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## THE NAME OF CORNELIA ORESTINA/ORESTILLA

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The name form of Cornelia (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1492), one of the mistresses of the emperor Caligula, has come down to us in different forms and through different traditions. The variants attested in our sources are as follows (other possibilities proposed so far are noted in brackets):

1. Κορνηλία Ὀρεστίνα  
— Dio 59,8,7  
— Xiph. 159,9—13 Dind.  
— Zonar. 11,5, p. 15,16—19 Dind.  
— CIL IV 6812: Cornelia P.f. Orestina
2. Livia Orestilla  
— Suet. Cal. 25,1
3. Κορνηλίου Ὀρέστου θυγάτηρ  
— Ioh. Anth., exc. de virt. fr. 82 Müller
4. (Cornelia Livia Orestina)
5. (Cornelia Orestilla)

In these passages it is told that when Cornelia was to be married to C. Calpurnius Piso, the future conspirator, the emperor appeared in the wedding and stole the fiancée away (probably in 38 A.D.). In a few days, however, she was cast off by Caligula, and later the unhappy couple was sent into exile,<sup>1</sup> accused of having renewed their relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Dio's account that they were exiled πρὶν δὲ δύο μῆνας ἐξελθεῖν is probably a mistake, because Piso was elected as a member of the Arval Brethren in May of the year 38 A.D. (CIL VI 2028, c 35, d 3, d 12) and his presence in the

In this paper it is my purpose to put forward all the evidence concerning Cornelia and her name and, as far as possible, to find out some explanation for the variety of her name forms. The first crucial question is whether Cornelia's cognomen was *Orestina* or *Orestilla*. In favour of the first the most important literary source is Dio 59,8,7, a passage preserved only in cod. Marcianus gr. 395 (Venice) dating from the eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, two Byzantine historians of the twelfth century, Xiphilinus and Zonaras, seem to testify to the form *Orestina*. But as compilers they mainly used Dio, and the passage in question certainly derives from his text. It is impossible to know which manuscripts they took as excerpts and how this part of Dio's work found its way to their epitomes. The only thing we can say is that the source they followed at that time had preserved Cornelia's cognomen in the form *Orestina*.

The other alternative is corroborated by the ms. tradition of Suetonius' *vita Caligulae* 25,1, where the cognomen appears uniformly as *Orestilla*. It was obviously this that made Dindorf propose the conjecture Ὀρεσίλλαν for the Dioan passage.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the development of the ms. tradition would have led to the corrupted form Ὀρεστῖναν attested for example in cod. Marcianus, and "the mistakes" of Xiphilinus and Zonaras would be taken from the same source.<sup>4</sup> A development from *Orestilla* to *Orestina* is palaeographically easier than that from the opposite direction, but if a corruption exists, we cannot precise in which period it happened. Codex Marcianus gr. 395 was written in Greek minuscules, where an inter-

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fraternity is attested both in September of the same year (CIL VI 2028, e 11, e 22, f 2) and in June of the year 40 A.D. (CIL VI 2030, 17—18; 32347, 26). According to Schol. Iuv. 5,109 (cf. Laus Pis. 68ff.) he was reinstated under Claudius, cf. recently R. Syme, HSCPh 88 (1984) 166. Hence it was not after two months but after two years that they were banished.

<sup>2</sup> The codex contains books from 44,35,4 up to 60,28,3. See especially U. P. Boissevain's Dio-edition (Berlin 1895—1931), I, LXVIII—LXXIV.

<sup>3</sup> Dionis Cassii Cocceiani Historia Romana. Cum annotationibus Ludovici Dindorfi, III, Lipsiae 1864, 304. The form of the codex, Ὀρεστῖναν, is accepted by J. Melber in his Teubner-edition of 1928 (vol. III, p. 334). The Loeb-edition of 1924 by E. Cary retains Ὀρεσίλλαν (vol. III, p. 284).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Boissevain, op. cit. II, p. 626: "quam facile ex Ὀρεσίλλαν quadratis litteris scripto Ὀρεστῖναν nasci potuerit in aprico est".

changeable reading of  $\lambda\lambda$  as  $\nu$  or  $\mu$ , and vice versa, was rather common.<sup>5</sup> However, an erroneous reading of a much earlier date cannot be excluded.

All this sounds possible. There exists, however, a Pompeian graffito, CIL IV 6812 (Reg. VI, ins. 9, Casa del Centauro), which proves the existence of a woman called Cornelia P.f. Orestina. As to the characters printed in CIL (the graffito itself may already have been destroyed; see note 9), the text probably dates from a period earlier than 79 A.D. and could approximately even coincide with the lifetime of the famous Cornelia. The identification, however, remains all but certain. Firstly, why would the name of a person so important and certainly well-known ever have been scratched on the wall of a Pompeian house, and further, why with a filiation? Even a cursory look at the indices of various volumes of CIL, not to talk about a more detailed study in the nomenclature of the Roman upper classes, reveals that it was quite exceptional to attach an ordinary filiation to a name of a female member of the imperial family. The identification with our lady becomes all the more improbable, as it is obviously necessary to suppose that a Roman woman who had her name written on a wall at Pompeii had to be rather the empress (in this particular case Cornelia became famous especially through the way she was abducted by Caligula) than a noble daughter of a certain Cornelius (as she was before the wedding episode), but as stated above, the woman of CIL IV 6812 could not be the empress. Of course, the graffito does not prove that the empress could have stayed at Pompeii,<sup>6</sup> but it does not prove anything of the woman's personality either. Such evidence suggests that she was a free-born Pompeian woman, daughter of P. Cornelius, but for the use of her cognomen we can only hazard certain guesses. It is known that names of famous and popular persons were often adopted by the lower classes, and perhaps also in this case the onomastic pattern was achieved by imitating the name of the great Cornelia,<sup>7</sup> all

<sup>5</sup> E. Mioni, *Introduzione alla paleografia greca*, Padova 1973, 100 (on cod. Marc. gr. 395 see p. 68).

<sup>6</sup> See P. Castrén, *Ordo populisque Pompeianus*, Roma 1983<sup>2</sup>, 157.

<sup>7</sup> The habit among the municipal families of bearing cognomina of illustrious persons has already been mentioned by L. R. Taylor, *The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic*, Bergamo 1960, 288. Cf. also P. Castrén, *Opusculum IRF 1* (1981) 22f. and H. Solin's remarks in the introductory chapter of his *Beiträge zur Namengebung des römischen Senatorenstandes* (in print).

the more because it would have been unusual if Cornelia P.f. Orestina, being a free-born woman, had had a Greek "slave name", which, in addition, was not very frequently attested in the onomastic register of the time (see p. 29 and note 17). In addition, her cognomen may have been associated more or less intentionally with the religious-literary figure Orestes<sup>8</sup> (and for some reason the suffix *-ina* was preferred to *-illa*<sup>9</sup>).

Returning to the literary tradition one should also note the curious variant of John of Antioch (of the seventh century), possibly due to a misunderstanding of the passage. He may have thought that *Cornelia Orestina/Orestilla* means 'daughter of Cornelius Orestes' thus interpreting the suffix as a kind of filiation. More interesting is the variant in Suetonius' Cal. 25,1. Why did he use the form *Livia Orestilla*? I think that as such *Orestilla* could represent the original and correct cognomen, but with *Livia* there must be something wrong. It may be that there was already some confusion in the archetype of Suetonius, a feature not unknown in works of other historians either.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> One should also keep in mind that the names beginning with *Orest-*, when attested in various parts of Italy, could in some cases be equally explained as originally Etruscan (cf. the Aretian inscription *-cnei urste* cited by W. Schulze, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*, Berlin 1904 [1933] 203). However, the name was probably in most cases thought of as Greek. The stem *Orest-* was also considerably more common in the Greek-speaking East (see note 17). Cf. also H. Solin, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der griechischen Personennamen in Rom I*, Helsinki 1971, 88—89.

<sup>9</sup> I have also considered the possibility that ORIISTINΛ in the graffito has been carelessly read as ORIISTINΛ instead of ORIISTIAIΛ (a mistake for *Orestilla*), cf. the examples in Kajanto's *The Latin Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965, 14—15 and the alphabet tables in Zangemeister, *CIL IV,1, tab. I, 3,11—14*. Some cases also in Hübner's *Exempla scripturae Latinae*, Berolini 1885, LXI. But as it has not been possible to see the letters in person, nor is there any photo at hand, we must naturally rely on Mau's reading. It is even possible that the graffito does not exist any more, because at the time of Mau's edition (1909) it was the only one that had come to light from the Casa del Centauro.

<sup>10</sup> In the present context it is much less probable that Dio would wrongly have written *Cornelia* instead of *Livia* (as in fact has already been suggested by H. Willrich, *Klio* 3 [1903] 294 n. 3), although he (or the source he followed) is known to have committed many mistakes (see for example note 1). The *Annales* of Tacitus present an instructive example of many errors and omissions, pro-

Be this as it may, the name formula *Cornelia Livia Orestina* proposed by Groag in PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1492 (cf. also RE IV 1600, 443) is to be rejected. Our Cornelia was born around the time of Christ's birth,<sup>11</sup> while the first certain cases recording the use of two gentilicia and one cognomen among Roman senatorial women occur only about one hundred years later. Even then examples are very rare. These cases only became more common at the turn of the second and third centuries A.D.<sup>12</sup>

Prosopographical analysis might give us more help. It is generally believed that Cornelia was somehow connected with P. (Cornelius) Scipio Orestinus (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1441), whose name is known from a Telesian inscription (CIL IX 2219). Unfortunately nothing is told about his lineage. Given this evidence we can produce a link between them merely on the basis of their similar cognomina. He could be her brother or father. Neither of these possibilities is ruled out by any contrary arguments. If they were brother and sister (as is suggested for example in the *stemma Lentulorum* of PIR<sup>2</sup> II, p. 328), their father might have been P. Cornelius Lentulus Scipio (*cos. suff.* 2 A.D.).<sup>13</sup> The problem is certainly not facilitated by

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foundly studied by R. Syme in his Tacitus II, Oxford 1958, 746—749 (on Suetonius and Dio see Tacitus I, 388).

<sup>11</sup> According to R. Syme, AJPh 101 (1980) 335 (= Roman Papers III, 1228), Piso's birth may be put not later than the year 8 A.D.

<sup>12</sup> The following list some of the earliest cases: Claudia Arruntia Marcella (TAM II 361; Xanthus), whose husband entered the Senate only in Domitian's time (AE 1972, 572; Ephesus). Desticia Sallustia Plotina (PIR<sup>2</sup> D 58 is probably the same woman as PIR S 73), *clarissima puella*. Didia Cornelia Ingenua (PIR<sup>2</sup> D 80; cf. *stemma* in PIR<sup>2</sup> I 284; from Cuicul), from the middle of the second century A.D. Iulia Antonia Eurydice (PIR<sup>2</sup> I 644), whose husband was legate of Numidia in 124/125—126/127 (AE 1954, 149; cf. W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian*, München 1970, 195—200). Iulia Quintilia Isaurica (PIR<sup>2</sup> I 697), from the turn of the first and second centuries A.D., and finally Vibullia Alcia Agrippina (RE VIII A, 2470—71, 12), mother of the famous sophist Herodes Atticus (*cos.* 143 A.D.).

<sup>13</sup> There is naturally no need to suppose that Cornelia was necessarily called *Orestina*, if her brother (?) bore the cognomen ending in *-inus*. On the contrary, it was preponderantly the cognomen in *-illa* that appeared as the feminine counterpart of that in *-inus*, see M. Leumann, *Lateinische Cognomina auf -inus und -illa*, Kleine Schriften, Zürich 1959, 63ff.

the fact that in CIL IX 2219 there was no filiation. In order to solve the difficulty it might be opportune to assume that the *consul suffectus* of 2 A.D. had a wife, an otherwise unrecorded woman, from whom the cognomen was inherited by the children. Thus could be explained the emergence of the cognomen *Orestinus* among the Cornelii Lentuli of the early Empire. As to the identification of the consul's wife, the cognomen may be the clue. *Orestes* with its derivatives goes back a long way — it was especially (exclusively?) used by one branch of the Republican Aurelii (RE II 2514—15, 177—181). Moreover, there was one Cn. Aufidius Orestes (RE II 2295—96, 32), consul in 71 B.C., adopted *summa senectute* by Cn. Aufidius (Cic. dom. 35). The cognomen is derived from the fact that he was an Aurelius by birth. The same may be true with Q. Mucius Orestinus (RE XVI 423—424, 12), *trib. pl.* in 64 B.C. What is more, we also know two female members of the *gens*, the notorious Aurelia Orestilla (RE II 2544, 261), with whom Catilina is said to have fallen in love (Sall. Cat. 15,2; App. bell. civ. 2,2), and, living in the same period, (Aurelia) Orestilla (the cognomen is preserved in Val. Max. 4,6,3), wife of M. Plautius Hypsaeus (RE XXI 15—16, 22). So it seems that the daughters of Aurelii Orestae were called Orestillae.<sup>14</sup> If the establishment of a link by marriage between Aurelii and Cornelii can be verified, it could be regarded as an argument in support of the name form *Cornelia Orestilla*. That the name was inherited from the maternal side is by no means unexpected, as is easily revealed by a systematic study of the senatorial *stemmata*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Besides being one of the earliest examples of the use of cognomina among women of nobility, *Orestilla* is also the earliest known Greek cognomen in Roman senatorial women's nomenclature and represents the genus of old Greek cognomina of the Republican nobility (the type *Philippus*, *Philo*, *Sophus*), see H. Solin, op. cit. in note 8, 87f. It is also to be noted that the Greek (!) cognomen of Aureliae Orestillae is the earliest known instance of the suffix *-illa* in Roman women's nomenclature, a fact that in part made M. Leumann, op. cit. 83, suggest a Greek origin for it (cf. already Τελέσιλλα and Πράξιλλα from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. for example the appendix of G. Barbieri's contribution in *L'onomastique latine* (Paris 13—15 octobre 1975. Colloques internationaux du C.N.R.S. 564), Paris 1977, 184—189.



The use of *Orestilla* among the nobility was not restricted to these women alone. A further instance is to be found, though much later, in the name of Fabia Orestilla, wife of the emperor Gordianus I (vita Gord. 17,4). As to the distribution of the name pair *Orestina*—*Orestilla* throughout Italy, it may be noted that the name was rather rare. In the provinces of the West it is not attested at all. From the capital only one example of *Orestina* is recorded: Behilia Horestina (CIL VI 36507; 3rd cent. A.D.). Orestin[---] in CIL VI 18879 is uncertain. Besides the senatorial cases *Orestilla* is found only once in Roman inscriptions: CIL VI 2188/9.<sup>16</sup> Outside of Rome *Orestilla* occurs at Sarnum (CIL X 1112; Christ.), *Orestina* at Ricina (CIL IX 5762), at Clusium (CIL XI 2559; Christ.) and at Pompeii (CIL IV 6812; see above). *Orestes* with its derivatives seems to have been more popular in the eastern parts of the Empire being predominantly attested from Greek sources.<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion, though the case in question may be somewhat perplexed, certain data can be brought together. The gentilicium studied was most obviously *Cornelia*. Suetonius' alternative *Livia* may be a mistake. As to the cognomen, there are actually two pieces of evidence supporting the form *Orestina*: the possibility of imitation in CIL IV 6812 and Dio 59,8,7, which could very well have suffered from the hand of some careless scribe. The remedy Ὀρεστίλλαν suggested by Dindorf, sponsored also by

<sup>16</sup> CIL VI 23021 (the stone gives ORISTILA), erroneously regarded as Roman, was found at Salona (Dalmatia), see R. Noll, Griechische und lateinische Inschriften der Wiener Antikensammlung, Wien 1962, 85, No. 265 (plate 8).

<sup>17</sup> The two Latin instances of *Orestilla* come from Samos, CIL III 7165 (= 457): Iulia Orestilla, and from Salona, CIL VI 23021 (see the previous note). From Haïdra (Africa) one *Orestina* is attested, MEFR 1912, 163, No. 85: Valeria Orestina. In CIL III 12302 (Epirus) the name remains uncertain: Orestin[---]. All the Greek occurrences that I have found date from the imperial period (2nd—4th cent. A.D.): Macedonia, Thessalonica, IG X:2, 487: Ἐρεννία Ὀρεστεῖνη; 611: Πολικτήτη (= Πολυκτήτη) Ὀρεστεῖνη. Thessalia, IG IX:2, 340, b 4: Ὀρεστε[ίν]η (slave); 1031: Ὀρεστεῖνη. Laodicea Combusta, MAMA I 175: Ὀρεστῖνα. Isauria, IGR III 291: Ἀὐρ. Ὀρεστεῖνα (ἀρχιέρεια); SEG I 472: Ὀρεστεῖνη (Τιβερίου). Moreover, the suffix *-iana* is found twice at Termessus, TAM III 509: Ὀρεσσιανή (θρ.); 870: Ἀὐρ. Ὀρεσσιανή (προφήτις ἱερῶν Ἐλευσινίων). At Termessus, compared with other places, *Orestes* seems to have gained a more conspicuous popularity.

Boissevain (see notes 2 and 3), might be the correct form. Suetonius gives *Orestilla*, a fact not to be neglected even if he wrote a false gentilicium. However, as a primary source the graffito should be seriously taken into account, even if the hypothesis of imitation could not be verified. The prosopography did not help much either in tracing the correct form of the cognomen, although the reconstruction of a link between the Republican Aurelii and Cornelii could yield an explanation for its origin. Finally, because the possibility of three names (*Cornelia Livia Orestina*) cannot stand, there still remains the problem of deciding between *Cornelia Orestina* and *Cornelia Orestilla*.