



## Dedication to Livia (CIL II, 2038)

### ph0005925.jpg

[1]

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

**Original Location/Place:** Unknown location. Found inserted into a circular tower in Anticaria, Baetica (modern Antequera, Spain)

**Actual Location (Collection/Museum):** Unknown

**Date:** 14 CE to 29 CE

**Physical Characteristics:**

Probably the middle part of a statuary base.

**Material:** Unknown

**Measurements:**

Height: 48 cm

Width: 68 cm

Depth: 60 cm

Letter height: 4-3 cm

**Language:** Latin

**Category:** Roman

**Publications:** *CIL* II, 2038

**Commentary:** This inscription, formerly part of an honorific statue base, dates to the period between Tiberius's accession as emperor in 14 CE, and the death of Livia in 29 CE. The base, which most likely held a statue of Livia, was found in the ancient province of Baetica, where the imperial cult is known to have been particularly well established (see Étienne, *Le Culte Impérial*, esp. p. 353-397). The dedication was set up as part of a group, along with statues of her two sons, Drusus and Tiberius, by a priest in the imperial cult, Cornelius Proculus. Drusus the younger brother of Tiberius, had died in 9 BCE, so the inclusion of him in this statue group is somewhat unusual; dedications in the provinces do not tend to continue to honour those who have died beyond their immediate commemoration, so, as Ann Kuttner has suggested, Proculus must have been particularly influenced by some other statue group of this type put up under Augustus when Drusus was still alive (*Dynasty and Empire*, p. 291).

The inscription names Livia as 'Iulia Augusta,' reflecting the change of status accorded to her in Augustus's will of 14 CE; as well as bequeathing to her one third of his estate, he specified that she was to be adopted into the Julian *gens* as his daughter, and to take on the name *Augusta* (see Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome* II.75.3; Tacitus, *Annals* I.8.1, Suetonius, *Augustus* 101.2; Barrett, *Livia*, p. 148). Although there is no precedent for a husband 'adopting' his wife in this way, the new name, Julia Augusta, brought Livia into the same family as her son and – most crucially – served as a permanent reminder of her status as Augustus's widow and Tiberius's joint heir. The large inheritance and the highly symbolic titles went far beyond what might typically have been awarded to the spouse of an important and aristocratic figure, but it ensured her stability and established a uniquely public role for Livia alongside her son, Tiberius (Severy, *Augustus and the Family*, p. 210).

Livia's role as the ideal 'mother' (*matrona*) figure is also alluded to in this inscription. She is described as mother of Tiberius and Drusus, which is perhaps an unusual inclusion given the length of time since Drusus's death. Livia's characterisation as a *matrona* was a key facet of Augustan ideology; her moral rectitude was highlighted as exemplary and her womanly virtue formed an important part of a directly political public image (Purcell, "Livia and the womanhood of Rome", p. 84). In the case of this inscription, however, Livia's status as mother is celebrated beyond her own offspring. She is given the somewhat hyperbolic title of 'she who gave birth to the world' (*genetrix orbis*), emphasising the importance of children in Augustan social and moral ideology, which saw the bearing of them crucial to the general prosperity and security of the world (Purcell, "Livia and the womanhood of Rome", p. 100). Although this is the first of only a handful of epigraphic texts which refer to Livia as *genetrix orbis*, the epithet was also found on imperial coinage minted in the provinces. For example, a bronze coin from Baetica (*Colonia Romula*) is marked on the obverse with *DIVUS AVGVSTVS*, with the reverse inscribed with *IVLIA*



AVGVSTA GENETRIX ORBIS and showing Livia's bust with a crescent on a globe (Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire*, p. 291; for coinage celebrating her as Julia Augusta, see Étienne, *Le Culte Impérial*, p. 428-9). There are also frequent allusions to motherhood in statue groups from the late principate, in which her role as mother is not explicitly stated, but where her inclusion with the image of Tiberius makes the association implicitly (Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, p. 121). The title '*genetrix*' also implicitly linked Livia with the cult of Venus Genetrix, the mythical progenitor of the Julian *gens*, through whom they claimed divine ancestry (Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, p. 120; Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire*, p. 31-2; Schilling, *La Religion Romaine*, p. 304-346. See also the description of [Livilla as Anchisean Aphrodite in Ilium](#) [2]).

These attributions, although important in Augustan ideology for promoting the imperial family as a moral and religious example which Roman families around the empire could – and should – emulate, were potentially problematic for Tiberius's authority once he had acceded to the emperorship. Including Livia as part of the Julian *gens* may well have helped to secure his own hold on the principate, the award of the title *Augusta* could be seen to undermine or rival his control. There has been much discussion in earlier scholarship as to whether or not the title was indicative of some sort of joint-control, but this has largely been dismissed; not only would it go against Augustus's careful and deliberate efforts to act with constitutional propriety, but it risked drawing comparisons with those 'barbarian' states in which women – such as Cleopatra – were deployed into political positions, and whose power was emblematic of some sort of breakdown in moral and social order (Wyke, *Meretrix Regina*, p. 350). Whatever the strategy behind the scenes, Livia's public role – however ill-defined – had to be maintained as one which emphasised and celebrated her wifely virtues; honours such as the title *genetrix orbis* may perhaps be understood as an innovative attempt to elevate her above other Roman *matronae*, but within the bounds of what was socially respectable. An attempt by the Senate to elevate her status even further by awarding the title *mater patriae* (mother of the fatherland) was put down by Tiberius, who also refused the titles of *parens patriae* (parent of the fatherland) and 'son of Julia' (*filius Juliae*) that the Senate suggested awarding to him directly (Tacitus, *Annals*, I.14; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, XVI.2). He surely recognised the potential conflict that such titles implied; how could Tiberius be in charge of the Roman state as their symbolic '*pater*' if he was also the son of the '*mater patriae*'? The delineation of authority was not clear, and it is for this reason that Beth Severy has suggested that Tiberius likely rejected honorific titles based on familial relationship (*Augustus and the Family*, p. 212).

This inscribed statue base does, however, illustrate the extraordinary and unprecedented role held by Livia both before and after the death of Augustus. As his wife she was his moral counterpart, acting as the '*mater*' of the state by providing practical and financial support in the raising of children and supporting dowries for poor brides (see Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LVIII.2.2-3; Severy, *Augustus and the Family*, chapter 6). In the religious sphere, she followed his example, dedicating shrines and temples to goddesses with whose attributes she could also be celebrated. Following Augustus's death, she represented continuity and security, maintaining the public statement of *pax* that Augustus had brought to the empire. It is no coincidence that the *Ara Pacis* had indeed been dedicated on Livia's birthday, not Augustus's.

It is worth noting that the province of Baetica, where this statue base was erected, had a particularly strong fascination for the imperial family and their cult. The statue and base were erected by a 'priest of the Caesars' (*pontifex Caesarum*), perhaps as part of a shrine to Livia and Tiberius. Indeed, in 25 CE a deputation from Baetica had travelled to Rome in order to ask permission to build a shrine to Tiberius and Livia, following the precedent set by a temple to Tiberius and Livia and the Senate that the Senate had agreed to in Smyrna (see Tacitus, *Annals*, IV.55-56; Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, I.1 p. 158-60). Tiberius refused Baetica's request, stating that he permitted the temple to his person in Smyrna only because Augustus had previously permitted the city of Pergamum to erect one to himself and the city of Rome; one instance of this was acceptable, but to permit a second shrine would reduce the honour to vulgarity. Although he refused to allow the construction of a shrine, devotion to the imperial cult in Baetica remained strong, with Livia achieving a quasi-divine status there even within her own lifetime (see Grether, "Livia and the Roman imperial cult"). Some difference between the centrally sanctioned and provincially organised depictions of Livia is only to be expected however; the Roman state could not be seen to promote an image of Livia that went beyond the (already unprecedented) honours awarded to her by Augustus, nor to publically undermine the new emperor and risk destabilising the security of the empire. In a province such as Baetica, however, there was more freedom to demonstrate local autonomy. The inscription on this statue base, with its attribution of *genetrix orbis*, is illustrative of local patrons engaging with and applying their understanding of 'official' imperial propaganda but developing it in their own way (Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, p. 121).

Keywords in the original language:



- [Lulia](#) [3]
- [Augusta](#) [4]
- [Drusus](#) [5]
- [divus](#) [6]
- [mater](#) [7]
- [Tiberius](#) [8]
- [Caesar](#) [9]
- [princeps](#) [10]
- [conservator](#) [11]
- [Germanicus](#) [12]
- [genetrix](#) [13]
- [orbis](#) [14]

Thematic keywords:

- [Livia](#) [15]
- [Augustus](#) [16]
- [Tiberius](#) [17]
- [Caesar](#) [18]
- [Julio-Claudian dynasty](#) [19]
- [mother](#) [20]
- [Venus](#) [21]
- [province](#) [22]
- [Spain](#) [23]
- [Baetica](#) [24]
- [imperial cult](#) [25]

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Fishwick, Duncan, [The Imperial Cult in the Latin West, volume I](#) [29] (Leiden: Brill, 1987)  
Grether, Gertrude, [Livia and the Roman imperial cult](#) [30], *American Journal of Philology* 67.3 (1946) : p. 222-252  
  
Hekster, Olivier, [Emperors and ancestors: Roman rulers and the constraints of tradition](#) [31] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)  
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Schilling, Robert, [La religion romaine de Vénus: depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d'Auguste](#) [34] (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1982)  
Severy, Beth, [Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire](#) [35] (London, New York: Routledge, 2003)  
Wyke, Maria, [Meretrix regina: Augustan Cleopatras](#) [36], in *Augustus* (ed. J. Edmonson; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.197-243

**Other sources connected with this document:** Inscription

## [Livilla as Anchisean Aphrodite in Ilium](#) [2]

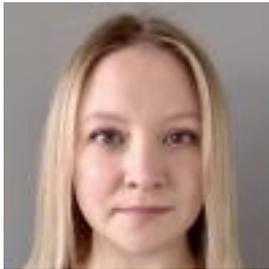
An inscription honouring Antonia Minor and the Julio-Claudian lineage in Ilium (Troia) calls Livilla “Aphrodite of Anchises”

- [Read more about Livilla as Anchisean Aphrodite in Ilium](#) [2]



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