

FORMA VRBIS

INTERNATIONAL

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FROM EPIGRAPHY TO ARCHAEOLOGY

THE EAGLE PROJECT
EXPLORING THE DIGITAL FRONTIERS OF EPIGRAPHY

THE SPLENDOUR OF SYBARIS
NEW ARCHAIC-PERIOD DISCOVERIES

ARCHAEOLOGY IN SALENTO
ROCA VECCHIA AND THE ROMANELLI CAVE

Leader: Forma Urbis International – from Epigraphy to Archaeology

New frontiers in epigraphy and a host of new technological developments in that field is the topic that opens the first English-language issue of our magazine. *Forma Urbis* was founded in 1995, with the purpose of sharing knowledge about Rome and the entire ancient world with our readers. We have explored the rediscovery of underground Roman sites and monuments, presented essays on ancient history, on archaeology (from protohistory to the Middle Ages), numismatics, culture and folk traditions, as well as articles about new archaeological discoveries – which we are often the first to describe.

The journal's primary aim – especially since its union with the Fondazione Dià Cultura, which has been in charge of its content and art direction since 2012 – is to offer an ideal blend of scientific journal (as is clear from our content, which is always provided by professional archaeologists) and magazine for the general public (as can be seen from our widespread dissemination both on newsstands and online). In other words, ours is a high-quality and authoritative publication, accessible to an audience that comprises even occasional readers.

This first international issue discusses epigraphy, the science that deals with inscriptions (*tituli* in Latin). It is a discipline that is difficult to define, a task made even more complicated by epigraphy's relationship with sciences such as papyrology and numismatics – the studies of documents written on papyrus and of coins, respectively – which circumscribe its area of competence and, occasionally, become 'entangled' with it. The word's literal meaning, from the Greek *epigraphēin*, meaning "to write on", corresponds perfectly to the Latin *inscribere*. Epigraphy therefore encompasses all written material handed down to us directly from antiquity as opposed to being passed down through the mediation of Medieval copyists. Inscriptions are a priceless legacy. Not only do they represent an important source for the study of history and archaeology, they also create an immediate point of contact with the ancient world. They paint us a realistic picture of the multiple facets of public and private life that characterised the widely differing ages during which they were produced. The messages entrusted to epigraphs are many and varied, from those involving individuals' *cursus honorum* (public careers) to laws, from calendars to oracles, from public works to *instrumentum domesticum* (objects of daily use), from funerary to honorary inscriptions, and so on. As we shall discover going deeper into these pages, the contribution that epigraphy has made to the reconstruction of the political, economic and social histories of the ancient world, its daily life, and the histories of sports, law and religions, is an enormous one. Inscriptions bear faithful and invaluable witness to the evolution of language, its chronological and geographic development, based on an inscription's time and place of provenance. Funerary epigraphs, for instance, or the inscriptions carved into or extemporaneously painted onto walls, such as those found in abundance in the cities around Vesuvius, constitute a unique source for the reconstruction

of the *sermo cotidianus*, the spoken language. The fact that the space of inscriptions is limited means that the inscribed text is always fairly short, that the style of epigraphic texts is generally concise, succinct, paratactic, terse and formulaic, and that they do not pose great exegetical difficulty from a grammatical standpoint. On the other hand, deciphering the abbreviations, contractions and nexuses that were very often used for reasons of economy of space is the most complex aspect of their study. It is the task of epigraphy to explain the meaning of specific formulas used, to deal with the characters employed to write the inscriptions, determine their age based on their forms, and use them to glean a wide variety of information about the monuments on which they are found: when they date from, their purpose, who commissioned them, restorations they have undergone, the figurative representations they contain and their dedications. These are only some of the many responsibilities that fall in the realm of epigraphic science, as we shall discover while perusing this first international issue of *Forma Urbis*. We would also like to take this opportunity to remind our readers that our journal derives its name from *Forma Urbis Romae*, the famous plan of Rome from the time of Severus, carved (between 203 and 211 A.D.) onto great marble slabs, on which, thanks to their inscriptions, we can identify many edifices of that age.

This issue deals at length with the European project EAGLE (Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy), co-funded by the European Commission as part of its Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP). The project's purpose is to collect and catalogue, in a single, easy-to-search database, over a million and a half images and other digital objects related to hundreds of thousands of inscriptions from the Greco-Roman world, each accompanied by essential information and, in many cases, translations into English or other modern languages.

The project is part of Europeana, the European digital library which has collected millions of digital objects from the most important archives, libraries and museums in all of Europe. The application of information technology to epigraphy has given rise to many significant changes in the study of antiquity, and its continuing contribution to this field's evolution remains a dynamic and exhilarating one, thanks largely to the new opportunities created by the exchange and sharing of knowledge. This happy union between technology and the sciences of antiquity is intended to render our cultural heritage more accessible to all. That heritage does not cease to grow and amaze us, as is demonstrated by the splendid 6th-century B.C. artefacts recently found near the modern town of Sibari (province of Cosenza) during the course of excavations conducted by the Archaeological Superintendency of Calabria. It is here, in the pages of *Forma Urbis*, that they are presented for the first time. We have devoted a special feature in this issue to the famous Magna-Graecian megalopolis of Sybaris, destroyed by its rival Croton in 510 B.C., refounded as a Panhellenic colony in 444 B.C. by the will of Pericles, and established as a Roman colony in 193 B.C. with the evocative name of *Copia*, in remembrance of the opulence and ancient splendours which today are being rediscovered there.

The issue continues with articles dealing with archaeology

2 in Salento, in Apulia. Iapygia, as it was called in ancient times, was occupied from its founding by peoples of Greek and Illyrian origin. It encompassed the lands of Daunia (Northern Apulia), Peucetia (Central Apulia) and Messapia (ancient Salento).

As far as the inhabitants of the peninsula are concerned, we know that some ancient sources thought them to be of Cretan origin. Strabo was one of these (X, 478-480). He tells us of a sumptuous temple dedicated to Athena located in those lands, in a place that the Latins, in apparent confirmation of this fact, called *Castrum Minervae*. It was also believed to be Aeneas' first landing place in Italy (Dion. Hal. I, 51; Virg. *Aen.*, III, 520-531). However, unlike the Iapyges – whose eponymous hero was Iapyx, son of Daedalus and a woman of Crete – the Cretans who dwelt on the peninsula of Salento were said to have been brought there by the local king of Lyttos, son of Deucalion and grandson of Minos:

(...) *et Sallentinos obsedit milite campos / Lyctius Idomeneus*
“(...) and Lyctian Idomeneus occupied the Salentine plains with his soldiery”
(Virg. *Aen.*, III, 400-401)

Idomeneus – whom Varro (*Rerum Humanarum*, III) considers the founder of the ancient settlement of *Castrum Minervae* – took part in the Trojan War, like all of Helen's royal suitors. He fought and won fame at the head of a Cretan force of 80 ships. He was present for the fall of the city, conquered through the stratagem of the wooden horse in which he hid with his companions in order to seize the fortress of Ilium undisturbed. Contrary to that which is reported in the *Odyssey* (III, 191) and in other sources (Diod. *Bibl.* V, 79, 4), which tell of the Cretan king's happy return to his homeland following the War, more recent traditions (Strabo, X, 479-480; Virg. *Aen.* III, 121-122; XI 264-265) regarding his *nostos* (return) report that he was assailed by a storm before reaching the island. Idomeneus made a vow that, if he should reach his homeland safe and sound, he would sacrifice the first human being he met there to Poseidon. The victim thus designated was one of his own sons, whose sacrifice – evidently displeasing to the gods – caused the outbreak of a horrible plague. In order to end it, Idomeneus was exiled from Crete. The king travelled to southern Italy, settling in Salento, where he built the temple to Athena which would inspire the city's Latin name.

As we shall discover in this issue, Salento, a region lying entirely outthrust towards the eastern Mediterranean, was naturally inclined to become a 'receiver' for the different cultures arriving from the sea's far shores.

Mycenaean, Greeks, Byzantines and Arabs were some of the most frequent visitors to this cultural crossroads, whose origins lie in remote prehistory. Traces of its long existence remain in the ancient tales of places such as the extraordinary site of Roca Vecchia – where our earliest history is documented through rare evidence – and the Romanelli Cave. All are ready to inspire awe in today's travellers, the occasionally inadvertent heirs of the Grand Tourists of yesteryear.

Simona Sanchirico, Managing Editor of *Forma Urbis*
Fondazione Dià Cultura





Dedication to Septimius Severus (CIL XIV 4569), photographed by Hans Georg Kolbe (from the cover of the April 2012 issue of *Forma Urbis*)



Fragment of a monument inscription from Piazza Madonna di Loreto (from S. Orlandi's, "Quando basta un frammento", published in *Forma Urbis*, April 2012, p. 23)



View of excavated ruins in the Sybaris archaeological park (www.wikimediacommons.org)



Poesia Cave ("Grotta della Poesia") in Roca Vecchia, on the Adriatic Sea, located in the municipality of Melendugno, Province of Lecce, Italy (www.wikimediacommons.org)





Roca Vecchia, panoramic view (www.wikimediacommons.org)

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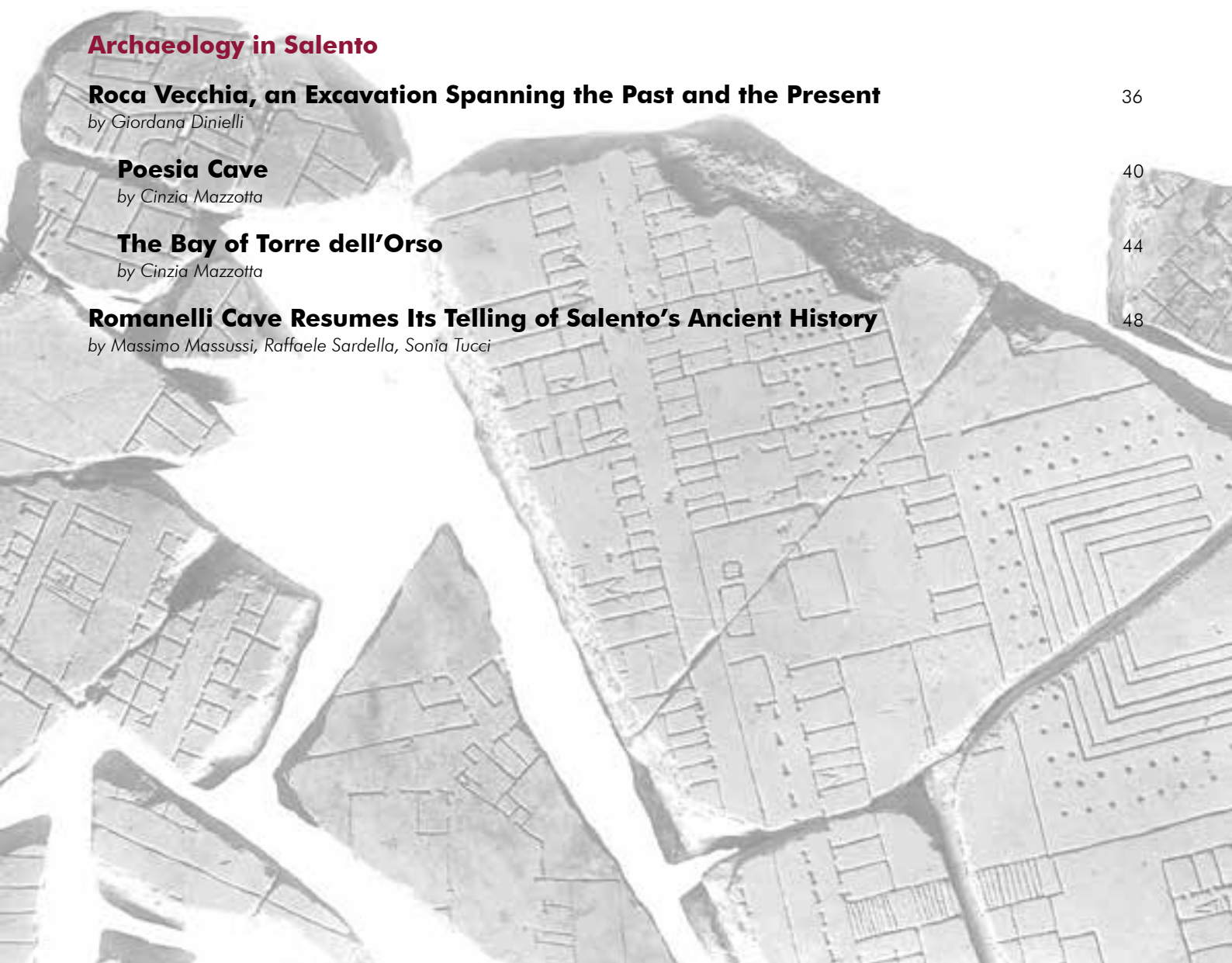
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Detail of the base of a statue at the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MiBACT) National Library of Modern and Contemporary History. Co-winner of the Special EAGLE Award for the 2013 Wiki Loves Monuments photography contest (photo by G. Anesin. Source: Wikimedia Commons CC-BY-SA)



1. EAGLE federation logo

EAGLE: From the Birth of an Idea to the Realization of a Project

by Silvia Orlandi*

It was in the final decades of the 20th century that the computer ceased to exist solely in scientific laboratories and entered the sphere of the liberal arts, giving rise to the flourishing and increasingly varied world of the Digital Humanities.

Classical Latin and Greek epigraphy have not been indifferent to the research and development capabilities to be gained from adopting information technology. Indeed, the very nature of this subject, based as it is on the study of a huge number of texts, many of which share similar and repetitive characteristics (formulas, names, abbreviations, etc.), seems to invite the use of tools that are capable of simplifying the filing and management of large volumes of data and information. Many projects were born as a result. They sought, first and foremost, to meet the needs of scholars through a marriage of epigraphy and information technology. They went beyond the limits imposed by the need to consult documents and bibliographical information, which are characterised by their highly scattered and fragmentary nature. Despite having been embarked upon with the best of intentions, not all of these projects reached completion. Of those that did, not all managed to accomplish what they had set out to achieve, to remain current, or to keep pace with technology's constant evolution. Most importantly, not every application of computer science to epigraphy has been able to generate an authentic "work tool", destined not merely to take the place of the old paper archives, but to simplify the task of scholars of ancient history, offering new inspiration for reflection and in-depth historical research.

The new millennium ushered in a period of reflection on this topic. It called into question the indiscriminate enthusiasm that had formerly greeted all things "digital".

The relationship between the creation of new computer technologies and the real requirements of the users for whom they were destined – including the field of epigraphy – became the subject of more careful consideration. Silvio Panciera identified these requirements in his introduction to one of the first epigraphic collections available online, the *Inscriptions of Aphrodisias* (<http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/>). Firstly, users would need such collections to be able to rapidly record every inscription dating from before the 7th century, based on the best edition available. Secondly, each epigraph should be accompanied by essential information that would make it possible to consult not only its textual content, but also study its physical appearance (material, type of support, inscription technique), an integral part of the message an inscription conveys.

It was thus that, in 2003, EAGLE (Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy) (Fig. 1) was born. It originally consisted of a federation of three databases: the Epigraphic Database Bari (EDB), the Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH), and the Epigraphic Database Rome (EDR) (Figg.



2. Homepage of the EDB - Epigraphic Database Bari



3. Homepage of the EDH - Epigraphic Database Heidelberg



4. Homepage of the EDR - Epigraphic Database Rome

2-3-4), to which a fourth, the Hispania Epigraphica Online (Fig. 5) was added in 2009. The purpose of the project was to take the texts and images of the Latin and Greek inscriptions contained in the different archives and make them openly and freely accessible online through a single web portal. The archives would take on the responsibility of digitizing the epigraphs, dividing up the work and spheres of competence as follows: Roman, but only texts commissioned by Christians (EDB); Roman (excluding Christian inscriptions) and ancient Italy, including the provinces of Sicily and Sardinia (EDR); the Iberian Peninsula (HEO); and the remainder of the Roman Empire's European provinces (EDH).

Tens of thousands of epigraphic texts, many accompanied by their associated images, were thus made available to the academic community. They could be accessed either through the different databases' websites or via a portal which permitted field-based searches based on their common features (text, bibliography, place of discovery, etc.). While these projects were extremely valuable to users, those working to make them a reality faced an arduous task. Despite not always having the financial support they required, they strove in every way, sometimes at the expense of the pace of data entry, to maintain a high standard of quality in terms of content. They conducted checks – often through direct comparison against the originals – of transcriptions, of the information on each epigraph's origin and state of preservation, and of bibliographical citations. A chance to grow and a new stimulus for the initiative arrived from the European Commission in 2012, in the context of the 7th Framework Programme's call for tenders for the ICT-PSP. The Commission had faith in the project's potential and chose to support it through a generous three-year grant, over the period April 2013 – March 2016. This opportunity arose largely from a realisation that, despite the fact that it represents a significant component of Europe's historical and archaeological heritage, epigraphy was poorly represented on Europeana, the chief online portal for European culture.

The project consequently became the "Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy". EAGLE's aim is to make the different materials (texts and images) from the various "content providers" who have participated in the project – and which constitute a substantial percentage of our known epigraphic heritage – accessible, through both Europeana and another new, purpose-built portal.

Other partners – caretakers of digital collections of great interest for ancient epigraphy – later joined the original EAGLE federation of 4 databases: Oxford University, which, in 2012, went online with the site *The Last Statues of Antiquity* (Fig. 6); the University of Bordeaux, which, thanks to its online project, PETRAE, has made available to scholars the epigraphs from Aquitaine (Fig. 7); the Austrian database *Ubi erat lupa*, with its excellent photographs of Roman monuments, many bearing inscriptions; the British School at Rome, with digital images from its historical archive, most significantly inscriptions from Tripolitania and southern Etruria; the *Archaiia Kypraki Grammateia*, with ancient written sources of the history of Cyprus; lastly, the Istituto Archeologico Germanico, with its vast archive of photographs (and other materials) digitised in the Arachne



5. Homepage of HEO - Hispania Epigraphica Online



6. Homepage of LSA - Last Statues of Antiquity



7. Homepage of the PETRAE online database

database. Even more projects and institutions have joined the confederation over time, accepting the invitation to make their material available to the public. They share EAGLE's spirit and aims and their contributions have been equally important. These include the Ancient Graffiti Project from the University of Lexington in Virginia (USA), which collects graffiti from Pompeii and Herculaneum (Fig. 8), and the project to digitise the Latin inscriptions from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Fig. 9), to name only two examples.



8. Homepage of the Ancient Graffiti Project

The material in this diverse collection, incorporated so as to be searchable via a single portal, will make it possible to carry out searches that span all inscriptions – whether Latin or Greek, pagan or Christian – overcoming the traditional academic divisions between subjects and therefore enabling us to gain a more complete picture of the ancient world, of which these epigraphs are the expression. The variety of material made available by EAGLE is well represented by the project’s logo, designed by Nicola Cionini for Promoter S.r.l. It contains images of a pagan inscription in Latin, a Greek inscription commissioned by a Christian, a waxed writing tablet (in recognition of the presence of Pompeiian and Herculanean *tabulae* in the EDR database), and an inscription in gold wire applied to glass, belonging to the so-called class of *instrumentum domesticum* – although not to the category of seals, which have been temporarily excluded from the project due to their particular cataloguing requirements.

Rendering the inscriptions “accessible”, however, does not mean merely making them searchable for the community of scholars who use them for study and research. In keeping with the spirit of knowledge sharing that characterises EAGLE, it also means opening them up for use by a broader public of students, teachers, tourists, the interested and the curious. Like all European projects, EAGLE has a strong “civic” component. It has accepted the seemingly impossible challenge of bringing texts – in languages, and often even in alphabets, that not everyone knows – to a non-specialist public.



9. Homepage of AshLI - Latin Inscriptions of the Ashmolean Museum

The idea of employing image recognition technology (developed by the “A. Faedo” Institute of Information Science and Technologies of the National Research Council of Italy in Pisa) was essential to overcoming this obstacle. Already successfully applied to other monuments, it made it possible to develop, in association with the Parisian company Eureva, a smartphone application capable of recognising inscriptions without the user having to type in any text.

An awareness of the importance of image-based communication in today’s world informed the choice to entrust EAGLE’s online promotion to social networks and a purpose-made video, jointly developed by sector professionals and content providers.

The further possibility of linking a record containing an inscription’s original text to one or more translations into modern languages is the result of collaboration with Wikimedia Italy. It is, in fact, thanks to the new EAGLE MediaWiki platform that it is now possible to post online not only existing translations of epigraphic texts, previously published in a wide range of contexts, but also translations executed ad hoc by scholars or students, in the latter case supervised by their teachers. Indeed, the potential of using epigraphic material as a tool for teaching ancient



history and Classical languages in schools is substantial, as numerous experiments in different parts of Italy have already shown.

It is the very nature of inscriptions – whose content, physical appearance and historical and topographical context mean that they are always destined to tell stories – that suggests this potentiality. Whether their stories are big or small, they are always perfectly suited to be presented as narratives. It was this aspect that gave rise to the idea of developing, as part of the project, a special storytelling app. This app would be able to simplify the task of anyone who – using the instruments (text, images, maps, videos, etc.) made available by the Web – wished to tell the “story” behind a given inscription. They are the stories of people who are not necessarily famous, of places that are not always visible, of feelings not always expressed... Another interesting and entertaining challenge taken on and publicised by EAGLE is a writing competition, set to honour the best short story based on an ancient inscription.

Taking an initiative created in an academic setting and transforming it into a large-scale European project, targeting not only scholars but lay circles as well, is no simple task. It simply would not have been possible without the spirit of collaboration and the free exchange

of scholarship and knowledge that have characterised the EAGLE partnership – a confederation that has never ceased to grow – from the time of its inception (Fig. 10). This spirit of collaboration between individuals, institutions, nations and generations is the most important of all the “best practices” that we must adopt if real progress is to be achieved in scholarship and in civil life.

**Silvia Orlandi, Scientific Coordinator of the EAGLE Project, Professor of Latin Epigraphy at the “Sapienza” University of Rome*

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10. The EAGLE confederation (photo by L. Giberti)