

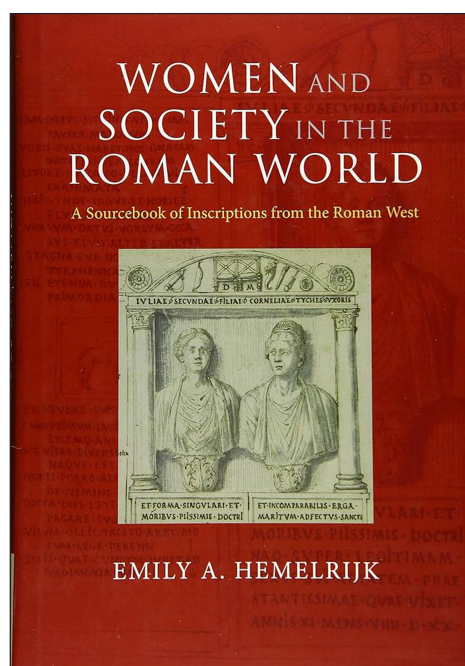
Book Review

Hemelrijk, Emily A. 2023. *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscriptions from the Roman West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-316-50905-0 paperback £22.99.

The paperback edition of Hemelrijk's sourcebook (originally published in 2021), presents an impressive collection of inscriptions and graffiti that sheds new light on women's lives in the Roman west. Primarily intended for a non-specialist audience, it includes around 600 translated sources in English, along with numerous illustrations. In this regard, Hemelrijk has done an excellent job. While the book is designed with a non-professional readership in mind, scholars will also find it valuable as the material is well-organized and contains precise commentaries and annotations. This book is intended to complement, rather than replace, other well-established sourcebooks such as Lefkowitz and Fant (*Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation*).

Hemelrijk's emphasis on inscriptions — a type of evidence that is often confined to more specialized works — is a refreshing change by significantly contributing to making this type of material accessible to a wider audience.

The book starts with a preface clearly outlining the chronological scope and criteria used for selecting sources. Following this, a glossary of Latin terms is included. Though



brief, it is a useful addition for those without specialized knowledge. The book also includes three maps of Roman Italy and the Imperial provinces. In the introduction, readers will find a concise and thorough overview of the selected epigraphic sources. The book itself is organised into seven chapters, each introduced by careful and informative discussions. Black-and-white photographs are also provided to illustrate 71 inscriptions. These figures are helpful additions, particularly for considering the scale of the text and the presence (or absence) of decorative elements. Lastly, for each inscription, its date (ranging from the first century BC to the third century AD), provenance, and references from epigraphic corpora (such as *AE*, *CIL*, *IGUR*, and *InscrIt*) are meticulously recorded, thereby enhancing the book's usefulness for teaching and further research. Although the original texts of the inscriptions are not included — only their translations — these are available through an open access download on the Cambridge University Press website.

The book is structured thematically as follows: In Chapter 1, Hemelrijk provides evidence highlighting the central roles women played in households, not only as wives and mothers but also as daughters, grandmothers and members of stepfamilies and foster families. Women's identities are also the focus of Chapter 2 which explores their legal status and ethnic background. This chapter is divided into two subsections: the first addresses topics such as slaves' employment, relationship with masters, marriage between patrons and freed persons, and the *vicarii* (or 'sub-slaves'), while the second subsection, much shorter in length, covers women's citizenship and ethnicity with 19 inscriptions drawn exclusively from the northern provinces of the Roman Empire (Britannia, Gallia Lugdunensis, Germania, Noricum, Pannonia, Raetia).

Chapter 3 is the most extensive, containing 136 inscriptions which are related to women's 'occupations'. It begins with medical professions and continues to present women in roles such as educators, hairdressers, shop owners, merchants, entertainers, sex workers, landowners and workshop managers. Most of the inscriptions are from the Italian peninsula, with the material organized thematically rather than chronologically.

The inclusion of evidence about women's geographic mobility in Chapter 4, which mainly focuses on women's sociability and agency within their communities, is somewhat unclear. This chapter includes important inscriptions related to female *amicitia*, illustrating its parallels to male friendship, as well as various curse tablets, binding spells and Pompeian graffiti pertaining to women's love affairs and conflicts. Additionally, the chapter introduces significant evidence of the personal patronage of affluent and elite women in Italy, alongside their influence over *collegia*, *corpora* and *sodalitates*.

Chapter 5, titled simply 'Religion', offers a comprehensive overview of women's religious agency, a topic of considerable interest to modern scholars. It includes subsections on priestesses, female cult personnel, as well as dedicants and devotees. From serving — in an official capacity — deities such as Ceres, Juno and Bona Dea as *sacerdotes* as well as *ministrae* and *magistrae*, to making offering to various deities, including Jupiter, Dis Pater and Mercurius, this chapter underscores the diversity of religious offices and practices available to women in the Roman Empire.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on affluent and prominent women. Chapter 6 introduces source materials on Roman women whose patronage enabled them to receive public honours, and women who financed public buildings and food donations, as well as women who were formally appointed as patronesses or 'mothers' of their cities. A subsequent group of 15 inscriptions highlight Roman women who were recipients of public portraits statues and public funerals, ending with six Pompeian graffiti that attests to women's involvement in local politics as supporters (*rogatores*) of candidates. Chapter 7, devoted to *Imperial Women*, includes a modest selection compared to the extensive epigraphic evidence available on these women. Starting with the much-debated statue base of Cornelia Africana, the chapter proceeds with inscriptions documenting key events in the lives of women from the emperors' families. Further subjects covered include the many honorific titles received by some imperial women during their lifetimes and a selection of evidence about the vast estates, workshops, and staff owned by these women.

The sourcebook concludes with a bibliography, followed by an intuitive index that lists both page numbers and the inscription number, making it easier for readers to navigate the materials.

Women and Society in the Roman World is an outstanding work that will undoubtedly prove to be an invaluable resource for students and scholars alike. By providing a carefully curated selection of inscriptions covering a considerably broad spectrum of topics related to women, it effectively fulfils its purpose — to serve as a core text for university courses on women in the ancient world and gender studies.

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