

Jason MORALEE

Dedications for Salvation's Sake from Parthian and Roman Dura Europos

A common type of dedicatory inscription, found in both Greek and Latin, asks for the salvation of the Roman emperors (Latin: *pro salute Augusti*, Greek: *hyper s'Útírias Sebastou*). Less commonly, it asks for the salvation of prominent individuals or the dedicator himself and his family members. The epigraphic record at Dura Europos provides an ideal case study for how these inscriptions were embedded in the social and religious landscape of the city as it was transformed under the pressure of Roman occupation. It will be demonstrated that the habit of making dedications for salvation's sake found new expression with the arrival of Roman soldiers in the second century AD. The Roman military calendar, dedicatory inscriptions, and graffiti, all left by Roman officials and soldiers in the military quarter established in the city, show that dedications for salvation's sake were chiefly reserved for the living distant emperor and were made by those with a direct connection to the Roman state in association with Roman military and religious buildings.

Recent interest in the Aramaic equivalent of the formula has shown that this type of inscription functioned to establish and ritually affirm relationships, vertically linking the dedicator to superiors and inferiors, including the gods and distant rulers, local officials and children, while simultaneously linking the dedicator horizontally to his peers, who used such inscriptions competitively to publicize their individual generosity and their family's elite standing or aspirations. This paper investigates the pattern of this dedication's use both in the Parthian and Roman periods of Dura Europos, concluding that the native habit of producing these dedications lost its impetus as Roman officials and soldiers came to dominate the epigraphic and physical landscape of the city.