



[Arch of Crescens, Numidia \(CIL VIII, 8313\)](#) [1]

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Honorific.

Original Location/Place: 100 m east of the Temple of the gens Septimia, Cuicul, Numidia.

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Dismantled, in loco; Djemila, Algeria.

Date: 160 CE to 161 CE

Physical Characteristics: Twelve fragments of a dedicatory inscription, believed to have been from the Arch of Crescens, in modern Djemila. The text of the inscription is in two parts, which may have appeared on the two faces of the attic of the arch, or together on the same side, as per the dedicatory inscription of the Arch of Caracalla also in Djemila (Leschi, "Inscription de l'arc dit de Crescens à Djemila," p. 339; For the details of each individual fragment, see the notes in *ILAlg*, 7644).

Material: Marble (?)

Measurements: Width: 1.30m

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Publications: *CIL* VIII, 8313

ILAlg. II 7644

AE 1925, 23-4

AE 1949, 40

[HD025615](#) [2]

Commentary: The above text has been reconstructed from twelve fragments of a dedicatory inscription that originally adorned the now ruined Arch of Crescens in the small town of Cuicul, Numidia (modern Djemila, Algeria). The arch was dedicated by a member of the local elite in a combined dedication to the Fortuna of the emperor, the emperor and the patron deities of the place.

As the inscription relates, the arch was dedicated by Caius Iulius Crescens, *flamen* of Augustus for the province of Africa (*flamen Augusti provinciae Africae*); he was the first and only of the colony of Cuicul to have reached this position (*qui primus / ex colonia sua Cuiculitana hunc honorem gessit*), and made the benefaction to his town in his will (*ex testamento*). It comprised a donation of 15000 sesterces, which were ordered to be used for the construction of an arch over the road that led to the theatre, in the east of the town, which was to be surmounted by two statues of Fortune and of Mars (*insuper statuas duas Fortunae et Martis fieri iussit*). This was a characteristic act of euergetism; a member of the local elite advertised and promoted his success, in a prominent part of the town, by offering a monumental structure that both celebrated his achievements and announced his loyalty and devotion to the imperial house, through the dedication to *Fortuna Augusta* and his religious piety, honouring also the god Mars. This loyalty, piety and devotion was extended to his entire *gens* too, through the inclusion in the second half of the inscription of the role of his grandson and heir, Caius Iulius Crescens Didius Crescentianus, whose role in the building of the arch is also attested. The younger Crescens is also described as having achieved some municipal success; he had reached the position of perpetual *flamen* (*flamen perpetuus*) and was also *quattuorvir* in both Cuicul and the provincial capital, Cirta, some 80 km away (*III colo/niarum Cirtensium item Cuiculitanae*). As the heir to Caius Iulius Crescens, he fulfilled the instructions of his will, but enhanced them by doubling the donation of money (*duplicata pecunia fecit*) and adding a statue of the emperor Antoninus Pius (*addita statua Imperatoris Antoni/ni Augusti Pii*); other epigraphic texts from Cuicul reveal that Crescentianus had been raised to equestrian status at the end of his military career through the patronage of the emperor (see *ILAlg* 2, 7946; Février, *Djemila*, p. 61; Leschi, "Inscription de l'arc dit de Crescens à Djemila," p. 340).

Arguably the most significant statement in the inscription is found in the combination of entities to which it is dedicated: *Fortuna Augusta*, Antoninus Pius (who must still have been alive when the arch was completed, as his deification is not attested in the inscription), the god Mars and the *genius* of the colony. Dedications to *Fortuna Augusta* in the provinces were well dispersed and well known by the second century CE; the cult of 'Augustan Fortune' had been established in order to celebrate the aims of the principate in the first century CE, and had allowed towns and cities across the empire "to forge a close relationship with the new imperial power through a member of its elite" (see [Dedication of the Temple of Fortuna Augusta \(CIL X, 820\)](#) [3]; van Andringa, "M. Tullius...", p. 104). Dedications of buildings or monuments, such as the Arch and statues set up by Crescens and



his grandson, allowed citizens far from Rome to express their loyalty to the emperor and to interact with the ideology and expectations of the regime in a way that emphasised the unifying nature of imperial power. The inclusion of the living emperor in the dedication is indicative of how the cult had evolved; where the success of the cult in its initial phases under Augustus had depended upon members of the local elite to make such dedications seemingly 'independently', and without the visible encouragement of the emperor, dedications to the living ruler alongside those to the Fortuna Augusta were now ingrained in the cultural and religious conscience of the provinces.

The second part of the dedication is made to the god Mars, and to the *genius* of the colony, who are perhaps inherently linked by the origins and the status of Cuicul's foundation. The town had been founded under the emperor Nerva as a colony for military veterans; it occupied a strategic defensive position on a ridge between two wadis in an austere mountain region 900 m above sea level, and 80 km from the capital of Numidia at Cirta (MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 226). As a military colony of Roman citizens it had developed quickly into a small but highly urbanised settlement with a *cardo maximus*, forum, theatre and baths, the "unmistakable imagery of imperial urbanism" (MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, p. 6. For a detailed survey of the architecture of the town, see Février, *Djemila*, p. 23-70). It is perhaps unsurprising that a colony of military veterans would choose Mars as their patron deity; as the god of warfare dedications to him within the camp and on campaign would have been a regular part of military life and inscriptions from Cuicul demonstrate that they continued to be made within the new colony in thanks for his support (Février, *Djemila*, p. 13). However, the inclusion of the *genius* of the colony (*genius coloniae*) in association with Mars is an interesting addition, and one that occurs in at least three further inscriptions from Cuicul (CIL VIII, 8311; *ILAlg* II.3, 7675; *ILAlg* II.3, 7678). The *genius* was one of the oldest elements in Roman religion, an 'other-soul' that represented the life-double of a man, whose job was to protect fertility and the continuation of families from one generation to another (Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," p. 1570). It stood for "the sum of one's vitality, energy, and capability of enjoyment, in short for his personality and his higher, inner self" (Spiedel, "The Cult of the Genii in the Roman Army," p. 354). In another guise the job of the *genius* was to guard physical objects or geographical locations; this found particular support amongst the military, who made dedications to the *genius castrorum* (*genius* of the camp) or the *genius centuriae* (*genius* of the century of soldiers), as well as to numerous incarnations of the *genii* that were specific to particular units or divisions of soldiers (Spiedel, "The Cult of the Genii in the Roman Army," p. 355). The specific association of the *genius* of the colony with dedications to Mars in Cuicul may be an extension of the veterans's previous devotion to the *genius* of their camp or detachment, under whose *tutela* (guardianship) they had lived (Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, vol. II.1, p. 382). Indeed, as Michael Spiedel has noted, there is no evidence to suggest that the emperor introduced or chose the *genius* of any unit, with the specific nature of each one evidence for a "widespread, genuine religious experience, independent of government machinations or imperial religious policy" and which was unique to each individual *genius* worshipped by the different military communities (Spiedel, "The Cult of the Genii in the Roman Army," p. 356).

The construction of the so-called Arch of Crescens in Cuicul was, therefore, a monument that celebrated the particular origins of the colony as well as the prominence of a local family who had risen to the leading positions of provincial government. The inclusion of the emperor in the dedication was an act of gratitude for the patronage he had extended to Caius Iulius Crescens grandson and heir, Crescentius, who sought to demonstrate his relationship with the imperial house and celebrate his own success. Crescentius had been elevated to equestrian status under Antoninus Pius, at the end of a military career, and his own personal success can be said to have mirrored the success of Cuicul itself; both Crescentius and the town had originated in a military context before emerging as legitimate 'Romans', whose accomplishments were dedicated to the emperor, the god and the *genius* that had made their prestige possible.

Keywords in the original language:

- [Fortuna Augusta](#) [4]
- [Antoninus Pius](#) [5]
- [Mars](#) [6]
- [genius colonia](#) [7]
- [arcum](#) [8]
- [flamen](#) [9]
- [provincia](#) [10]
- [Africa](#) [11]



- [colonia](#) [12]
- [Cuicul](#) [13]
- [honor](#) [14]
- [testamentum](#) [15]
- [statua](#) [16]
- [nepos](#) [17]
- [pecunia](#) [18]
- [patronus](#) [19]

Thematic keywords:

- [Numidia](#) [20]
- [Cuicul](#) [21]
- [colony](#) [22]
- [military veterans](#) [23]
- [Antoninus Pius](#) [24]
- [Mars](#) [25]
- [Fortuna Augusta](#) [26]
- [arch](#) [27]
- [Genius](#) [28]
- [evergetism](#) [29]
- [civic benefaction](#) [30]

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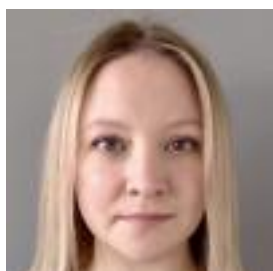
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- [4] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/fortuna-augusta>
- [5] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/antoninus-pius>
- [6] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/mars>
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- [8] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/arcum>
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- [12] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/colonia>
- [13] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/cuicul>
- [14] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/honor>
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- [22] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/colony>
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- [28] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/genius>
- [29] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/euergetism>
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