

# ***Ex voto***

## **The Prevention of Risks with the help of the Gods**

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SFB 933 – TP A03-UP2

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Masarykova univerzita  
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**UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG**  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

## Examples of Latin votive inscriptions

CIL XIII 8793, Colijnsplaat



CIL V 1613 = InscrAqu III 3356,  
Aquileia



CIL V 6875 = InscrIt XI 1, 73,  
Great St. Bernard Pass



# Database of the latin inscriptions made by Manfred Clauss and Wolfgang Slaby

## EDCS



### Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby

#### EDCS

Manfred Clauss / Anne Kolb / Wolfgang A. Slaby



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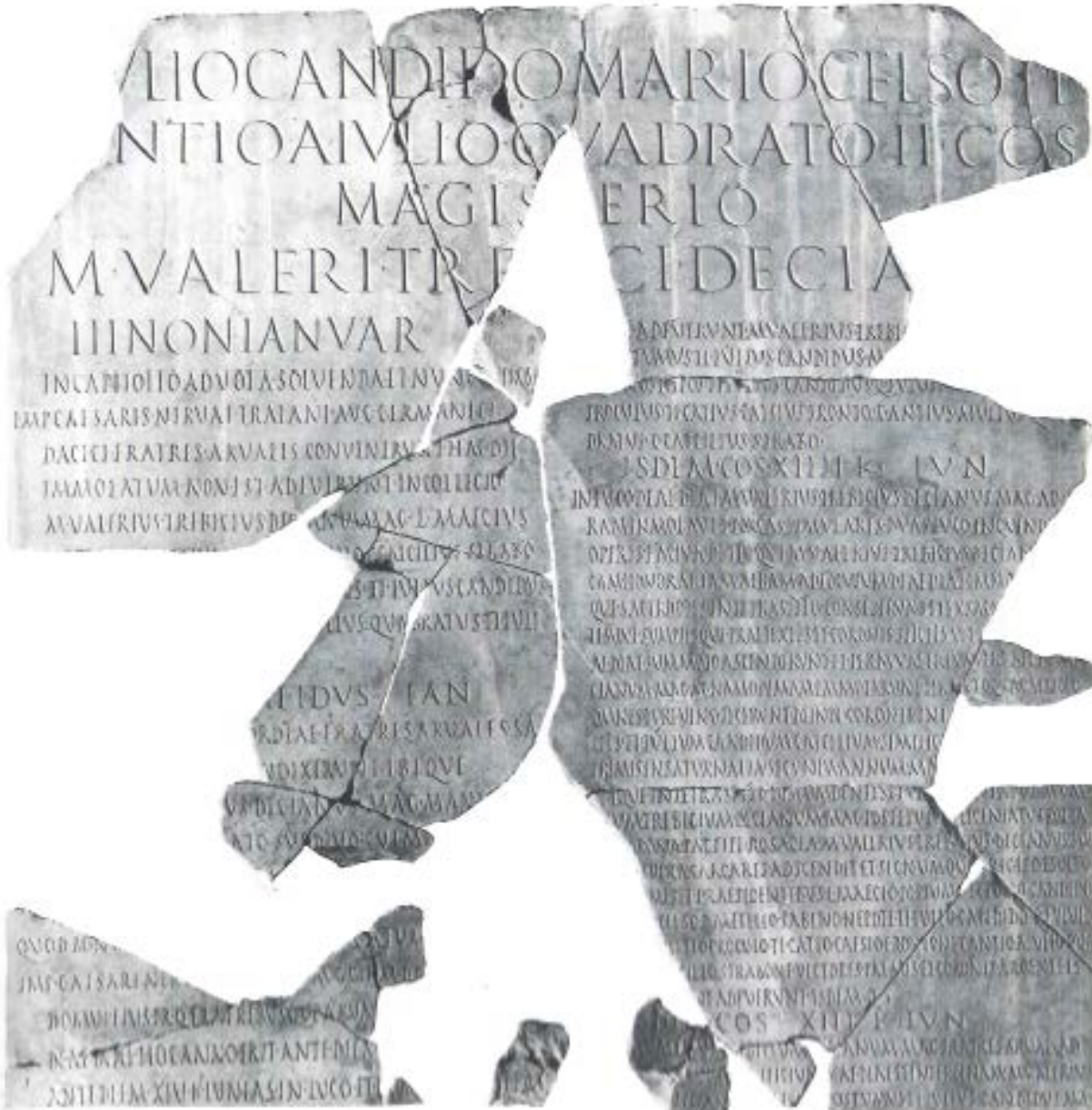
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The PHP routines for the database query and for the web-presentation of the search results were developed by [Dr. Bernward Tewes](#) with assistance of [Barbara Woitas](#). We cordially thank both members of the computing center of the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Modifications, advices and proposals should be sent to the initiator of the database, [Prof. Dr. Dr. Manfred Clauss](#).

[http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi.php?s\\_sprache=en](http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi.php?s_sprache=en)



# The steps of a vow



Year 105 AD

Main sources:

Literary texts

Fragment of the Acta of the Arval Brothers

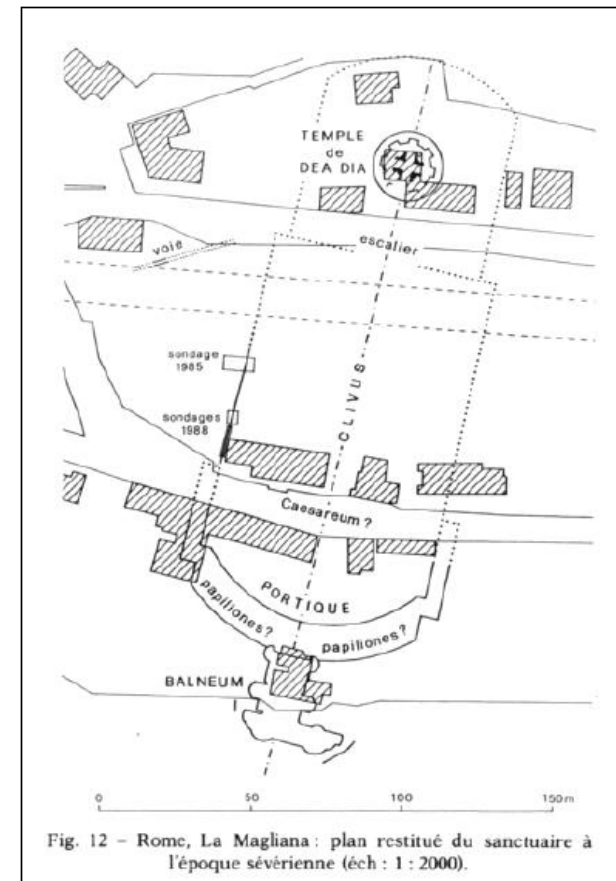


Fig. 12 - Rome, La Magliana : plan restitué du sanctuaire à l'époque sévérienne (éch : 1 : 2000).

## The steps of a vow

1. *votum concipere*  
define the wording of a vow
2. *votum nuncupare*  
pronounce the vow
3. *votum suscipere*  
assume the obligation to the God
4. *voti damnatus* ou *voti reus*  
obligation to the God
5. *votum solvere* ou *votum reddere*  
fulfillment of the vow

## 1. *votum concipere*

CIL III 5862 (p. 1854, 2328,50, 2328,51), Zwiefalten

Deo Invicto / Soli templum / a solo resti/tuit Valerius /  
Venustus v(ir) p(erfectissimus) p(raeses) /  
p(rovinciae) R(aetiae) sicuti **voto / ac mente**  
**con/ceperat** red/ditus sanitati / v(otum) s(olvit)  
l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)

Valerius Venustus, vir perfectissimus, governor of Rhetia, renovated a temple for the undefeated god Sol from top to bottom. As he had defined the wording of his vow, he fulfilled it, willingly and deservedly, after his healing from an illness.





## 2. *votum nuncupare*

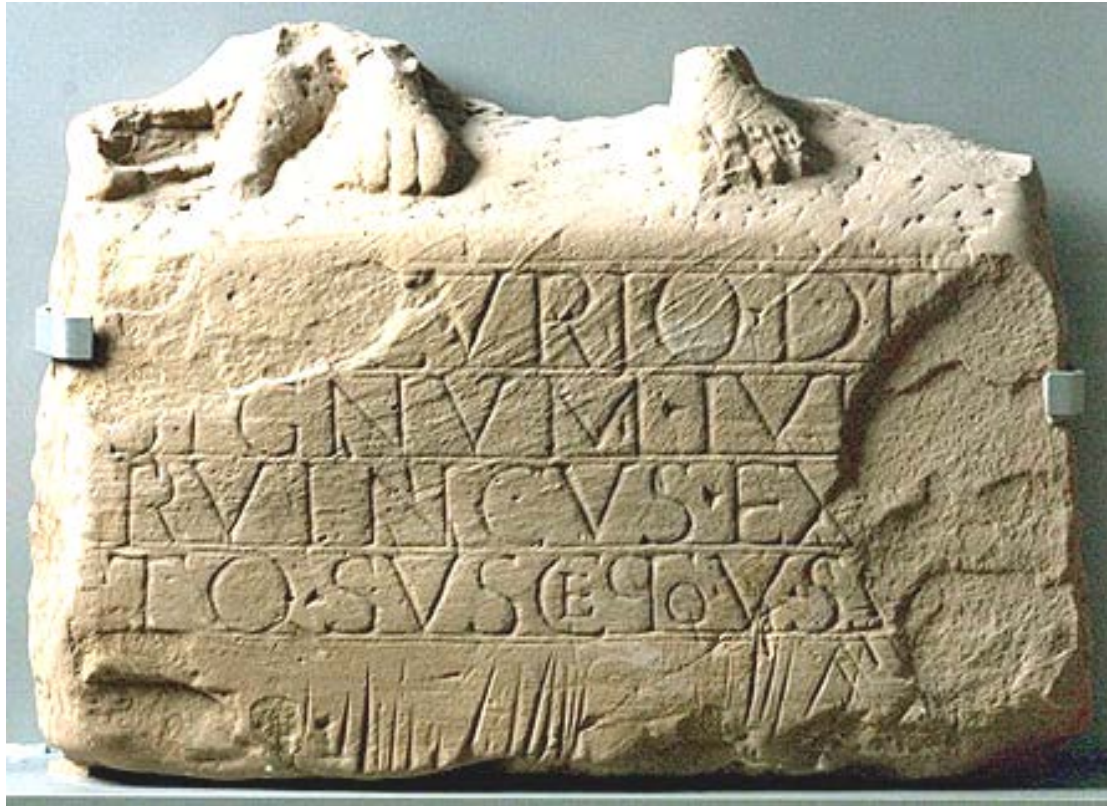


CIL III 1110, Apulum

D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) /  
pro salute inc/olumitate M(arci)  
Aur(eli) / Timotei et Aur(eli)  
M(aximi) **votum nun/cupavit**  
**solvitque** / Euthyces eorum  
lib(ertus) / retulit

For the undefeated god Sol Mithra. For the salvation of Marcus Aurelius Timoteus and Aurelius Maximus. Euthyces, their freedman, had pronounced and fulfilled the vow.

### 3. *votum suscipere*



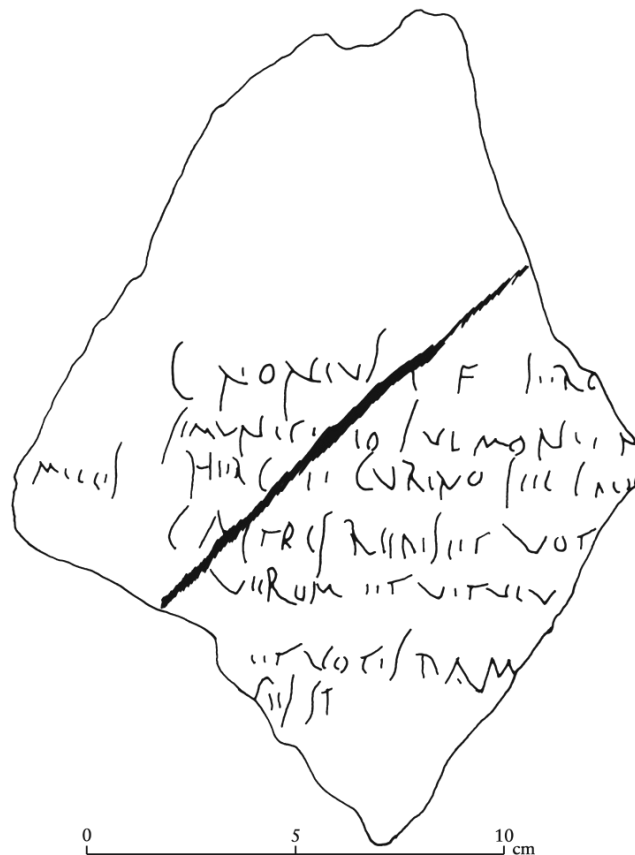
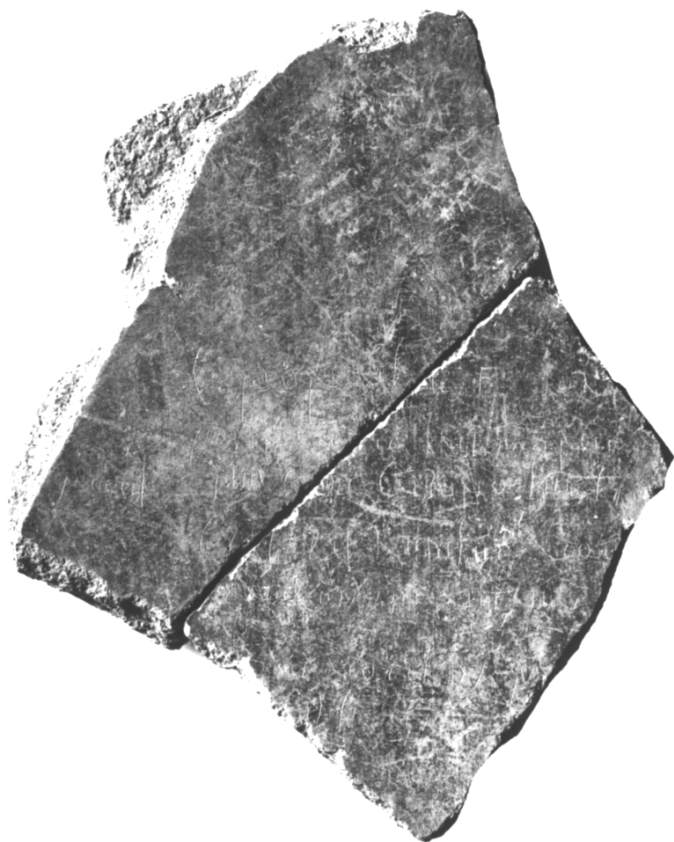
AE 2011, 859, Rainau-Buch

[Mer]curio de[o] / signum Iul(ius)  
[Pe]rvincus **ex [vo]/to suscepto**  
v(otum) s(olvit) [l(ibens) m(erito)]

For the god Mercury. Iulius Pervincus dedicated an image because of the vow that he had assumed. He has fulfilled this vow, willingly and deservedly.



## 4. *voto damnatus*



AE 1981, 283 =  
AE 2012, 415, Sulmo

C(aius) Nonius L(uci)  
f(ilius) Serg(ia) [---] / e  
munici[p]io Sulmone  
p[ro]fectus / miles  
Herc[u]li Curino sei  
salv[us] e / castris  
rediset vot[a ---] /  
ver(r)em et vitulu[m] /  
et votis dam[natus] /  
adest

Caius Nonius, son of Lucius, of the Sergia tribe, who had left the Sulmona municipality as a soldier, took a vow to Hercules Curinus to dedicate a male pig and a young bull when he returned healthy from the military camps. Obligated vis-à-vis the god, he is there.

## 5. votum solvere

CIL VI 68, Roma

Felix publicus / Asinianus  
pontific(um) / Bonae Deae  
agresti Feliculae /  
**votum solvit** iunicem  
alba(m) / libens animo ob  
luminibus / restitutus  
derelictus a medicis post /  
menses decem beneficio  
dominae medicinae  
sanatus per / eam  
restituta omnia ministerio  
Canniae Fortunatae



Felix Asinianus, public slave of the priests has fulfilled his vow to Bona Dea Agrestis Felicula and willingly dedicated a white calf because of the healing of his eyes. Abandoned by the doctors, ten months later he was cured thanks to the generosity and remedies of the goddess.

# Query of the database EDCS

*votum / voto + causal conjunctions ob, quod, pro*

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➔ 130 Latin votive inscriptions with explicitly mentioned reasons for vows

+ 50 further examples without causal conjunctions, found by the systematic reading of all 12.000 votive inscriptions



# Reasons of vows mentioned in the Latin votive inscriptions

disease	25	
birth	2	
<i>incolumitas</i>	15	
<i>periculum</i> (war, captivity)	28	
distress	7	
travel	32	
work, commerce	11	
construction and protection of buildings	9	
fight of gladiators	5	
<i>processus</i> / promotion	11	
liberation from slavery	5	
<i>immunitas</i>	3	
merits	6	
<i>memoria</i>	3	
<i>fides</i> / <i>indulgentia</i> / <i>auxilia</i>	5	
<i>beneficia</i> / liberation of sin	2	
<i>mos maiorum</i> / veneration	4	
joy / gratitude	2	
		n <sub>total</sub> = 175

## Reasons of vows: disease

CIL III 5862 (p. 1854, 2328,50, 2328,51), Zwiefalten

Deo Invicto / Soli templum / a solo resti/tuit Valerius / Venustus v(ir)  
p(erfectissimus) p(raeses) / p(rovinciae) R(aetiae) sicuti voto / ac mente  
con/ceperat **red/ditus sanitati** / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)

Valerius Venustus, vir perfectissimus, governor of Rhetia, renovated a temple for the undefeated god Sol from top to bottom. As he had defined the wording of his vow, he fulfilled it, willingly and deservedly, after his healing from an illness.



CIL III 06456 = 10389 = ILS 3025, Aquincum

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Salutari // et Genio domus / eius L(ucius)  
Serenius / Bassus |(centurio) leg(ionis) II / Adi(utricis) **gravissima /  
infirmitati / liberatus** / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To Jupiter, the best and greatest, and to the genius of his house,  
Lucius Serenius Bassus, the centurion of Legio II Adiutrix,  
accomplished his vow, willingly and deservedly, after being freed from  
a very serious illness.



## Reasons of vows: ear and eye diseases

CIL VI 68 (p. 3003, 3755) = ILS 3513, Roma



Felix Publicus / Asinianus pontific(um) / Bonae Deae  
agresti Felicu(lae?) / votum solvit iunicem alba(m) /  
libens animo **ob luminibus / restitutis** derelictus a  
medicis post / menses decem beneficio dominaes  
medicinis sanatus per / eam restituta omnia  
ministerio Canniae Fortunatae

... because of the healing of his eyes. Abandoned by  
the doctors, ten months later he was cured thanks to  
the generosity and remedies of the goddess.

CIL III 7266 = ILS 3853, Epidaurus



Cutius has auris Gallus tibi voverat olim /  
Phoebigena et posuit **sanus ab auriculis**

Cutius Gallus, who had formerly promised  
these ears to you, Phoebigena (= Aesculapius),  
laid them down, cured of his ear disease.



# Anatomical ex-voto

Republican Italy



Source des Roches near Chamalières



Sanctuary Forêt d'Halatte



## Reasons of vows: birth of a child

CIL III 10369 = AE 1891, 61, Baracska près d'Aquincum

I O M  
C O C C  
S E N E C I O  
D E C A L E  
I · R̄ · O B · N A T  
M · C O C C E I  
S E N E C A E F L  
V S L M

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)

Cocce(ius)

Senecio

dec(urio) al(a)e

I T(h)r(acum) **ob nat(alem)**

**M(arci) Coccei**

**Senecae fil(ii)**

v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To Jupiter, the best and greatest,  
Cocceius Senecio, decurion of the ala I  
Thracum has fulfilled his vow, willingly and  
deservedly, for the birth of his son Marcus  
Cocceius Seneca.

## Reasons of vows: *periculum* = war, captivity

IDR III 1, 138a = AE 1978, 681, Tibiscum

[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo) [Con]serv(atori)

P(ublius) [---]is

Anto-

n[inus(?)] **qu[od]**

**eff[u]gerit**

**periculum**

v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) [m(erito)]

To Jupiter, the best and greatest, the Conservator, Publius [---]is Anton[ius?] has fulfilled his vow, willingly and deservedly, because he has escaped danger.

AE 1991, 1378 = 2011, 1142, Preslav

[---]

leg(ionis) I Ital(icae)

[[A]]ex[[andrianae]]

militavit b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) et

cornicul(arius) proc(uratoris)

quot tiro proficiscens

in bello Bosporano

voverat et adiuvante

numen(e) eius **multis**

**periculis in barbarico**

**liberatus** sit merito

votum posuit

... fulfilled his vow, deservedly, as he had promised going to Bosporan war as a recruit, after being released from many dangers in the Barbaricum





## Reasons of vows: travel



CIL V 6875, Great St. Bernard Pass



Poenino / **pro itu et reditu** / C(aius)  
Iulius Primus / votum s(olvit) l(ibens)  
m(erito)



CIL V 6873, Great St. Bernard Pass



Iovi P[oenino] / Q(uintus) Iu[lius] /  
Alp[inus] / **pro i[tu et] / re[ditu]** / votum  
s(olvit) [(l)ibens] m(erito)]

## Reasons of vows: work

CIL V 5609, Sibirium

*Abasc[a]ntus*

*s(oluit) u(otum) l(ibens) m(erito)*

*Auiano*

*pro apes*

... for the bees

IRCPacen 437, Ervedal

FONTAN[O] [?]

SACRVM

THREPTVS C(aii) APPVLEI

SILONIS · SER(ous)

V(otum) S(oluit) L(ibens) · A(nimo)

OB · AQVAS · INVENTAS

... because he had found the fountain

CIL XIII 8793, Colijnsplaat



Deae N[e]halenniae

**ob merces recte conser-**

**vatas** M(arcus) Secund(inus) Silvanus

negotiator cretariu[s]

Britannicianu[s]

v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito)

To the goddess Nehalennia, Marcus Secundinus Silvanus, a ceramic dealer in commerce with Britain, has fulfilled his vow, willingly and deservedly, because his merchandise has remained intact.



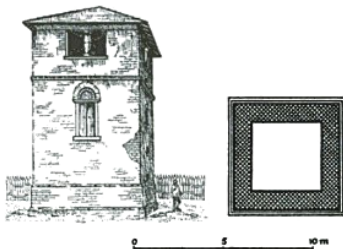
## Reasons of vows: completion of buildings

CIL XIII 6509, Odenwaldlimes WP 10/37  
Schneidershecke (Mudau-Schloßbau)

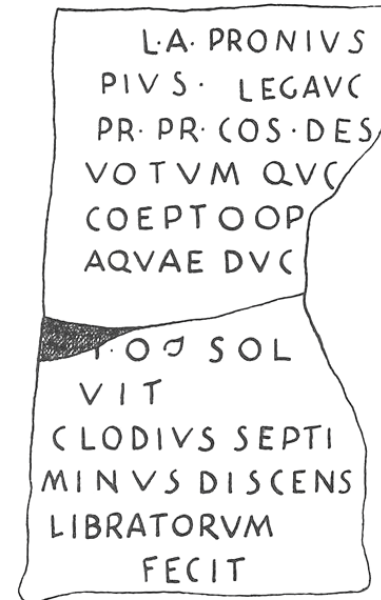


I O M  
V E X I L  
C O H · I ·  
S E Q · E T R A R  
E Q · S V B C V R ·  
A N T O N · N A T A  
L S 7 L E G X X I I P  
P F O B B V R G · E X  
P L C V S L L M

*ob burgum explicitum*  
for the completion of  
the burgus



AE 1942/43, 93 = AE 1973, 646,  
'Ain Charchar



L(ucius) Apronius / Pius leg(atus) Aug(usti) /  
pr(o) pr(aetore) co(n)s(ul) des(ignatus) /  
votum quo[d] / coepto op[ere] / aquae  
ductu[s] / [[[Alexandriani]]] / [promiserat] /  
[opere perfec]/[t]o sol/vit / Clodius  
Septi/minus discens / libratorum / fecit

... after the completion of the aqueduct, he  
fulfilled the vow which had been promised at  
the beginning of the work



## Reasons of christian vows

CIL XI 276 = ILS 818 = ILCV 20, Ravenna

Sancto ac beatissimo / apostolo Iohanni Euangelistae / Galla Placidia Augustus / cum filio suo / Placido Valentiniano Augusto / et filia sua / Iusta Grata Honoria Augusta / **liberationis pericul(or)um maris** / votum solvent // Beati misericordes quoniam miserebitur deus // Confirma hoc deus / quod operatus es in nobis / a templo tuo Ierusalem / tibi offerent reges munera

... to the Holy Apostle John the Evangelist, Gallia Placidia and her children have fulfilled the vow for their rescue from a shipwreck

DE D̄I ET X̄PI VMBRIVS FELIX · MAG  
FECIT VOTVM REDDIDIT D̄O PRECA  
TVR PRO SVIS PECCATIS SALVI  
FICETVR A P CCCLX ET ÇIII

CIL VIII 21551, Mechera-Sfa (408 apr. J.-C.)

... for the liberation of his sins

## What happens when the God does not fulfill his part of the vow?

Donc, en Grèce et à Rome, le vœu était un contrat entre l'homme et la divinité, contrat proposé par l'homme, qui en fixait lui-même les deux termes, c'est-à-dire ce qu'il demandait et ce qu'en échange il offrait à la divinité. La divinité pouvait ne pas l'accepter ; si elle refusait sa faveur ou sa protection, le contrat tombait de lui-même ; mais, si elle acceptait le contrat, si elle accordait à l'homme ce qu'il demandait, celui-ci ne pouvait plus se soustraire à l'obligation qu'il avait contractée ; il était, suivant la forte expression des Romains, condamné à s'acquitter de son vœu. A quelle sanction s'exposait-il, s'il manquait à sa parole ? Sans aucun doute, il encourait la colère divine ; c'est pour ne pas attirer sur eux cette colère que les Ornéates cherchèrent et trouvèrent le moyen de s'acquitter, sans sacrifices trop lourds pour eux, de leur vœu imprudent ?

Jean Toutain, *Votum* (Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines V 1), Paris 1919, 974.



Nothing happens? People do not express their disappointment or their displeasure towards the gods?

## ***Contra votum* : testimonies of unfulfilled vows in 250 epitaphs**

IAquil 3087, Aquileia



Innox Ienuari/anus qui vixit a/nnis VI  
mensi(bu)s II / die(bu)s XV **contra / votum**  
par/entes fec/erunt

Innox Ienuarianus, who lived 6 years, 2  
months, 15 days. His parents have made  
the grave, despite a vow.

CIL VI 11793, Roma

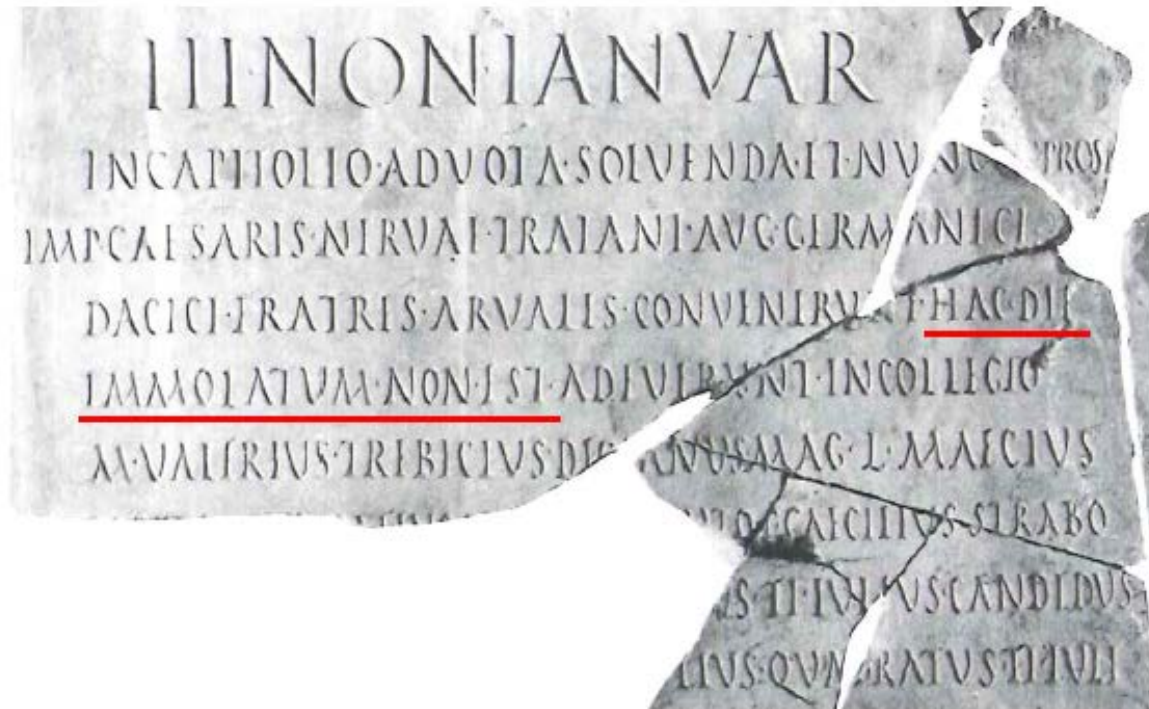


D(is) M(anibus) / Anniae / Isiadi / matri /  
carissimae / Annia Elpis / **contra votum** /  
posuit

To the Gods Manes, Annia Elpis made the  
urn for her dearest mother Annia Isias,  
despite a vow.



## Fragment of the Acta of the Arval Brothers: *Hoc die immolatum non est*



- 3 janv. 1 le troisième jour avant les nones de janvier, les frères arvaux se réunirent au Capitole pour acquitter et prononcer les vœux pour le salut de l'Empereur César Nerva Trajan Auguste Germanique Dacique. En ce jour  
5 on n'a pas immolé. Étaient présents dans le collège le président Marcus Valerius Trebicius Decianus, Lucius Maecius [Postumus, Tiberius] Cadius [Caesius] Fronto, Caius Caecilius Strabo, [— —]us, Tiberius Iulius  
10 Candidus [Marius Celsus, Caius Antius Aulus] Iulius Quadratus, Tiberius Iulius [Candidus.]

CIL VII 2075 (p. 864, 3261) = 32372 = ILS 5046, Roma (105 AD)

## At the moment of the death of Germanicus: Suet., Caligula 5

(2) Quo defunctus est die, lapidata sunt templa, subversae deum arae, Lares a quibusdam familiares in publicum abiecti, partus coniugum expositi.

(2) On the day when he died, stones were thrown against the temples, and the altars of the gods were overthrown; some people threw their Lares familiares into the streets; others exposed their newborn children.

## Martial, epigram 40

Non horti neque palmitis beati,  
sed rari nemoris, Priape, custos,  
ex quo natus es et potes renasci,  
furaces, moneo, manus repellas  
et silvam domini focus reserves:  
si defecerit haec, et ipse lignum es.

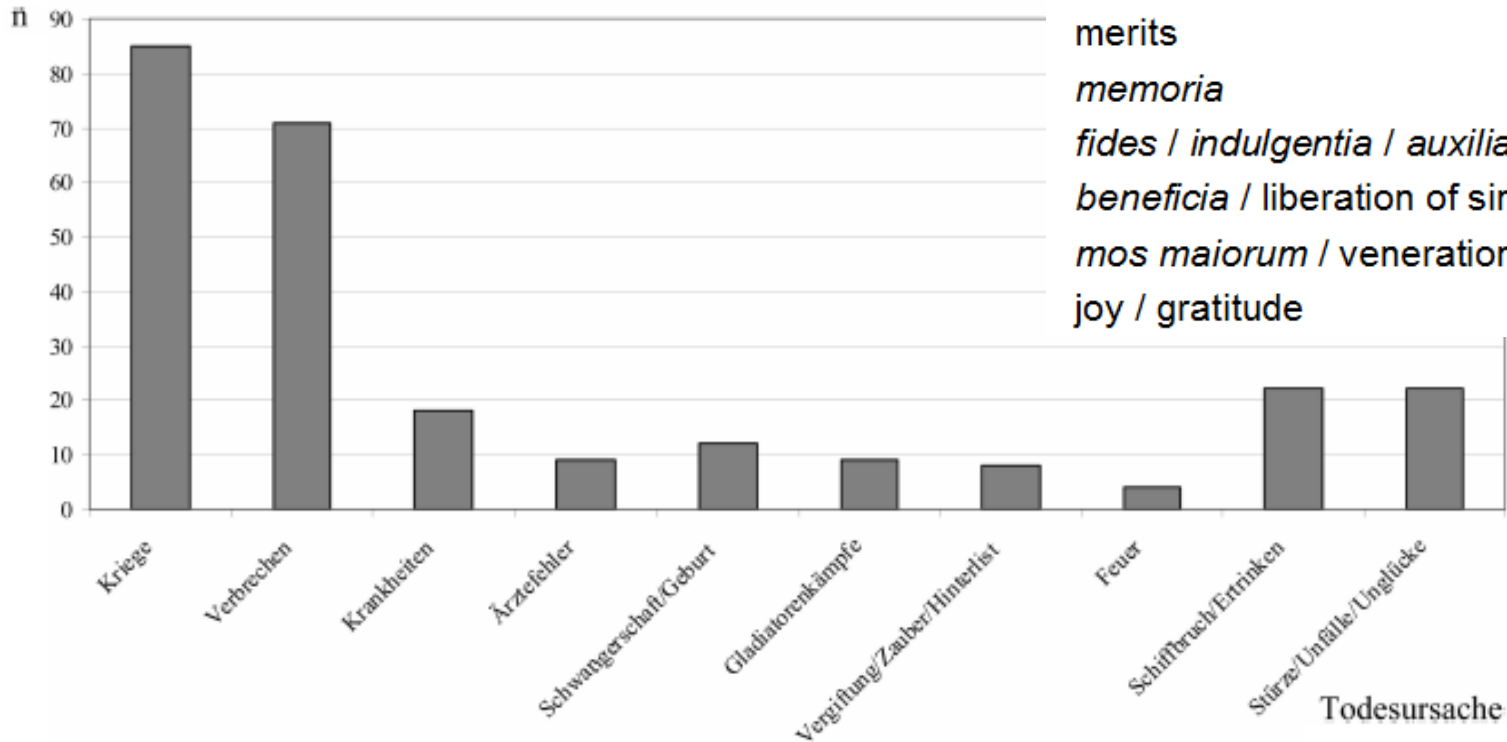
Priapus, guardian of no garden or rich vineyard, but of a sparse copse, from which you were born and can be reborn; I ask you to ward off thieving hands and keep the wood for the hearth of its master: if that gives out, you're wood yourself.



# Latin votive inscriptions and epitaphs: Risks perceived and incurred



What kind of risks people tried to manage with divine help?



disease	25
birth	2
<i>incolumitas</i>	15
<i>periculum</i> (war, captivity)	28
distress	7
travel	32
work, commerce	11
construction and protection of buildings	9
fight of gladiators	5
<i>processus</i> / promotion	11
liberation from slavery	5
<i>immunitas</i>	3
merits	6
<i>memoria</i>	3
<i>fides</i> / <i>indulgentia</i> / <i>auxilia</i>	5
<i>beneficia</i> / liberation of sin	2
<i>mos maiorum</i> / veneration	4
joy / gratitude	2