

Preface

Some years ago, as I had been working on inscriptions in various museums in Rome—some of which were very grand pieces, funerary altars inscribed with poems in elegiac distichs and with ample ornamentation—I realized that I was actually rather unfamiliar with the collection of 24 Greek and Roman inscriptions at my own *alma mater*; it had in fact thitherto practically escaped my attention. It soon turned out, though, that no-one knew very much about these inscriptions, neither as regards their contents nor when it came to their provenance. Obviously, in spite of epigraphy being a discipline very much in vogue among Swedish philologists of the early 20th century, none of them thought it worth while to pay any closer attention to these stones. This is all the more remarkable as Greek and Roman inscriptions have always been something of a rarity in Sweden.

The apparent explanation for the scholars' lack of interest is the relative plainness of the stones in the Uppsala collection, and at first glance, it is hard to blame them. With a couple of notable exceptions, these are inscriptions that are found by the hundred (not to say by the thousand) in the storerooms of any provincial museum in Italy, or let into the walls of the porch of the parish church; few of them seem to be able to contribute anything to our

knowledge of the ancient world or the classical languages.

But even the simplest inscription, if pressed, may give away bits of information that prove not only unexpected but also quite interesting. I believe that this edition contains a couple of such instances. It is also a fact that every reasonably well-preserved epitaph still serves its original commemorative purpose. Even if we lack the full sepulchral context within which these inscriptions were meant to be viewed and read, their texts still succeed in prolonging the memory of a L. Caecilius Hymnus or an Elpidia by planting their names in our minds. The tomb may have been replaced by a display case, but the epitaph still conveys its message to the modern reader as directly as it did to the Roman. The inscriptions offer a rare opportunity for immediate communication with the ancient world, and as such, every inscription is important.

This commented edition has been made with the purpose of lifting the veil on the inscriptions in Uppsala by presenting them as accurately as possible in a manner accessible not only to epigraphists, but also to those who may come into contact with the inscriptions for other than professional reasons. As the latter group may not be specialists of Greek and Latin epigraphy, some information has been in-

cluded in the notes that may seem entirely banal to the scholar, but that will hopefully serve the purpose of enlightening the layman on certain essential points. Other discussions may appear extremely technical to the non-specialist. In both cases, I hope that readers will find it possible to sift out what interests them without being bothered by that which does not.

Throughout my work on these inscriptions, the staff at the Museum Gustavianum has been most helpful. I would like to express my thanks here to Christina Risberg, formerly Senior Curator at the museum, and to her successor, Geoffrey Metz, for their obligingness in putting the collections at my disposal and for assisting me in finding my way around the material. Others have greatly facilitated my search for information (albeit a search more often vain than fruitful), in the archives of Nationalmuseum, of Uppsala University and of the Uppsala University Library. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Professor Mika Kajava, of the University of Helsinki, who read the entire manuscript, solved some tricky problems and offered many valuable suggestions from which this edition has greatly benefited. Among friends and colleagues at the Department of Linguistics and Philology, I would like to mention Mr Johan Heldt, with whom I have had the privilege of discussing several points pertaining to the

Greek inscriptions and who also read much of the manuscript. Dr Jenni Hjøhlman, the editor of the series, has put great effort into preparing the manuscript for publication and shown great care and patience in making sure that all sublinear dots occur in their right places.

As far as I know, the collection in Uppsala is among the northernmost collections of Greek and Latin inscriptions in the world, if not the northernmost. It is intriguing to think about what the marine C. Antheus Niger would have said, had he known that his very own tombstone would end up on display in a land that—for all he knew—was situated *ipso in Oceano*, as Tacitus says, and beyond which was believed to lie another sea, *pigrum ac prope immotum*, which the crew of the *Capricornus* would probably not have dared to sail, lest they should encounter the *Hellusii* and the *Oxionae*, who had the faces of humans but the bodies and limbs of wild beasts. But in the large and comprehensive collections of southern and central Europe, most of these stones would have found it difficult to hold their own in the competition for attention with more fancy pieces. In a collection of 24, every inscription is a main item. In this way, it is a bit of luck for Antheus and the other men, women and children commemorated in our inscriptions, that their epitaphs ended up this far north, in *ultima Thule*.

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