

Claudius and the Monumentalization of Water Supply Improvements in Rome

Claudius is often overlooked as one of the emperors who changed the cityscape of Rome, due in large part to the ancient literary sources that mostly dismiss him as an ineffectual buffoon. In the past, scholars have described Claudius' contributions to public building in Rome as utilitarian and of minor importance (Mommsen, Blake 1959). Recent interest in Claudius and his reign has led to a reassessment of the emperor's role in imperial administration (Momigliano 1960; Levick 1990), in the creation and dissemination of an imperial image (Osgood 2011), and the organization of the imperial court (Michel 2015). The visual and social impact of Claudius' building projects, however, has remained in the shadow of Augustus' work. Scrutiny of epigraphic evidence, within the context of Roman topography and epigraphic history, reveals that Claudius left a significant and unique monumental mark on the city via aqueduct construction and repair. This illustrated paper examines changes over time in the commemoration of water supply improvements in Rome under Claudius, and the enduring influence of his work. Looking specifically at Claudius' completion of the Aqua Claudia and Aqua Anio Novus, and the repair of the Aqua Virgo, I argue that Claudius changed the dynamics of advertising water supply improvements. He thus left a distinct mark on the urban landscape that matched his interests in archaic building styles and spellings.

Claudius' reign marks the greater monumentalization of aqueduct construction and repair. Based on surviving evidence, the monumental commemoration of aqueduct construction and repair did not become widespread until the Augustan period. During Augustus' reign, many short aqueduct *cippi*, similar to milestones, with inscription letter height ranging from 4-6 cm, were installed to mark aqueduct channels and commemorate work done. No aqueduct *cippi* have been found on aqueducts outside of Rome and none date earlier than the Augustan period or later

than 44 CE (Fabretti 1680, Lanciani 1880, Evans 2002). Early in his reign, Claudius continued the Augustan tradition of installing *cippi* to mark repairs, as four Claudian *cippi*, dating to 44 CE, have been found for the Aqua Virgo (e.g. *CIL* 6.1254 = 6.31565b = *ILS* 5747b; *CIL* 6.40880 = *AE* 1939, 54). After 44 CE, Claudius turned to a more monumental means of advertising his work on the water supply, namely much larger aqueduct arch inscriptions at major crossroads, like the Porta Maggiore (*CIL* 6.1256 = *ILS* 218), where the new Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus crossed the convergence of the Via Labicana and Via Praenestina.

No new imperial fora, temples, or spectacle buildings were built during Claudius' reign, but the size, location, and message of arch inscriptions could be just as monumental. In fact, when Claudius became emperor in 41 CE, the Aqua Virgo had been disrupted by construction of an amphitheater by his predecessor Caligula. Rather than completing the amphitheater, Claudius abandoned the project (Suet. *Calig.* 21.1) and focused on getting the Aqua Virgo repaired by 45 CE (*CIL* 6.1252a = *ILS* 205). The act of leveling the foundations of an entertainment venue, restoring the arches of an aqueduct, and commemorating the action with a monumental arch inscription, made a mark on the urban landscape as well as a statement about the imperial priorities of the time.

The shift from smaller aqueduct *cippi* to monumental arches, like the Porta Maggiore, with a distinctly Claudian rusticated style and archaic spellings (e.g. *Caisar* instead of *Caesar*) stands in contrast to the increasing homogenization of building styles and epigraphic orthography in the Augustan period and beyond. Rustication and Claudius' archaic spellings may not have remained in style beyond Claudius' reign, but the monumentalization of aqueduct repairs certainly did. Subsequent emperors, particularly the Flavians, followed Claudius' lead in the

language and placement of aqueduct arch inscriptions as the smaller, less monumental aqueduct *cippi* fell out of use.

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