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PRAENOMINA RECORDED ERRONEOUSLY IN INSCRIPTIONS
With an Observation on the Grandfather
of Q. Aulus Cerretanus (cos. II 319 BC)

OLLI SALOMIES

It is well known that Latin inscriptions, from simple funerary ones to elaborate texts published by Roman authorities such as bronzes recording laws, often include striking errors and mistakes. Even the Capitoline fasti, the text of which is in general remarkably faultless, can offer instances such as *Valprios* for *Valerius* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 42, a censor of 252 BC) or *Perilus* for *Philus* (ibid. 44, the consul of 223 BC).¹ Of the errors one encounters in reading Latin inscriptions many may be attributed to the respective stonecutters, but there are also other ways of explaining the mistakes, for instance faulty drafts for the texts to be inscribed. There is a recent paper on all this by Heikki Solin, 'Zur Entstehung und Psychologie von Schreibfehlern in lateinischen Inschriften',² which will no doubt revive the discussion on the phenomenon. In this paper, my aim is not to enter into a general discussion of errors in inscriptions, but rather to point out some interesting examples of praenomina rendered erroneously in various epigraphical texts.

In doing this, I am not going to say anything on those rather uninteresting errors which can be regarded as simple mistakes and do not seem to be in need of elaborate explanation. Errors of this kind are quite numerous. Any Roman Tiberius could at some stage find his praenomen abbreviated somewhere as *T.*, this abbreviation in fact being that of *Titus*, and many a Titus must no doubt have faced the situation that his praenomen was abbreviated with *Ti.*, which of course was meant to be the abbreviation of *Tibe-*

¹ The latter not noted by A. Degrassi in his list of mistakes in the Capitoline consular and triumphal fasti, Inscr. It. XIII 1, 641f. This is, in fact, quite a mysterious case because the letters *er* seem to be attributable to a correction made by a later stonecutter.

² In: Acta colloquii epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.-6. Sept. 1991 habiti, ed. H. Solin, O. Salomies, U.-M. Liertz (Commentationes humanarum litterarum 104, 1995) 93-111.

rius.³ And stonecutters having to deal with the praenomen *Manius*, abbreviated with an *M* of the archaic type having an extra stroke on the right, understandably often got it wrong.⁴ Sometimes one observes that in inscriptions in which men (who should have a praenomen) are enumerated after women (who do not have a praenomen) the praenomina of the men are omitted, no doubt in most cases because the stonecutters had quickly become used to nomenclatures beginning not with praenomina but with nomina.⁵ But there are also errors of a more interesting type which do not seem to be simple blunders. For instance, reading the commentary on an inscription from Aquileia, *Inscriptiones Aquileiae* 932 (CIL V 8347), one learns that the stonecutter who was inscribing the nomenclature of a certain C. Caecilius Aquileiensis started by inscribing *Q. Caecilius*, only later correcting the praenomen. Although this does not necessarily mean a thing, one cannot help thinking of the fact that *Quintus* was by far the most common praenomen among Caecilii, both among the senators and others.⁶ Perhaps this stonecutter was somehow simply accustomed to prefixing the praenomen *Q.* when having to deal with Caecilii.

In a first-century inscription from Savaria, CIL III 4198 = 10922 = RIU 157, one observes another interesting example of a praenomen rendered erroneously. The text is inscribed as follows: *C. Caesio C. f. Cl. Victori ... C. Caesius Vitulus et C. Caesius Optatus et Caesia Graeca parentibus etc.* From this it would appear that all male members of this family had the same praenomen. Unfortunately for the stonecutter, the discovery of another in-

³ Most of the T. Claudii attested in inscriptions later than the earliest Empire (CIL VI 1057, v 55; 1058, iii 86. 101. v 59; 15310; 15319; 32533 b i 3; 34863; 34881; 36042; I. Ephesos 426 etc.) will in fact have been Ti. Claudii. For *Ti.* = *Titus* see *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987) 57 n. 127.

⁴ *Vornamen* (n. 3) 36 n. 53; AE 1971, 534 = IAMaroc II 94, line 43. In modern numismatical literature, one observes an established, but misguided, custom to interpret the abbreviation as standing for *Mn.*, i.e. the 5-stroke *M* is apparently understood as *M(a)n(ius)* with a ligature of the *M* and the *N* (cf. e.g. S.J. Westdal, *Dictionary of Roman Coin Inscriptions* [1982] 30; A. Burnett – M. Amandry – P.P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* [1992] no. 322-4, 359f., 437).

⁵ E.g. CIL XIV 1262 (F. Sinn, *Vatikanische Museen. Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense. Katalog der Skulpturen* 1 [1991] no. 59) ... *matri Liviae A. f. Iustae, Liviae A. f. Hagiae, Livi A. f. Sabini* (for this Livius Sabinus' praenomen *Aulus* see CIL XIV 1249 = Sinn, *op. cit.* no. 73). Cf. *Vornamen* 419f. and *Inscriptiones Aquileiae* 603.

⁶ Cf. *Vornamen* 198 n. 128, 199. For Aquileia, see the index of *Inscriptiones Aquileiae*, p. 1282.

scription (AE 1988, 935) mentioning members of the same family shows that he had been doing his job badly, for in this latter inscription the two sons appear, no doubt correctly, as *C. Caesius C. f. Vitulus* and *L. Caesius C. f. Optatus*. The explanation is clearly that because both the father (and the grandfather) and the eldest son had the praenomen *Gaius*, and because during the Empire in more and more families all sons inherited the father's praenomen (cf. below), the stonecutter inadvertently extended the use of this praenomen also to the younger son.

But there is one recurring mistake in the rendering of praenomina which is of especial interest, namely mistakes in praenomina appearing in filiations. For some easily identifiable reasons praenomina appearing in filiations referring to fathers (and sometimes, in addition, to grandfathers) tend to be identical with those prefixed to the nomina of the persons in question; that is, if one comes across a *C. Cornelius*, a good guess would be that this person's filiation should be *C. f.* (and *C. n.*). During the Empire this is easily understandable, because praenomina were becoming hereditary, sons more and more often automatically inheriting the paternal praenomen.⁷ But this tendency is clear already during the Republic when it was still customary to give each son a personal praenomen; for instance, of the members of the *consilium* of Cn. Pompeius Strabo in 89 BC (enumerated in the well known inscription CIL I² 709add.) more than 70% have the same praenomen as their fathers.⁸ The obvious explanation is that in most families there was only one son (Cichorius [n. 8] speaks of "erschreckend geringe Kinderzahl").⁹ But whatever the explanation, the fact is that at all times, or at least from the later Republic onwards, most sons had the same praenomen as their fathers, this again leading to praenomina appearing in filiations tending to be mere duplications of the praenomina which appeared in front of the nomina.

It is easily imaginable, then, that Roman stonecutters may have become accustomed to inscribing the same praenomen twice, both before the

⁷ Vornamen 378ff.

⁸ C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (1922) 184; cf. Vornamen 211 n. 151.

⁹ But observe also that if a son who had the paternal praenomen died young the praenomen of another son having another praenomen could be changed to that of his brother (see Vornamen 209ff.), this custom producing yet more sons with the same praenomen as their fathers.

nomen and after it in the filiation. This seems to be the best explanation¹⁰ for cases such as the inscription from Urvinum, CIL XI 6059, cf. A. Donati, *Epigraphica* 29 (1967) 181 (AE 1968, 161), which has the following text: *Q. Vasselio Q. f. Stel. Sab[in]o* (a praetorian who died in his twenties) ... *C. Vasselio C. f. Stel. Sabino patri, matri*. Since the father of the praetorian was a Gaius, it is clear the he himself must have been *C. f.*, not *Q. f.*; the stonecutter has, however, by mistake simply duplicated his own praenomen *Q.* A similar case is CIL V 5865 from Mediolanum (seen by Mommsen), *C. Herennius C. f. Iuvenior Vivir iun. sibi et L. Herennio patri, ... matri, M. Herennio Vero fratri* etc., where the correct filiation should of course have been *L. f.*, not *C. f.*, in which the man's own praenomen is simply reproduced. From Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana there is IAM II 479, *L. Valerio L. f. Claud. Prisco annor. XVII M. Valerius Peregrinus pater filio*. Besides stonecutters, copiers of inscriptions may also easily make a mistake of this kind.¹¹

One finds mistakes in filiations even in the consular fasti.¹² *Q. Pedius*, who later became *cos. suff.* in 43 BC, appears in the Capitoline triumphal fasti recording his triumph in 45 *ex Hispania* as *Q. Pedius M. f. pro cos.* But in the list of the consuls of 43 BC, the *Fasti Colotiani* (*Inscr. It.* XIII 1, 273) have *Q. Pedius Q. f.* Though other scholars had thought that this, not *M. f.*, was the correct filiation,¹³ A. Degrassi (*Inscr. It.* XIII 1, 275, 567) suspected a mistake in the *Fasti Colotiani*, and this was confirmed by the discovery of

¹⁰ In theory, one could of course also think that in some of the following cases the sons had been adopted by relatives with the same nomen, *C. Vasselius C. f. Sabinus* for instance on being adopted by a *Q. Vasselius* taking the adoptive father's praenomen and referring to the adoptive father in his filiation. On the other hand, in such cases we would be dealing with real (not "testamentary") adoptions, and the wording of the cases quoted below does not recommend this assumption at all.

¹¹ Most transcriptions of the inscription in honour of *M. Titius L. f.* (the consul of 32 BC) seen by Cyriacus in Mytilene, CIL III 455 = 7160 (ILS 891; ILLRP 433), have the reading *M. Titio M. f.*, the correct filiation *L. f.* appearing only in two of the copies in which Cyriacus' text has been transmitted (see Mommsen's apparatus criticus in CIL).

¹² Observe however, that F. Münzer's assertion in RE XIII 287 that *P. Crassus M. f.* (the consul of 95 BC, RE no. 61) is given the incorrect filiation *L. f.* as censor in 89 in the Capitoline fasti is based simply on a misprint in the old CIL edition of the fasti, which in fact have *M. f.* (*Inscr. It.* XIII 1, 54).

¹³ W. Drumann – P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms III*² (1906) 687 n. 9 and F. Münzer, RE XIX 38 (no. 1) thought that *Q. f.* would be probably correct, basing this on the fact that *Q.* was *Pedius'* own praenomen.

an inscription from Casinum, set up *Q. Pedio M. f. pro cos., patrono* (AE 1971, 97; CIL I² 2974). As for the possible source of the stonecutter's error, observe that the other consuls of 43 BC to be inscribed were (in addition to *C. Iulius Caesar*) *C. Vibius C. f. Pansa*, *A. Hirtius A. f.*, *C. Carrinas C. f.*, *P. Ventidius P. f.*, all thus having the praenomina of their own fathers.

The consul of 160 BC, L. Anicius Gallus, appears as *L. f. L. n.* in the Capitoline consular fasti (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 51). But in the Capitoline triumphal fasti the same man (as shown by the triumphal fasti from Urbs Salvia, Inscr. It. XIII 1, 338) is given the filiation *L. f. M. n.* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 81). I do not seem to recall having seen the meaning of this being taken under consideration;¹⁴ however, I think that we have here another mistake of the above kind, the stonecutter having, when inscribing the entry for 160 BC, mechanically reproduced, in the indication of the consul's grandfather, the praenomen which had already appeared twice in the man's nomenclature. Furthermore, taking *M. n.* to be the correct filiation has the extra advantage of bringing this man, who because of his nomen no doubt came from Praeneste,¹⁵ in connection with the *praetor* of Praeneste M. Anicius, whose activities in 216 BC are registered with approval by Livy (23, 19, 17ff.). It seems a good guess that the consul could be this M. Anicius' grandson.¹⁶

All this now brings us to an obscure character of the period of the Samnite wars, Q. Aulius Cerretanus. A man of this name is known to have been consul in 323 and 319 and *magister equitum* in 315. In the entry in the Capitoline fasti on the events of 315, the filiation of the man is given as *Q. f. Ai. n.* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 36). Of course it was thought that the consul was identical with the master of the horse (e.g. E. Klebs, RE II 2411 n. 2). But in the beginning of this century, a new fragment of the Capitoline fasti, referring to the second consulate in 319, gave the filiation of the consul Q. Aulius as *Q. f. Q. [n.]* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 36). From this it seemed to follow that there were in fact at the same time two Q. Aulii Cerretani, the grandson of a Quintus and the grandson of someone whose praenomen was abbreviated as

¹⁴ E. Klebs (RE I 2197f. no. 15) and A. Degrassi (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 123; 556) simply note the discrepancy. E. Badian, *Chiron* 20 (1990) 377, seems to accept *L. f. L. n.* as the correct filiation.

¹⁵ A. Licordari, in: *Tituli* 5 (1982) 38.

¹⁶ Thus D.M. Novak, in: *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* (ed. C. Deroux) I (1979) 123.

Ai. This view has been advocated by some scholars,¹⁷ most recently and most competently by the Swedish scholar Örjan Wikander, who rightly points out that *Ai.* instead of *Q.* would be a quite inexplicable error, and that one can find two contemporary senators with different grandfathers but otherwise identical names in the two late fifth-century P. Cornelii A. f. Cossi RE no. 118 (who was *P. n.*) and RE no. 119 (who was *M. n.*).¹⁸ However, this is not really a good parallel, because the Cornelii were a large patrician *gens* with numerous members known to us (and no doubt many more not registered in the historical tradition) already in the fifth century, and it seems natural to come across two members not closely related with the same name. With the Aulii it is quite different, because in this case we are dealing with a *gens* which makes an appearance in history only this once, and therefore it would be almost incredible if it could have produced two homonymous members at the same time who are not even first cousins.

Considering this, and reluctant to have to have something to do with a praenomen beginning with *Ai.*, I once suggested that we would be dealing in all cases with only one man called Q. Aulius Cerretanus, and that *Q. f. Q. n.* was his correct filiation, *Ai. n.* being an error (Vornamen 60). However, in view of the fact that this error would be inexplicable indeed and, on the other hand, in view of the examples presented above it now seems obvious to me that *Q. f. Q. n.* must be the mistaken filiation, *Q. f. Ai. n.* the correct one. But this of course raises the question of the grandfather's name. Now, the question of the acceptability of a praenomen abbreviated as *Ai.* needs urgent reconsideration in view of the publication of an archaic inscription written on a bronze plate, now in a private collection in the Netherlands, but said to have been found somewhere near Rome (P.J. Sijpesteijn, ZPE 81 [1990] 243f.; not, I think, in *Année épigraphique*). This fragmentary (only the left side has been preserved) and problematic text (but which is, according to the editor, who refers to an "Atomabsorbitionsanalyse", above the suspicion of being a forgery) begins – this is clear enough – with the names of persons who seem to have been *tribunei plebe[i]* (l. 3), perhaps not in

¹⁷ A. Degrassi, *Inscr. It.* XIII 1, 109f.; T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* II 535 (index), cf. I 157 n. 2; E.J. Phillips, *Athenaeum* 50 (1972) 339. K.J. Beloch, *Römische Geschichte* (1926) 659 (index) identifies all the known Q. Aulii, but does not comment upon the problem presented by the filiations.

¹⁸ Ö. Wikander, *Opusc. Rom.* 19 (1993) 105.

Rome.¹⁹ One can decipher the names of two persons;²⁰ in addition to a certain *An. Mateli(os) V. [f.]* (line 1) one finds in line 2 a certain *V. Semini(os) Ai. f.* Here we have at last what seems to be a parallel to the praenomen of Q. Aulius' grandfather.

My conclusion is, then, that the Cerretani are all only one person, whose grandfather had a praenomen abbreviated with *Ai.*, of which there now seems to be another attestation in the new inscription. Since this can hardly be classified as a genuine Roman praenomen, this may be taken to mean that the ancestors of Aulius Cerretanus – whose cognomen seems to refer to some locality²¹ – had come from somewhere outside Rome; and observe, for a possible parallel, that the grandfather of the first plebeian consul in 366 BC, L. Sextius Lateranus, also had a foreign praenomen, namely *Numerius* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 32).²² Of course, we are still left with the question of how to interpret the abbreviation *Ai.*, but this is a question which I think must, for the time being, be left open; one can only hope that the full name will emerge some day from some new epigraphical discovery.²³

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¹⁹ Magistrates known as 'tribunes of the plebs' are attested at least in Teanum Sidicinum, Nuceria, Bantia and Venusia (see A. Degrassi on ILLRP 690).

²⁰ In line 1 (at least) one name seems to be missing altogether, in line 2 one recognizes the beginning of a nomenclature beginning with *A. Vl -- J.*

²¹ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (1965) 48f. n. 2 suggests, under the impression that the name appears only in Livy, that one should emend it to *Caerretanus*; but in fact the Capitoline fasti also have the form *Cerretanus* (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 36).

²² The fact that the Fabii, for a very special reason, used the praenomen *Numerius* (Vornamen 39f.) does not really make this a "Roman" praenomen. – Observe also that an obscure consul of the fifth century, P. Sestius Capito in 452 BC, is given the filiation *Q. f. Vibi n.* in the Capitoline fasti (Inscr. It. XIII 1, 24).

²³ It is true that in the past some scholars have postulated the existence of a praenomen which could be suitable, "*Aemus*", on the basis of a late-Republican inscription from Puteoli, CIL X 1589 = I² 1618. This is, however, not acceptable (Vornamen 97).