

Antiquity Matters!
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Ornator Patriae, Ornator Sui: The Patria as an Epigraphic Tool of Self-Promotion

An examination of Latin literary sources to highlight the defining characteristics of the *patria* arrives at three primary conclusions.

Firstly, the *patria* is understood as an individual's place of ancestral origin and belonging, encompassing and embodying in a single concept the fundamental traditions, values, and historical or mythical past of the Roman community. Such is communicated most clearly through the implementation of familial terminology, and a strong connection to and incorporation in kinship mythology.

Secondly, the *patria* was recognised as the source of benefits closely associated with communal living. Such *beneficia* include *libertas*, communal security and shelter, the possession of a clear cultural identity, and a shared future destiny to name but a few. This depiction of the *patria* as a supreme benefactor or patron is communicated via terminology usually associated with patronage.

Finally, since the *patria* can be recognised as an individual's most important collective identity (in terms of an identity hierarchy), and due to the *beneficia* that the *patria* offers, its members find themselves in a situation of unconditional service.

This paper will illustrate the way in which members of the Roman world took their obligation to the *patria* seriously, but doing so in such a way as to simultaneously further their *own* social or political standing. That is to say, this paper will highlight the way in which the service to the *patria* was used as an epigraphic tool to politically and socially embellish and promote the individual(s) concerned.