

Discuss all the passages in the *lex de colonia Genetiva* that provide information on religious institutions (priesthoods, civic cults, etc.) in Urso. Use complementary evidence to verify the evidence from the *lex de colonia Genetiva*.

Context

The *lex de colonia Genetiva* is a Roman municipal charter from Urso in Spain. The colony was founded by Julius Caesar in the first century BC, but no exact date is known.¹ It sets out the obligations and duties of the local government officials and as a document shows how local government was intended to work, in the case of a new foundation rather than a previously established settlement.² It is also called the Lex Ursonensis.³

It is a set of four inscriptions on bronze that were discovered in 1870-1. They are currently in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. There has been some argument over the years as to which order they should be arranged in. Some parts are not very legible, but scholars agree on the sense of the text.⁴

It is a disorganised text, which may be attributed to the chaotic nature of its preparation after the murder of Caesar, and to the addition of pieces between drafting and engraving.⁵

The style of the letters shows origin in the Flavian time period; the charter itself is the original from Caesar's time.⁶ This demonstrates that the laws in Urso have not been changed in the intervening time, despite the change from the Republic to Imperial Rome.

The contemporary Lex Irnitana, Lex Malacitana and Lex Salpensana are similar municipal charters, but the portion regarding religion has not survived in any of them. However, the existing portions of these laws do corroborate the Lex Ursonensis.⁷

Religious Festivals

The Lex Ursonensis prescribes a meeting to decide when festivals and sacrifices will be held and by whom, with the decision made by a majority vote of the decurions. This freedom of religion, the ability to pick which festivals to celebrate, was a primary reason for the differences in calendar between Rome and its subordinates.⁸ This was a common freedom, as shown by the common deviance from Rome's calendar across the Empire.

The Lex Ursonensis gives intentions to organise an event for Jupiter, Juno, Minerva. The Capitoline triad were an important feature of Roman religion. Rupke suggests that it may be

¹ Crawford 1996

² Crawford 1996

³ Crawford 1996

⁴ Crawford 1996

⁵ Crawford 1996

⁶ Crawford 1996

⁷ Galsterer, 2006b.

⁸ Renger et al 2006. Lex de Colonia Genetiva 64

an important indicator of city status.⁹ It also requires gladiatorial games for Venus, who is linked to the Colonia de Genetiva Iulia as its namesake goddess in her role as Venus Genetrix, legendary ancestress of the Julian family line.¹⁰

Funding the Ceremonies

The Lex Ursonensis mentions Haruspex, a different type of divining priest deriving from the Etruscan tradition. It mentions this in the context of paying priests expenses.¹¹ This was restricted to expenses incurred in the course of their duties only, as Roman priesthoods were a second job and did not impede the course of a Roman career.¹²

The Lex Ursonensis specifies that revenues brought into the colony funds will be used for sacrifices. Within 60 days of duoviri taking post, they and at least 20 decurions must arrange for the funds and contracts for things necessary for sacrifices and religious matters¹³ This is a very usual arrangement; rituals and religious festivals were a state expense.¹⁴

Pontiffs and Augurs

The Lex Ursonensis,¹⁵ in chapter 66 to 68, sets expectations regarding pontiffs and augurs. Pontiffs and Augurs are both Roman priests. Pontifex, from the Latin for Bridge, is a priest who is not dedicated to one specified god and who therefore can perform sacrifices to any god.¹⁶ Cicero specifies that the pontifices are in charge of the rituals,¹⁷ and Dionysius of Halikarnassus says that they give judgement on “all religious cases” and ensure that the officials with religious duties “commit no error in regard to the sacred laws”.¹⁸

An augur is a type of priest who divines, often from the flight of birds.¹⁹ The signs that are divined are called auspices, indicating the opinion of the gods.²⁰ Both are highly vital to Roman government; Livy 1.36.3-7 explains that nothing of import “in war or domestic

⁹ Rupke 2014

¹⁰ Lex de Colonia Genetiva 70-71

¹¹ Lex de Colonia Genetiva 63

¹² Renger et al, 2006.

¹³ Crawford 1996. Lex de Colonia Genetiva 69, 65

¹⁴ Festus 284.L. Warrior 2002, 47. Lex Flavia Municipalis 92.

¹⁵ Galsterer, H. 2006a. Ferrer Maestro, 2006.

¹⁶ Gordon, 2006.

¹⁷ Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods 1.122

¹⁸ Dionysius of Halikarnassus, Antiquities 2.73.1-2, Warrior 2002, 48.

¹⁹ Briquel, 2006. Warrior 2002, 189.

²⁰ Warrior 2002, 49, 189.

politics” was done without use of auspices.²¹ Cicero (Laws 2.20-1) reaffirms the control the augurs and auspices had over what was “unjust or unlawful”²²

First, that pontiffs and augurs once appointed will have places in their respective colleges at the colony. Second, that pontiffs, augurs and their children are exempted from military service and public duties, in the same way that their counterparts at Rome are.²³ This appears to be perfectly normal, part of the laws and customs templated from Rome.

Thirdly; that jurisdiction and adjudication in matters relating to the auspices belong to the Augurs.²⁴ This is an old right of the Augurs, as described by Cicero, Dionysius of Halikarnassus and Livy, above.²⁵

Fourthly, that pontiffs and augurs may use the toga praetexta at the public games and at the public sacrifices they perform. Fifth, that pontiffs and augurs have the right and power to sit among the decurions when watching the games.²⁶ These are both displays of high social status. The Lex Flavia Municipalis confirms that the rights of seating at the games should be maintained as before that charter,²⁷ which confirms that seating at the games was something that municipal charters could affect.

A replacement for a dead or condemned pontifex or augur gets the same rights and status as the rest of their college. None may be replaced or added to either college unless the number of that college is less than three.²⁸ These laws correlate with the identification of an augur as a position for life.²⁹

Appointing of replacement pontiffs or augurs is done in the same way as replacing a duovir, set out earlier in the text.³⁰

These are procedural points and are based around a three-person college, which was originally the case for Rome, before expansion of the city required that number be increased.³¹

²¹ Livy 1.36.3-7, Warrior 2002, 50.

²² Cicero Laws 2.20-1, Warrior 2002, 49.

²³ Ferrer Maestro, 2006. Renger and Galsterer 2006.

²⁴ Briquel, 2006

²⁵ Livy 1.36.3-7, Warrior 2002, 48-50. Cicero Laws 2.20-1 Dionysius of Halikarnassus, Antiquities 2.73.1-2,

²⁶ Gizewski, C. and Campbell, J. B. 2006, Eck, 2006. Hurschmann, R. 2006a and 2006b

²⁷ Lex Flavia Municipalis, 81.

²⁸ Lex de Colonia Genetiva 67

²⁹ Warrior 2002, 47.

³⁰ Lex de Colonia Genetiva 68

³¹ Warrior 2002

Conclusion:

The religious structures provided by the *lex de colonia Genetiva* are not exclusive to Urso and appear to be common in Roman areas.

This may not be representative of all charters despite the fact that Urso is in Roman Spain, which was/ was not (delete as appropriate) quite securely under Roman control in this time period. Urso was founded by Caesar, presumably Julius, and therefore just predates the Principate, which might affect this.

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