

# ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

NOVA SERIES

VOL. III

HELSINKI 1962 HELSINGFORS

# INDEX

Patrick Bruun	The Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine . . . . .	5
Michael Ginsburg	The Hellenistic <i>προσβολή</i> and the <i>prosbul</i> . . . . .	37
Iiro Kajanto	On the Problem of »Names of Humility« in Early Christian Epigraphy . . . . .	45
Eino Mikkola	Die präpositionale Hypostase, Apostase und Metabase im Lateinischen, Griechischen und Altindischen . . . . .	55
Henric Nordberg	On the Bible Text of St. Athanasius . . . . .	119
Paavo Numminen	Severa Mater . . . . .	143
Päivö Oksala	Das Aufblühen des römischen Epos. Berührungen zwischen der Ariadne-Episode Catulls und der Dido-Geschichte Vergils . . . . .	167
Teivas Oksala	Catulls Attis-Ballade. Über den Stil der Dichtung und ihr Verhältnis zur Persönlichkeit des Dichters . . . . .	199
Jaakko Suolahti	The Consul: — — — — —. N. CARVE — — in 458 B.C. . . . .	215
Henrik Zilliacus	Anecdota sepulcralia . . . . .	229

# ON THE PROBLEM OF »NAMES OF HUMILITY» IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EPIGRAPHY

Iiro Kajanto

It has often been suggested that the early Christians had borne »names of humility», such as *Proiectus* and *Stercorius*, among other less common, as a mark of resignation and indifference in the face of the derision of the pagans. The idea was first put forth by H. CANNEGIETER, an eighteenth century scholar.<sup>1</sup> During the following century the idea was taken up and elaborated by E. LE BLANT, a famous Christian epigraphist. He derived the names of that type from the charges and insults flung at the Christians in the period of the persecutions; a number of the names of the Christians, such as *Alogius*, *Exitiosus*, *Iniuriosus*, were nothing but »ces mots injurieux» of the pagans, whereas others, such as *Proiectus* and *Stercorius*, were »les termes vagues de reproche ou de mépris.»<sup>2</sup> These ideas of Cannegieter and le Blant were accepted by GIOVANNI DE ROSSI also;<sup>3</sup> a list of Christian »nomi di umiliazione» found its way into F. GROSSI GONDI's handbook on Christian epigraphy,<sup>4</sup> and hence into Dictionnaire d'archéologie et de liturgie chrétienne.<sup>5</sup>

However, from the very beginning the theory has been subjected to criticism. R. MOWAT, in a polemical article, contended that *Proiectus* and *Stercorius* could not, for reasons to which I shall return below, count among »names of humility». He fights the whole idea that the early Christians had wanted to express humility by personal names. The Christians certainly bore the outrages of the pagans with resignation, »mais sa morale était trop

---

<sup>1</sup> De mutata Romanorum nominum sub principibus ratione, Lugduni Batavorum 1784, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> »Recherches sur quelques noms bizarres adoptés par les premiers chrétiens», Revue d'archéologie, NS 1864, p. 5 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae I<sup>1</sup> Roma 1857—61, p. cxiii.

<sup>4</sup> Trattato di epigrafia cristiana, Roma 1920, p. 83 f.

<sup>5</sup> Tome VII: 1, p. 745, Paris 1926.

élevée pour jamais enseigner la dégradation volontaire.»<sup>1</sup> A few other scholars are also opposed to the idea.<sup>2</sup>

As a starting-point of the discussion it may be useful to tabulate the frequencies in pagan and Christian epigraphic material of the personal names claimed to be »names of humility» borne by the early Christians.<sup>3</sup> To be accepted as »Christian», a name should not be found at all in pagan material or at least be much less frequent.

	pagan	Christian
Alogius .....	1	11
Alogiosus .....	1	1
Calumniosus .....	—	4
Contumeliosus .....	—	1
Credulus .....	4	1
Exitiosus .....	—	10
Importunus .....	—	4
Iniuriosus .....	—	1
Proiectus .....	1	62
Stercorius .....	15	53

Considering that pagan epigraphic material is many times larger than the Christian one, the names, with the exception of *Credulus*,<sup>4</sup> meet the condition. However, the only names which are of a somewhat higher frequency, are *Proiectus* and *Stercorius*. If they can be shown to imply »Christian humility», the theory may be said to have been proved, but if it turns out not to be so, the Christianity of the other similar names will also become doubtful.

*Proiectus* is often written *Pr(a)iectus* and *Pr(a)ieicticius*. Here *Pro-* and *Prae-* were quite equal, for the same person had his name written now *Pro-*, now *Prae-*, e.g. ICR III 8647 a *fossor* (grave-digger in catacombs) is called *Pr(a)ieicticius*, whereas his name in 8655 has the form *Proiecticius*. The only

<sup>1</sup> »Examen de la signification attribuée aux noms d'hommes *Sarmentius, Proiectus, Stercorius*», *Revue d'archéologie* 1868 I, p. 355 ff.

<sup>2</sup> So e.g. J. MOFFAT, »Names (Christian)», *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* IX, Edinburgh 1917, p. 145; J. SCHRIJNEN, »Die Namengebung im altchristlichen Latein», *Mnemosyne* 1935, does not include »names of humiliation» in his catalogues of Christian names.

<sup>3</sup> The material has been collected from *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (abbreviated CIL), *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae I—III* (ICR), DIEHL's *Inscriptiones Latinae christianae veteres*, and from the as yet unpublished *Inscriptiones christianae Vaticanae recentae triginta*, edited by *Instituti Romani Finlandiae Sodales*.

<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Christianity of the only example of the name (CIL VIII 20313) put in this column is not quite certain.

example considered pagan is CIL III 11206 c: . . . *Proiectus act(uarius?)*, but the epitaph is written with the characters of the fourth century, and the person may after all be a Christian. The inscriptions in which the name occurs are in general rather late, the earliest dated one being CIL VIII 20309, A.D. 351. A late date is also argued by the fact that *Proiectus* is almost without exception a single name; the only examples of gentiles are ICR I 730 = DIEHL 2635: *Aur(elius) Proiectus*, dated A.D. 419, and DIEHL 2722 Badn: *Mar(ius?) Pr(a)ieiectus*. The disappearance of the gentile was just a conspicuous feature of late Latin nomenclature. Except for a late (A.D. 575) epitaph of a *Proiectus ep(i)s(copus)* in DIEHL 1042, the bearers of the name seem to have been humble people.

The facts tabulated may strongly argue for the Christianity of *Proiectus*; why, if it was not because of its Christian suggestiveness, does the name occur only in Christian inscriptions? However, the mere fact that a name is found exclusively in Christian material does not prove it Christian. Also the meaning of the name must suggest Christian ideas. This is just the point contested. In opposition to CANNEGIETER and his followers, MOWAT (op. cit.) and, following him, A. FERRUA<sup>1</sup>, argue that *Proiectus* has no pejorative sense; it simply denotes »an exposed child», and is similar in meaning to *Spurius*. This argumentation seems to find support in some passages from the Roman Comedy, where the verb *proicere* really stands for »to expose», e.g. Plaut. *Cist.* 123—24: *parvolam puellam proiectam ex angiportu sustuli*; the same girl is referred to as *proiecticia illa* line 191. Some questions, however, arise. Why is the name found almost exclusively in Christian material, when the pagans also picked up exposed children? Moreover, there are some facts which, as I think, clearly prove the improbability of the whole idea of the meaning of *Proiectus*. The children exposed and picked up had quite a specific term, for they were called *alumni*. In Christian inscriptions *alumni* are numerous, but in no one of the examples given by DIEHL 757—762 A does an *alumnus* bear the name *Proiectus*. Further, an exposed child certainly should have no parents and other blood relations; accordingly, when a child bearing the name *Proiectus* has a stone put up by the parents (CIL XIII 3875 and 3876; ICR I 1440 = DIEHL 3446; 3733 = DIEHL 4352; II 6296) or has a brother (ICR I 633 = DIEHL 2810 D), we may be quite sure that the name borne by the child did not derive from exposition. I think this double argument and the numerous examples supporting it suffice to demolish the theory of MOWAT

<sup>1</sup> »Epigrafia sicula pagana e cristiana», *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 1941, p. 167, fn. 1.

and FERRUA. Since *Proiectus* cannot denote »an exposed child», another meaning of the words *proiectus* and *proiecticius* should be cited to explain the name; now the words also denote »abject» and »contemptible», e.g. Tertull. *Pud.* 13,9: *Apostolus vero sceleratam libidinem fornicationis incesto onustam tam proiecte* (with contempt) *ignovisset, ut...* We have in fact a contemporary passage in literature in which the meaning of the name seems to be clearly revealed, Ammianus Marcellinus 28, 6, 26: *Salutat te Palladius proiecticius, qui non aliam ob causam dicit se esse proiectum, nisi quod in causa Tripolitanorum apud sacras aures mentitus est.* Here we have a nickname in the making; it is not impossible that *Proiecticius* is here a nickname given by a person to himself. In any case, I think the passage brings out the meaning suggested by the names *Proiectus* and *Proiecticius* to the people of Later Antiquity.

Thus *Proiectus* is an u n c o m p l i m e n t a r y c o g n o m e n. But before answering the question of whether it is a name suggestive of »Christian humility», the name *Stercorius* must also be considered.

*Stercorius*, which derives from *stercus*, »dung», »excrements», is not exclusively Christian, but the frequency of the name is far greater in Christian material. Neither is *Stercorius* as exclusively a name of humble people as *Proiectus*. In CIL VI 31845 a *M. Aurelius Stercorius* is an *eques Romanus*; in CIL III 7494 we have a [*Fl(avius) Ste*]rco*rius vir clarissimus*, A.D. 369, and in DIEHL 300 adn *Istercor[ius]*<sup>1</sup> *v(ir) e(gregius)*, both members of the senatorial class.

Now the scholars who have tried to confute LE BLANT have in general denied the pejorative sense of *Stercorius*. So MOWAT explains that there is no idea of contempt in this name, which suggested »la fumure des terres, l'entretien des étables et des écuries.»<sup>2</sup> Most acceptance has recently been given to another theory, first put forth by a French scholar, P. PERDRIZET. He asserted that the Latin *Stercorius* was similar in meaning to the Greek *Κοπρεύς*, *Κοπρία* and other similar names (in PREISIGKE's *Namenbuch*, covering the Egyptian papyri, there are no less than 14 varieties of the name) implying »an exposed child found on a dunghill.»<sup>3</sup> It is accordingly the Greek name that must be debated first.

<sup>1</sup> For the parasitic »i», a feature of Vulgar Latin, see F. SOMMER, *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre*, Heidelberg 1948, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> »Copria», *Revue des études anciennes* 1921, p. 85 ff., followed by FERRUA in the passage cited (see p. 47 fn. 1 above).

In his article PERDRIZET gives two reasons for his view about the significance of the name: first, most bearers of the Greek names of the type of *Κοπρεύς* were slaves and freedmen; again, in the work called the Gnomon of Idios Logos (BGU V: 1) there are numerous references to the picking-up of newborn children exposed on the *κοπρίαί* or dung-hills near Greek cities.<sup>1</sup> Though generally accepted,<sup>2</sup> the theory, on nearer scrutiny, reveals several weaknesses. A similar argumentation as above in regard to *Proiectus* can be applied here also. There are some passages in which a child is explicitly stated to have been picked *ἀπὸ κοπρίας*, but no one of the children bears a name of the type of *Κοπρεύς*; POxy I 37, 5 and 38, 6 the name is *Ἑρακλᾶς*; BGU IV 1058, 11 *ἀναιρετὸν* — *δουλικὸν παιδίον* bears the name *Ἄ . . . ματιον*; in BGU IV 1106, 12 a similar child is called *Τύχη* and in PSI III 203, 3—4, in a fragmentary passage, the name of a child *ἀπὸ κοπρίας* is *[Δ]ιονύσιος*. Again, there is any number of cases in which a person bearing the name of the type of *Κοπρεύς* has the father's name added in the usual Hellenic fashion, e.g. *Κοπρῆς Ἀρποκρατίωνος τοῦ κ[αί Δι]θύμου* (BGU II 362, ix 19, A.D. 214/5); *Κοπρῆς Πααίμεως* (BGU II 659, ii 23, A.D. 228/29; other cases are numerous: BGU II 585 ii 2; 618, ii 6; 659 iii 21; VII 1617 i 9; 1634 ii 41; 1608, 4; IX 1900, 123; POxy I 80, 18, 19; X 1275, 8; XII 1446, 29; XXIV 2415, 58; PSI XII 1245, 2). In a few cases, only the name of the mother is recorded, the child being illegitimate, e.g. BGU IX 1900, 111: *Κοπρῆς ἀπ(άτωρ) μη(τρὸς) Σαραποῦτος* (another similar case is POxy XII 1446, 18). In some cases the names of both father and mother are given, e.g. BGU IX 1900, 28: *Κοπρῆτος Πανίωνος μη(τρὸς) Ἀρεῖτος* (another example is POxy XIV 1695, 8). There is a case in which the name of the grandfather is also recorded, BGU IX 1900, 124: *Χῶνσις* (nominative) *Ἑρακλείδου καὶ Κοπρῆς* (nominative) *υἱός*. The examples could easily be multiplied from other collections of papyri.

In the face of such a multitude of unequivocal examples, the theory of PERDRIZET about the significance of the names of the type of *Κοπρεύς* is untenable. *Κοπρεύς* and similar names may well have been borne by humble people, but they certainly did not denote the origin of the persons *ἀπὸ κοπρίας*.

This etymology of the names accordingly proving wrong, others must be looked for. F. CUMONT derived the name *Κοπρία* from the geographic name

<sup>1</sup> E.g. § 41: *ἐὰν Αἰγύπτιος ἐκ κοπρίας [ἀν]έλῃται παῖδα καὶ τοῦτον υἰοποιήσῃται, μετὰ θάνατον τεταρτολο[γεῖτ]αι.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WESTERMANN, »Sklaverei», RE Suppl. VI p. 997, 60: he considers a woman as *κοπριααρέτη* because of her name *Κοπρῆ*. Cf. further BGU V: 1 p. 56, fn. 1.

*Κόπρος*, a demos of Attica.<sup>1</sup> Were it so, one could expect a large number of the names of this type in Attica; actually there are no examples either in KIRCHNER'S *Prosopographia Attica* or in *Inscriptiones Graecae III* (*Inscriptiones Atticae aetatis Romanae*). The most successful explanation of the names is that once given by F. BECHTEL.<sup>2</sup> Bechtel argued that *Κοπρία* and other similar names derived from the common word *κόπρος* »excrement», and belonged to the large group of »uncomplimentary nicknames» (*Spitznamen*) which had become common personal names; the names derived from *κόπρος* revealed lack of *φιλοκαλία* in the bearers, and the uncomplimentary nature of the names was often felt even by those who had received it at birth from the parents and not as a nickname in later life.

The scholars who maintain that the Latin *Stercorius* should be interpreted in a way similar to the Greek names discussed above, implying »an exposed child», do not make it clear whether they think *Stercorius* is a translation. In any case, translations of Greek personal names were uncommon, for Greek names were in most cases taken over unchanged by the Romans. Thus *Copres* and *Coprilla* (a diminutive) are according to *Thes. l. L. Onom. II* p. 588 found in Latin documents also. We may add to these cases recorded by *Thesaurus* a *Copria* found in *ICR I 1571 = DIEHL 2792 B adn* and *Coprion* in *DIEHL 4133 C*. Since translation is unlikely, the only possible explanation for the meaning »an exposed child» would be to ascribe the origin of the name *Stercorius* to similar conditions in exposing children. However, as far as I know, there are no references in Latin literature to exposing children on dunghills. In the passage cited from Plautus (p. 3 above) the girl had been exposed in a lane (*angiportus*); *Tertull. Apol. 9, 17: filios exponitis suscipiendos ab aliqua praetereunte*, implies a street or a public place, and *Digesta 25, 3, 4* declares in explicit terms: *publicis locis misericordiae causa exponit*. The name *Stercorius* accordingly does not seem a proper term for exposed children. Again, it is stated that the exposition of children was very common in Africa.<sup>3</sup> Yet the names derived from *stercus* are not very frequent in *CIL VIII*, which covers the Latin Africa; there is a single instance of *Stercorius*, together with a few other derivations from *stercus*, such as *Stercorosus* and the diminutive *Stercula*. Finally, the same argumenta-

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue des sculptures et inscriptions antiques des musées royaux du cinquanteaire*, Bruxelles 1913, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> »Die einstämmigen männlichen Personennamen des Griechischen die aus Spitznamen hervorgegangen sind», *Göttinger Abhandlungen*, Phil. hist. Klasse, N.F. II: 5, Berlin 1898, p. 76 f.

<sup>3</sup> WESTERMANN, *op. cit.* (p. 49 fn. 2 above) p. 997, 47.



tion as in regard to *Proiectus* and *Copria* to refute the current etymology of the names applies here also. I have not come across any *alumnus* bearing the name *Stercorius*. On the contrary, *Stercorius* is often borne by people having parents and other near relatives. So, out of the pagan examples, CIL III 2117, 2684, 8549, V 914, VI 3549, 17455, 26850, 28512 record one or both parents, 5167 a brother. Because Christian epitaphs are briefer than the pagan ones, fewer of them record the names of the relatives. However, parents are recorded in ICR III 6937 and 9171, and a sister in ICR I 1653 = DIEHL 4024.

We must accordingly give up the idea that *Stercorius* denoted »an exposed child». Still another etymology has been suggested for the name, for J. SCHRIJNEN considers it as »occupational cognomen» (Berufsnamen).<sup>1</sup> We have, however, no evidence to support the view, and it is not easy to see what occupation SCHRIJNEN had in mind. The name is more over quite too common make this etymology likely. The pejorative connotation of *Stercorius* cannot be explained away. *Stercus* and its derivatives had always been terms of abuse in Latin, cf. e.g. Plautus *Mil.* 88: *miles meus erus — gloriosus, impudens, stercorereus, plenus peiuri atque adulteri*; further, Cic. *De orat.* 3, 164: *Nolo »stercus curiae» dici Glauciam*.

*Proiectus* and *Stercorius*, then, must be considered u n c o m p l i m e n t a r y c o g n o m i n a. But are we because of this entitled to think they were »names of humility» assumed by the Christians in joyous resignation in face of the assaults of the pagans? Evidence to be summoned in support of this view is scanty. LE BLANT cites one example from Lactantius to prove that the Greek equivalent of *Stercorius* had been exploited as a name of abuse against the Christians. It is the passage in which *Cyprianus* (St. Cyprian) is told to have been called *Coprianus* by a learned pagan *quasi quod elegans ingenium et melioribus rebus aptum ad aniles fabulas contulisset* (*Div. inst.* 5, 1, 26 f.). But though, in the opinion of the learned pagan, a man who devoted himself to the *aniles fabulae* of Christianity earned the nickname *Coprianus*, the case is too singular and too individual to go as an argument. *Cyprianus* was nicknamed *Coprianus* because that nickname was the nearest at hand and could be coined by changing only one letter in the name of the Carthaginian bishop (*inmutata una littera*, as Lactantius states). Greek names derived from *κόπρος* had been in use in Greek since Homer, the uncomplimentary nature of the names being more or less transparent. Yet though the herald of Eurystheus in *Il.*

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. (p. 46 fn. 2 above), p. 276.

15, 639 bore the name *Κοπρεύς* as a symbol of his contemptible character,<sup>1</sup> he certainly had not earned this name because of his religious doctrines.

To consider *Proiectus* and *Stercorius* and other similar though less common cognomina as »Christian names of humility» is, I think, to misunderstand the whole story of Latin nomenclature. In Latin, no less than in Greek, numerous popular cognomina were uncomplimentary in nature and had probably originated as nicknames. Thus in the republican times several hereditary and other cognomina derived from some bodily defect, as Plutarch remarks in his excursus upon Latin nomenclature in *Marius* 1, 4: *τοῦτο δὲ προσηγορικὸν* (scil. cognomen) *ἐξ ἐπιθέτου πρὸς τὰς φύσεις ἢ τὰς πράξεις ἢ τὰ τοῦ σώματος εἶδη καὶ πᾶσι τὴν τίθεισθαι.*<sup>2</sup> To cite some examples, *Crassus* may be paraphrased as »Fatty»; several cognomina had been derived with the suffix *-o* from the names of single parts of the body, implying abnormal largeness, e.g. *Barbo*, *Fronto*, *Naso*. *Balbus* again refers to a defect of speech. Defects of intellect could also be recorded in cognomina, a well-known example being *Brutus*; cf. Livy 1, 56, 8: *Ergo ex industria factus ad imitationem stultitiae*, — — *Bruti quoque haud abnuit cognomen*. Neither was *Barbarus* any compliment. I have given only a few examples out of a large group. *Proiectus* and *Stercorius* and the other similar names mentioned p. 45 do not deviate from this old pattern. The names may have originated as individual nicknames, but soon catching the popular imagination they became common cognomina transmitted from parents to children.

But if *Proiectus* and *Stercorius* and other similar names cannot be considered as »Christian names of humility», how do we account for the fact that they are much less frequent or not found at all in the pagan inscriptions? The solution of the problem may be found in the formation of the names. With the exception of *Importunus* and *Proiectus*, all the other names listed p. 46 had been formed with the suffix *-osus* or with the suffix *-ius*. Now these suffixes did not come in use in the coining of new cognomina until the beginning of the third century A.D., and cognomina ending in *-osus* and *-ius* had not become really frequent until the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>3</sup> The number of the new cognomina derived with these suffixes was very great, and it was no wonder that new uncomplimentary cognomina should also

<sup>1</sup> This example is from PERDRIZET, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. HUG, »Spitznamen», RE IIIA p. 1827, 47.

<sup>3</sup> I hope to be able to discuss the problem of the cognomina in *-osus* and *-ius* in more detail in my work upon the nomenclature in the early Christian inscriptions of Rome and Carthage.

have been coined. So the frequency of the names listed on p. 46 in Christian inscriptions was simply due to the fact that they were late coinages. Some of the names, such as *Stercorius*, came in use during the third century, and were accordingly found in pagan material also, whereas others, such as *Exitiosus*, came in use so late that they were found only in Christian documents. *Impor-tunus* and *Proiectus*, on the other hand, were no new coinages (both derive from adjectives), but old ways of forming cognomina had naturally not died out.