

SUMMARY

“*De verborum significatu* as a source text for researching rituals of ancient Romans”

Verius Flaccus, a Roman grammarian who taught Octavian Augustus’ grandsons, achieved distinction through authoring *De verborum significatu*, the first alphabetically arranged Latin dictionary, presumably compiled on Augustus’ orders. The lexicon’s entries explain terms and notions from ancient Roman history, law, religion and topography already unfamiliar to Romans living under Augustus, with the author’s aim being to familiarise his readers with Roman traditions. Augustus not only put an end to civil wars, but also extended the boundaries of Rome through annexing neighbouring lands; their former inhabitants flocked into Rome and changed her social and cultural composition. A staunch conservative, Augustus sought to counteract foreign influences, promoting age-old customs and rites. Accordingly, an alphabetic lexicon such as *De verborum significatu* could have been written on the emperor’s orders to instruct immigrants and culturally-ignorant Romans about their cultural heritage. Drawing from numerous sources, Flaccus quoted unsigned administrative, legal and religious documents; furthermore, he drew passages from long-lost works of lawyers, historians, grammarians, rhetoricians and poets.

Regrettably, Flaccus’ lexicon survived only as a summary by one Pompeius Festus, a Roman grammarian living in the second century CE. Festus aimed to prune the lengthy text (entries under P supposedly filled five volumes) to more manageable proportions, deleting entries he believed were too obscure to 2nd c. CE Romans. A work of twenty volumes, Festus’s summary devoted every volume to a separate letter, with the infamous letter P given two volumes. Little of Festus’ work survived: its only manuscript (*Codex Farnesianus*, 9th c. CE, currently in Naples) was badly damaged in fires, surviving volumes (M to V) in a very poor condition.

In the eighth century CE, Paul Deacon (a Benedictine monk and grammarian living at Charlemagne’s court) produced an epitome of Festus’ summary as an interesting addition to Charlemagne’s library. Condensing Festus’ twenty volumes into nineteen (with two volumes of P merged), Paul regrettably omitted many passages—not only quotes from ancient authors, but also those sections he could not comprehend, due to his incomplete command of Roman culture and Latin. Paul’s deletions become particularly visible in comparison between his text and entries surviving from Festus’ work.

In sum, over three thousand entries survived to this day, with one fourth of them concerning ritual observances of ancient Romans; as such, the lexicon is of immense value to scholars of Roman religion. Inopportunately, verification of information given in either Festus or Paul’s entries poses remarkable difficulties. Not only are extant corpora poorly preserved, but also there are very few *comparanda*, with most ancient works quoted in *De verborum significatu* lost to the vagaries of time.

Accordingly, the following doctoral dissertation aimed to carefully juxtapose, analyse and reconstruct extant entries, regarding their importance to ancient Roman ritual studies.

The dissertation in question encompasses the introduction (discussing the lexicon's transmission history and manuscripts), seven chapters and the conclusions section. The selection of entries enabled the author to group them into seven distinct categories, translating handily into chapters. The first chapter ('Main notions of Roman ritual observance: *religio, sacrum, ritus*') discusses entries explaining the basic building blocks of the Roman belief system, whereas the second one ('Ancient Roman divination') analyses entries pertinent to another crucial aspect of Roman ritual, namely, *disciplina augurandi*. The third ('Deities in entries') and fourth ('Public and private festivities') chapters respectively touch on worshipped deities and their festivals, either public (*sacra publica*) or private (*sacra privata*); in turn, the fifth chapter ('Ancient Roman priests') focuses on priestly orders, whose members officiated rituals and ceremonies. The sixth chapter ('Sacrifices and sacrificial implements') discusses entries relating to performance of *sacrificium*, that is, sacrificing and utensils used in the process, whereas the seventh chapter concerns entries about holy sites and temples ('Holy sites – *loca sacra*'). In the final section of the dissertation, one finds the discussion of conclusions drawn from the source analysis, the bibliography of source texts and secondary literature, as well as the index of entries discussed within the dissertation.