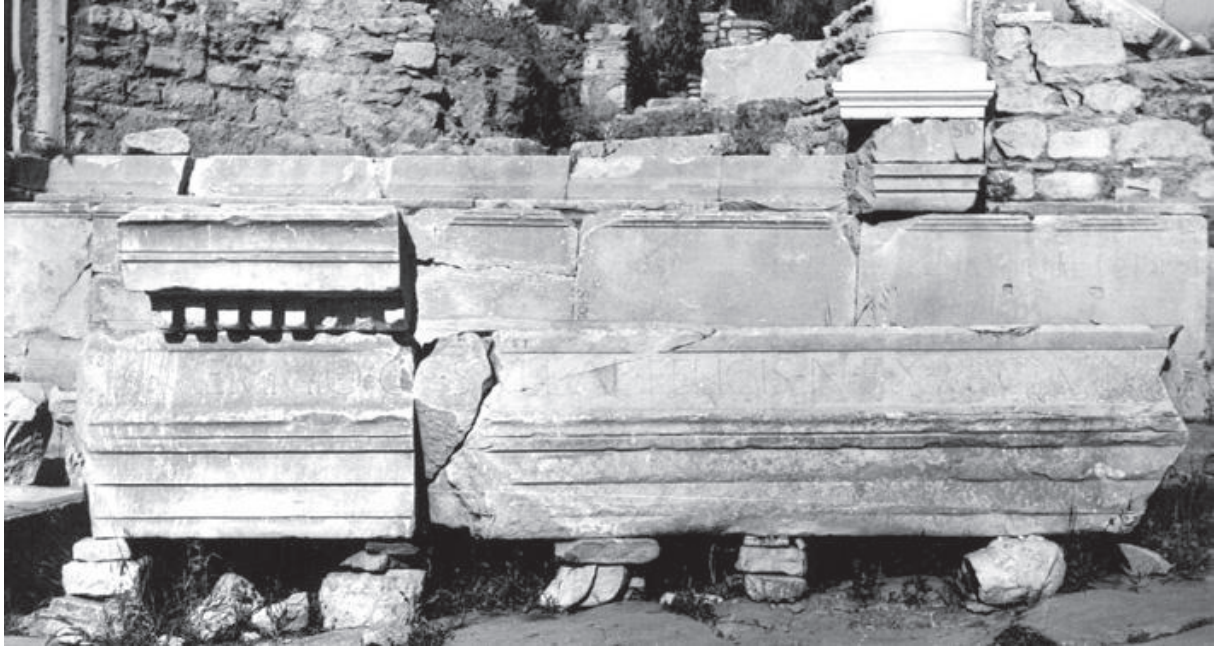
⁶ Wiseman 1967, 164.

⁷ Degrassi 1954, 130.

⁸ Alzinger 1974, 19; Feldman Weiss 2003, 92.

⁹ Spanu 2010.

¹⁰ Torelli 1997.



Figs 2-3: The inscription of the monument of C. Memmius in Ephesus (after Alzinger, Bammer 1971).

Memmius, grandson of Sulla Felix (who paid for this monument) from his own funds” (figs 2-3). It also informs that the statue of Lucius Cornelius Sulla once stood on a base built of stone blocks. Known since the 1950s, this inscription is sometimes misquoted. Instead of *pequnia*¹¹ (fig. 4), we can read in some papers *pecunia* and the text is integrated as *ex pecunia publica*, an expression of which there is no trace here. In the first place, it must be observed that in the monument there were at least two epigraphs, in Latin, to which must be added a fragment in Greek that Torelli integrated as *Mve]σθεως*, i.e. a mythical progenitor of the *gens Memmia*.¹² This allowed him to propose that the ancestors of the deceased C. Memmius C. f. were in the attic, and welcomed him into heaven. The hypothesis that this fragment could belong to a cartouche affixed next to one of the representations of the upper floor is very brilliant. However, we do not understand how a fragment inscribed with letters at a height of 2 cm could be read if placed at a height of about 12 meters above unless the floor of the upper storey of the monument was practicable. Furthermore, the presence of an explanation in Greek next to a sculpture could suggest that the work had been executed by a Greek artist, thus partly coming to confirm Torelli’s other brilliant hypothesis of considering the author of the monument to be Athenian C. Avianius Evander, which was favoured by C. Memmius, at least in Rome.¹³

M·ANNAVS
Q·F·III·VIR·D
Q·VINO·PORTA
REFIC·LOC·AVIT
EX·S·C·E·I·D·E·M·Q
PROB·AVIT

Fig. 4: A detail from the inscription on figs 2-3 (after Alzinger, Bammer 1971).

¹¹ Feldman Weiss 2003, 91.

¹² Torelli 1997, 166-167.

¹³ Cf. Torelli 1997, 162. However, the same is referred by Horace during the time of Augustus (Sat., I, 3, 90) as an artist who worked metals, i.e. *catillum Evandri*.



Fig. 5: An inscription from Aquileia in northeastern Italy (after Hübner 1885; re-drawn by L. Özlüoğlu, 2023).

The first observation is that the archaic form *pegunia* is used in the inscription, instead of *possibile*, which was common in the imperial period. The peculiar shape of the Q, with the perfectly horizontal stroke, is typical of the Late Republican period. Ernst Willibald Emil Hübner already indicated this as typical of the Caesarian age, citing an example from an inscription from Aquileia in which this type of Q is repeated several times (fig. 5). We can also add that the lateral rods of the letter M are slightly oblique, which is reminiscent of the older form.

The text was therefore commissioned by a person who spoke and thought in Latin. Under no circumstances could he have disposed of public money from the city of Ephesus, so it makes no sense to believe that the epigraph could include an expression such as *ex pegunia publica*. In the form that was reconstructed by the Austrian excavators, the inscription reaches a length of just over 3.70 m². According to the reconstruction by Ulrike Outschar, the total length of the epistyle must have been around six metres¹⁴. Therefore, there is the possibility that in the long-missing part after *ex pegunia* [sva there was the name of the father C. Memmius and a formula like *f(aciendum) c(uravit)* or similar. Why on earth should the city government of Ephesus have erected a monument with an epigraph in Latin? Eventually, he would have had it written in Greek or at the most in bilingual form, like so many other inscriptions. We, therefore, do not believe it is a tribute from the city, but rather a private monument.

The dedicatee

Another epigraph, which was already placed at the beginning of one side of the epistyle, consists of only three letters, C. Me[mmio]¹⁵. It makes us understand that on two sides there were two identical inscriptions. The completely empty space on fragment S4 demonstrates that one side (the back one?) was without any inscription. No fragment exists of the fourth side. It is usually believed that the dedicatee was the former *propraetor* of the province of Bithynia, who was a lover of literature¹⁶ and who would have gone into exile around 52 BC due to a tangle of political scandals in the capital. Cicero addresses him in a letter in the summer of the year 51 BC, when he arrives in Athens.¹⁷ He does not find *Memmius*, who had left for Mytilene the day before.¹⁸ It is possible that around that date C. *Memmius*, who was travelling on the Asian coast, could have reached Ephesus – just a hundred miles away as the crow flies – where he could probably count on good friendships.

Sulla's grandson

The epigraph of the dedicatee contains the formula *Sullae Felicis n(epos)*. In this way, we attempted to re-establish a sort of family tree that went back directly to grandfather Sulla, father of his mother Fausta. Of her, the sources, which are either true or invented, have informed us about a licentious life and a divorce from C. *Memmius* in 56 BC. She was born shortly before 86 BC and would marry in 72 BC.¹⁹ The marriage, therefore, lasted nearly sixteen years; C. *Memmius* could have been born at the earliest in the late seventies. If, as we hypothesize, the monument dedicated to him had a funerary character when he died, precisely in Ephesus, he must have been twenty years old or a little more. So the reference to his illustrious ancestor can be a sort of guarantee for a positive (hoped-for) political future or even express regret for a future that would never have been realised, as we see a few years later

¹⁴ Outschar 1990, 69.

¹⁵ Called S4 by the publishers of the monument, cf. Alzinger 1971, 32.

¹⁶ About him lately Farrell 2020.

¹⁷ For all problems relating to this letter, see Morgan, Taylor 2017.

¹⁸ Cic., Ad Att., V, 11, 6: *me ad Memmium scribere, qui pridie quam ego Athenas veni Mytilenas profectus erat*.

¹⁹ Münzer 1931.

in Virgil's *tu Marcellus eris*, i.e. Virgil reading the Aeneid to Livia, Octavia and Augustus. Here the mention of the grandfather recalls a similar phenomenon highlighted by Michael H. Crawford in connection with two denarii issued in 54 BC by the *triumvir Q. Pompeius Rufus* commemorating his grandparents, i.e. the homonymous *Q. Pompeius Rufus* and *Silla*, who were both consuls in 88 BC.²⁰ The phenomenon reappears in the imperial period in many official inscriptions mentioning the emperors.²¹

We can think about Julius Caesar's proud affirmation of being Marius' nephew pronounced in Rome during the funeral of his grandmother Iulia in 69 BC.²²

Sulla in Ephesus

In our inscription, the precise reference to Sulla on a prominent and highly visible monument in Ephesus suggests that at the time there were many people who had good memories of the Roman general. Despite the serious measures he himself took in Ephesus in 84 BC, after some "rebels" had turned against the *mercatores* and the Roman soldiers in 88 BC – on these, we have precise reports, especially by Appian²³ – there was certainly a good part of the population in Ephesus who had benefited from the favours of Silla and obtained Roman citizenship. Probably on their support *C. Memmius* could count for the erection of a symbolic monument.

An interesting document probably refers to this period: it is a lead weight from the ex-private collection of Ms Berna Oğuz in Izmir, and today in the collection of Mr Koray Selçik, also in Izmir (fig. 6). It bears the inscription ETΩI / A crown N which corresponds to the civic year 51 or to the date 84/83 BC.²⁴ It is possible that the renewal of all the weights of the city – or perhaps of the Artemision – should be related to the presence of Sulla or at least to the serious measures he took to punish the Ephesians.



Fig. 6 : An inscribed lead weight with from the private collection of Koray Selçik in Izmir (ex Berna Oğuz Collection, acc. no. 278) (photo by B. Oğuz, 2021).

Conclusions

What is left of the Ephesian inscription does not allow us to say that it reported the formula *pequnia publica*. Therefore the monument could be built at the private expense of the father of the deceased, obviously with the permission of the community and the administration of Ephesus. The choice of the form *peqvnia*, with the straight horizontal stroke, confirms a dating within the end of the Republican age.

In any case, the choice to highlight the lineage of *C. Memmius* from Silla implies the awareness that in the city of Ephesus there was a large number of people who positively remembered the politician, who had severely punished Rome's opponents precisely in Ephesus, but had also allowed many people to acquire Roman citizenship in the first century BC.

Acknowledgements

Fig. 1 was arranged by Dr Sami Patacı (Ardahan) in 2023 for which we would like to express Dr Patacı our gratitude. Fig. 5 was re-drawn by Ms Leyla Özlüoğlu (Izmir) whom we would like to thank sincerely.

Acknowledgements are due also to Professor Erwin Pochmarski (Graz) who kindly read a draft of the paper and shared his comments. We have attempted to incorporate his suggestions in the hope of making this a stronger and more useful paper. We, however, are solely responsible for the final outcome.

²⁰ Crawford 1974 456, no. 434.

²¹ Among the many examples from Hadrian onwards we recall that of Septimius Severus in AD 206-207 in ILSARD-I-375-46. Plut., Caes., V, 2.

²² Appian., Mith, XII, 9, 61-63.

²⁴ Cf. Rigsby 1979.

REFERENCES

- Alzinger, W. 1971: *Das Monument des C. Memmius*, Forschungen in Ephesos 7, Vienna: Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut.
- Alzinger, W. 1974: *Augusteische Architektur in Ephesos*, Sonderschriften, herausgeben vom Österreichischen Archäologischen Institut in Wien 16, Vienna: Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut.
- Bammer, A. 2007: Zum Monument des C. Memmius in Ephesos. In: M. Meyer (ed.), *Neue Zeiten - neue Sitten: zu Rezeption und Integration römischen und italischen Kulturguts in Kleinasien*, Wiener Forschungen zur Archäologie 12, Vienna: Phoibos, 57–61.
- Crawford, M. H. 1974: *Roman Republican coinage*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Degrassi, A. 1954: *Fasti Capitolini, Corpus scriptorum latinorum Paravianum*, Turin: G. B. Paravia.
- Farrel, J. 2020: Was Memmius a good king? In: D. O'Rourke (ed.), *Approaches to Lucretius: traditions and innovations in reading the De rerum natura*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 219–240.
- Feldman Weiss, C. 2011: *Living fluidly: uses and meanings of water in Asia Minor (second century BCE – second century CE)*, doctoral thesis, Brown University, Providence, RI <<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:11442/PDF/>> (accessed on 15 February 2023).
- Hübner, A. 1885: *Exempla scripturae epigraphicae Latinae a Caesaris dictatoris morte ad aetatem Iustiniani consilio et auctoritate Academiae litterarum regiae Borussicae*, Berlin: apud G. Reimerum.
- ILSARD: G. Sotgiu, *Iscrizioni latine della Sardegna*, Supplemento al Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum X e all'Ephemeris Epigraphica VIII, Padova: CEDAM.
- Mallios, Y. 2010: *Ephesus (Antiquity), Monument of Memmius*. In: *Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic world*, vol. 1: *Asia Minor*, Athens: Foundation of the Hellenic World, 181–192 <<http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=8258>> (accessed on 15 February 2023).
- Morgan, L., Taylor, B. 2017: Memmius the Epicurean, *The Classical Quarterly* 67/2, 528–541 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26546337>> (accessed on 15 February 2023).
- Münzer, F. 1931: C. Memmius. In: W. Kroll (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 15/1: *Mazaïos–Mesyros*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 609–616.
- Outschar, U. 1990: Zum Monument des C. Memmius, *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien* 60, 57–85.
- Rigsby, K. J. 1979: The era of the province of Asia, *Phoenix*, 33, 39–47.
- Spanu, M. 1988: Architettura e urbanistica di Efeso. Sviluppi e problemi, *Prospettiva* 52, 41–49.
- Spanu, M. 2010: Appunti sui monumenti funerari intra moenia a Efeso. Aspetti architettonici e urbanistici. In: M. Valenti (ed.), *Monumenta. I mausolei romani, tra commemorazione funebre e propaganda celebrativa. Atti del Convegno di Studi (Monte Porzio Catone, 25 ottobre 2008), Tusculana - Quaderni del Museo di Monte Porzio Catone* 3, Rome: Edizione Exòrma, 53–66.
- Şimşek, G. 2014: Yeni Bıçimlenme Süreci Olarak Kültürel Miras / Cultural heritage as a new formation process, *Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1/2, 90–105 <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/adusobed/issue/17959/188813>> (accessed on 15 February 2023).
- Torelli, M. 1988: Il monumento efesino di Memmius, *Scienze dell'Antichità. Storia archeologia antropologia* 2, 403–442.
- Torelli, M. 1997: *Il rango, il rito e l'immagine. Alle origini della rappresentazione storica romana*, Saggi di archeologia 2, Milan: Electa.
- Waelkens, M., Vandeput, L., Berns, Ch., Arian, B., Poblome, J., Torun, E. 2000: The northwest Heroon at Sagalassos. In: M. Waelkens / L. Loots (eds.), *Sagalassos*, vol. 5: *Report on survey and excavation campaigns of 1996 and 1997*, Acta archaeologica Lovaniensia: Monographiae 11, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 553–593.
- Wiseman, T. P. 1967: Lucius Memmius and his family, *The Classical Quarterly* 17/1, 164–167 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/637776>> (accessed on 15 February 2023).

Lista ilustrațiilor

Fig. 1: Efes și alte locuri menționate în text (de S. Patacı, 2023).

Figurile 2-3: Inscripția monumentului lui C. Memmius din Efes (după Alzinger, Bammer 1971).

Fig. 4: Detaliu din inscripția de pe figurile 2-3 (după Alzinger, Bammer 1971).

Fig. 5: O inscripție din Aquileia, în nord-estul Italiei (după Hübner 1885; redesenată de L. Özlüoğlu, 2023).

Fig. 6: O greutate de plumb inscripționată din colecția privată a lui Koray Selçik din Izmir (colecția Berna Oğuz, nr. de înregistrare 278) (fotografie de B. Oğuz, 2021).

ERGÜN LAFLI
Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi,
Arkeoloji Bölümü, İzmir, Turkey
elaflı@yahoo.ca

MAURIZIO BUORA
Società Friulana di Archeologia, Udine, Italy.
mbuora@libero.it

