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THE NOMENCLATURE OF (CLAUDIA) LIVIA, “LIVILLA”*

TUOMO NUORLUOTO

Nero Claudius Drusus and the younger Antonia were survived by three children: Germanicus Caesar, the future emperor Claudius, and a woman who is familiarly known as *Livilla*, but whose full name was probably (*Claudia*) *Livia*, as will be argued here. Since her name appears somewhat inconsistently in various scholarly works (see below), it is the intention of this paper to shed some clarity on the matter. The anomaly concerning her name may seem trivial, but it has been under debate for decades, and therefore a consensus ought to be established, for the sake of clarity in modern research and prosopographical works, if nothing else.

The form (*Claudia*) *Livia Iulia* was first introduced by Th. Mommsen in 1876 (cf. *CIL* VI 5198) and taken up in *PIR*¹ II (1897).¹ Ever since, this has been the standard form in most prosopographical works (*RE* XIII,1 s.v. ‘Livius (Livia)’ nr. 38; *PIR*² L 303; *PFOS* 239) and the form is also used in more recent scholarship.² Furthermore, our person of interest is sometimes referred to as

* I thank Mika Kajava for the initial inspiration for this paper and for his comments, the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions, Christopher Mallan for sending me his article on Zonaras, and Antonios Pontoropoulos, Baukje van der Berg, Urpo Kantola, Anna-Maria Wilskman, and Astrid Capoferro for helping me access various resources.

¹ For Mommsen and *CIL* VI 5198, see the discussion below. *PIR*¹ II = H. Dessau (ed.), *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I. II. III. Pars II*, Berolini 1897.

² *RE* XIII,1 = W. Kroll (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Band XIII. Halbband XXV*, Stuttgart 1926; *PIR*² L = L. Petersen (ed.), *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I. II. III. Pars V. Fasciculus 1*, Berolini 1970; *PFOS* = M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre sénatorial (Ier–Ile siècles)*, Lovanii 1987. More recent scholarship: G. Martina, “L’interventismo familiare di Antonia Minore: il caso della morte di Germanico e Livilla”, in F. Cenerini – F. Rohr Vio (eds.), *Matronae in domo et in re publica agentes*, Trieste 2016, 287–304, 296 n. 45; also M. Platon, *Édition des livres 57 et 58 de l’Histoire romaine de Dion Cassius: établissement*

Livia Iulia, e.g. by R. Syme and P. Sinclair.³ The form (*Claudia*) *Livia*, which I believe to be correct, is also used by some notable scholars, e.g. O. Salomies, M. Corbier, and M. Kajava.⁴ The exact reasoning behind this choice, however, ought to be clarified in better detail.⁵ The relevant question is to what extent the sources we have at hand really reflect a name that was once used.

The fact that her primary individual name, viz. the name she was called by in most personal encounters, was *Livia*, or the hypocoristic form *Livilla*, is clear from our sources. For example, she is known from several inscriptions of her slaves and *liberti* in which she appears either simply as *Livia* (*CIL* VI 15502; 38204) or as *Livia Drusi Caesaris* (*CIL* VI 4349; 5226; 8899; 19747; 20237). She is also called in the same way in some Egyptian papyri, viz. at least two petitions from Euhemeria from 29 and 34 CE, which mention her as Λιβία Δρούσου Καίσαρος (*P. Ryl.* II 127; 138).

The name is also well attested for her in literary sources. Tacitus for example always calls her *Livia* (*Tac. ann.* 4,3,3; 4,10,2; 4,40; *Livia uxor Drusi* in *ann.* 2, 43, 6 and *Livia nupta Druso* in 2,84,1), Pliny mentions her as *Livia Drusi Caesaris* (*Plin. nat.* 29,1,20), and in Pseudo-Seneca's *Octavia* (941–943) she is similarly styled as *Livia Drusi*. Suetonius consistently uses the hypocoristic form *Livilla* (*Suet. Tib.* 62; *Claud.* 1,6; 3,2)—though it should be noted that Suetonius seems to have the general tendency of calling women by diminutive

du texte, traduction et commentaire, Toulouse 2015, 307 n. 702

³ R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy*, Oxford 1986, 93–94; 112; 169–70; P. Sinclair, “Tacitus’ presentation of Livia Iulia, wife of Tiberius’ son Drusus”, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 238–56. Note also that in *RE* XIII,1 she is found s.v. ‘Livius (Livia)’ and not ‘Claudius (Claudia)’.

⁴ O. Salomies, “Die Bedeutung der Onomastik für die Rekonstruktion von Genealogien in Rom”, in W. Eck – M. Heil (eds.), *Prosopographie des römischen Kaiserreichs. Ertrag und Perspektiven*, Berlin 2017, 109–32, 128; M. Corbier, “Maiestas domus Augustae”, in G.A. Bertinelli – A. Donati (eds.), *Varia epigraphica. Atti del colloquio internazionale di epigrafia*, Faenza 2001, 155–199, 177 n. 79; M. Kajava, “A new catalogue of Roman upper-class women”, *Arctos* 22 (1988) 75–93, 84.

⁵ Some valid points have been made, e.g. Corbier (above n. 4) 177 n. 79 concludes that *Livia* was the woman’s individual cognomen, which would be in line with the general pattern of Julio-Claudian princesses being called in public by only their cognomen (that is, if they had one). Kajava (above n. 4) 84, in turn, notes that a nomenclature consisting of three nomina “does not seem very plausible”.

forms.⁶ The form *Livilla*, however, is also later used by Dio (in 58,11,6–7 and 58,24,5).

The fact that our Livia also bore the nomen *Claudia* is equally clear. It was, after all, her father's nomen, and it is the nomen that is attested for her *liberti* in the following epitaphs from Rome:⁷

CIL VI 5226: *Ti(berius) Claudius / Alexa / Liviae Drusi / Caesar(is)
l(ibertus) / Claudia Liviae l(iberta) Libas*
CIL VI 15502 = ILS 8054: *Claudia Liviae l(iberta) Melpomene*
CIL VI 38204: *Claudia Liviae lib(erta) Storge*

Since *Claudia* was her real nomen, the nomenclature *Livia Iulia* can already be ruled out. The question now remains what to do with the name *Iulia*. The existence of the name is based on two different sources: two passages of Dio as paraphrased by the Byzantine author Zonaras and a funerary inscription from a Roman columbarium. Let us begin with the account of Dio/Zonaras.

Dio 58,3,9, which only survives through the excerpt of Zonaras (11,2), mentions 'Iulia, daughter of Drusus', as the bride of L. Aelius Seianus. This may seem puzzling, since the imperial bride of Seianus was no other than our Livia—whose daughter, however, was called *Iulia* (cf. PFOS 422). Furthermore, not only was Livia the wife of a Drusus (she was married to Drusus Iulius Caesar), she was also the daughter of one (i.e. Nero Claudius Drusus). One could thus assume that Zonaras (or his source) was confused and mixed the name of Livia with that of

⁶ Perhaps in an attempt to be dismissive, or simply out of preference. Cf. for example *Terentilla* pro *Terentia* (the wife of Maecenas) in Suet. *Aug.* 69,2; possibly also *Tertulla* pro *Tertia* in the same passage (see M. Kajava, *Roman Female Praenomina: Studies in the Nomenclature of Roman Women* (Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 14), Rome 1994, 209–10). He also calls one daughter of M. Iunius Silanus (*cos. suff.* 15) by the name *Claudilla* (Suet. *Claud.* 12,1), whilst in the account of Tacitus she is *Claudia* (Tac. *ann.* 6,20; 6,45).

⁷ It is unclear if one of the above-mentioned papyri can be used as evidence for the existence of the name *Claudia*. *P. Ryl.* II 127 mentions a slave/freedman of Livia, who is styled as Κλάδος Λιβίας Δρούσου Καίσαρος and his name could be emended into Κλα<υ>δ<ι>ος. The name Κλάδος, however, is fairly well attested and could simply be the slave's personal name, as pointed out to me by U. Kantola (27 cases in the LGPN). Furthermore, if we assume that he was called *Claudius*, the question remains why no cognomen was attributed to him.

her daughter Iulia, as suggested by G. V. Sumner.⁸ This seems plausible, but there is also another confusing passage that requires some attention.

The passage in question is Dio 57,22,2. It is important to point out that there is a serious problem with textual transmission in the very part that mentions the name. Dio's original text is lost and the passage in the standard edition by Boissevain is based on the epitome of Xiphilinus (139,20–30) in which the text goes as follows: ἦν τινες λουίλαν ὀνομάζουσιν.⁹ This has been emended to ἦν τινες Λιουίλλαν ὀνομάζουσιν, “some call her Livilla” (in contrast to *Livia*). In his independent summary, Zonaras (11,2), in turn, paraphrases Dio in the following way: ...γυναικὸς, ἦν Ἰουλίαν, ἕτεροι δὲ Λιβίαν γράφουσι, “...the woman, Iulia, whom others write Livia”. Boissevain, who clearly did not believe that the name *Iulia* is from Dio's lost original, addressed the matter in his critical apparatus: *Dio mihi scripsisse videtur in hunc fere modum: ἦν τινες μὲν Λιουίλλαν ἕτεροι δὲ Λιουίαν ὀνομάζουσι.*¹⁰ This view is also echoed by Sumner, according to whom there was “obviously a misunderstanding of Dio, who must have written that some call her Livilla, others Livia”.¹¹

Let us assume that there was a misunderstanding. But who made the mistake? If Zonaras simply copied his source, he can hardly be blamed for it. However, it is unlikely that Dio suddenly chose to use the name *Iulia*, or even *Livia*, given the fact that in other passages he calls her *Livilla* (see above). Perhaps one could assume that the text was transmitted to Zonaras in an erroneous or corrupt form. In the latter case it is possible that Zonaras, who seems to have confused Livia with her daughter Iulia in the later passage (Cass. Dio 58,3,9), emended the text to what he believed was correct.¹²

⁸ G. V. Sumner, “The family connections of L. Aelius Seianus”, *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 134–45, 144 n. 44.

⁹ Cf. the apparatus in U. Ph. Boissevain, *Dionis Cassii Cocceiani Historiarum Romanarum quae supersunt, Vol. II*, Berolini 1955 (editio secunda).

¹⁰ For Boissevain, see above n. 9.

¹¹ Sumner (above n. 8) 144 n. 44.

¹² In general, Zonaras seems to have often paraphrased his sources rather than copying them word-by-word. For his methodology, see C. Mallan, “The historian John Zonaras: some observations on his sources and methods”, in O. Devillers – B. Sebastiani (eds.), *Sources et modèles des historiens anciens* (Scripta Antiqua 109), Bordeaux 2018, 359–428, 366; cf. L. Neville, *A Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, Cambridge 2018, 191.

The name *Iulia*, however, is also epigraphically attested. It is often believed that our Livia is identical with the woman recorded as the *patrona* of 'Antiochus Iuliae Drusi Caesaris supra lectuarios' (*CIL* VI 5198 = *ILS* 1752). For sure, the use of the plain genitive (*Drusi Caesaris*) with no other indication would normally refer to the woman's husband—in which case we would have no choice but to identify the woman as our Livia. There is, however, the possibility that the *f* for *f(ilia)* is simply missing, in which case the woman in question would not be the wife but the daughter of Drusus (and of Livia), who was, as noted above, called Iulia. Similar examples exist in which the *f* has been omitted (perhaps unintentionally), e.g. *CIL* VI 9191, where *Messalin[ae] Tauri* ought to be read *Messalin[ae] Tauri (f.)*.¹³

The idea that *f(ilia)* was (accidentally) omitted was, in fact, already presented by W. Henzen in 1872, but contradicted by Mommsen (cf. *CIL* VI 5198), who suggested (as the first person, it seems) that *Iulia* was her third name, her full nomenclature thus consisting of three nomina.¹⁴ There are a couple of problems here. Firstly, a nomenclature consisting of three nomina would be highly peculiar at such an early period, as also noted by M. Kajava.¹⁵ Secondly,

¹³ Cf. T. Nuorluoto, "Names and social distinction. How were Roman female *patronae* recorded in the nomenclature of their slaves?", in F. Beutler – Th. Pantzer (eds.), *Sprachen – Schriftkulturen – Identitäten der Antike. Beiträge des XV. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik: Einzelvorträge* (Wiener Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte online 1), Wien 2019, 6 n. 31. Some such cases, however, have been unnecessarily interpreted as patronymics, even if we are clearly dealing with a gamonymic. Thus, for example, J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, New York 2003, 306–7 erroneously assumes that the *domina* of *Cer[inthus] Antoniae Drusi ser(vus)* in *P.Oxy.* II 244 was 'Antonia, daughter of Drusus'—despite the fact that the woman obviously is Antonia, the *wife* of Drusus (and daughter of Marcus Antonius and Octavia).

¹⁴ Henzen's idea is also reflected by Kajava (above n. 4) 84, who notes that the inscription "might in theory also refer to her [i.e. Livia's] daughter Iulia"; and by Corbier (above n. 3) 177 n. 79, in whose opinion the woman in question could "à toutes chances d'être la fille de Drusus et de Liuia".

¹⁵ Kajava (above n. 4) 84 (cf. above n. 5). Raepsaet-Charlier documents only one senatorial woman with such a nomenclature, i.e. Aelia Licinia Petili[a] (*PFOS* 15), who lived during the late second century—and even in her case the third onomastic item survives only partly and could be disputed. Her name is recorded in *CIL* V 871 (Aquileia). According to the picture in the Epigraphic Database Roma, there seems to be some space after the last onomastic item, which could also be, say, *Petili[ana]* (or something else). There are also some sporadic examples of non-senatorial women with such a nomenclature from a later period, e.g. Ulpia Aurelia Valeria (*CIL* III 6155 = 7571, Tomis, 3rd/4th c.). Cf. T. Nuorluoto, *Roman Female Cognomina: Studies in the Nomenclature of Roman Women*, Uppsala 2021, 114.

our Livilla appears in the numerous other similar inscriptions and formulae as *Livia Drusi Caesaris* (see above). So, why *Iulia* all of a sudden? Given the fact that we are dealing with a funerary plate for the wife of a freedman in a columbarium, it seems unlikely that the text would have been of much concern to any person who might have insisted on the correct form. The possibility of error thus remains—either the omission of *f.* or, perhaps less likely, having the wrong name carved in the plate.

Thirdly, even though Livia's family was connected to the imperial Iulii, none of her ancestors bore the name *Iulius* or *Iulia*, which also makes the choice questionable—unless we assume that the name was chosen for dynastic purposes (but in this case it would be strange that it was omitted from most sources). A fourth point that militates against the name *Iulia* is a purely onomastic one: it would be odd if one and the same woman were called by completely different types of nomenclature at the same time.

All things considered, it is reasonable to conclude that Livia probably did not have the name *Iulia*. However, in lack of a document recording her full name, such as her funerary inscription, some doubt will remain over the matter. In my view, however, the most plausible solution is that her full name was (*Claudia*) *Livia*, viz. a nomenclature consisting of two nomina, *Livia* serving as her individual cognomen.¹⁶ This solution would also be in good accordance with the onomastic patterns concerning Julio-Claudian princesses.¹⁷ The name was obviously chosen to recall her paternal grandmother, the empress Livia. That she was sometimes called *Livilla* was simply a matter of preference in everyday life, and it may have to do with the fact that in the imperial household she was “little Livia”, in contrast to her grandmother, the Augusta.

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¹⁶ For nomina used as women's cognomina, see Nuorluoto (above n. 15) 113–19.

¹⁷ Cf. n. 5 above for Corbier's argument.