

Abstract

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### **Differences in the epigraphic habit in the rural landscapes of Gallia Narbonensis**

Southern Gaul seems to provide us with highly literate societies where writing was widely used not only in the countless towns and *uici*, but also in the countryside. In a rural context, the wealth of epigraphic testimonies shows an enormous diversity. There are the high-status marble inscriptions that reflect elite self-display and the rather crude inscriptions set up by members of the subaltern classes. And between these two extremes we find a large variety of inscriptions that reflect different epigraphic habits and varying levels of literacy among the rural population. Especially in a religious context, we can recognise that the traditional epigraphic conventions were often suspended, while some practices derived from the use of Greek and Gallo-Greek in the late Republic. Moreover, it becomes obvious that the epigraphic habits differ enormously in the various regions of Gallia Narbonensis: for example, rural epigraphy was largely dominated by elites in Vienne and her territory, contradicting most of the other *civitates*, while in some regions, like the territory of the Vocontii, inscriptions were primarily used for religious purposes. Graffiti, for example from the sanctuary of Châteauneuf or the pottery kilns of La Graufesenque, provide a very different insight in people's literacy. Altogether, the people in Gallia Narbonensis show an enormous creativity in their use of Latin epigraphy.