

ROMAN COURT PROCEEDINGS IN POPYRI: NEW DOCUMENTS, NEW PERSPECTIVES

The establishment of the Roman Empire brought Roman courts and jurisdiction to the Mediterranean world, from the far-flung province of Britain to the Greek-speaking provinces of Asia, Syria and Egypt. Justice was a great *beneficium* that the Roman imperial state bestowed on its subjects, a claim that was essential to the legitimacy of Roman power. Accordingly, a central domain of the Roman imperial state was dedicated to the administration of justice, which was an important and highly visible public activity of officials throughout the Roman Empire.

Extraordinary documentation of the activity of courts in the Roman Empire has been preserved in papyri from Egypt and the Near East. This documentation includes ca. 370 authentic records of court proceedings from Roman Egypt, the single largest body of evidence for the legal process in the Roman Empire. Many of these documents are fragmentary and difficult to interpret, and many have been published more than a century ago without translation or analysis, with the result that the papyrological evidence for court proceedings has never been fully integrated into legal and historical research on the Roman Empire.

The first goal of the proposed project is to expand the evidentiary base for Roman court proceedings through the edition of ca. 50 unpublished papyri (mainly from the collection of the Austrian National Library) and the revision of ca. 20 published documents. The publication and analysis of these new texts will shed light on Roman documentation practices, archival institutions, and other aspects of the Roman legal sphere.

The second goal of the project is to provide, for the first time, an extended overview, typology and technical analysis of court proceedings in papyri in the Roman and Late Roman periods (1st–6th cent. CE). These documents (which are commonly classified under the general term "reports of proceedings") range widely in form, from extensive verbatim transcripts of proceedings, to short excerpts incorporated into lawyers' collections, to detailed accounts of trials in petitions. Consequently, a detailed typology of the evidence is necessary for addressing the central question of Roman court proceedings as a documentary form and its historical development. By providing a synthetic analytical framework for interpreting documents and texts of this genre, the project aims to make this crucially important body of evidence accessible beyond the field of papyrology to scholars of the Roman Empire.

The results of the project will be published in a volume of text editions, accompanied by an extended analytical introduction to the papyrological evidence for court proceedings in the Roman and Late Roman periods. As appendices, the volume will include updated inventories of all the relevant sources.