Part IV
The Political Graffiti from Pompeii

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C. Iulius Polybium aedilem oro vos faciatis. Panem bonum fert.
"I ask that you make (i.e. elect) Gaius Julius Polybius aedile. He bakes good bread."
Baking good bread had nothing to do with holding office in Pompeii, but as we know
from our own experience, political campaigns don't always stick to the issues.

Pompeii's Municipal Government
This is but one example of the many electoral notices painted on walls of shops and
houses in Pompeii; we call them *programmata*. From such notices, we know more about
the local government of Pompeii than we know about that of any other Roman town.
Pompeii had its own independent government, faithful, of course, to the emperors at
Rome, yet able to govern in local matters. Pompeii's government in fact resembled that
of Rome, as the following chart shows:

Rome		*Pompeii*
Consul	=	*Duovir*
Aedilis	=	*Aedilis*
Senatus	=	*Ordo*

Each year, in the spring, the Pompeians elected two co-mayors, or *duoviri*, and two
commissioners of public works, the aediles (*aediles*). There was also a town council,
called the *ordo*, whose members, the *decuriones* (equivalent to the senatores at Rome)
were 80 to 100 of the best men of the community. Membership in the *ordo* was for life,
but the *duoviri* and the *aediles* only served for one year. The *ordo* dealt with matters of
city finance, was the highest religious authority, and oversaw other public business, while
the two *aediles* managed everyday administrative duties.
These duties are explained by what the *aediles* are sometimes called in the
programmata: *duoviri v.a.s.p. proc.*, or *duoviri viis aedificiis sacris publicis procurandis*,
that is "two men, for taking care of streets, buildings, temples and public buildings" (such
as markets).
The highest office in Pompeii was that of the *duoviri iure dicundo*, or co-mayors for
administering justice.

The Election Notices
The *duoviri* and *aediles* were elected by the enfranchised adult male population, and we
have abundant evidence that the elections were not only hotly contested, but that a wide
spectrum of Pompeii's population, including women and slaves, actively participated in
campaigns. This support is well attested in the many painted notices—*programmata*—
which advertise the candidacy and urge the election of particular candidates.

These *programmata* regularly appear in two distinct forms: the first type advertises an individual's support, or, more often, a group's support of a candidate, and the other calls on "you" to vote for the desired candidate.

In both types, the candidate and the office are named in the accusative: in the first type we find the name of the supporters in the nominative, then the verb *rogant* (or *rogat*), meaning here that the "subject (in the nominative case) proposes or supports the candidate (in the accusative case: direct object) for election."

In the other type, the unnamed (or sometimes named) writer speaks directly to the reader of the notice, with the words *oro vos faciatis*, or, "I ask that you make (i.e. elect) the candidate (in the accusative case)." Sometimes *oro vos faciatis* is abbreviated OVF.

In some *programmata*, a combination of the formulae appear, for example:

C. GAVIVM RUFUM AED OVF GRANIVS ROG

or "*Gaium Gavium Rufum aedilem oro vos faciatis Granius rogat.*" which means, "I ask that you elect Gaius Gavius Rufus aedile; it is I, Granius, who asks this."

What do these tell us about the political life of Pompeii? We can answer that they tell us everything, and yet so little. They record for us the names of candidates, yet neglect to record who won. They identify the office for which candidates stand, yet we don't know in which year (the *programmata* were left on the walls either to fade away or to be whitewashed for new notices). They reveal to us that the elections in Pompeii drew participation from virtually all members of society, including, surprisingly, those who couldn't vote—but who were certainly affected by the elected magistrates. Sometimes an expression of support is humorous, as in "All the late sleepers support Vatia for aedile" and sometimes scandalous, as in "Valens, elect Popidius Ampliatus aedile, and that man will do the same for you," or "His little darling supports Claudius for *duovir*."

Here are some common abbreviations found in Pompeian inscriptions:

AED	*aedile[m]*
II vir	*duovir[um]*
II. vir.i.d.	*duovir iure dicundo*
f.	*filius* or *filia*
OVF	*oro vos faciatis*
p.s.	*pecunia sua*
rog	*rogat* or *rogant*

Here, for advanced Latin students to translate, are some inscriptions about activities of the *ordo* at Pompeii:

1. *CIL* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*) X 846
   N. Popidius N.F. Celsinus
   Aedem Isidis terrae motu conlapsam
   a fundamento p.s. restituit. Hunc decuriones ob liberalitatem
   cum esset annorum sex ordini suo gratis adlegerunt.

2. *CIL* X 998
   Mamiae P.f. sacerdoti publicae

locus sepulturus datus decurionum decreto

3. *CIL* X 1026

    C. Calventio Quieto

      Augustali

    Huic ob munificentiam decurionum

    decreto et populi consesu [sic] *biselli*

    honor datus est

Here are some *programmata* from Pompeii

4. For students in the first year of Latin study:

    a. *C. Iulium Polybium IIvir[um] muliones rogant* (*CIL* IV 113)

    b. *C. Cuspium Pansam aedilem Saturnius cum discentibus rogat* (*CIL* IV 275)

    c. *Vatiam aed. furunculi rog[ant]* (*CIL* IV 576)

    d. *M. Cerrium Vatiam aed. o v Seribibi universi rogant. Scr[ibit] Florus cum Fronto* (*CIL* IV 581)

    e. *Cn. Helvium Sabinum aedilem aliari rogant* (*CIL* IV 3485)

5. For students in the second year of Latin study and beyond:

    f. *M. Pupium Rufum II vir. i.d. Mustius fullo facit et dealbat, scr[ibit], unicus sine reliq[uis] sodalib[us]. (CIL* IV 5329*).*

    g. *Bruttium Balbum II virum Genialis rogat. Hic aerarium conservabit (CIL* IV 3702*).*

    h. *L. Statium Receptum II vir. i.d. o.v.f. vicini, dig. Scr[ipsit] Aemilius Celer vic[inus]. Invidiose qui deles, aegrotes (CIL* IV   3775)

    i. *Cuspium aedilem. Si qua verecunde viventi debet gloria danda est, huic iuveni debet gloria digna dari (CIL* IV 7201)

    j. *L. Popidium L.[ucii] f[ilium] Ampliatum aed. Montanus cliens rogat cum latruncularis (CIL* IV 7851).

Notes

    1. N: Numerius (*praenomen*, or first name, of both this N. Popidius Celsinus and his father)

    Isis, Isidis F: Egyptian goddess worshipped at Pompeii

    motus, motus M: movement; *terrae motus*: earthquake

con (or *col)labor, -labi, -lapsus sum*: to fall in ruins
fundamentum, i N: foundation
liberalitas, atis F: generosity (e.g., that of N. Popidius Celsinus)
cum: although
ad (or *al)lego*: elect to. Takes dative (hence *ordini*).

2. P: Publius (*praenomen* of Mamia's father)
sacerdos, dotis here F: priestess
sepulturus: "for burial" (i.e. "which is going to bury")
understand *est* with *datus*
decretum, i N: decree

3. C: Gaius
Augustalis, is M: priest of the cult of Augustus
munificentia, ae F: *liberalitas*
consensus, us M: agreement
biselli honor: the distinction of the chair for two (*bisellium*, a richly
        ornamented chair of honor)

4. a. *mulio, onis* M: mule driver
   b. *discentibus* (ablative)=*discipulis*
   c. *furunculus, i* M: petty thief
   d. *Seribibus*: late drinker
     universus, a, um: all
   e. *aliarus, i* M: garlic dealer

5. f. *fullo, onis* M: dry cleaner
    dealbo, are: whitewash
    unicus: all by himself

   g. *aerarium, i* N: treasury
    conservo, are: keep safe

   h. *dig=dignum*
    vicinus, i M: neighbor
    aegroto, are: be sick; *aegrotes:* "may you be sick"

   i. *qua=aliqua*
    verecunde: modestly
   understand *homini* with *viventi (verecunde)*; they are indirect
   objects of *danda est* (here in second periphrastic construction— "must be
   given"—with *qua gloria* as its subject)

   j. *latruncularius, i* M: chess player