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## Empire of virtue? normative language and the legitimation of power in Roman North Africa

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# **Stellingen**

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## **Empire of virtue? Normative language and the legitimization of power in Roman North Africa**

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1. Normative language, as defined in this thesis, offered North African provincials opportunities to express normative beliefs on the legitimacy of power and to define their relationship to imperial and local powerholders.
2. Normative language formed an important element of inter-elite communication within imperial society, serving to legitimate official actions and enforce compliance.
3. Many key values of imperial ideology, as they appear in media such as coinage, literature and rhetoric, do not have a prominent place in the epigraphy of Africa Proconsularis or Mauretania Caesariensis. Instead, North African dedicators mostly focussed on those imperial values that matched local expectations of imperial rule.
4. It remains unclear to what extent Roman officials participated in the transmission of ideological notions between the imperial court and the provinces; Quintus Anicius Faustus appears as a clear example but may also have been an exception.
5. By acting as moral arbiters and wielding normative language, North African communities attempted to influence the actions of both powerful imperial officials and members of their own communities.

6. Normative language in praise of local powerholders served a seemingly paradoxical goal of both differentiating the honorand from other members of the community while also attempting to tie them more closely to the community as a whole.
7. As a preindustrial state, the Roman Empire could only wield its administrative and military apparatus selectively and relied on the (tentative) consent of its subjects to a far greater degree than it is usually credited with by scholars of Roman history.
8. The term 'local elites' is a problematic construct in the study of ancient history that homogenises a diverse and fluid group of actors of varying levels of wealth, influence and power, thereby reiterating ancient ideological fictions on communal harmony and 'natural' hierarchy.
9. Living in a culture that attaches far less importance to (dis)honour, modern scholars of Roman history do not always adequately appreciate the importance of honour as a social resource to be coveted and fought over.
10. The digitisation of historical data and the establishment of large databases are of great value to historians. Yet our desire to reduce the mass of data to clear, parsable insights should not come at the cost of attention for the small, the atypical and the obscure.
11. The public understanding of the Roman history of the Netherlands has yet to find a nuanced middle-ground between the glorification of imperialism on the one hand and ill-founded World War II analogies on the other.
12. Contrary to popular academic belief, the Dutch Research Council is not exclusively staffed by pedantic bureaucrats.