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POGGIO BRACCIOLINI AND CLASSICAL EPIGRAPHY

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Poggio Bracciolini (1380−1457), one of the leading humanists of the early Quattrocento, was probably the first who took a scholarly interest in classical epigraphy. His Sylloge, published ca. 1430 (see p. 32), contains 86 inscriptions, Nos 1−34, no longer extant, taken from a copy of the old *Codex Einsiedlensis*, which he found at the monastery of St Gallen, the others he copied from the original stones. Poggio's archetype has vanished but there are two later manuscript copies of his collection. *Vat. Lat.* 9152, from the XV or the early XVI century, gives the material from the *Einsiedlensis* in minuscule script and Poggio's own finds in majuscules. This manuscript is somewhat inaccurate. The other, *Angel.* D 4,18 comprises only Poggio's own material together with a few pieces from the *Einsiedlensis*. This copy is in general more reliable.

Poggio's Sylloge has been exhaustively discussed by the great epigraphists of the preceding century, by De Rossi, who found it,[1] and by W. Henzen. Henzen reconstructed it from these later copies in the first part of CIL VI[2]. Now it might seem that for we epigoni nothing remains but to dot some i's and to cross some t's. Fortunately, however, a few problems have remained open and some avenues have been left unexplored.

One still unresolved problem concerns the relation of Poggio's Sylloge to that of Signorili. *Sylloge Signoriliana*, reproduced by Henzen in

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[1]   Le prime raccolte d'antiche iscrizioni compilate in Roma tra il finir del secolo XIV, ed il cominciare del XV, Giornale arcadico 128, 1852, 9−76; Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae saeculo septimo antiquiores II.1, 1888, 338−342.

[2]   Monatsbericht der k. Preuss. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin, Mai 1866, 221−49; CIL VI.1, 1876, p. XXVIIIsq.

CIL VI.1 p. XV–XXVII, contains 83 pieces. The first version of that Sylloge, called *Farrago Barberiniana* because of its manuscript, *Barb. Lat.* 1952, seems to be dated 1409.[3] De Rossi attributed the collection to no less a person than Cola di Rienzo, a fantastic idea to which even Henzen (op.cit.) subscribed. But in the 1920s A. Silvagni convincingly showed that Cola di Rienzo's authorship was untenable.[4] Since then, the Sylloge has in general been attributed to Nicola Signorili, a city clerk *(scriba senatus)* of Rome. His compilatory work *Descriptio urbis Romae*, possible written ca. 1430 (see p. 31), included this earlier collection, with a few changes. While Silvagni's demolition of De Rossi's idea of Cola di Rienzo as the author of the Sylloge has been accepted,[5] the other side of his criticism seems to have escaped notice. Silvagni expressed grave doubts whether Nicola Signorili, *incultus homo,* could have launched a new field of study as difficult as classical epigraphy. He suggested that the Sylloge might be the fruit of Poggio's first interests in epigraphy. We know from a letter of Salutati that on his first arrival in Rome, 1403, Poggio collected and sent inscriptions to Salutati.[6] Unfortunately, Poggio's letters before 1416 have not survived. Hence we have no further information about his epigraphical pursuits during his first period in Rome.

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[3]   This is in general concluded from the mutilated opening lines of Barb. Lat. . . .(scil., *epitaphia) Romae reperta in annis Domini millesimo quadringentesimo nono.* The collection was first found and edited by De Rossi, Giornale arcadico 127 (1852) 254sqq.

[4]   Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores, N.S. 1922, p. XXXsq.; Se la silloge epigrafica signoriliana possa attribuirsi a Cola di Rienzo, Archiv. Latin. medii aevi I (1924) 175–183.

[5]   See R. Valentini & G. Zucchetti, Codice topografico della Città di Roma, 1953, 155 sq.; R. Weiss, The Discovery of Classical Antiquity, 1969, 146; Ida Calabi Limentani, Epigrafia latina, 1968, 42.

[6]   Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati, ed. F. Novati, III 655: *Ago gratias de cascis illis titulis, quos tam copiose, tam celeriter transmisisti. video quidem te pauco tempore nobis Urbem totam antiquis epigrammatibus traditurum.* While G. Voigt, Il risorgimento dell'antichità classica I, trad. italiana con prefazione e note del prof. D. Valbusa arricchita di aggiunte e correzioni inedite dell'autore, 1888=1968, 268 argued that Poggio had been encouraged by Salutati to collect inscriptions, Novati, ad loc., denies this. Poggio gathers epigraphs "di propra iniziativa".

It is not possible to take up here the complicated problem of the origin of the *Sylloge Signoriliana* and of its relation to Signorili's *Descriptio urbis Romae*. In my opinion, it is extremely improbable that a man like Signorili, whose *Descriptio* suggests a mind still largely medieval and entirely lacking in originality, could have been the first modern epigraphist. I hope to be able to return to the matter in a future paper.[7]

Apart from this, there are other problems. Poggio was not a full-time epigraphist. Collecting inscriptions was a marginal pursuit for him, probably a sideshow of his hunting of classical manuscripts. Poggio is better known as the inventor of the new humanist script and as the author of a multitude of letters, invectives, orations and treatises. Now it is of some interest to see whether his knowledge of classical epigraphy had any place in these achievements. Hence the main problem to be discussed in this paper concerns Poggio's use of classical epigraphy.

The material in Poggio's Sylloge is tabulated below in accordance with Henzen's numeration. The inscriptions copied from the *Einsiedlensis* have been excluded. In the first column, M stands for monumental, V for votive inscriptions, E for epitaph. The column for the concordances gives the relevant passages in *Sylloge Signoriliana* (S) — the asterisk marks inscriptions lacking in *Farrago Barberiniana* — as well as in CIL and Dessau's Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae. CIL VI covers Rome. For the other volumes, places are given. The next column shows whether the stone is lost or extant. The last column lists the references to the inscriptions in Poggio's *De varietate Fortunae* (the edition of 1723, reprinted in 1969), to be discussed in detail later on.

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[7] The original manuscript, Barb. Lat. 1952, is written in the new majuscules, also with the diphthongs. Is it possible to credit a city clerk, in 1409, with expertise in the new paleography? Moreover, in the manuscript a few words were abbreviated in accordance with the classical system by suspension, which began to be used in Rome only in the 1440s (see Ulla Nyberg, Über inschriftliche Abkürzungen der gotischen und humanistischen Schriftperioden, Arctos 12 [1978] 75 sqq.). On the stones, the words had been written in a fuller form. See the next note.

The inscriptions found and copied by Poggio

M 35 = S 13	= CIL VI 1244	= ILS 98	extant	VF p. 24
M 36 = S 15	= CIL VI 1245	= ILS 98	extant	VF p. 24
M 37 = S 12	= CIL VI 1246	= ILS 98	extant	VF p. 24
E 38	= CIL VI 18752		lost	
M 39 = S 8	= CIL VI 1256	= ILS 218	extant	VF p. 24
M 40 = S 9	= CIL VI 1257	= ILS 218	extant	VF p. 24
M 41 = S 10	= CIL VI 1258	= ILS 218	extant	VF p. 24
M 42 = S 7	= CIL VI 1385		lost	VF p. 8
M 43 = S 2	= CIL VI 945	= ILS 265	extant	VF p. 15
V 44	= CIL VI 540 & 425		lost	
M 45 = S 5	= CIL VI 1139	= ILS 694	extant	VF p. 15
E 46	= CIL VI 2183	= ILS 4161	extant	
M 47 = S 14	= CIL VI 1252	= ILS 205	extant	
E 48 = S 33	= CIL VI 984	= ILS 322	lost	VF p. 19
M 49 = S 3	= CIL VI 1033	= ILS 425	extant	VF p. 15
M 50	= CIL VI 931	= ILS 245	lost	
M 51 = S 27	= CIL VI 1305a	= ILS 5892	extant	VF p. 8
M 52 = S 18	= CIL VI 937	= ILS 3326	extant	VF p. 12
M 53 = S 44–5	= CIL VI 882	= ILS 115	extant	VFp. 20
M 54 = S 4	= CIL VI 1035	= ILS 426	extant	
E 55 = S 51	= CIL VI 1319	= ILS 862	extant	VF p. 8
M 56 = S 77*	= CIL VI 1314	= ILS 35	lost	VF p. 8
E 57 = S 50	= CIL VI 1374	= ILS 917	extant	VF p. 9
M 58 = S 11	= CIL VI 1259	= ILS 424	lost	VF p. 17
M 59 = S 22	= CIL VI 896	= ILS 219	extant	
M 60 = S 17	= CIL VI 1240a		lost	
M 61	= CIL VI 934	= ILS 252	lost	
M 62	= CIL VI 2004		lost	
M 63	= CIL VI 1718	= ILS 5522	lost	VF p. 22
M 64	= CIL VI 1750	= ILS 5703	lost	VF p. 14
E 65 = S 79*	= CIL VI 1343	= ILS 1127	lost	VF p. 20
M 66	= CIL VI 1142		lost	
M 67 = S 6	= CIL VI 1106	= ILS 548	extant	VF p. 16
M 68	= CIL VI 1702	= ILS 1251	lost	
E 69	= CIL VI 25537		extant	
E 70	= CIL VI 20826		lost	
E 71	= CIL VI 9222	= ILS 7695	lost	
E 72	= CIL VI 25796		lost	
M 73 = S 38	= CIL XI 1828 Arretium	= ILS 56	extant	
M 74 = S 39	= CIL XI 1831 Arretium	= ILS 59	lost	
M 75 = S 81–2*	= IX 5894 Ancona	= ILS 298	extant	

M 76 = S 40	= CIL XI 3201 Nepete	= ILS 416	extant	
E 77	= CIL XI 147 Ravenna	= ILS 8241	lost	
M 78	= CIL XI 1924 Perusia	= ILS 5502	extant	
M 79	= CIL XI 4213 Interamna	= ILS 6629	extant	
M 80	= CIL IX 1558 Beneventum	= ILS 296	extant	
M 81	= CIL XIV 3608 Tibur	= ILS 986	extant	
M 82	= CIL X 5840 Ferentinum	= ILS 5345	extant	
M 83	= CIL X 5837 Ferentinum	= ILS 5342	extant	
M 84	= CIL X 5853 Ferentinum	= ILS 6271	extant	
E 85	= CIL VI 13203		lost	
M 86 = S 32	= CIL VI 960	= ILS 294	extant	VF p. 19

There are 52 epigraphs copied by Poggio, 11 of which are epitaphs and one a votive inscription. The rest are monumental inscriptions, *tituli honorarii* and especially *tituli operum publicorum*. The great majority are from Rome. Six are from Etruria, three from Ferentinum in South Latium while Tibur, Beneventum and Ancona have each provided one.

The original *Sylloge Signoriliana*, the *Farrago Barberiniana*, contained 61 epigraphs, 26 of which were also found in Poggio's Sylloge. Thus 35 inscriptions of the *Sylloge Signoriliana* are lacking in Poggio, but three of them were Greek and five medieval. Hence half of the material in the *Sylloge Signoriliana* was also found in Poggio. Whatever its cause, overlapping between these two collections is conspicuous.

Poggio's copies, though naturally not up to modern standards, are fairly reliable, and in general are superior to those in the *Farrago Barberiniana*.[8] Comparison with the modern copies of extant stones reveals that inaccuracies were commonest in abbreviations. It is possible, however, that some of them are attributable to the negligent copying of Poggio's lost archetype. Again, a few wrong transcriptions may have been due to imperfect knowledge of Roman nomenclature in

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[8] To quote an example, CIL VI 144 (extant) is given in Signorili 13 as *imp. caes. diui iulii f. augus/tus pont. max. cos. xii trib. / pot. x imp. uiii riuos aqua/rum cursuum refecit*, in Poggio 35 as *imp. caesar diui iuli f. aug / pontifex maximus cos. xii / tribunic. potesta xix imp. xiiii / riuos aquarum omnium refecit*. There are only two minor inaccuracies in Poggio's copy, *aug.* abbreviated and the final *t* missing in *potesta*, probably a scribal error.

Poggio's times, thus No 57 *Ponti P.f. Clamelae* for *Cla(udia tribu) Melae* probably originated from Poggio's ignorance of the abbreviated names of the tribes. But these and some other mistakes apart, Poggio rightly deserves the honour of being called the first modern epigraphist.

Use of epigraphy in paleography, orthography and linguistics

Poggio has been hailed as the chief inventor of the new humanist script or *littera antiqua,* as it was called at that time. According to B. L. Ullman, Poggio's minuscules were based upon the manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries while his majuscules were largely model-led upon inscriptions, which we know him to have collected and studied at least from 1403.[9]

Besides letter forms, with which we are not concerned here, epigraphy can be used to establish correct spellings. In the High Middle Ages, classical orthography had fallen into disorder. The diphthongs *-ae-* and *-oe-* disappeared, *-ci-* was substituted for *-ti-*, *michi* and *nichil* for *mihi, nihil, y* and *i* were interchanged, etc.[10] The restoration of classical orthography was due to the painstaking work of generations of humanists.[11] Because the medieval manuscripts were in general corrupt, it was not easy to determine correct classical spellings. Inscriptions, once they were realized to be authentic documents of classic Latin, were of great service here.[12]

Curiously enough, though Poggio utilized inscriptions to revive classical majuscules, and though he waged literary war with his mentor Salutati to replace *michi, nichil* with their correct forms,[13] he seems to have ignored epigraphical evidence in that most important orthographical matter, the restoration of the lost diphthongs *-ae-* and *-oe-*.

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[9]   B.L. Ullman, The Origin and Development of Humanistic Script (Storia e letteratura 79, 1960) 54—56.

[10] K. Strecker, Introduction to Medieval Latin, English Translation and Revision by R.B. Palmer, 1957, 59sq.

[11] See R. Sabbadini, Il metodo degli umanisti, 1920, 3sqq.

[12] As far as I know, the use of epigraphy in the orthographical studies of the humanists has not been given sufficient attention.

[13] For this famous quarrel, see Salutati, Epistolario IV 162sq.; B.L. Ullman, The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati (Medioevo e umanesimo 4, 1963) 110 sq.

In his treatment of diphthongs, Poggio's autograph manuscripts show a clear retrogression. According to Ullman, in his early manuscripts Poggio was careful of writing the diphthongs, especially -ae- in case-endings, whereas in his later manuscripts he treated them with increasing indifference.[14] It is of course possible that despite Ullman's contention, some of the later manuscripts, which particularly abounded in old monophthongs, had been written by Poggio's clerks and not by Poggio himself. But this cannot alter Ullman's conclusion that "starting out as a diphthong writer, he returned to the older practice of using the simple *e*, resorting to the diphthong only occasionally".[15]

Poggio's obvious negligence of epigraphical evidence in orthography is all the more remarkable as his closest humanist friends, Salutati, Niccoli and Bruni, at least occasionally cited epigraphs to support orthographical arguments. Salutati's resorting to epigraphy to settle the original name of Città di Castello is well-known. Concluding from manuscripts and from classical authors that *Tyberine* or *Tyferne* was its original name, he observed that according to *antiquissime littere quas vidi sumptas ex marmoreo lapide*, the name should be spelled as *Tifernum, per iotam, non per litteram pythagoricam* (scil., *y*).[16] B.L. Ullman remarks that "this must be one of the earliest instances since antiquity of the use of inscriptions to prove a point".[17]

Bruni and Niccoli also quoted epigraphs in orthographical discussions. Bruni dealing with the cause célèbre of the age, *michi, nichil* vs. *mihi, nihil,* in an undated letter to Antonio *grammaticus*, cites the authority of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Salutati in support of the former variants. He defends this writing by maintaining that *usus* is the *dominus* of language in antiquity no less than today, which *potest improbare, quod tunc probavit.* Bruni thus seems to argue that the de-

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[14]   Origin 24sqq. Albinia C. de la Mare and D.F.S. Thomson, Poggio's Earliest Manuscript, Italia medievale e umanistica 16 (1973) 179sqq., have contended that in his earliest manuscript in humanist script, written in 1400–1402, although conscious of the existence of the diphthongs, Poggio was not consistent in their use. In case-endings, he only uses the diphthong three times.

[15]   Origin 53.

[16]   Epistolario III 627.

[17]   Op.cit. 103.

velopment of language justifies deviations from ancient forms: *Nonne optume dicebant antiqui & pessume, eodemque modo alia permulta?. . . Nos vero omnia haec variamus usu jubente.* Bruni then quotes from *Ciceronis tempora* the forms *caussa* for *causa* and *iusus* for *iussus*, *ut Agellius* (scil., Aulus Gellius, but this is a mistake[18]) *testatur, & marmoreis quibusdam monumentis Romae licet conspicere.*[19] It is probable that Bruni had himself read these forms from epigraphs during his sojourn in Rome in 1415, incidentally additional proof of epigraphical pursuits in humanist circles at the Papal curia.

The most interesting case is that of Niccoli, who seems to have contributed to the invention of the new script more than is in general recognized.[20] Since he wrote very little himself, and since even this small output has largely vanished, we have only indirect knowledge of his literary activity. But some invectives against Niccoli reveal that just before 1413 he had composed a small book which carried the name of *orthographia* and which dealt in particular with diphthongs.[21] In his manuscripts, Niccoli was enthusiastic about the diphthongs, even to the point of wrong spellings.[22] It is probable that in composing this treatise, Niccoli used epigraphs, too. In his invective from 1413, Guarino da Verona writes: *Nec erubescit canus homo aerei nummi atque argentei marmorisque et codicum Graecorum testimonia afferre.*[23]

In my opinion, the passage can only be interpreted in the sense that in trying to establish classical orthography, Niccoli studied copper and silver coins, inscriptions as well as Latin words and names found in Greek manuscripts, a sound method from the modern point of view. Niccoli was probably the first to make rational use of epigraphy to settle the correct spellings of diphthongs, although the total disappearance of the book makes it difficult to get any clearer idea of his arguments. Guarino da Verona's *De arte diphthongandi*, probably written

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[18] Bruni is in fact quoting Quintilianus 1,7,20−21.

[19] Epist. VIII 2 p. 107 sq. (ed. Mehus, 1741).

[20] See Albinia C. de la Mare, The Handwriting of Italian Humanists I.1, 1973, 49.

[21] Evidence collected by Ullman, Origin 71.

[22] Ibid. 72sq.; cf. de la Mare & Thomson, op.cit. 194.

[23] Epistolario (ed. R. Sabbadini) I No 17 p. 38.

in 1415, though listing a number of correct spellings, does not quote epigraphs.[24]

Poggio's nearest humanist friends accordingly did not fail to utilize classical epigraphy in orthography. Since Poggio was more than any one else conversant with ancient epigraphs, and moreover keenly interested in all aspects of paleography, his increasing indifference to the writing of diphthongs, no doubt one of the most conspicuous orthographical innovations of the age, is all the more remarkable.

It is difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of this decline. In his Sylloge, published ca. 1430, the diphthongs were carefully written. That Poggio may have taken at least partial notice of epigraphical evidence is possibly seen in his treatment of the name *Caesar*. In his early manuscripts, the name was more commonly correct than other words including diphthongs, though in the later manuscripts, *Cesar* prevails.[25] *Caesar* was so common in inscriptions that Poggio cannot have failed to give attention to its correct classical form.

It would be interesting to see whether the diphthongs were more usual in majuscule than in minuscule script, the former being directly based upon classical epigraphs.[26] Unfortunately, the copies of Poggio's manuscripts seen by me have too few lines in capital letters to warrant reliable conclusions. After all, the choice of letter forms seems to have had little influence on spellings. In the marginal notes, which were between Gothic and his own humanist hand, the spelling *Caesar* was regular.[27]

Obviously Poggio did not consider diphthongs very important. In his early manuscripts, probably due to the influence of his Florentine friends, especially Niccoli, he took some pains to introduce them into his script but soon grew weary of them and largely reverted to the old

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[24]   Guarino's treatise was first printed in 1485, see Ullman, Origin 70 n. 30. In his preface, Guarino's gives as his sources *quae latinae locutionis memoria suppeditavit aut si quid paululum. . . ex doctissimo. . . praeceptore meo Manuele Chrysolora degustavi.*

[25]   Ullman, Origin 31; 34; 36; 41; 44sq; 47sq.

[26]   Ullman, Origin 44; the other of the two examples of *Caesar* in a late manuscript was written in capitals.

[27]   Ibid. 45; 48.

spellings which he had learnt in his youth. In some other respects, too, Poggio's Latinity fell short of classical purity, as Valla, with malicious delight, never tired of pointing out. Keen on some aspects of the revival of classical Latin, such as the letter forms, he neglected others which were equally important.

There is another linguistic controversy in which he, together with his contemporaries, failed to take notice of epigraphical evidence.

In 1435 the leading humanists fought over the languages in ancient Rome.[28] Bruni and a few others maintained a thesis according to which the speeches of the common people and of the educated were as widely dissociated from each other in antiquity as they were in their own day. The educated conversed in Latin, the people spoke the vernacular, viz. Italian.[29] Others, especially Flavio Biondo[30] and Poggio, denied this. Both resorted to much the same arguments. Poggio argued that both the common people and the educated spoke Latin. There were, however, differences in that the Latin of the educated was more elaborate. The speech of the people survived in modern Romance languages.[31]

In this connection it is only relevant to see whether epigraphs were quoted as evidence. Poggio defended his thesis of the unity of speech in ancient Rome by citing the theatrical performances and orations to the people, which would have been meaningless unless Latin had been the mother tongue of the people. From a modern point of view, inscriptions are similar evidence, especially the epitaphs of the commoners as well as the laws and decrees put on public view and intended to be read by the general public. Chrysoloras, who sojourned in Rome in 1411,[32] did not fail to draw linguistic conclusions from epigraphy. Referring to

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[28] The controversy has often been treated in modern literature, see R. Fubini, La coscienza del latino negli umanisti, Studi medievali III.2, 1961, 505—550; a bibliography of the controversy 507 n. 3.

[29] Bruni, Epist. VI 10 p. 62sqq.

[30] De verbis Romanae locutionis, printed in Scritti inediti e rari di Flavio Biondo (Studi e testi XLVIII, 1927, 115—130).

[31] Poggio developed these ideas in his Disceptatio convivialis III, reprinted in Opera Omnia I, 1964, 52—63.

[32] G. Cammelli, I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo I. Manuale Crisolora, 1941, 153sqq.

the countless Greek epitaphs to be found in the city as well as to Latin epitaphs including Greek phrases, he argued that the city had been inhabited by the Greeks no less than by the Italians, and even more, that the Italians knew Greek, too.[33]

Poggio's Sylloge contains a few epitaphs for the common people.[34] Epitaphs including warnings against violating tombs, like 77, were intended to be read and observed by people other than the handful of the educated. Poggio had also copied from the *Einsiedlensis* a public decree which, if given proper attention, would have been relevant to Poggio's arguments: the decree of a late prefect of the city to protect the people against the fraudulent practices of millers on the Janiculan hill.[35]

Poggio's disregard for epigraphical evidence is excusable. Latin was widely used in inscriptions in his own days. Churches were replete with the Latin epitaphs of prelates and noblemen and other dignitaries. Also, there were plenty of Latin epigraphs recording public building work as well as the decrees of the Popes and other authorities, etc. In these circumstances, it could not have been easy to see the difference between contemporary Latin epigraphy, comprehensible only to the educated few, and epigraphs in ancient Rome, which high and low, in fact everybody with a minimum of literacy, could understand.

Use of epigraphs as historical documents

It was, however, not only and not even mainly the lettering and language of classical epigraphs which could be pressed into service for *litterae renascentes*. Like other literary documents, epigraphy was also utilizable as testimony of antiquity. Again, imitation of antiquity being the dominating idea of the humanist movement, classical epigraphs, too, could be used as models for composing new ones.

Among the early humanists, Poggio made the most extensive use of epigraphs as documents of antiquity. In Bruni's correspondence, for instance, there are only a few references to ancient inscriptions. Apart

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[33] PG 156 col. 56.
[34] Nos 38, 46, 61–72, 77, 85.
[35] No 34 = CIL VI 1711.

from the passages dealing with orthography, already discussed, he quotes two epigraphs from Ariminum, one on the city gate,[36] the other on the bridge.[37] At Constance, in 1414, he found an inscription recording the construction of the city walls.[38] The stone was already much worn because, as Bruni writes, the populace took it *esse santuarium quoddam praecipuae religionis.* In all these cases, epigraphs are cited as records of the history of the places. He makes no attempt to quote them *in extenso.* Bruni's interest in classical epigraphy was accordingly restricted.

In the *corpus Poggianum,* classical epigraphy is of much greater importance. The well-known letters to Niccoli, from 1428, in which Poggio vividly describes his invention and transcription of inscriptions at Ferentinum and near the *porta Tiburtina* in Rome,[39] still breathe the joy of an epigraphist engaged in field-work. But he also made significant use of epigraphy as historial documents.

There is, it is true, only one relevant passage, but this is all the more weighty; it is in the first half of Book I of *De varietate Fortunae,* when he describes the ruins and monuments of Ancient Rome. The inscriptions of Poggio's Sylloge mentioned in this book have been recorded in the list on p. 22. Poggio was, it is true, not the first to make use of epigraphs in describing the monuments of Rome or of other ancient towns. Though he (p. 9) blames Petrarch for not giving proper attention to epigraphy, Petrarch occasionally referred to Roman inscriptions, thus in *De remediis utriusque fortunae* I 114 he quotes the fragmentary inscription CIL VI 1207, which also figures in Poggio's book (see below). But if Petrarch, enthusiastic though he was for the ruins of Rome, largely neglected epigraphy, and if Bruni made only cursory references to local inscriptions in Rimini and Konstanz, Poggio had two noteworthy predecessors in utilizing epigraphy for the description of ancient Rome: Chrysoloras and Signorili.

Chrysoloras, in his Σύνϰϱισις τῆς παλαιᾶς ϰαὶ νέας ῾Ρώμης (scil.,

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[36] Epist. III 9 p. 76sq. The inscription in question is CIL XI 465 = ILS 84.

[37] Ibid. p. 77, CIL XI 367 = ILS 113.

[38] Epist. IV 3 p. 107sq., CIL XIII 5249 = ILS 640.

[39] Lettere I (ed. Helene Harth, 1984) Nos. 69–72; 73 p. 188.

Constantinople), sent as a letter from Rome in 1411 to Emperor Paleologus, also mentioned monumental and other epigraphs.[40] Chrysoloras sent a copy of his letter to Guarino da Verona.[41] It is possible, though of course unprovable, that Poggio, a friend of Guarino, knew about the letter.

Signorili's *Descriptio urbis Romae* was a more direct model. Its exact date is not known for certain. While L. Pastor and others give as the *terminus ante quem* 1427 when Signorili is claimed to have died, Valentini & Zucchetti suggest that the work may have been composed as late as 1430.[42] His *Descriptio* is a patchwork put together out of *Mirabilia urbis Romae* and other earlier books on Rome. The *Sylloge Signoriliana* or *Farrago Barberiniana* constituted an integral part of the *Descriptio*. The inscriptions were quoted in full and preceded by indications of ubication as well as summaries of their contents.[43] There were also a few additions (see the tabulation of the material on p. 22). Omitting here the difficult problem of the authorship of the original Sylloge, it is probable that Poggio knew Signorili's *Descriptio*. But whether it in any way influenced the character of his own *Descriptio* is uncertain.

The tabulation of the material shows that most of the inscriptions contained in Poggio's own Sylloge were referred to in *De varietate Fortunae*. Excluding the non-Roman epigraphs as well as the epitaphs, only eight inscriptions of the Sylloge were not found in VF. Most of them were no doubt excluded as irrelevant to the theme, No. 50 concerning streets, 60 the banks of the Tiber, 62 *Fasti sacerdotum*, while 68 was a honorary inscription dedicated to a provincial governor. Poggio

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[40] PG 156 col. 29: Ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις γράμματα μεγάλα λέγοντα, Ἡ βουλὴ τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ ὁ δῆμος, Ἰουλίῳ εἰ τύχοι Καίσαρι, ἢ Τίτῳ, ἢ Οὐεσπασιάνῳ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ἕνεκεν, νικήσαντι ἀπὸ τῶν δεινῶν, ἢ φυλάξαντι τὴν πατρίδα, ἢ ἐλάσαντι τοὺς βαρβάρους; ἢ τι τοιοῦτον ἕτερον τῶν ἐπαινουμένων. ... Μεσταὶ μὲν τούτων ὁδοί, μεστὰ δὲ μνήματα καὶ τάφοι παλαιῶν, μεστοὶ δὲ οἰκιῶν τοῖχοι · πάντα τῆς ἀρίστης καὶ τελεωτάτης τέχνης;...

[41] Cammelli, op.cit. (n. 32) 158.

[42] Op.cit. (n. 5) 156–158.

[43] See, for instance, the passage on the well-known epigraph on the Pantheon (op.cit. 198): *In memoriam M. Agrippae. Epitaphium in frontespitio templi Pantheon, quod hodie dicitur Sancta Maria Rotunda, in memorian M. Agrippae, qui illud fecit aedificari. Epitaphium,* quoted in full.

did not describe the streets or the banks of the Tiber. Again, 61, a honorary inscription to Vespasian and 66 to Constantine were omitted probably because the former was nothing but a *lapis prope Capitolium* and the latter was without any indication of place. Hence they were unusable in a topographical discussion. Thus, only 47 is left. It recorded the restoration of the aqueduct of Virgo by Emperor Claudius and could properly have been mentioned in the passage in which Poggio dealt with that watercourse.

It is probable that the chapter on the monuments of Rome and the Sylloge were being composed almost simultaneously. The scene of the description of Rome's ruins is set in autumn 1430. In a passage (p. 9) Poggio's interlocutor, Antonio Loschi, praises Poggio's diligence in collecting ancient *epigrammata* and giving them in a small volume *literarum studiosis* to read. From this it is in general concluded that the Sylloge had been published a little earlier.[44]

VF has a few references to inscriptions not included in the Sylloge. After recording (p. 15) the triumphal arches of Septimius Severus (Sylloge 49), of Vespasian (48) and Constantine (45) *fere integri*, he continues: *pars Nervae Trajani quaedam praecipui operis residet juxta Comitium, in qua sculptae literae Trajani arcum fuisse dicunt.* In Poggio's days, a fragment of the epigraph was accordingly extant. It was probably the same that turned up in 1812, with the name *Traiano* still visible. The whole inscription had been seen only by Anonymus Einsiedlensis.[45] Poggio probably did not realize that the fragment belonged to that inscription. Due to a mistake, he gave as the ubication of the *Einsiedlensis* copy *in columna Traiani*. Again, his words suggest that the *titulus* of the arch raised to Titus in Circus Maximus in honour of his victory over the Jews was no longer extant (p. 16): *Legi quoque titulum eius Arcus, quem, devictis Judaeis, & Hierosolymis deletis, Tito Vespasiano in Circo maximo, ubi nunc horti sunt, gentilitas dicavit.* The inscription has been preserved only in *Einsiedlensis*.[46]

Other epigraphs mentioned in VF but omitted from the Sylloge are

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[44] De Rossi, ICVR II.2 p. 339, gives the year of the publication *fere MCCCCXXIX*.
[45] Einsiedl. 14 (CIL VI.1 p. X) = Poggio's Sylloge 8 = CIL VI 967 = ILS 309.
[46] Einsiedl. 29 (CIL VI.1 p. XI) = Poggio's Sylloge 18 = CIL VI 944 = ILS 264.

sepulchrum Q. Caeciliae Metellae (p. 19), recorded more correctly in Signorili 54 and extant today[47] and the inscriptions above *porta Ardeatina* and *porta Ostiensis*, in which *literae Arcadium & Honorium, muros, portas & turres urbis instaurasse, sunt documento* (p. 23). These belonged to a group of inscriptions recording the restoration of the city walls in 402/3. The epigraphs in *porta Praenestina* and in *porta Tiburtina* are extant,[48] the one above *porta Portuensis* is lost but has been recorded by Signorili 16.[49] According to Poggio, then, in his times similar inscriptions were visible above *porta Ardeatina* and *porta Ostiensis*, too. But because Poggio's topography is not always very accurate it is possible that he had confused the names of the gates.[50]

Poggio also records (p. 18) two recently *(nuper)* unearthed inscriptions in the portico of the theatre of Pompey: *Alterae* (scil., *literae) epigrammate effracto, genium theatri a Praefecto urbis instauratum ferunt, alterae a Symmacho urbis Praefecto Honorio Augusto dicatum.*[51] Both are now lost, but the latter has been preserved in a copy made by Ciriaco.[52] The former is given by Flavio Biondo, too, but in a briefer form: *genium theatri Pompeiani.*[53] Henzen placed the inscription among *falsae* 55*. Chr. Huelsen has, however, argued that the stone is genuine, convincingly as I think. [54] But instead of *genium*, he chose to read *proscenium*, the epigraph recording the restoration of that part of the theatre by Emperor Honorius. This is not necessarily true. Because *genius theatri*, like other geniuses of places and institutes, is found elsewhere,[55] Poggio's interpretation is equally acceptable. The lost stone may have noted the restoration of the statue of the *genius* of the theatre.

Huelsen also contends that Poggio's reference to *monumenta*

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[47] CIL VI 1274 = ILS 881.

[48] CIL VI 1189 and 1190.

[49] CIL VI 1188.

[50] See Valentini & Zucchetti, Codice topogafico II 149 n. 3.

[51] The 1723 edition adds *quodam* before *Praefecto*. In the manuscript used for this edition, Ottob. Lat. 2134, the word is, however, missing.

[52] CIL VI 1193.

[53] Roma instaurata II 109.

[54] Miscellanea epigrafica, Röm. Mitt 14 (1899) 251sqq.

[55] CIL X 3821 = ILS 3662 Capua.

quaedam prisca quae hodie Cimbron appellant; templum ex manubiis Cimbricis a C. Mario factum (p. 8—9) is to be connected with the inscription CIL VI 1207, the epigram already quoted by Petrarch (see p. 30), variously attributed but according to Mommsen (note in VI 1207) praising Domitian.[56]

In using the epigraphs to describe and identify monuments, Poggio is much more skilful than Signorili. He never quotes the inscriptions in full. Only at the beginning (p. 8) does he record a few complete inscriptions, but puts them in reported speech. The very first epigraph quoted is also worthy of notice for the fact that it is here in a more correct form than in the Sylloge: *in quibus* (scil. vaults on the Capitol) *scriptum est literis vetustissimis, atque adeo humore salis exesis, Q. Lutatium Q.F. & Q. Catulum coss. substructionem & tabularium de suo faciundum coeravisse.* Sylloge 56 omits *tabularium.* Because both manuscript copies of Poggio's original repeat the mistake, it was probably found in his archetype through oversight, whereas in VF he quoted it in a more correct form.[57]

In most cases, Poggio cites the relevant inscriptions only briefly, e.g. the long epigraph recording the restoration of *Thermae Constantinae*[58] is referred to by *Constantini id esse opus testis est epigramma, in quo Petronium Perpennam urbis praefectum illas reparasse legimus* (p. 14). The three Imperial arches, mentioned above (p. 32), are only said to exist *salvis titulis* (p. 15). But Poggio is not always as brief as that. Although he never quotes the epigraphs in full, he usually summarizes them, e.g. Sylloge 58, on the restoration of the aqueduct in Coelio, is aptly reduced to a few lines by dropping the long list of the genealogy and offices of the restorers, Septimius Severus and Antoninus Pius (p. 17).

Altogether Poggio very skilfully incorporates his epigraphical material into the description of the Roman monuments. In comparison with the clumsy and inexpert method of Signorili (see p. 31), his is much more readable and informative.

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[56]   Op.cit. 255sqq.

[57]   The inscription has some minor inaccuracies, but they may be disregarded here.

[58]   Sylloge 64: 57 words.

Poggio, like his contemporaries in general, thus gave the greatest attention to the epigraphs which illustrated the history of monuments and places. Considering the limited number of inscriptions known at that time, it is understandable that epigraphy was not put to use e.g. for the study of ancient prosopography or institutes. Again, epitaphs, though making up the bulk of inscriptions, were given scant attention. Only one fifth of the material collected by Poggio belonged to that category. Moreover, many of them had been copied for other than epitaphic considerations. But the utilization of epitaphs has in fact remained inadequate up to the present.

Imitation of Classical inscriptions

During the 15th century, especially since the 1440s, Latin epitaphs in the churches of Rome, Florence, Venice and other places were increasingly modelled upon classical epitaphs from lettering to structure and diction, even to ideas.[59] Monumental inscriptions, especially *tituli operum publicorum,* also imitated classical epigraphs.[60]

We know little about the authors of these classicizing inscriptions. But they were often so elaborate that we can safely assume their writers to have been humanists or at the very least persons influenced by humanism. The humanists were certainly interested in epitaphs. One of their favourite pursuits was composing epigrams on the deaths of eminent persons. E.Walser, for instance, prints no less than 26 epigrams commemorating the death of Poggio.[61] Pontano's *De tumulis* is well-known. While most of these products were merely literary exercises, a few were actually carved on tombs.[62]

Where did the authors of the inscriptions get their models? Literary epigrams and verse epitaphs, too, had probably been inspired by clas-

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[59] See my Classical and Christian. Studies in the Latin Epitaphs of Medieval and Renaissance Rome, 1980, and Papal Epigraphy in Renaissance Rome, 1982.

[60] Cf. my Papal Epigraphy 82, 88, etc.

[61] Poggius Florentinus. Leben und Werke, 1914=1974, 557 sqq.

[62] Cf. my forthcoming paper in the Studi offerti a Francesco della Corte, Aspects of humanism in Renaissance epigraphy.

sical poetry more than by classical epigraphy, though e.g. Pontano is
also known for his epigraphical studies. For the great majority of epi-
taphs, which were written in prose, models were at hand in the collec-
tions of classical inscriptions, which were in circulation since the first
third of the Quattrocento. Again, many of the writers of the classiciz-
ing epitaphs had no doubt consulted classical inscriptions *in situ*. But
most writers probably neither studied classical models in collections
nor on stones. They only imitated a type which they knew to have been
modelled upon the sepulchral inscriptions of *prisci illi*.

Hence, the originators of the humanist epitaph were in all likelihood
persons who either collected classical epigraphs or otherwise studied
them. Since Poggio was the first who took more than a cursory interest
in classical epigraphy and since he was a versatile and prolific writer,
one could assume that he also composed epigraphs. But if he did so, we
know regrettably little about it.

One inscription certainly written by Poggio has survived. In present-
ing, in 1438, a valuable reliquary bust, possibly made by no less a
person than Donatello[62a], to the church of St Mary in his native Terra-
nova, Poggio composed a long epigraph telling, in a pious medieval
spirit, the miraculous story of the finding of *diversorum sanctorum
reliquias* contained in the vessel.[63] It is written in early humanist script,
while the abbreviations are mostly of the medieval type. The inscrip-
tion, by its very nature, does not show any influence of classical
models. It is more a legend carved on stone than a typical epigraph.

According to the contemporary biographer Vespasiano da Bisticci,
Poggio ordered his own tomb before his death and wrote his own
epitaph,[64] a practice not uncommon at this time.[65] Other contemporary
sources confirm that Poggio was in fact "con grande honore" buried in

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[62a] J.J. Rorimer, A Reliquary Bust Made for Poggio Bracciolini, Metropolitan Museum
of Art. Bulletin N.S. 14 (1956) 251.

[63] Reprinted in Opera Omnia II, 1966, 859 sq. Photograph in Un toscano del 1400.
Poggio Bracciolini 1380–1459, a cura di Patrizia Castelli, 1980, 182.

[64] Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV, vol. 2, 1893, 209: "Innansi che morisse. . .
ordino la sepoltura sua in Sancta Croce, di marmo, e il modo che voleva ch'ella
estesse, e l'epitaffio fece lui medesimo".

[65] Cf. my Classical and Christian 50.

the church of Santa Croce in Florence.[66] The history of Poggio's tomb is obscure. Today there is not a trace of it to be found in the church.[67] By the mid 18th century, it had already vanished.[68] It is possible that the monument was never built, due to the unhappy fate of Poggio's sons, [69] and even the temporary tomb destroyed during the restorations of the church. If built and extant, Poggio's tomb would probably have equalled the magnificent monuments of other chancellors of Florence in Santa Croce, those of Bruni, Marsuppini, Machiavelli. Moreover, the great humanist and the first modern epigraphist very likely wrote a truly classicizing epitaph for himself.

This is all we know about Poggio as a writer of epigraphs. In the *corpus Poggianum,* other references to epigraphy are not frequent. His correspondence, excluding the well-known letters to Niccoli on his finds (see p. 30), carries no mention of inscriptions. In his dialogues and treatises, he utilized epigraphical material only in *De Varietate Fortunae.*

Two groups of publications do, however, contain epigraphical references. These are the funeral orations and the invectives. It is natural that especially *orationes funebres* should mention epitaphs. Both were closely connected, their common aim being to immortalize the memory of the deceased. There is no need to dwell upon the importance of fame, a legacy of antiquity, for the humanists. Poggio, too, praises the sweetness of the immortal name. His funeral speeches, even in memory of ecclesiastical dignitaries, do not disdain to celebrate worldly fame, which, besides preserving the memory of the departed, served as an incitement to others to earn similar glory. The same idea of fame was conspicuous in the tomb inscriptions from the Renaissance.[70] Epitaphs,

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[66]   D. Buoninsegni, Storie della città di Firenze dall'anno 1410 ad 1460 scritte nelli stessi tempi che accadono, 126.

[67]   D. Bacci, Poggio Bracciolini nella luce· dei suoi tempi, 1959, 54; P. Bacci, Cenni biografici e religiosità di Poggio Bracciolini, 1963, 29.

[68]   It is not recorded in G. Richa's Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine I.1, 1754, 78—123 among the other epitaphs of Santa Croce.

[69]   This is suggested by Vespasiano da Bisticci, op. cit.: "Di poi, donde si procedessi, le sue sustanze andarono a male, e la sepolutura non si fece".

[70]   Classical and Christian 83—86.

especially the longer ones on the monumental tombs of persons of distinction, often resemble summaries of funeral speeches, including as they do the curriculum vitae of the departed and the praise of his *virtutes*. One can notice that the Cardinal Virtues were eulogized in funeral inscriptions no less frequently than in funeral orations.[71] A study of the similarities between Renaissance *orationes funebres* and Renaissance epitaphs could be rewarding.

It is the very idea of fame served by ancient honorific inscriptions that Poggio quotes in his funeral orations. He winds up his first speech in memory of cardinal Zabarella, in 1417, by urging the city of Florence to honour him with a magnificent tomb *in quo scribatur breviarium gestorum eius, prout solitum est fieri his qui pro patria occubuissent. Superimponenda esset sepulchro aurea statua more priscorum, cuius in basi esset inscriptum Parenti patriae. Sed quia hic mos venit in desuetudinem, satis erit constitui sepulchrum, ornarique ad modum maiorum nostrorum, cum inscriptione honorifica quae fit ad honorem ipsius & ad imitationem posterorum.*[72] Clearly it is the classical epigraphs in honour of great men that Poggio had in mind, incidentally a further proof of his epigraphical interests before the late 1420s. The reference to the ancient custom of honouring illustrious people by statues and honorary inscriptions is also significant. Except for the Popes, raising statues to mortals was not very common during the Renaissance.[73] Poggio regrets the desuetude of honorary statues in his funeral speech in memory of Niccolo Niccoli, too, who died in 1437.[74]

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[71] The first oration in memory of Cardinal Zabarella, in 1417 (see Walser, op.cit. 69sq.), reprinted in Opera Omnia I 252sqq., praises his *prudentia, iustitia* (157), *liberalitas ac beneficentia, charitas ac misericordia, modestia* (258), *fortitudo* (259). For the funeral inscriptions, see Classical and Christian 105sqq.

[72] Opera Omnia I 260sq.

[73] See my Papal Epigraphy 93, 98sq. Still in 1593, the Roman Senate and People, raising a statue to Alessandro Farnese, described the custom as a classical legacy, which had fallen into desuetude: *maiorum morem seculis multis intermissum revocandum censuit.*

[74] Opera Omnia I 277: *Equidem si id religio nostra aut tempora paterentur, decernerem mea sententia statuam illi marmoream in Bibliothecae parte collocandam cum inscriptione honorificentissima & ad memoriam illius & ad reliquorum aemulationem.*

The attitude to classical honorific statues and epigraphs is somewhat modified in Poggio's last funeral oration, which he wrote in 1445 for the memory of Cardinal Giuliano de' Cesarini. The cardinal had fallen at Varna in a defeat suffered at the hands of the Turks.[75] Poggio praised him as a Christian martyr who had died for a just cause. At the beginning of the oration, Poggio once again quotes the custom of the *prisci illi* to honour their heroes by *equestres atque inauratae statuae*.[76] But while admitting the justice and utility of the practice, he repudiated these *praemia* of the ancients as *res caducae momentaneaeque*. The idea was repeated at the end of the speech.[77] Whether this more sceptical idea of the value of perishable worldly monuments in comparison with heavenly glory was due to Poggio's veneration of a Christian martyr or to the increasing piety of his declining years or simply to the fact that the cardinal never had a sepulchral monument,[78] cannot be certain. Poggio, like every true humanist, was of course able to modify his rhetorical masterpieces in accordance with the particular requirements of a case.

The classical idea of honouring a man with a statue and inscription was put to ironical use in some of his numerous invectives. In his third invective against Filelfo,[79] he travesties classical honorary inscriptions by describing how the Florentines raised a *statua laureata* to Filelfo in the courtyard of a brothel, *cum inscriptione honorifica: Philelpho morum adolescentum corruptori*. There is a similar passage in the famous third invective against Valla, which tells the tale of Valla's descent into Hell.[80] Valla receives a statue in the forecourt of Hell *cum insigni basis inscriptione: Laurentio Vallae de inferis commilitoni bene merito*.

While these examples were not actual epigraphs, they reveal that Poggio could write inscriptions in imitation of antiquity. Whether he in fact did so, remains so far unknown.

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[75] Walser, op.cit. 206.

[76] Opera Omnia II, 1966, 725.

[77] Ibid. 735.

[78] See the note, ibid, 735 n. 1.

[79] Opera Omnia I 183.

[80] Ibid. 237.

On the other hand, we know for certain that Ciriaco d'Ancona, the first professional epigraphist, wrote classicizing epitaphs. While many have been preserved only in manuscripts, a few were carved on stone.[81]

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[81] See e.g. De Rossi, Inscript. christ. urbis Romae 11.2, 1888, p. 374 and 379–80. J Colin, Cyriaque d´Ancône. Le voyageur, le marchand, l'humaniste, 1981, 49, 63, 312, 336–38, 372. Numerous examples in Vita di Ciriaco Anconitano scritta da Francesco Scalamonti, edited by G. Colucci in Antichità picene XV 1792 p. xix; lxxx; cxi; cxvi; cxxv; cxxvi; cxxxiii; cxxxvii sqq. Ciriaco´s activity as writer of epigraphs is worth investigating.