

The (Strange) Roman World at the Time of Christ

Nancy J. Padgett, Ph.D.

njpadgett@gmail.com

December 11, 2016

Lectures are posted on my history Web site:
www.historytravelswithnancy.com

The (Strange) Roman World at the Time of Christ

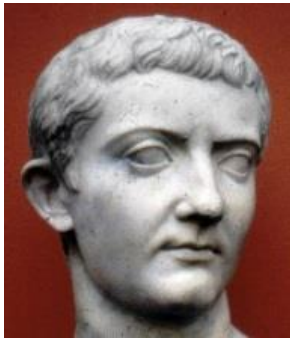
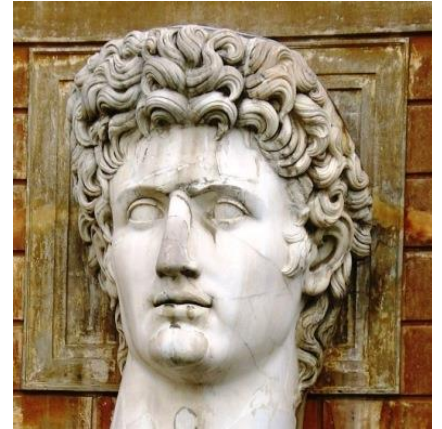
1. Daily Life in the Roman World
2. Roman Cities: A Trip to Ephesus
- 3. Lesser Beings: Women, Children, Slaves. The Elderly**
4. Religions of the Roman Empire
 - Setting the Stage for Christianity

Reminder: Legal Status

- In the Roman world, your legal status determined your life:
 - free vs slave ; freedmen and freedwomen
 - male vs female
 - citizen vs non-citizen
 - the father vs children

Who's Who

- Augustus (63BC--AD14, age 77). Won the Civil Wars 31 BC. Proclaimed Emperor 27 BC, ending the Republic.
- Livia, (59 BC--AD29, age 88). Married Augustus when she was 20.
- Below: Livia's son Tiberius and Augustus' daughter Julia the Elder.



Livia: Marriage as Politics

- Livia was descended from two of the most ancient clans in Rome—the Claudians and the Drusus Livian families.
- Her first husband chose the wrong side in the Civil War. They went into exile. Upon return, the husband could regain only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of their property. Livia was thus in reduced circumstances
- Met Octavian/ Augustus. He was power, the rising star of Roman politics. She was status, through her double ancient ancestry -- the Claudian and the Drusus Livian clans.
- They were both already married. Augustus' wife was pregnant. Livia was pregnant. They both divorced their spouses and married each other.

Women in the Roman World

- A female was legally bound to a male for her entire life: father, husband, or guardian (in Latin, 'tutor').
- A woman could not
 - vote
 - hold office
 - argue for herself in court

A Woman Could:

- inherit property : some independent wealth
- own or sell her own property
- initiate a divorce
- leave a will directing her personal assets.

Livia, wife of Augustus, owned a passel of properties. Some she inherited. Others came through her shrewdness in investing.



Women and Identity

The Family (gens) Comes Before the Individual



Julia, daughter of
Emperor Augustus,
known as 'Julia
Caesaris filia'



Julia, daughter of
Emperor Titus



Julia, wife of Emperor
Severus

How Men Wanted their Women to Look

- All statues of women, including those on tombs, were erected by men—husband or father.
- A statue erected in a public, civic space was a high honor.
- Statues were not intended to be real-life portraits.

The Honorary Male Look

A husband might show his wife with the virtues of the ideal Roman male.



Dignity, control over oneself and others, high-minded—the wife of Vibia Drosos.

Or, The Beautiful (but Chaste!) Look.
He might show off her beauty and luxurious
attire, a reflection of his own glory.

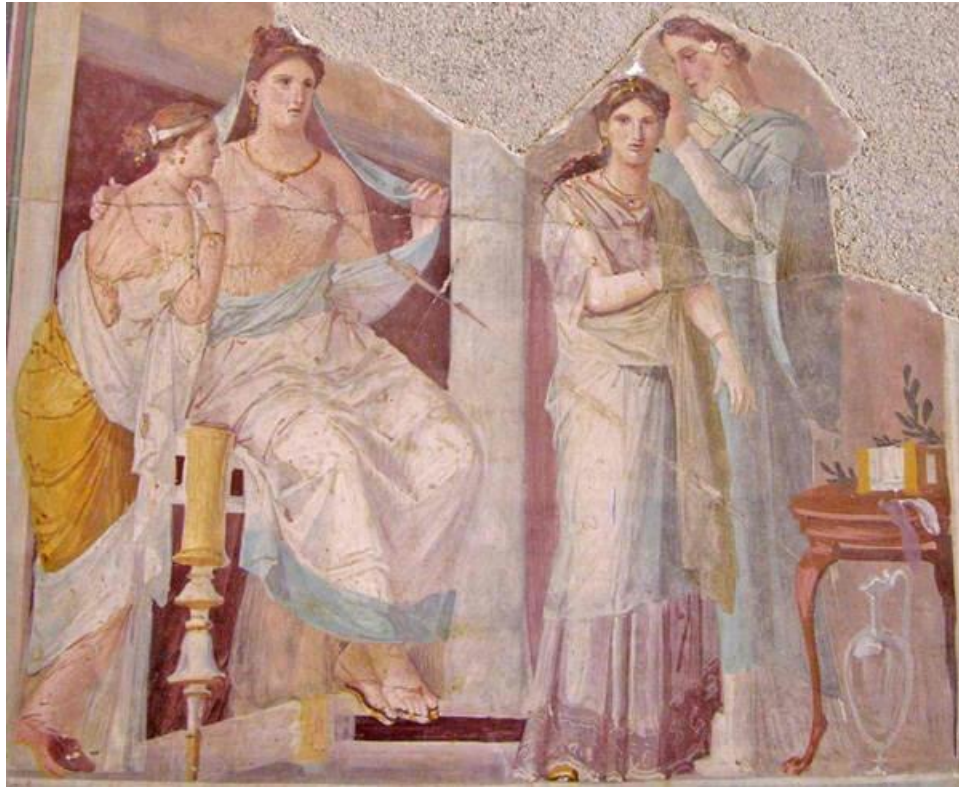


The Clothes

- *The first layer is the tunic with its high neckline.*
- *On top of the tunic was added the stola. The stola is belted at the high waist and drapes to the floor.*
- *The third layer is the palla. It covers both her shoulders, with one end flung over the outstretched right arm.*

Beautiful Clothes, Elegant Hairstyles

The wife was to accompany her husband to social events with grace and sophistication

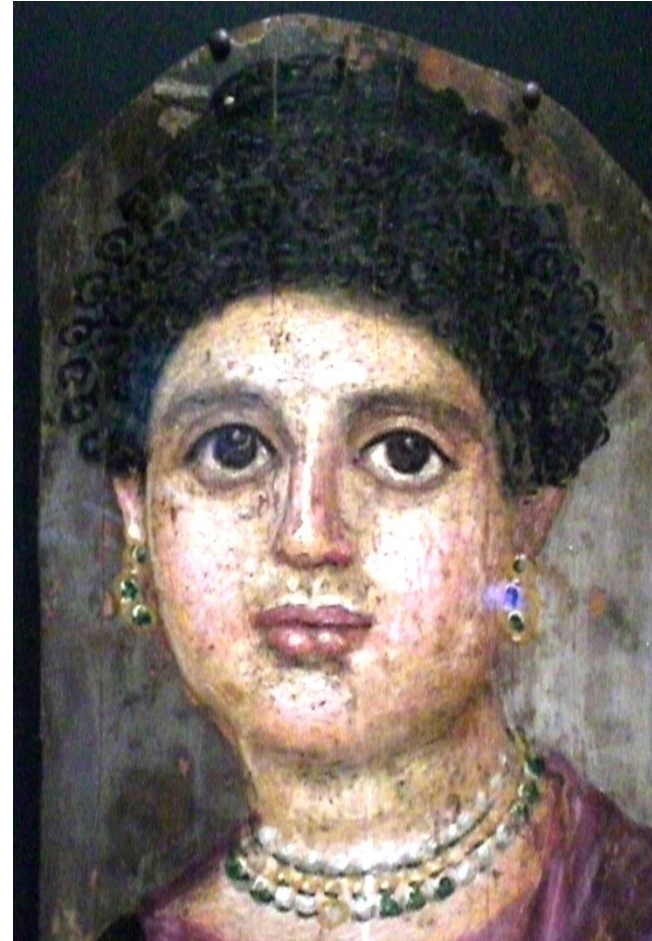


Hairstyles took a LOT of work





From the East



Galen: on Cosmetics

- Galen, the famous Greek physician of the 2nd c AD, also wrote about cosmetics. He approved of cosmetics to prolong beauty. But he frowned upon some beauty procedures--dying hair or bleaching skin. These were "unnatural."



On the 13th of August each year, Roman women were supposed to wash their hair.

Livia Sets the Style

- Livia's "nodus"- meaning "tight roll"- hairstyle was widely copied throughout the Empire. Statues of her were erected in the East as early as 30 BC. Over 50 portraits of her and 68 inscriptions dedicated to her have been found. Four in Ephesus alone.

She usually appeared as a very young woman.



Livia: Modest or Elegant?

- Livia was not exactly the schemer portrayed by popular media, cheerfully eradicating an assortment of strangers, friends, and close family.
- She (and Augustus) were known for modesty. But Livia did not eschew elegance. Many of her household staff of 200 turn out to be in the beauty business.

- Hair and make-up artists. The hairstyles lasted for days.
- Dressers (in Latin "ornatrices") -- perhaps the fashion stylists of the day.
- Wool workers ("lanipendi") and sewers ("sarcinatrices"), who made the clothes.
- "Keepers of her wardrobe" cleaned, folded, and mended them. Since Livia was also a priestess, there had to be a separate specialist to look after her priestly garments and accessories.
- A specialized shoemaker ("calicator") . A goldsmith ("aurifes"), a gilder ("inaurator"), and a pearl setter ("margaritarius") for her jewelry.

Livia at Home

- Livia also had a sizeable medical staff. Livia obsessed about her health. Included a masseuse and a personal physician for Augustus, who prescribed lots of cold baths.
- Livia wrote medical recipes, one for nervous tension. The recipe cook marjoram, rosemary, fenugreek with wine. Add lots of oil (like an olive oil). Add a wax at the end of cooking so the medicament becomes a salve.

Livia and Augustus Travel Together

- Normally, elite Roman women did not travel with their husbands on official business. But Livia did.
- Augustus, once proclaimed emperor in 27 BC, decided that every five years he should visit and stay in one of the Empire's provinces for three years, returning to Rome for two years. Then start over with a different area.
- Together in 22 BC they visited the East. Cities and provinces went all out to impress "the Royals" , hoping in return for favors. Worked well for Ephesus, which became the capital of a new province "Asia."

What Livia Did in Her Travels: Omens and Portents

- In visiting Greece, Livia made sure to visit the famous sanctuary at Delphi, and while there made a generous "dedication" in the form of the letter epsilon inscribed in gold.
- Perhaps to obtain assurances of good health while on travel, as the "plague" was prevalent. Both stayed in good health on this very extended trip.
- On the downside, Athens during the visit experienced a bad omen: the cult statue of Athena on the Acropolis turned around 180 degrees and spat blood. Hmmm. August then took away two of the city's two important territories.

Livia and Adoption

- Augustus, in his will, adopted Livia upon his death. That is, adopted Livia into the Julian clan. Now she belonged to three clans—the Livians, the Claudians, and the Julians.

Augustus Says: "Get Married and Make Babies"

- Under Augustus, women had less freedom, at least in theory.
 - If convicted of adultery, a woman could lose up to half her property.
 - She might be banished.
 - If married, have at least 3 children
 - If widowed, remarry within 2 years.



Getting Married



The Dowry

- Legally, the father had to provide his daughter with a dowry to enable them to marry. How large was the dowry? About one year's worth of family income, not very large by later European standards.
- A husband could not give gifts to his wife during the man's lifetime and vice versa, to avoid polluting finances—no such thing as "joint property."

Allowances and Inheritance

- A father or a mother could give their married daughter an allowance in addition to the dowry (which was technically her husband's to manage.)
- A daughter's father (and mother) usually left her, along with the male children, an inheritance. It could be money, farmland, other real estate, and jewels.
- Roman custom did not permit the husband to use these sources of his wife's funds.

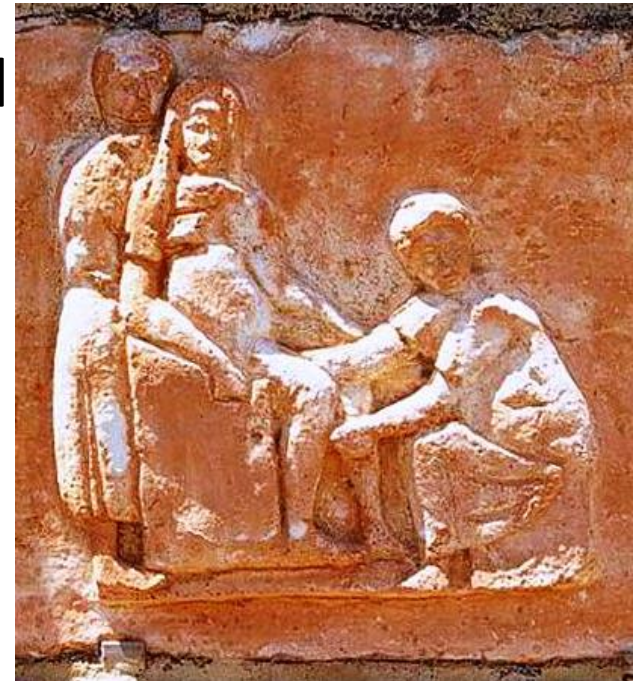
Augustus on Wives

- Under Emperor Augustus, husbands elevated to the Senate had to have their wives' lineage scrutinized.
- If the husband had married "beneath his class," he must divorce and remarry.
- If a husband caught his wife in the act of adultery, he not only had to divorce her, he had to prosecute her within sixty days. If he did not, the husband could be prosecuted as well.
- An adulterous wife could not remarry.
- Divorced women (non-adulterous) were penalized if they did not remarry within two years.
- How did Augustus carry out his conservative program? He used legal edicts: A woman convicted of adultery could lose up to half her property and be banished to an island.

Lesser Beings: Children

Having Babies

- Women delivered their babies using a birthing chair. It had a back, arms, and a crescent-shaped hole in the seat. The chair placed the mother in an upright position for delivery. It was not used for labor. An attendant, usually a slave, assisted the midwife from behind the chair.
- The Greek physician Soranus wrote a treatise, "Gynecology". He set out the requirements for the ideal delivery and recovery rooms, beds, midwife, etc.



Mothers and Children

- Mothers did not "nurture."
- They instilled Roman "virtues". Dignity, sobriety, perseverance, in control of themselves and others they were responsible for.
- The mother was responsible for the child's education.

Male Children:

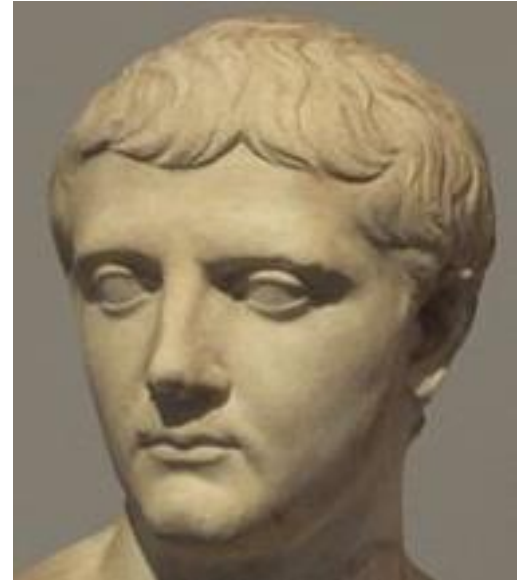
Children did not have a "childhood" or "teenager" years. They were raised to become adults as soon as possible.



School Boys with Tutor

The Death of a Child: Drusus

- Drusus was the stepson of Augustus , from Livia's first marriage. Drusus died at age 29 while on military campaign in today's Germany.
- Augustus gave a funeral eulogy in the Circus Maximus, a very big deal. Portraits of the Julian and Claudian clans surrounded the funeral bier.
- The ashes of Drusus were deposited in the monumental Mausoleum built by Augustus. Augustus wrote the verses that appeared on his tomb, and later a prose account of his life.
- To console mother Livia, the Roman Senate voted statues for her.



The Fly in the Ointment

- Still not enough children of the aristocratic elite.
- Adoption was the answer.
- Definitely not the adoption practiced in the modern world. The adoptee could be and often was a male adult. Even one who already had his own family.

A Particularly Pesky Fly: The Emperor's Male Children

- Livia and Augustus did not have children of their own.
- Each male death in the Augustan family triggered rumors of poisonings and other means of assassination. This lack of males who reached an age where they could succeed Augustus resulted in a constant stirring of the pot of civil unrest.
- Augustus settled upon Livia's second son, Tiberius. Augustus at age 65 adopted Tiberius, age 44.

Livia and Son Tiberius

- Settling the succession brought relief: "parents felt heartened about the future of their children, husbands felt secure about their wives, property owners anticipated profits from their investments." (Velleius)
- Upon Augustus' death in AD 14, Senate voted to call her "Julia Augusta." A very great honor.
- She and son Tiberius, now Emperor, increasingly were at odds over her honorifics, independence, and influence.
- When she died in AD 29, Tiberius allowed her only a modest funeral. He failed to execute her will, to erect a memorial to Livia, to approve her deification.



Female Children



Girl, Reading.

A Particularly Pesky Fly: The Emperor's Female Child

- Julia, only daughter of Augustus, had a happy marriage and bore 3 sons and 2 daughters.
- But husband #1 died, and she was immediately married off to Livia's son, Tiberius. Disaster, plus no children.
- Always a "wild child," Julia had many affairs. Took to wandering the streets of Rome seeking excitement. Augustus in a rage exiled many of her lovers and even had one executed.
- Exiled Julia. Stipulated her remains upon her death could not be buried in his Mausoleum.
- Julia died when Tiberius had her starved to death while in exile.

Lesser Beings: Slaves. The Elderly

Lesser Beings: Slaves



The Spoils of War

The Elderly



Augustus and Livia: Herod

- Herod, King of Judea at the time of the birth of Christ, had some good qualities. He appealed to Augustus to decrease penalties upon those Eastern cities that had ended up on the wrong side of the Civil War. Herod was often successful.
- Livia was sought out by female members of Herod's family for advice, which she evidently gave.

Looking Further Ahead: Emperor Tiberius and Pontius Pilate

- Tiberius was prone to bouts of depression.
- Exiled himself to Capri, where he stayed for 11 years, AD 26-37. Failed to rule daily.
- Especially did not appoint new provincial governors or supervise the old ones.
- Thus Pontius Pilate stayed as prefect of Judea for 10 years (AD 26-36), long past the usual time, and long past his capabilities.

How to Make a Roman Hairstyle

