

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XXXI

HELSINKI 1997 HELSINGFORS

INDEX

H. W. BIRD	<i>The Historia Augusta on Constantine's Lineage</i>	9
HELEN GASTI	<i>Ajax' Trugrede: Its Meaning and Dramatic Function</i>	19
MAIJASTINA KAHLOS	<i>Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and the Rivalry between the Bishops in Rome in 366–367</i>	41
MIKA KAJAVA	<i>Heracles Saving the Shipwrecked</i>	55
MASSIMO PIERPAOLI	<i>Sull'edilità di Varro e Murena</i>	87
REIJO PITKÄRANTA ET ROLF WESTMAN	<i>Bibliographie abrégée des études classiques en Finlande 1987–1996</i>	101
OLLI SALOMIES	<i>Two Notes On Cora</i>	123
W. J. SCHNEIDER	<i>Kytragora – ein attischer ghost-name</i>	129
HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Analecta epigraphica CLXVII–CLXXII</i>	135
HOLGER THESLEFF	<i>The Early Version of Plato's Republic</i>	149
MANNA VESTERINEN	<i>Communicative Aspects of Ancient Greek Dance</i>	175
VEIKKO VÄÄNÄNEN	<i>Florilegium Aboëense. Recueil de proverbes latins manuscrits de Turku, Finlande</i>	189
ROLF WESTMAN	<i>Addenda to the Bibliography in Arctos XXX</i>	227
	<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	231
	<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	259
	<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	261

TWO NOTES ON CORA

OLLI SALOMIES

In the course of studying the history and the epigraphy of the city of Cora (now Cori), in order to prepare a new edition of the inscriptions of the city for a second edition of CIL vol. X, I have made some interesting observations which are to be presented in this paper.

I. Cora During the Civil War between Marius and Sulla

The literary sources do not tell us much of the history of Cora (in Latium, between Velitrae and Norba) in antiquity. There are some legends concerning the origins of the city and its "history" in the regal period, and the name also appears occasionally in the annals dealing with the earlier Republic; no continuous narrative of the vicissitudes of Cora can, however, be based on this.¹ But even what we know of early Republican Cora is substantial compared to what the literary sources say of the city after the Hannibalic war. There is a mention of the city in Strabo and in Pliny the Elder, and Symmachus had a villa there (and there are some further references to Cora in late antiquity); otherwise there is only a passing mention in the *Pharsalia* of the first-century A.D. poet Lucan. This passage has, however, had an interesting fate in Coran studies. Let us examine this special case, which throws some interesting light on the ways of establishing

¹ What can be extracted from ancient authors has most usefully been set forth by Th. Mommsen in CIL X p. 645 and by C. Hülsen in RE IV 1216f. A. Accrocca (a local man, clearly; there is a via Accrocca in Cori), *Cori. Storia e monumenti* (Roma 1933) cannot be recommended, and P. Manciocchi, *Cori. Storia e monumenti. History and Monuments* (Cori 1987) is aimed at the tourist rather than at the scholar. – There is one ancient mention of Cora which is omitted in modern expositions of the city and its history (and also in the article on Cora in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*), namely the pun on the name *Cora* in Plautus, *Captivi* 881ff.

"historical facts" in modern expositions of the history of a small Italian country town, though not necessarily also telling us something about the "real" history of Cora (the "wie es eigentlich gewesen") or illustrating the interpretation of the poet Lucan.

In the 19th century, authors dealing with Cora had nothing to say on the subject of Cora in the early first century B.C. except that the city must have become a *municipium* after the Italic war.² But at the end of the century things start to progress. In the *Realencyclopädie* article on Cora (of 1900) by Chr. Hülsen (RE IV 1216) one finds the statement, accompanied with a reference to Lucan 7, 392, that Cora was destroyed in the civil wars in the time of Marius and Sulla ("Zerstörung im Bürgerkriege unter Marius und Sulla"). This new information did not find its way to the *Dizionario epigrafico* article on Cora published in 1910,³ but readers of Accrocca's book on Cora published in 1933 (see n. 1) will find the same statement (on p. 18). By this time, this "fact" had already become common knowledge, for in Accrocca there is a reference to the "comune opinione" (but, perhaps because of the nature of the book, no such reference to Lucan). Accordingly, one finds the mention of the destruction of Cora in the Marian and Sullan period in all authors who have dealt with Cora after the Second World War, each author also substantiating their statement with a reference to the passage of Lucan mentioned above.⁴

There remains a question: if Cora was destroyed during the civil wars between Marius and Sulla, which of the two was responsible for this? Hülsen in 1900 did not specify his views on this point, but Accrocca in 1933 provides us with an answer: it was Marius' troops who destroyed Cora. The blame is laid on Marius also in the later studies by Chiari, Brandizzi Vittucci, Crescenzi and Tortorici, and Morselli (see n. 4). But, since

² Cf. S. Viola, *Memorie storiche dell'antichissima città di Cori ne' Volsci* (Roma 1825); Th. Mommsen, CIL X p. 645.

³ E. De Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico* 2,2 (1910) 1207.

⁴ O. Chiari, 'Il tempio di Ercole a Cori', in: *Rassegna del Lazio* 2 (1955), fasc. 5,15; P. Brandizzi Vittucci, *Cora (Forma Italiae I 5, 1968)* 32; C.F. Giuliani, 'Cora', in the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Classical Sites* (1976) 238; L. Crescenzi and E. Tortorici, 'Cora', in: *Enea nel Lazio. Archeologia e mito* (1981) 28 (and, copying Crescenzi and Tortorici, C. Morselli, in: *Bibliografia topografica della colonizzazione greca* 5 (1987) 411); F. Coarelli, *Lazio (Guide archeologiche Laterza, 1982)* 254; id., in: *Les "bourgeoisies" municipales italiennes aux IIe et Ier siècles av. J.-C.* (1983) 239; M. Cancellieri, in: *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 1 (1984) 887; P. Manciocchi, op. cit. (n. 1) 24.

practically nothing is known of Cora in this period, is it not, theoretically, just as likely to have been Sulla? This is the view of Giuliani (n. 4); and the same view is firmly taken by Coarelli in the 1983 volume *Les "bourgeoisies" municipales italiennes* (n. 4) p. 239, who is the first scholar to provide an explanation: Cora was destroyed (or at least suffered "gravissimi danni") because of its "posizione politica ... avversa a Silla". (He adds that this is the reason for the fact that no Coran senators can be found in the late Republic.)

We thus have a number of authors stating that Cora was destroyed in the civil war; some stating that it was Marius who destroyed the city, some stating that it was Sulla who was the culprit, one scholar, Coarelli, specifying that this was because the Corans did not like Sulla's political views. How can this be resolved? If one returns to the primary sources (always a good idea), which in this case consist of the passage of Lucan referred to above, it emerges that everything that has been said on Cora during the civil war is based on a misunderstanding: there is absolutely nothing in Lucan on Cora in the Marian and Sullan period (and how could there be, in a narrative of the civil wars between Caesar and Pompeius?); in the passage (7, 389ff.), Lucan is imagining the devastation in Italy following the battle of Pharsalus (7, 407f. *Pharsalia tanti / causa mali*): *tunc omne Latinum / fabula nomen erit; Gabios Veiosque Coramque / pulvere vix tectae poterunt monstrare ruinae* (etc.).

It would be interesting to know how the story of Cora's destruction, based on (as we saw) absolutely nothing, developed. If Hülsen really was the first scholar to quote Lucan as an authority on Cora under Marius and Sulla (and he certainly is the earliest I can trace), all this must be his mistake, perhaps due to illegible notes he had made for his RE article on Cora. But how had his one-line observation in the RE, written in German, become "comune opinione" by 1933, this being stated not in scholarly book, but in one written by a Coran amateur? And on what did Accrocca base his view that it was Marius who was to blame for the destruction? It would also be interesting to know at what phase Sulla, favoured by the other school of thought, stepped in. However, since we are dealing with fables here, it is better to leave the matter to those specialised in this kind of narrative fiction.

II. Carlo Fea, an epigraphist visiting Cora?

The famous antiquarian and archaeologist Carlo Fea (1753–1836), a learned man of wide interests and indisputable merits, carried out distinguished work also in the field of Latin epigraphy.⁵ From the point of view of Coran studies he is interesting inasmuch as his manuscript notes, now in the Vatican, include a page with a transcription of seven inscriptions from Cora, CIL X 6511, 6518, 6521, 6524, 6526, 6529, and 6530 (Cod. Vat. Lat. 10592 f. 296). It is stated in the manuscript that all come from Cora, but on most of the inscriptions Fea is more specific: according to him, 6526 (a text recording the building of an aqueduct by the *quattuorviri iure dicundo* C. Oppius Verus and L. Turpilius Priscus) "stava nella città di Cora avanti la scala esterna della casa del sig. Can. Cuagari, ma in occasione, che il medesimo ha rifatta la detta scala l'ha incorporato al muro, onde più non si vede"; of the inscriptions 6511, 6518, 6521, 6529 and 6530 Fea tells us that they "existed" (which must mean that he wished to convey the impression that he had actually seen the texts) "nell'orto interno delli Signori Tiraborelli" (a well-known Coran family).

At first glance, everything looks plausible, and Mommsen never had any doubts about Fea having visited Cora and having copied inscriptions there (cf. CIL X p. 645 and e.g. the apparatus on 6518, "Fea p. 296 qui vidit"). However, the fact is that Fea is lying; it may well be that he had at some time visited Cora (he knew the name Tiraborelli), but he certainly did not copy any inscriptions there. Let us examine the information he offers, which (as I said) on the surface seems plausible, but which in fact includes suspicious elements. Firstly, it is certainly strange that he should state that inscription 6526 had been built into a wall, so that it could not be inspected (who would do such a thing?), for the inscription was in fact seen in the via delle Colonnate close to the casa Tomasi by other scholars in the earlier 19th century and also later by Mommsen (though by the time of Mommsen, the right side of the text had been lost). Secondly, it is very strange indeed that there is no trace of the five inscriptions said by Fea to exist in the casa Tiraborelli, for other inscriptions which are known to have belonged to the collections of the casa Tiraborelli in that period still exist in the same house

⁵ See e.g. P. Pelagatti, in: *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica* III (1960) 611. For a recent paper on Fea see R.T. Ridley, *In Defence of the Cultural Patrimony: Carlo Fea goes to Court*, *Xenia Antiqua* 5 (1996) 143–158.

(now casa Ricci). Again, the quality of Fea's readings in many cases seems to imply that he had not copied the inscriptions carefully. In the case of the votive inscription 6511 he omits the line with the name of the deity (*Matri Matutae*); in no. 6518 (= I² 1512) he offers the reading *Touscia f.* where the original reading of the inscription seems to have been *Toutia M. f.*

Considering this, one starts to wonder how Mommsen could have accepted Fea as a genuine witness to the text of the inscriptions. Perhaps Mommsen thought that Fea's many merits placed him above suspicion. On the other hand, Mommsen had for some reason missed an important book, the perusal of which could have made him realise the nature and quality of Fea's Coran studies.

In 1764, the famous artist Giambattista Piranesi published in Rome his work *Antichità di Cora*, which deals mainly with the archaeological remains (the so-called temple of Hercules etc.), but which also includes many illustrations of inscriptions, in some cases as parts of the monuments themselves (e.g. CIL X 6506 = I² 1507, the inscription from the temple of Castor and Pollux), but mostly as parts of the decoration of the frontispiece. The work includes illustrations of the following inscriptions: CIL X 6506, 6511, 6517, 6518, 6521, 6524, 6526, 6529, and 6530. Piranesi had certainly seen no. 6506 himself, probably also 6517; the inscriptions 6511, 6518, 6526, 6529 he had copied from Iosephus Vulpius' *Vetus Latium profanum et sacrum* (there can be no doubt about this, as Vulpius' and Piranesi's texts are absolutely identical). As for nos. 6521 and 6530, both depicted as being fragments, these texts do not appear in earlier editions of inscriptions, and it is perhaps possible that Piranesi had invented the texts himself (6521 may have been inspired by 6520, 6530 seems to present some features of 6528). In any case, Piranesi's work would obviously have been worth quoting, and one can only wonder how Mommsen can have missed it.

But to come back to Fea: even the most cursory comparison between Fea's texts and those of Piranesi makes it absolutely certain that Fea has copied from Piranesi's book everything he has from Cora. For instance, in the arrangement of various inscriptions on Piranesi's frontispiece, line 2 of CIL X 6511 is partly hidden by another stone, and instead of the whole word *magistra* only *gistra* is visible; Fea, accordingly, has the text *gitra* (he missed a letter). Again, in 6518, where the original reading of the name seems to have been *Toutia*, Piranesi (copying Vulpius) has *Touscia*, which reading also appears in Fea. In 6521, Fea's version is clearly only a careless

copy of Piranesi's text, in which some lines are omitted. In 6524, both Piranesi (again copying Vulpius) and Fea have the absurd reading *Romano*. In 6529, Piranesi equips the names *Lepani* and *Tidi* (which he, and of course Fea, have in the form *Clidi* – the form copied by Piranesi from Vulpius) with *I longae* – which are not found in earlier editions of the text, but which of course also appear in Fea. Only Piranesi and Fea have the inscription 6530, which may well be a fake invented by Piranesi, inspired perhaps by no. 6528 (cf. above). One could go on and on with this, for the texts of Piranesi and Fea are always identical, except in those cases in which Fea has been careless and has got something wrong. But it should in any case be clear by now that Fea has no information whatsoever on inscriptions from Cora except that which he had found in Piranesi's book. It follows that whatever he says on the location of the inscriptions he transcribes is simply an invention, and so it appears that even a man like Fea was capable of inventing information which would otherwise be missing. There remains the question of why he should have done this, but I leave this for others to solve.

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