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THE NON-LATIN AND NON-GREEK PERSONAL NAMES IN ROMAN BRICK STAMPS AND SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON SEMITIC INFLUENCES ON THE ROMAN COGNOMEN SYSTEM

Tapio Helen

The following list contains all non-Latin and non-Greek cognomina (and sole names such as the names of slaves) of Roman brick stamps (CIL XV 1 and its Supplement). Geographical and ethnic names I have regarded as Latin or Greek even though they originate from some other language (e.g. *Salassus*, *Cantaber*), so they are not included in the list.

For lists of Latin and Greek names I have used Kajanto's *The Latin Cognomina* and Pape & Benseler's *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*. I also consider some gentilicia which strike me as foreign (non-Latin). These gentilicia are *Anufius*, *Basilus*, *Milasius* and *Vismatius* (see below under *Iuba*, *Minna*, *Cupitus* and *Vismatius*). This list does not aim at completeness as the cognomen list does.

Both my and Kajanto's lists contain one name (but only one) which is common, namely *Cupitus*. Kajanto includes it in his list with certain reservations. It has a meaning as a Latin word but is probably a Celtic name which happens to coincide with a Latin word (see below). This poses a problem. There are Latin names which are adaptations from other language names. It is an important task to single out such cases, especially if the persons constitute the object of the study and the names are studied only in connection with the persons as a source of information about them. Thus, for instance, all the names in the list below refer to only one bearer in Roman brick stamps, i.e. there is only one person per foreign name (except the gentilicium *Vismatius*). More is known about them, too, other than their name. In such cases, the persons and their histories are of

interest, and one can arrive at more conclusions about the person from a foreign name than from a Latin or Greek one.

A better example of this than the *Cupitus* above is *Bassus*. It is a very normal and old Latin cognomen, belonging to an original Latin type of cognomina. But it has been maintained that many *Bassus*-cognomina in Imperial times originate in the Semitic (Arabic) word *bassun* (now pronounced 'bass' = 'cat'), which happens to have been readily adapted into the system as the old Latin cognomen *Bassus* (Stark 77).

I have made no attempt to discuss such foreign names which were adapted as Latin names. Thus *Bassus* is not included in my list tempting though it might be to look for an oriental origin for certain of the *Bassi* of the brick stamps. *Cupitus* is the only exception. But it is not a Latin cognomen to which a foreign name has been adapted, as *Bassus* is.

More important for the whole Roman name system is the case of foreign translation loans as Latin or Greek cognomina. The cognomen became established as part of the Roman personal name in late Republican and early Imperial times. It is commonly believed that slave names played a highly significant part in this. Myriads of manumitted slaves made up the bulk of new Roman citizens. When they reached citizen status, they retained their old slave name as a cognomen and attached to it, as a token of their new status, a Roman nomen gentilicium and praenomen, which they borrowed from their former owner whenever possible. Semitic and other names were translated, one assumes, and so introduced into the Roman name system, as the bearers of the names became part of the Roman world.

It may be that the Roman cognomina mainly consist of such translations and that the whole cognomen system belongs to the wider Mediterranean culture of the Empire rather than to a tradition originating in Rome and Italy.

Such names as *Felix*, *Fortunatus* or *Faustus*, the most common of Latin cognomina, express an idea ('happiness, good luck') which makes them suitable personal names in any human culture. Names from the root š^cd (Arabic s^cd) meaning 'happiness, good luck' were, and still are, very popular among the Semitic peoples, names like the Arabic Sa^cd and Sa^cīd (Stark 53, 115). Cf. also the name *Gadia* below. The popularity of *Felix*, *Fortunatus* and *Faustus* may be seen as a Semitic influence on Roman cognomen

system, although, owing to the broadly human nature of the idea implied in these names, this is not necessarily the case.

Similarly, the Latin cognomen *Blandus*, for example, may or may not be a translation of a Semitic name, such as *Latīf* (Arabic = Lat. *blandus*). Or consider the Latin cognomen *Successus*. The idea behind this name is evidently an expression by the parents of a wish for success in life for the child. A Semitic (Arabic) counterpart is the name *Taufīq* (= 'success'). Here the grammatical form of the name is also interesting. *Successus* is a past participle, which in Latin has a passive meaning only, whereas as a name *Successus* clearly has an active meaning (as the present participle *succedens*). Kajanto points out this type and its peculiarity in *The Latin Cognomina* 93. The Semitic *Taufīq* is a noun, and on this analogy the Latin name can also be explained as being originally a noun, *successus*, *-ūs* = 'success' = *taufīq*. The fact that *successus* when used as a personal name was a participle and not a noun can be seen in the oblique cases (the genitive is *Successi* not *Successūs*).

The very common Latin cognomen *Crescens* may be taken as an illustration of the differences in the ideas underlying personal names in different cultures. One can connect *Crescens* with the old Latin tradition of names denoting the bodily qualities and physiognomy of the name bearer, among names such as *Bassus* (short of stature), *Rufus* (redhead), *Calvus* (bald), etc. The idea behind the name would be "bodily growing of the child so named", maybe a wish of the parents that the child grow normally. In accordance with this idea, Kajanto places the name *Crescens* under the heading "physical peculiarities, body as a whole, growing up" (*The Latin Cognomina* 65 and 234).

The "Semitic" idea underlying such names is that God is the increaser, 'God increases him (his wealth, herd, progeny, etc.)' or maybe 'fear of God increases in him'. The Arabic root *zyd* contains the idea of growing or increasing (Latin *cresco*, *augeo*), and personal names from *zyd* such as *Zaid* and *Yazīd*, are expressions of the "Semitic" idea of personal increasing. Such Latin cognomina as *Crescens* and *Auctus* may be translations of such Semitic names. The honorific name *Augustus*, which the senate gave to Octavianus, is an instance of the "Semitic" rather than "Latin" idea of personal increasing.

The "increasing"-motif in Roman cognomina is interesting from the

viewpoint of continuity or discontinuity of the name system from the old Latin of the Republic to the new Roman of the Empire. In a personal name, like *Crescens*, the old Latin idea of the sheer physical quality of the person, "bodily growing up", is somewhat odd but not inconceivable. On the other hand, the "Semitic" idea of personal increasing as the origin of *Crescens* is also plausible.

The following is my list of foreign personal names in Roman brick stamps. I refer to the stamps thus: the bare number is the number of the stamp in CIL XV, 1 and a number preceded by S. refers to Bloch's Supplement to CIL XV, 1.

Abdas 779 *P. Aemili Abdatis* (gen.)

Obviously a Semitic name from the root 'bd meaning 'slave' (in Arabic 'abd). Stamp 779 is spurious, Dressel regarding it as forged.

Barnae(us) 1325 *C. Naevius C.l. Barnae(us)*

First century A.D. Names beginning with *bar-* are not common in Latin and Greek. All we have are the names derived from *barba* and *Barbarus*. The *bar-* in this and the following name is probably the Aramaic *bar* = 'son'. This is the normal way of forming patronymics in Aramaic, e.g. in NT, *Barabbas*, *Barnabas*, *Barjesus*, *Barsabbas*, *Bartholomaeus* (Wuthnow 34). — This name belongs to a type of common Semitic nickname (Lidzbarski discusses them in his *Kosenamen* 13—17). The nickname is formed by taking the first three consonants of the longer full name and adding the ending *-ay* (which in Greek transcription becomes *-αιος* and Latin *-aeus*). In this case the full name would be *brnbw*, the NT *Barnabas* (thus Lidzbarski 14, occurrences of *brnbw* can also be found in Stark 12, 79). In Acts 4,36 the name *Barnabas* is explained in Greek as *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως* "the son of the consoler". Cf. *Rabbaeus*, *Tognaeus* and *Zabdaeus* below.

Bars() 542, S. 154 *L. Lab(erius) Bars()*

The stamps are presumably from the first decades of the second century A.D. Probably the *bar* is the same Aramaic 'son' as in the preceding name. In this case the praenomen-gentilicium combination may also say something of the origin of the man. L. Laberius Maximus (other well-known Laberii

had praenomina other than L.) was procurator of Judaea immediately after the Jewish war, from 71 on; later he was *praefectus annonae* and *praefectus Aegypto* (RE XII 249—250). *Bars*() may have been a Jew enslaved during or after the war, later freed and granted citizenship by L. Laberius Maximus.

Comolvis 2000 *C. Stati Comolvis* (gen.)

The stamp is from the middle of the 2nd century A.D. Holder (I, 1079) considers *Comolvis* a Celtic name but adds a question mark. This is the only occurrence of the name, as far as I know.

Cupitus 1305 *C. Milasi Cupiti* (gen.)

First half of the second century A.D. According to Holder (I, 1197), this is a Celtic name. Kajanto has it in his list of Latin cognomina (The Latin Cognomina 296); he remarks that most of its occurrences are to be found in Celtic territory. It is probably a Celtic name which coincides with a Latin word (see above). The gentilicium *Milasius* is also Celtic according to Holder (II, 584).

Diagiza S. 302 = 2445 *Diagiza M. Fulvi s(ervus)*

The stamp is from the first century A.D. The name is Thracian according to Detschew (131). This stamp represents the only occurrence of the name.

Dida 1429 *M. Iul(ii) Didae*

The stamp has the consular date of the year 123 A.D. According to Detschew, the name is presumably Thracian but may also be Illyrian or Phrygian (Detschew 131). The name Διδᾶς is fairly common in Egyptian papyri (Preisigke, Namenbuch).

Gadia 1007 *Gadia Domiti Tulli* (sc. *servus*)

The name of Domitius Tullus dates the stamp to the years 94—108 A.D. This is a common Aramaic name, according to Jastrow (211b). The root *gd* means 'good luck'. In Genesis 30,11, for example, the name of the son of Jacob Gad is explained in this way. The god Gad in Hellenistic times was identified with Tyche. In Semitic inscriptions the personal name is *gdy*, the Greek transcription is *Gadias*. In Josephus ant. 15,252 recounting events from c. 50 B.C. a man appears whose Aramaic name is *Gadia* and

Greek name *Antipater*. The name has two possible interpretations, 'kid, goat' or 'luck, lucky'. From the meaning 'luck' the idea behind the name would be according to Stark, 'my fortune is (some god)' (Stark 13 and 81; Wuthnow 38).

Gobathus 928, 929, S. 251, S. 252 *Ti. Claudi Gobathi*

The stamps are from the latter part of the first century A.D. Holder considers it a Celtic name but adds a question mark to this statement (Holder I, 2030f.). It may be derived from the Celtic word *goba* meaning 'smith'. The name of an uncle of Vercingetorix was *Gobannitio*, which may also be derived from *goba*. The name is known only from these stamps.

Isio 1477 *Dom(iti) Ision(is)*

The stamp is from the year 123 (consular date). The name is evidently derived from the name of the goddess Isis, that is why I consider it non-Greek. It occurs frequently in Egyptian papyri (Preisigke, Namenbuch), but is rare elsewhere.

Iub(a) 825, S. 226 *Sex. Anuf(i) Iub(ae)*

The stamps are probably from the first half of the second century A.D. If this is the correct completion of the stamp text, the man would have the same name as the Numidian kings. Thus, the name would be Libyan. The gentilicium also sounds barbaric, and I have not found it elsewhere.

Licca 2252 *M. Licini Liccae*

The stamp is from the first century A.D. According to Krahe, this is an Illyrian name, and is found in Latin inscriptions only (Krahe 66).

Minna 884 *Q. Basili Minnae*

The stamp is from the first century A.D. The cognomen may be Semitic or Libyan. Apart from this stamp, the rare occurrences of the name known to me are from Africa (6 times in CIL VIII). In PW 15:2, 1854 a *statio* with the name *Minna* is mentioned. The gentilicium also seems to be non-Latin and non-Greek. Its occurrences also point to Africa: in CIL VIII and Inscr. Lat. de l'Algérie 29 occurrences altogether and in CIL VI six occurrences.

Pharnac(es) 100

The stamp is from the first half of the second century A.D. The name is Persian. It was familiar to the Romans as the name of the king of Pontos whom Julius Caesar defeated at Zela 47 B.C.

Rabbaeus 310, 311, S. 81, S. 616 *St(atius) Marcius Rabbaeus*

The stamps are from the first half of the first century A.D. The name is an instance of a very popular type of Aramaic nickname. This type is a grade further reduced from the type *Barnaesus* above (Lidzbarski, *Kose-namen* 14f.). The short name is formed by the first two consonants of the full name, doubling the second consonant, changing the vowel of the first consonant to *a* (if it is not originally *a*), and adding the ending *-ay*. This type was very productive, and Greek and other non-Semitic names were also used for these names, e.g. the name of one of the twelve Apostles, *Thaddaeus*, is explained by Lidzbarski as derived from a Greek name beginning with Θεοδ-. The Aramaic name *Yannay* of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jan-naeus shows how greatly abbreviated these names are. *Yannay* is short form of *yhwntn* (the Biblical Jonathan). It also shows that in Roman times these names had some official standing and were no longer mere nicknames. The Apostle and Evangelist *Matthaeus* and the little man *Zacchaeus* are other NT personages with names of this type. The gentilicium *Annaeus* may also have its origin in a Semitic name of this type (the prevalent opinion is that it is an Italian or Etruscan name, a byform of *Annius*, *Anneius*). *Rabbaeus* probably derives from the Semitic root *rby* which means 'increase, grow', as in the Arabic word *riban*, 'interest (on money)'. The meaning of the full name from which *Rabbaeus* is formed could be 'great is God' (Lidzbarski 16; Stark 49 and 111; Jastrow 1439b; Wuthnow 166).

Samsaca S. 76 *Samsaca Calpetani s(ervus)*

The stamp is from the first half of the first century A.D. This may or may not be a Semitic name. I have found no informed opinions in this matter. The beginning of the name could be the Semitic word for 'sun' (Arabic *šams*) which is commonly used in Semitic names (e.g. the biblical *Samson*), but the whole is not a very plausible Semitic name. This stamp is the only occurrence of the name. I have found one *Samsacius* (Diehl, *Inscr. Lat. Christ. veteres* II 4386).

Tarula 2206

The stamp is presumably from the first century A.D. According to Detschew, the name is Thracian (Detschew 491f.).

Terco 1467 *Terconi(s)*

The stamp is consular dated to the year A.D. 123. I have found no explanation for this name or any name with such a beginning.

Teres 2323 *Q. Egnati Terenis*

The stamp is from the first century A.D. The name is a common Thracian one according to Detschew (500—502). This Thracian name differs from the Latin name *Teres* in the stem, which in oblique cases ends in *n*; the first *e* is long, Greek transcription Τηρης.

Tirida(tes?) S. 399 *Tirida(tes) s(ervus)*

The stamp is from c. A.D. 120. *Tiridates* is a Persian name, a well-known name for Armenian kings (Justi 326).

Tognaeus S. 529 *St(atius) Marcius Tognaeus*

The stamp is from the middle of the first century A.D. I have found no explanation of this name. Formally it could be a Semitic name of the type described above under *Barnaeus*, but there is no positive indication that it is a Semitic name.

Vismatius (For the bearers of this gentilicium, see Helen 124—125).

There are several *Vismatii* in Roman brick stamps. Their stamps range from the first century A.D. to the late second. The name also appears in the forms *Bismatius* and *Vimatius*. It seems that the *gens Vismatia* appears only in Roman brick stamps. I have met the gentilicium nowhere else. The first *Vismatius*, *Vismatius Successus*, appears in the stamps first (late first century A.D.) without the gentilicium, as *Successus* solely; later he becomes *Vismatius Successus*. Thus it seems likely that he began his career as a slave and was later manumitted. One may infer from the uniqueness of the name that perhaps *Successus* himself coined his new gentilicium from a word of

some language other than Latin or Greek. Which language this was is a matter of pure conjecture, to me anyway.

Zabdae(us) 809, S. 413 *Anni Zabdae(i)*

The stamps are probably from the first century A.D. This is a common Aramaic name of the same type as *Barnaëus* above (Jastrow 377b; Wuthnow 48; Stark 16—18 and 85—86). The root *zbd* means 'gift' and the meaning of the full name would be 'gift (of some God)'. In the NT, Zebedaeus, the father of the Apostles James and John, bears this name.

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