

WHAT'S IN A NAME? A SURVEY OF ROMAN ONOMASTIC PRACTICE FROM c. 700 B.C. to A.D. 700*

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INTRODUCTION

Perusal of over a thousand years of the *fasti* of the Romans' eponymous magistracy is sufficient to demonstrate that Roman onomastic practice did not stand still. Why, then, is there a tendency to see the system of three names (*tria nomina*, i.e. praenomen, nomen gentilicium, and cognomen) as the perfection and culmination of the Roman naming system rather than as a transitory stage in an evolutionary process? The simple answer is probably that usage of the *tria nomina* happens to be typical of the best documented class in one of the best documented, and certainly most studied, eras of Roman history — the late Republic and early Empire. This perspective tends to pervade discussion of post-classical developments,¹ the basic outline of which is clear from a glancing comparison of the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, which catalogues eminent persons of the first to third centuries A.D., with the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, covering the fourth to seventh. The difference in their very organizational structure betrays the change since, while the entries in *PIR* are classified alphabetically by nomen, those of *PLRE* are arranged by last name, usually cognomen. The major problem requiring explanation is why the nomen gentilicium, the central element of the classical *tria nomina*, should have been displaced by the cognomen as the one most consistently attested element.

This change has typically been seen as a process of decay of the archetype represented by the *tria nomina*. There has been no shortage of explanations proposed for this transformation. The use of a plurality of names, reversal of the traditional order, Greek or 'oriental' influences, the advent of Christianity, the prevalence of imperial *nomina*, a weakening of legal control, and even the late imperial use of colourful soubriquets (*signa*) have all been cited as causes at one time or another.² Such a wide variety of theories reflects the generally specialized nature of onomastic studies.³ Certainly the truth lies in social and political rather than merely linguistic factors. In order to place later developments in their proper context, I will, in the first section of the paper, briefly review the processes by which the *tria nomina* of the classical period were initially produced.

I. FROM DUO TO TRIA NOMINA

The Praenomen and Nomen

The Romans themselves were conscious that three names had not always been the norm. According to the grammarian Titius Probus, Varro reasoned that simple names had at one

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¹ A refreshing, but little-heeded, exception was J. Morris, 'Changing fashions in Roman nomenclature in the early Empire', *LF* 86 (1963), 34–46.

² The classic account is E. Fraenkel, 'Namenwesen', *RE* 16 (1935), columns 1648–70, in which post-classical developments are discussed, under the emotive title 'Die allmähliche Zerrüttung des alten römischen Namenssystems' (columns 1662–4). Greek influence is cited by H. Solin, 'Die innere Chronologie des römischen Cog-

nomens', in N. Duval (ed.), *Actes du colloque internationale du CNRS no. 564 sur l'onomastique latine, Paris 13–15 octobre 1976* (1977) (hereafter *Onom.Lat.*), 429; Christianity by A. P. Kazhdan, 'Names, Personal', *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991) (hereafter *ODB*), 1435; imperial *nomina* and weakening legal control by I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies in the Early Christian Inscriptions of Rome and Carthage* (1963) (hereafter *Onomastic Studies*), 16–18; a combination by T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554–800* (1984), 20.

³ e.g. the papers of the international congress *Onomastique latine* (Paris, 1977) were dominated by discussion of epigraphic sources, taking little account of the important work recently done on Late Antique papyri.

time existed, since Romulus, Remus, and Faustulus possessed no other names.⁴ Indeed, from at least the seventh century B.C., Latin shared both with most other Italic languages and Etruscan a naming system in which every man, and in theory at least every woman, possessed two names. Priscian proposed that this practice arose 'because at the time when the Romans admitted the Sabines to the state they placed their own names in front of theirs and the Sabines vice-versa to confirm their union.' He does add in qualification that the development might have resulted from a different cause.⁵ This binominal system, of which the origins still remain obscure, comprised a variable individual and an invariable heritable element. The singular importance of the heritable element is indicated by the fact that it was known by the Latin grammarians simply as *the* name, the *nomen*, while the individual name was defined in relation to it as the *praenomen*. This binominality was in itself a relatively unparalleled situation in the ancient world. The majority of other Indo-European languages, with no concept of a fixed heritable family name, normally utilized a single personal name alone.⁶

In Italy the Indo-European single personal name survived as the relatively insignificant praenomen. Indeed, in contrast to the compounds favoured by the Greeks and others (e.g. Ἀριστο-τέλης, Βερε-νίκη, Casi-mir, Hilde-gard, Blod-wen, etc.), they are noticeably simple. In etymology praenomina appear to be a mixture of abbreviated versions of such honorific compounds and simple descriptive names.⁷ Also in stark contrast to Greek practice the Romans used a very small selection of personal names and the weight of convention seems to have strongly discouraged indulging in new coinages. Ninety-nine per cent of Romans of the regal and republican period shared one of only seventeen praenomina.⁸ Women were deprived even of this limited distinction; already by 350 B.C. the feminine praenomen appears only vestigially, if at all. The subjugation of the praenomen to the gentilicium as an individual's most significant name is eloquently demonstrated by the Romans' own habit of reducing them to a set of standard abbreviations.⁹ Indeed it is indicative of the number that fell into disuse that a number of archaic praenomina are scarcely commemorated save in nomina (e.g. Septimus in Septimius, Octavus in Octavius). In addition, there was a strong tendency for the first-born male child to be given the same name as the father, further limiting individual choice.¹⁰ Even the choice of praenomina for subsequent sons appears, in some families at least, to have been subject to an order of precedence.¹¹ Such a restricted canon of personal names was sufficient only because of the consistent use of an individual's associated nomen.

In the dialect of Latium this was restricted in grammatical termination to the adjectival suffix *-ius* (fem. *-ia*)¹² and, despite a wide variety of etymologies, its onomastic purpose was consistent — to denote patrilineal ancestry.¹³ All offspring, generation after generation,

⁴ C. Titius Probus, *De praenominibus* (preserved with Valerius Maximus in Julius Paris' epitome) 4.1: 'Varro simplicia in Italia fuisse nomina ait existimationisque suae argumentum refert, quod Romulus et Remus et Faustulus neque praenomen ullum neque cognomen habuerint.'

⁵ Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae* 2.23 (H. Keil, *Gramm.Lat.* 2.57, ll. 13–17): 'Praenomen est quod praenonituri nomini vel differentiae causa vel quod tempore, quo Sabinos Romani asciverunt civitati, ad confirmandam coniunctionem nomina illorum suis praeponebat nominibus et invicem Sabini Romanorum. Et ex illo consuetudo tenuit, ut nemo Romanus sit absque praenomine.' Cf. Probus, *De praenominibus* 2: 'Romanus autem est ab Albanis et Sabinis multiplicandorum nominum consuetudinem traxisse, quoniam ab illis orti sunt.'

⁶ On the ancient Greek naming system see the extensive discussion of E. Fraenkel, *RE* 16, columns 1611–48. The usage of the patronymic in *-ides/-ades* in a fossilized form among the Athenian aristocracy to denote members of a γένος — a group of families claiming descent from a single heroic or divine ancestor whom they worshipped in a collective ceremony (e.g. the Εὐμολπίδαι) — is highly atypical.

⁷ e.g. Lucius, Publius, and Servius are probably abbreviations of compound elements (cf. Λουσίας, Νικίας), while Gnaeus and Spurius are clearly examples of the descriptive, 'Schimpfnamen', type (cf. Σίμων, Δίδυμος). On their etymologies see G. D. Chase, 'The origin of Roman praenomina', *HSCP* 8 (1897), 153–8 and 181.

⁸ Of a total fifty six known from the historians and the inscriptions of *CIL* 1. According to Probus, *De praenominibus* 3.1, Varro considered that there were only about thirty praenomina. G. D. Chase, *HSCP* 8 (1897), 135, counts sixty four, but I have excluded those cognomina latterly used as praenomina (see below p. 131).

⁹ I list here, with their ancient abbreviations, the seventeen praenomina in question: A. [Aulus]; Ap(p). [Appius]; C. [Gaius]; Cn. [Gnaeus]; D. [Decimus]; L. [Lucius]; M'. [Manius]; M. [Marcus]; N. [Numerius]; P. [Publius]; Q. [Quintus]; Ser. [Servius]; Sex. [Sextus]; Sp. [Spurius]; T. [Titus]; Ti(b). [Tiberius]; V. [Vibius].

¹⁰ O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987), 215–25, notes some exceptions.

¹¹ cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), Genealogical Table 1. The Metelli.

¹² Occasionally in lengthened form as *-cius/-aeus*; *-a/-as* and *-o* and *-anus/-i* genus forms belong to Etruria and Transappennine Italy respectively. See further W. Schulze, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen* (revised edn, 1991).

¹³ H. Rix, 'Zum Ursprung des römisch-mittelaltlich Gentilnamensystem', *ANRW* 1. 2, 714–58; J. Morris, *LF* 86 (1963), 35: etymologies include reference to both animal (e.g. Porcius) and vegetable (e.g. Iulius), hair colour (e.g. Flavius), topographical provenance (e.g. Tarquinius) as well as fossilized patronymics akin to the *-ides* form in Greek (e.g. Marcius).

inherited their father's nomen unaltered. Consequently they were retained by daughters at marriage rather than being replaced by the husband's. The emphasis on the paternal line suggests the practice's origin may be associated with the institution of *patria potestas*. Since patrilineal ancestry defined the membership of a Latin clan (*gens*), the nomen was occasionally qualified as the 'gentilicium'. However, because it is not plausible that the progenitors of, for example, all the families of Marcii, will have been one and the same Marcus, all persons who shared the same nomen were not necessarily related and consequently did not comprise a single gens. Nonetheless, in their eagerness to antedate their nobility, families of recent prominence frequently seized upon identity of gentilicium as a method of forging connections with illustrious figures from earlier history.¹⁴ To noble families the importance of perpetuating the nomen far outstripped the continuation of the blood-line. Hence recourse was often made to adoption, under which the adopted son took on the names of his adoptive father, just as if a natural son; including adjusting his patronym and voting tribe. Nonetheless, while epigraphic and literary evidence naturally favours the aristocracy, the nomen gentilicium appears to have been adopted by all Italians of whatever socio-economic class.¹⁵ A study of the onomastics of the Latins' neighbours, the Etruscans, whose literacy appears to antedate the Romans', suggests that two names have superseded one as the norm from c. 650 B.C. By this time there is evidence that Latium too had adopted the gentilicium, which suggests a development general within the 'Tyrrhenian cultural koiné' of the seventh century.¹⁶

A peculiarity of this binominal system was that, in contrast to the single personal name system, an individual's diacritic (i.e. a person's individuating name) and most significant name were not one and the same. For, although the personal praenomen could be used as the single diacritic name within the household, the range of praenomina was so small that in any wider context it was inadequate as a diacritic. Only in cases where the praenomen is so distinctive that no confusion could arise was it employed alone.¹⁷ Thus, although the diacritic function was performed by the praenomen, outside the family it was the custom to address individuals by praenomen and nomen together; if one name were to be used, it would be the nomen not the praenomen. Unsurprisingly, these unfamiliar conventions of address were not fully understood by the Greeks in their early encounters with Romans. Consequently they had a tendency to refer to them, with what might seem over-familiarity from a Roman, by praenomen alone. For instance, T. Quinctius Flaminius (cos. 198), who earned popular renown for his espousal of freedom for Greek cities, was remembered as Titus.¹⁸ Even as late as the early first century the Aphrodisians referred to a proconsul as simply Quintus.¹⁹ Since women normally retained the paternal gentilicium, outside the family context these alone frequently sufficed to distinguish them; if not, their father's or husband's name in the genitive might be appended. Hence the early demise of the feminine praenomen. Within the family a system of naming successive daughters Secunda, Tertia, Quarta, etc. or Maior and Minor appears to have arisen.²⁰ For Roman men, in official contexts where greater definition was required, the habit was to append the patronym (sometimes also the name of the grandfather and even great-grandfather, but never the metronym as in Etruscan practice); for example, M. Antonius M(arci) f(ilius).

¹⁴ A phenomenon mocked by Cicero, *Brutus* 62; *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.38.

¹⁵ A. D. Momigliano, 'The Origins of Rome', *CAH* 2 7.2, saw the growth of the binominal system as concurrent with the urbanization of archaic Central Italy.

¹⁶ J. Heurgon, 'Onomastique étrusque: la dénomination gentilice', *Onom.Lat.*, 27-31; 'Vetusia' (= ? Veturia) is on a silver bowl from the Bernadini tomb, Praeneste, of c. 700/650 B.C., cited by T. J. Cornell, 'The tyranny of the evidence: a discussion of the possible uses of literacy in Etruria and Latium in the archaic age', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World* (1991), 18-21.

¹⁷ Such is Livy's usage; e.g. Appius Claudius is called simply Appius (II.24-27); and Kaeso Quinctius simply Kaeso (III.11-15).

¹⁸ Polybius, xviii *passim* (except at xviii.46.5 where, quoting a Roman declaration, he uses the correct Roman form 'T. Quin<c>tius'); indeed, following Polybius' usage, Plutarch's life of Flaminius is the only one to be entitled by praenomen alone.

¹⁹ Q. Oppius; see J. M. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (1982), 12, doc. 2b, l. 13.

²⁰ G. D. Chase, *HSCP* 8 (1897), 159-74.

The Cognomen

It was only with the advent of the cognomen that the familiar tria nomina came into existence. The etymologies of the earliest genuinely attested cognomina, as well as that of the term itself, suggest nicknames referring to individual qualities (e.g. of birth or physical appearance). Many are nouns of obscure slang vocabulary with the -a and -o terminations or are pejorative nouns with the -io ending, while others are straightforward adjectives or occupational nouns.²¹ While cognomina might arise as unflattering references to prominent individuals, they were eagerly retained by descendants, taking advantage of their distinctiveness, to denote a particular domus (family) amongst the broader gens; e.g. the Cornelia Scipiones and Caecilia Metelli. The evidence suggests that they were pioneered by the élite, perhaps keen to differentiate a noble family ancestry.²² Some patrician families bear cognomina as early as the later fifth century but they were slow to gain recognition in official documents; they first appear in the late second century but are not common until the Sullan period.²³ The first examples of cognomina amongst the *plebs ingenua* are not until c. 125 B.C. and they were not to be common for over a century.²⁴ As with the praenomen, women are not generally found bearing the 'patronymic' cognomen. The singular fame of a particular cognomen might allow it to stand for the associated gentilicium in binominal address; e.g. Q. Metellus (not Q. Caecilius) or Cn. Piso (not Cn. Calpurnius). This was, naturally, a characteristic of the nobility and Cicero restricts his use of this form of address to such men. Hence the practice was imitated by those eager to establish themselves.²⁵ Given their clumsiness for conversational purposes, only in highly formal speech would the full three names be used.

The tria nomina, thus developed, formed a system subject to rigid convention. The new-born could only be called by those names sanctioned by family tradition. This is symptomatic of a society that held the *mos maiorum* in such great reverence.²⁶ Take, for instance, the usage of the Tullii Cicerones. M. Tullius Cicero the orator was just one in a line of four identically named individuals known over the four generations from his grandfather to his son. It is only the variation in praenomina which distinguishes him from his brother Quintus (Tullius Cicero) or his cousin Lucius (Tullius Cicero). Neither his grandmother Gratidia, mother Helvia, nor wife Terentia had any detectable onomastic impact on their offspring; the patrilineal ancestry is exclusively commemorated. According to convention, as the elder son Cicero inherited his father's praenomen along with the grouping of gentilicium and cognomen unaltered. The only possibility of innovation comes with extra cognomina, distinguished by the grammarians as *agnomina*, acquired by an individual during his lifetime on account of some quality or exploit. Thus P. Cornelius Scipio earned the agnomen Africanus for his victories in the Second Punic War.²⁷ Agnomina were also employed by aristocratic adoptees to commemorate their original parentage — the only opportunity that existed for celebrating more than a simple unilateral pedigree. This was achieved by appending an adjectival form of the original gentilicium as, famously, when the younger son of L. Aemilius

²¹ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (1965), 120–2; e.g. Ahala, Piso, Cicero, Scipio. For an example of the obscurity of their meanings, even to Romans sometimes, see the discussion of the various etymologies proposed for Galba in Suetonius, *Galba* 3.

²² E. Badian, 'The clever and the wise: two Roman cognomina in context,' in N. Horsfall (ed.), *Vir Bonus Discendi Peritus* (1988), 8f. L. Cornelius Cn.f. Scipio (cos. 298), born c. 340 B.C., is the first case verifiable from a non-literary source according to I. Kajanto, 'On the chronology of the cognomen in the Republican period', *Onom.Lat.*, 63; unless P. Cornelius P. f. Scapula of *AE* 1967.19 may be identified with, or related to, the *magister equitum* of 362 or consul of 328 (H. Solin, 'Analecta epigraphica', *Arctos* n.s. 6 (1969), 110ff.; cf. T. R. S. Broughton, *MRR* III (1986), 70).

²³ A. Mau, 'Cognomen', *RE* 4 (1900), column 225.

²⁴ I. Kajanto, *Onom.Lat.*, 67.

²⁵ J. N. Adams, 'Conventions of naming in Cicero', *CQ*

n.s. 28 (1978), 151–4; R. Syme, 'Imperator Caesar: a study in nomenclature', *Historia* 7 (1958), 185f. = *Roman Papers* 1 (1979), No. 29, 374ff. On the retention of such 'gentilicial' cognomina by adoptees, see O. Salomies, *Adoptive and Polynonymous Nomenclature in the Roman Empire* (1992) (hereafter *APNom*), 83.

²⁶ This is less plausibly attributed to strict state control by C. Nicolet, 'L'onomastique des groupes dirigeants sous la République', *Onom.Lat.*, 46ff.

²⁷ Although it has been argued (e.g. B. Doer, *Die römische Namengebung* (1937), 46–52, 68–71) that such cognomina *ex virtute* were the result of a formal grant by the Senate, J. Linderski, 'The surname of M. Antonius Creticus and the cognomina *ex victis gentibus*', *ZPE* 80 (1990), 159ff., demonstrates that it is better to understand them as being assumed unofficially; it was an added benefit if the Senate actually granted a corresponding triumph. Thus M. Antonius managed to snatch his 'Creticus' from the jaws of defeat (*ibid.*, 163f.).

Paullus (cos. II 168 B.C.) was adopted by P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus to become P. Cornelius P.f. Scipio Aemilianus.²⁸

Such was the naming system which the Latin grammarians, from Varro in the first century B.C. to Priscian in the sixth A.D., had in mind when defining the technical vocabulary of nomenclature (i.e. praenomen, nomen, cognomen and agnomen).²⁹ Driven by antiquarian interest and a desire to establish rules they gave the false impression that this was an unaltered archetype, thus encouraging modern commentators to look upon this as the apogee of the Roman naming system and to treat all later developments as decay. However the reality, even in Varro's day, was somewhat different.

II. DIACRITIC SHIFT

By the later second century B.C. the aristocrats' agnomen was no longer the only type of cognomen which regularly acted as an individual signifier. It had become the practice for non-Italian enfranchised (chiefly Greek freedmen) to retain their single name as their cognomen and at the same time use it as their diacritic. Like the adopted child from his adoptive father, the enfranchised peregrine and freedman generally received the praenomen and nomen of their patron.³⁰ For example, both Cicero's client Cratippus and his freedman Tiro, took Marcus Tullius, but obviously had no right to the patronymic cognomen Cicero. Instead, naturally reluctant to lose their original identity, they took the opportunity to retain their personal names as cognomina (i.e. M. Tullius Cratippus and M. Tullius Tiro). After all, especially to Tiro in Rome, Marcus was redundant as an individual signifier since he would share it in common with all Cicero's other freedmen. Hence their cognomina functioned as both individual signifier and diacritic in all contexts. This represented a considerable improvement in clarity on traditional Roman usage. It can be imagined that the impact of the usage of the swelling freed population on the *plebs ingenua* of Rome in the second and first centuries B.C. was significant. Furthermore, I suggest, the freedom of this diacritic cognomen from the conventions that attached to the selection of traditional praenomina and cognomina made its adoption a highly attractive strategy for those parents wishing to endow their child's name with a greater degree of individuality. Most notably, it also helped to redress the nomenclative imbalance between the sexes, since women might bear feminine versions of the new cognomina. Thus, despite the probable origin of the fashion, from about 100 B.C. native Romans began to give their children diacritic cognomina at birth. Native Romans used the new cognomen to indulge in new coinages, often formed, like an adoptee's cognomen, from a gentilicium. The one convention that can be clearly observed is that natives scrupulously avoided the -ius suffix proper to the nomen, save where there was not much chance of confusion between an adjective and a gentilicium (e.g. Tertius).

The kin of the unfortunate Varus (cos. 13 B.C.) illustrate the naming strategies typical of native Romans in this period of diacritic shift (see the simplified stemma below).³¹ Passing over a sister who married into the Cornelia Dolabellae, Varus had two sisters who married into families who bore traditional tria and duo nomina respectively: the Nonii Asprenates and the Appuleii. Up until this generation neither family exhibits any deviation from the *mos*

²⁸ However this was not the only measure used to reflect adoption during the Republic; on which see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Two Studies in Roman Nomenclature* (1976), 83-7.

²⁹ e.g. the fourth-century Diomedes, *Ars grammatica* 1 (H. Keil, *Gramm.Lat.* 1.321, ll. 3-11): 'Proprium nomen quattuor sunt species, praenomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen. Praenomen est quod nominibus gentilicis praenotitur, ut Marcus, Publius. Nomen proprium est gentilicium, id est quod originem familiae vel gentis declarat, ut Porcius, Cornelius. Cognomen est quod unius cuiusque proprium est et nominibus gentilicis subiugitur, ut Cato, Scipio. Ordinantur enim sic, Marcus Porcius Cato, Publius Cornelius Scipio. Agnomen quoque est quod extrinsecus cognominibus adici solet ex aliqua ratione vel virtute quaesitum, ut est Africanus,

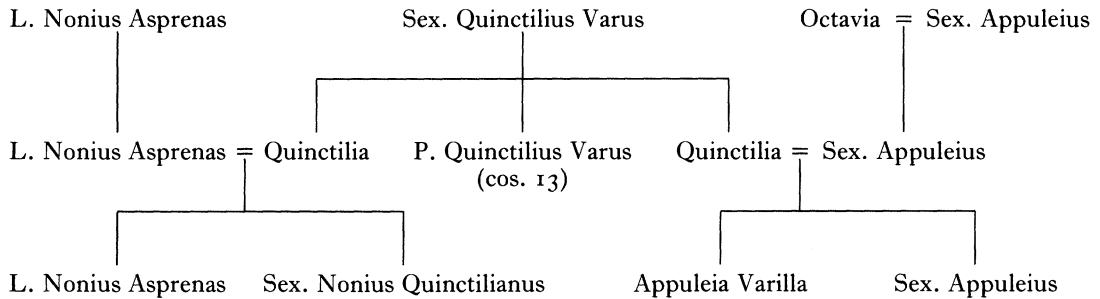
Numantinus et similia.' And Priscian, *Inst. Gramm.* 2.22 (ibid., 2.57, ll. 12-13): 'Nam propria habent species separatim quattuor: praenomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen.'

³⁰ Though for exceptions in both cases see O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987), 233-8. In contrast while still servile the single name was placed in the position of praenomen to the master's gentilicium; e.g. Apollonius Laelius Q(uinti) s(ervus), Prepon Alleius M(arci) s(ervus) of *ILLRP* 1².194 = *ILS* 9236 Delos, who contrast with the freedman M. Granius M(arci) l(ibertus) Heras from the same stone.

³¹ The following discussion is based on that of R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (1986), 313-18 and Genealogical Table 26.

maiorum. However in the next, born in the thirties and twenties B.C., individuating cognomina appeared in addition to the continued customary differentiation by praenomina. In contrast with the unilateral nature of the classical system, the decision to vary cognomina allowed the commemoration of matrilineal ancestry (i.e., Nonius Quintilianus and Appuleia Varilla). In the case of Asprenas junior, his cognomen had now a double force as patronymic and individual signifier. On the other hand, that it ceased to be borne by siblings also explains the poor survival rate of venerable patronymic cognomina. When the contents of *CIL* 1², comprising inscriptions largely of the late Republican period, are compared with *ICVR*, covering the third to sixth centuries A.D., of the 1,945 different cognomina only 196 (i.e. 10 per cent) are common to both.³² In turn the continued shunning of any cognomen in the male line of the Appuleii is typical of the practice of the *plebs ingenua*, amongst whom the new cognomen did not achieve dominance until the Flavian period.

STEMMA OF THE QUINCTILII



The personal nature of the new individual cognomina meant that they admirably fulfilled the diacritic function. In the face of the proliferation of such cognomina, the fewer praenomina were fighting a losing battle for their position as prime individual signifier. The cognomen inexorably gained the upper hand. The usage of Cicero is indicative of the flux of the mid-first-century situation. Some he addresses by praenomen and nomen (or 'gentilicial' cognomen for nobles), others by nomen and cognomen.³³ I would argue that the formula was decided by whichever (praenomen or cognomen) was the chief diacritic in each case. While the diacritic shift may be detected implicit in the usage of Latin authors, it appears that the only explicit intimation in the surviving sources that this may be taking, or have taken, place comes from a Greek, Plutarch. Although a Roman citizen, he was not born so and thus viewed Roman naming practices as an outsider. Writing *c.* A.D. 100, he considers C. Marius and other republican characters for whom he can find no τρίτον ὄνομα (i.e. cognomen) curious anomalies. He criticizes Posidonius, who had written over a century earlier, for considering the praenomen (τὸ πρῶτον) as a Roman's principal name, since this would rob women of any personal name. Posidonius already, it seems, had felt compelled to refute those who were claiming that the cognomen was a Roman's principal name.³⁴ It is to the latter system, of the final diacritic, rather than the classical patronymic, cognomen, that Plutarch's contemporary, Juvenal, made reference in his quip '... tamquam habeas tria nomina' (*Sat.* 5.127), likening possession of the tria nomina to free status. The same point is made by another contemporary, Quintilian; 'Nemo habet nisi liber praenomen, nomen, cognomen' (*Institutio Oratoriae* VII.8.27).³⁵ In both examples the phraseology simply contrasts possession of the tria nomina with servile status rather than as defining Roman citizenship. I think this reflects the fact that not only were they also borne by Latin citizens (such as slaves enfranchised under the Lex

³² Figures from H. Solin, *Onom.Lat.*, 103; more strikingly still, if one subtracts from these 196 those which are Greek (which in *CIL* 1² more often belonged to freedmen rather than natives), only 66 Latin cognomina remain.

³³ As analysed by J. N. Adams, *CQ* n.s. 28 (1978), 145ff.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Marius* 1.

³⁵ In the light of Quintilian's words, A. Mócsy's attempt (in discussion of I. Kajanto's, 'The emergence of the late single name system', *Onom.Lat.*, 429) to identify Juvenal's tria nomina as praenomen, nomen, and patronym or tribe is highly implausible.

Iunia) but might frequently be imitated by Latinized *peregrini*, perhaps with an eye to usurping citizen privileges.³⁶

Where it had assumed the diacritic function the cognomen usurped the role in intimate address played by the praenomen in the classical system. Address by two names remained the formal public usage, but this was now almost universally by nomen and cognomen together. This is the typical usage of Tacitus, writing in the early second century. The reversal of the cognomen and nomen, which is particularly common in his works and which has been cited as a perversion of the classical system, should be seen as little more than a stylistic device, which did not effect name-giving practice. Indeed the inertia of tradition meant that the diacritic cognomen was never accepted as a central part of a Roman's official nomenclature. Thus filiation persisted in being expressed in terms of the father's praenomen, even if his diacritic had been his cognomen, and when a citizen gave his full name the cognomen was normally condemned to be separated from the other nomina by the indication of filiation and voting tribe; as typically, M. Tullius M.f. Cor(nelia tribu) Cratippus, a descendant of Cicero's client.³⁷

The Eclipse of the Praenomen

By the end of the first century B.C. the cognomen was overtaking the praenomen as the individual signifier of the majority. Nevertheless, it was as yet far from universal and some more traditional families fought a rearguard action against its dominance. Perhaps deliberately to emphasize their nobility, certain members of the aristocracy attempted to inject renewed life into the praenomen by reviving supposedly archaic ones (e.g. Faustus Cornelius Sulla, Iullus Antonius) or, most tellingly, by shoe-horning established cognomina into first position (e.g. Paullus Fabius Maximus, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus). While paving the way for Augustus' notorious assumption of Imperator as a praenomen,³⁸ this curious phenomenon had no impact on popular practice, being restricted to a small circle amongst the aristocracy, and proved to be an onomastic cul-de-sac.³⁹

The patchiness of the record of the praenomina of even eminent individuals in the imperial period reflects their growing inconsequentiality, being often neglected by contemporaries. A further consequence of the victory of the cognomen as the single diacritic name was that, in those families where this had happened, the neglected praenomen tended to become fossilized. No longer was it simply the first-born son who received the father's praenomen, now all did. Naturally this development occurred in different families at different times, but the phenomenon can certainly be traced back well into the first century A.D. This was not simply a vulgarism of freedmen, but appears even in aristocratic circles. For instance, the praenomen Titus became fossilized in the family of the emperor Vespasian (born A.D. 9) with his own generation at the latest, seeing that he shared it in common with his elder brother Sabinus (cos. suff. 47).⁴⁰ The diacritic shift gathered momentum from c. 50 B.C. and was complete by A.D. 100, though the praenomen still remained in use in a generally fossilized form.⁴¹ Nevertheless the practice of the emperor Vespasian's family demonstrates that the fossilization of the praenomen did not mean that it could never act as the diacritic. For, his elder son, the emperor Titus, who was also called T. Flavius Vespasianus, was commonly known by his praenomen to distinguish him from his homonymous father. On the other hand the younger brother, and later emperor, was known by his cognomen, Domitianus.

³⁶ On Junian Latins see P. R. C. Weaver, 'Where have all the Junian Latins gone? Nomenclature and status in the early Empire', *Chiron* 20 (1990), 275-305.

³⁷ *CIL* III.399 Pergamum, c. A.D. 40. The cognomen's final position is precisely dictated by the regulations of the *lex repetundarum*, *FIRA* I², no. 7, l. 14 and *Tabula Heracleensis*, *FIRA* I², no. 18, l. 146.

³⁸ On which see R. Syme, *Roman Papers* I, 365-77.

³⁹ Instances are listed by O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987), 313-18. The latest datable example is *PIR*² E 82, *Galeo* Tettienus Severus M. Eppuleius Proculus L.f. Claud(ia) Ti. Caepio Hispo, suffect consul in A.D. 102 or 104.

⁴⁰ See the stemma of the T. Flavii, *PIR*² III, 183.

⁴¹ O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987), 378-89. An effect of spurious variation of praenomina was sometimes created by the inheritance of a fossilized praenomen through the maternal instead of the paternal line; which accounts for the examples of unexpected variation cited by Salomies, 387f., such as the curious instance of three or more sons sharing only two praenomina: C. Cassius Crispus, L. Cassius Secundus and C. Cassius Atilianus (*CIL* v.5991 Milan).

Once the praenomen became fossilized it may be thought of as part of an invariable unit with the nomen. Being less individuating and less of a consciously given name, its onomastic purpose was so reduced that besides certain official contexts it fell out of common parlance. Thus, although still quoted in citizens' birth certificates as late as the mid-third century,⁴² the praenomen was already in rapid decline from about the middle of the second century A.D. and became a rarity even in the epigraphy of the senatorial aristocracy from c. 300. It is no surprise that the last man recorded sporting a praenomen should come from that traditional milieu, namely Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus (cos. 485), a descendant of the writer.⁴³

While the mass enfranchisement of non-Italians may be singled out as the cause of the diacritic shift and demise of the praenomen, it is not the explanation for the turn taken by the Roman naming system in the third century. *Peregrini* might introduce non-Latin sounding gentilicia, but in practice the system was noticeably resistant to the introduction of non-Italian elements. Those peregrines (mostly westerners) whose forebears had been sufficiently influenced by Roman culture to adopt Latin names (usually cognomina) as their single names were able to form genuinely Roman-sounding nomina from their father's names by the addition of the -ius suffix. In this way such nomina as Latinius, Cassianus and Constantinius arose. The number of nomina formed from purely barbarian names is extremely small and in no way correlates to the expansion of citizenship. Again, when onomastics of peregrine families came under Roman influence without their full cultural Romanization, the nomina and praenomina of famous Romans, such as Pompeius, Antonius, Iulius, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Titus, etc. might be found used, in indifference to their Roman usage, as single names and thus as most untraditional cognomina by their enfranchised descendants.⁴⁴

Despite such novelties the gentilicium preserved its central importance undiminished and its onomastic purpose unaltered within what had, by the end of the first century A.D., in effect returned to being a binominal system. In contrast to the early Roman system it was based on nomen and cognomen rather than praenomen and nomen. This is not immediately apparent because the general reverence for the *mos maiorum* dictated retention of the praenomen long after it had ceased to serve a useful onomastic purpose. Perhaps reflecting an improvement in women's social recognition, the new system was shared by both men and women and also permitted the celebration of matrilineal ancestry. Moreover, the system was common to all citizens of whatever origin. Passing on the immutable nomen, with, more often than not, the fossilized praenomen, new citizens were indistinguishable in their onomastic practice from natives. The practice of Constantinius Aequalis and Pacatia Servanda is typical of the later first or second century.⁴⁵ The couple had three sons. They named the eldest Constantinius Servatus, his cognomen a development of his mother's. The second they named Constantinius Aequalis after his father and the third Constantinius Constans. Constans' cognomen is a pun on the gentilicium of a kind scarcely possible under the restrictive praenominal system and this example illustrates how the catalogue of cognomina was continually enlarged by new coinages within Latin itself rather than simply by foreign borrowings.

III. ÉLITE NAMING PRACTICE IN THE HIGH EMPIRE

What then of the multiplication of names that has been cited as detrimental to the classical system? An extraordinary plurality of names certainly was a phenomenon of the new aristocracy of the imperial period. Although commonly revealed by epigraphy, the phenomenon aroused little comment in contemporary writers, let alone grammarians. In contrast to the simple multiple cognomina of the republican aristocracy the presence of two or more gentilicia, after which it has been termed 'binary nomenclature', make this polyonymy appear highly untraditional. Take, for example, the suffect consul of A.D. 118/9 (cos. 1139), C.

⁴² e.g. *P.Oxy.* 2565, A.D. 224; *AE* 1948.121, A.D. 240.

⁴³ O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (1987), 41 ff.

⁴⁴ For statistics on the use of nomina as cognomina at Rome, see I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 22. The borrowing of famous surnames such as Stanley, Percy, How-

ard, Sydney, and Nelson as popular Christian names presents a modern British parallel.

⁴⁵ *ILS* 7591 Lugdunum. Despite the provenance, Constantinius Aequalis was originally from Germaniceia in Commagene.

Bruttius L.f. Pom(ptina) Praesens L. Fulvius Rusticus, whose name is composed of two standard sets of tria nomina, or the full nomenclature of the younger Pliny, C. Plinius L.f. Ouf(entina) Caecilius Secundus. The fact that Pliny lacks the double prae- and cognomina of Bruttius Praesens (as Pliny addresses him in his letters) is not significant, since the second gentilicium is the diagnostic symptom of binary nomenclature. This polyonymy was generated by a practice new to the imperial age; that is a testator's stipulation that legatees take on his/her name as a condition of accepting an inheritance. The institution has thus acquired the title of 'testamentary adoption'.⁴⁶ Similarly, if not more commonly, the same condition was applied to maternal inheritance, especially if the mother's wealth or noble pedigree considerably enhanced that of the family. The attraction of such a mutually satisfactory practice is obvious; especially so, if the heir were from a family whose advancement was owed to the imperial system and thus anxious to establish independent aristocratic credentials. A paternal line deficient in ancient nobility might be enhanced by commemorating both bi- and multilateral connections (i.e. maternal and testamentary ancestry). Nonetheless, a rare literary reference to the practice does warn that it might on occasion prove a liability. The young Ti. Claudius Nero (the future emperor Tiberius) was compelled to repudiate the name of one M. Gallius, when he later came under the patronage of Augustus, because Gallius had been one of the princeps' political opponents.⁴⁷

The binary nomenclature resulting from maternal inheritance and testamentary adoption is largely indistinguishable without additional biographical information. For instance, despite their similar formulation, the names of Praesens and Pliny are the result of different situations. The former, the natural son of a L. Bruttius, has appended the nomina of his maternal grandfather, L. Fulvius Rusticus, to his paternal nomina.⁴⁸ Pliny on the other hand was born P. Caecilius Secundus, the son of L. Caecilius Cilo and a Plinia, and was adopted in A.D. 79 by the will of his maternal uncle, C. Plinius Secundus. This testamentary adoption achieved its objective admirably since, although originally a Caecilius, the testator's heir has been remembered as a Plinius.⁴⁹

The construction of binary nomenclature exhibits considerable freedom, particularly in instances of maternal inheritance, though names taken after testamentary adoption do tend to take primary position.⁵⁰ Moreover there was no limit to the number of names acquired by such amalgamation of pedigree. The peak of polyonymy is found in the consul of A.D. 169, Q. Pompeius Senecio . . . Sosius Priscus. Composed of no less than thirty-eight separate elements, comprising fourteen different sets of nomina, his full nomenclature stands as testimony to a nexus of blood and social relationships extending back over three generations.⁵¹ Such bloated nomenclature, too unwieldy for normal use, was habitually abbreviated but not always consistently. Thus, although usually known as Q. Sosius Priscus, he is also attested as Q. Sosius Senecio. With the full name owing less to the commemoration of patrilineal descent than to the inheritance of landed wealth and illustrious pedigree, it is no surprise that the patrilineal nomen might not dominate in abbreviation. Indeed Sosius Priscus was a Pompeius by paternal descent.⁵²

⁴⁶ See principally R. Syme, 'Clues to testamentary adoption', in S. Panciera (ed.), *Titulus 4: Atti del colloquio internazionale dell'AIEGL su epigrafia e ordine senatorio*, Roma 14-20 maggio 1981 I (1982 [1984]), 397-410 = *Roman Papers* IV (1988), No. 9, 159-73; idem, 'The paternity of polyonymous consuls', *ZPE* 41 (1985), 191-8 = *Roman Papers* V (1988), No. 37, 639-47; and, more generally, O. Salomies, *APNom*, *passim*.

⁴⁷ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 6.3: 'Post reditum in urbem a M. Gallio senatore testamento adoptatus hereditate adita mox nomina abstinuit, quod Gallius adversarum Augusto partium fuerat'.

⁴⁸ This case was discussed by R. Syme, 'Praesens the friend of Hadrian', in *Studia in Honorem Iro Kajanto* (1985), 274 = *Roman Papers* V, No. 32, 563f. and again most recently by O. Salomies, *APNom*, 36f.

⁴⁹ Th. Mommsen, 'Zur Lebensgeschichte des jüngeren Plinius', *Hermes* 3 (1869), 31-139 = *Gesammelte Schriften* IV. *Historische Schriften* 1, No. 4, 366-468; in particular, 'Plinius Adoption in ihrer rechtlichen Bedeutung', 397-412. Maintenance of his adoptive cognomen would have resulted in the unaesthetic repetition of

Secundus which had already been inherited from his mother. It is for similar aesthetic reasons that the second praenomen is omitted from the middle of his name.

⁵⁰ O. Salomies could find only one exception to the primacy of adoptive nomina, and that from the Greek East (*APNom*, 5, 42 and 83). He reckons that maternal nomenclature tends to be second, though adduces numerous counter examples (*ibid.*, 63-7 and 75-8, cf. 67-9 and 78-80).

⁵¹ *PIR* P 492: Q. Pompeius Senecio Roscius Murena Coelius Sex. Iul(ius) Frontinus Silius Decianus C. Iul(ius) Eurycles Herculaneus L. Vibullius Pius Augustanus Alpinus Bellicius Sollers Iul(ius) Aper Ducenius Proculus Rutilianus Rufinus Silius Valens Valerius Niger Cl(audius) Fuscus Saxa Amyntianus Sosius Priscus (*ILS* 1104); at least six of these sets of names inherited from his father Q. Pompeius ... Sosius Priscus, cos. 149 (*PIR* R 68). J. Morris, *LF* 86 (1963), 42-4 traces the origin of these names to a dozen persons of the Flavio-Trajanic period.

⁵² O. Salomies, *APNom*, 66 and 70f.

The core of the old senatorial aristocracy, having weathered the marginalization of their order in the later third and early fourth century, continued the same polyonymous practices. Indeed the poet Ausonius disdains others for the habit of importing the names of connections rather than of direct ancestors into their nomenclature.⁵³ Thus, in considering the divergent gentilicia of the brothers Vulcaci Rufinus (cos. 347) and Neratius Cerealis (cos. 358), we should not neglect the possibility that one or other had undertaken the *condicio nominis ferendi*.⁵⁴ However, because of a decline in epigraphic material, few are known by any more than two names. Given that there was no compulsion to include the patrilineal nomen in abbreviation, this can leave the impression of a certain nomenclative anarchy. The one notable development is a greater degree of consolidation of polyonymy by grouping the various gentilicia together rather than interspersing them with the cognomina, as in the case of M. Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus (cos. 343). This was abbreviated to Furius Placidus, whereas Memmius was probably his chief patrilineal gentilicium.⁵⁵

Ultimately, despite the unorthodox appearance of this polyonymy, it is not culpable of undermining the importance of the gentilicium. Not only did this fashion have no impact on the general population — a noble pedigree being an aristocratic concern — but moreover the games they played with their polyonymy, particularly in its abbreviation, are founded upon the understanding that the patrilineal gentilicium was the keystone of the naming system.

IV. THE ONOMASTIC IMPACT OF THE *CONSTITUTIO ANTONINIANA*

Given then that neither the controlled enfranchisement of non-Italians under the Principate nor the extravagant fashions of the aristocracy undermined the centrality of the gentilicium to the tria (or, more commonly, duo) nomina, what then did cause the transformation that makes it impossible to compile *PLRE* on the same basis as *PIR*? On the eve of the edict known as the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, by which the emperor Caracalla granted all free subjects Roman citizenship in A.D. 212, the users of the Roman naming system comprised native Italians, their descendants in the provinces, and foreign enfranchisees who had embraced the Roman name with their citizenship. The conditions under which the majority of these non-Italian citizens came by their citizenship entailed exposure at close quarters to members of the Roman ruling classes. Thus they assimilated a Roman's mental, psychological attitude to personal names with their citizenship. In the provinces the tria nomina marked one apart as the possessor of certain privileges, which was motivation enough for the ex-peregrines to hand down their nomina like native Italians. Soldiers could be issued with diplomas to verify their right to bear the tria nomina and the scrutiny of one claim by no less a body than the consilium of the emperor Commodus emphasizes the importance laid on enfranchisement by the authorities.⁵⁶ However the *Constitutio Antoniniana* changed all this. By giving Roman citizenship at one stroke to all free subjects (with the possible exception of *dediticii* — specific groups of defeated barbarians settled inside the Empire) the controlled process of assimilation was swept aside. The most rustic of peasant farmers had become Roman citizens without necessarily intimate or prolonged contact with the Roman naming system. Nevertheless they now assumed the names of their benefactor: M. Aurelius. Indeed Aurelius Zosimus, who had been Zosimus Leonidou before 212, specifically attributes his change of name to what he calls Caracalla's 'sacred gift' (θεῖα δωρεά).⁵⁷ Such people had not had to undergo the change in psychological attitude of the earlier enfranchisee and this showed in the way they employed their new nomen. Their almost ubiquitous omission of the praenomen is not significant, seeing that it was already almost totally redundant amongst those native to the system. More

⁵³ Ausonius, *Opuscula 1.praefatiunculae* 1.9–12: 'Hinc late fusa est cognatio; nomina multis / ex nostra, ut placitum, ducta domo veniant: / derivata aliis, nobis ab stemmate primo / et non cognati, sed genetiva, placent.'

⁵⁴ Ammianus XIV.11.27; cf. *PLRE* I Cerealis 2.

⁵⁵ *PLRE* I Placidus 2, perhaps a descendant of C. Memmius M.f. Qui. Caecilianus Placidus a suffect consul of the mid-third century (*PLRE* I Placidus 3).

⁵⁶ On the purpose of military diplomas see J. C. Mann and M. M. Roxan, 'Discharge certificates of the Roman

army', *Britannia* 19 (1988), 344. The *Tabula Banasitana* records imperial scrutiny of the claim of the chief of the Zegrenses, Aurelius Iulianus, for Roman citizenship for his wife and children; for the text see A. N. Sherwin-White, 'The *Tabula Banasitana* and the *Constitutio Antoniniana*', *JRS* 63 (1973), 86–7.

⁵⁷ *BGU* II.655 (Arsinoite nome, 16 August 215): 'Ἀδελφός Ζώσιμος πρὸ μὲν τῆς θείας (sic) δωρεάς καλούμενος Ζώσιμος Λεωνίδου...'

important, I suggest, is the different way in which 'Old' and 'New' Romans from the same ethnic backgrounds treated their names once enfranchised.⁵⁸

The extent of the impact of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* has been doubted, but a survey of the epigraphic evidence of both East and West reveals that in the East Aurelius is the most common nomen and even in the West it runs a close second to the well-established Iulius.⁵⁹ Its impact is clearly visible in the *laterculi* of praetorians making dedications to the emperor. Of the 802 names extant from *CIL* VI.1058, of July 210, only thirty nine are M. Aurelii (i.e. less than 5 per cent). Of the twenty names of *CIL* VI.2799, of June 227, nineteen (i.e. 95 per cent) are M. Aurelii. According to the formulae of such documents these latter are all equipped with filiation and voting tribe; however all are uniformly 'M.f. Fl(avia tribu)', which invites suspicion of their filiation as fictive and themselves as post-212 enfranchisees since the voting tribe Flavia never existed. Such fictitious voting tribes are widely attested among praetorians recruited from the Danubian provinces in the decades immediately after 212.⁶⁰ In the East, further away from the influence of Latin models, some New Romans on the contrary, while adding the nomen Aurelius before their single given name in the standard manner, retained their native system of finally placed patronym. The contrast is clear in an example from the world of the Graeco-Hamitic peasants of Egypt. In A.D. 229 the farmers Aurelius Iulius Ammoniou, Aurelius Acaeraeus Papontotos, Aurelius Coptreus Saratos, and Aurelius Papontos Corneliou applied for a loan of seed corn.⁶¹ The addition of the nomen has not disturbed their traditional naming formula. On the other hand, M. Lollius Leonides, steward of the crown land on which they wished to sow, is distinguished as one whose citizenship predates 212 not only by his nomen but also by the way in which he uses it.

This distinction between Old and New Romans comes through in the files of the auxiliary *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* stationed at Dura. The papyri include a record of the unit's distribution made in A.D. 219. The scribe has credited all the soldiers with Aurelius for convenience.⁶² The layout strongly suggests that this nomen was written in for aesthetic reasons as a central column around which the postings (on the left) and individual names (on the right) were then inserted, e.g. *P.Dura* 100, col. xxxii, ll. 12-17.

ad Sacr[ahi]mag.	Aurel.	Bassus Tiberini
Becchuf.	Aurel.	Iulius Marinus
	Aurel.	Iulius Marinus alter
	Aurel.	Male(s) Matthana
sig.	Aurel.	Flavius Euclides
	Aurel.	Ie[r]haeus Themarsa

Although all members of the unit now have three names, these are not all of the same construction. There is a dichotomy between those who have Aurel. + nomen + cognomen (e.g. the Iulii Marini, Fl. Euclides) and those who have Aurel. + cognomen + patronym in genitive (e.g. Bassus Tiberini, Males Matthana).⁶³ It seems reasonable to understand this dichotomy as that between those who (whether by Roman or Latin status) possessed the tria nomina previous to the *Constitutio* of seven years before and those that had not. The above

⁵⁸ The only legal difference between Old and New Romans is that there is no evidence that the latter were ever enrolled in voting tribes. This is hardly surprising given the practical difficulty involved for the bureaucracy in digesting such an enormous number simultaneously.

⁵⁹ K. Bourazelis, *Θεῖα Δωρεά. Studies on the Policy of the Severans and the Constitutio Antoniniana* (1989), 120-32; e.g. Aurelius accounts for c. 23 per cent of the nomina attested in the Christian epigraphy of Carthage and Rome, Iulius only c. 5 per cent (I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 16).

⁶⁰ e.g. Aelia, Aurelia (*CIL* VI.2832 and 2833), Aelia, Antonia, Augusta, Flavia, Iulia, Septimia, and Ulpia (*EE* IV.891-5), all in *laterculi praetorianorum* from Rome, and the ex-praetorian '[M. Aur.] M.f. Ulp. Syrio' posted to Carlisle (for whom see M. W. C. Hassall and R. S. O. Tomlin, 'Roman Britain in 1988. II Inscriptions', *Britannia* 21 (1990), 331-3). On the history of the phenomenon

before 212 see G. Forni, 'Tribù e pseudo-tribù romane in epigrafi', in V. Giuffrè (ed.), *Sodalitas 1: Scritti in onore di A. Guarino* (1984), 97-104.

⁶¹ In fact even their metronyms are included, according to local custom but entirely against traditional Roman practice: *P.Oxy.* 3906, ll. 2-5: παρὰ Αὐρηλίου Ἰουλίου Ἀμμωνίου μητρὸς Σαρ[.]ος / καὶ Ἀκαριαίου Παποντώτος μητρὸς Διονυσίας καὶ Κοπρέως / Σαρatos μητρὸς Ταύριος καὶ Παποντώτος Κορηλίου μητρὸς / Κάριος πάντων ἀπὸ κώμης Σιγμέφα.

⁶² This was not a scribal habit confined to the army; see e.g. 'Aurelius Ignatius Apollinaris' of Nov./Dec. 213, from a family of L. Ignatii, in *P.Diog.* 11, cf. 10 and 17.

⁶³ On the Aramaic/Arab genitives (as might be expected in a unit of Palmyrenes) represented by 'Matthana' and 'Themarsa' see J. F. Gilliam, *P.Dura* (1959) introduction, 60.

extract apart, in *P.Dura* the names of the New Roman type far outnumber those of the Old, as might be expected in an auxiliary cohort.⁶⁴ I suspect that the fate of those who had borne the nomen Aurelius before 212 is represented by the few curious cases who are ascribed a praenomen and cognomen after Aurelius (e.g. Gaius Germanus, Marcus Victor, Marcus Maior, Quintus Iulianus). Having already supplied 'Aurel.' as the nomen of default, I suggest that the scribe was anxious to be consistent in giving everybody three names, but was at the same time reluctant to commit the aesthetically displeasing combination 'Aurel. Aurelius'. As a compromise he was forced to insert their praenomina most irregularly (otherwise uniformly omitted) after the anticipatory Aurelius.

It is not only in this first enfranchised generation that Old and New Romans can be distinguished. The New Romans of the Greek East never embraced the traditional Roman form of expressing the patronym between nomen and cognomen. When stating their name for official purposes the formula Aurelius with cognomen and patronym became the established norm.⁶⁵ Having never been assimilated to the Latin system, while feeling that their nomen was an integral part of their nomenclature they did not consider that it signified patrilineal ancestry. Although they handed it down from father to son, descent was still indicated primarily by patronym and metronym. Aurelius was borne merely as a badge of citizen, as opposed primarily to slave, status. In any case the ubiquity of the nomen Aurelius in regions that had been only slightly touched by Roman citizenship before 212 (e.g. rural Egypt) meant that it could not function practically as a normal gentilicium. However, not only did the Romanization of names not increase after 212, it also went into reverse in some respects. There is evidence that families of non-Italian extraction whose citizenship was of no great antiquity apostatized from the traditional system, abandoning their distinctive nomina. This happened in the case of the family of M. Lucretius Diogenes, whose descendants in the male line a generation after 212 are recorded with simply the 'default-nomen' Aurelius. Presumably to such a family the gentilicium had never felt natural and, once there was no motivation to maintain it as an indicator of citizenship, they let it lapse.⁶⁶ This process explains the drastic reduction in the incidence of nomina formed from peregrine cognomina that occurs in the third century. By the fourth century those gentilicia in use represent a hard core of traditional Roman nomina.

In official contexts it was understood that a nomen was still required of a Roman citizen. For New Romans and pre-212 enfranchisees in areas dominated by New Romans, Aurelius sufficed as their nomen in default of any other. On the other hand, those of Italian and peregrine extraction in areas dominated by Old Romans might retain their family gentilicia. Thus in the Empire's isolated corners and in areas of Italy family gentilicia are attested to the middle of the seventh century A.D.⁶⁷ Generally, however, since the cognomen performed the function of both diacritic and principal name of address, it was natural that New Romans (and under their influence Old Romans too increasingly) should omit their nomen except when the occasion explicitly demanded it.⁶⁸ Its eclipse in common parlance was such that the fourth-century *Historia Augusta* cannot be relied upon for the nomina of third-century individuals, not even those of emperors.⁶⁹ Indeed, already before A.D. 270, the term 'nomen', without qualification, could be reapplied to designate the now dominant cognomen, since 'Aemilius' is

⁶⁴ For a statistical analysis see J. F. Gilliam, 'The Dura rosters and the Constitutio Antoniniana', *Historia* 14 (1965), 81-4.

⁶⁵ G. Daux, 'L'onomastique romaine en Grèce. Appendice: Passage du nom grec au nom romain', *Onom.Lat.*, 413-16, discusses the development of this formula.

⁶⁶ P. Schubert, *Les Archives de Marcus Lucretius Diogenes* (1990), 16-19. Other proofs of citizenship, birth certificates and signet rings soon disappeared. The last known birth certificate (*AE* 1948.121) dates from 25 January 240 and finds of signet rings cease in mid-third-century contexts (oral communication of Dr M. Henig).

⁶⁷ e.g. the population of Altava and Pomarium in Mauretania, where the emperor Septimius Severus

planted veteran colonies, habitually use gentilicia; the last datable instance is Iulia Rogatiana who died in 655 (*IAM* 11.608, Volubilis). In Italy Melminius Cassianus, the last recorded member of a family which dominated the municipal offices of Ravenna since c. 500, was *magistratus* in 575 (*P.Ital.* 6).

⁶⁸ As noticed in the epigraphic record of Rome and Carthage by I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 16-17. See also Kajanto, *Onom.Lat.*, 421-30.

⁶⁹ On which see R. Syme in J. Straub (ed.), 'The Ancestry of Constantine', *The Historia Augusta: a Call of Clarity* (1971), 60 = *Historia Augusta Papers* (1983), No. 5, 76.

termed a praenomen in an inscription from Dacia.⁷⁰ Certainly in Ammianus Marcellinus' terms gentilicia are 'praenomina'.⁷¹

It should be remembered that, since Aurelius had been an imperial gentilicium for a considerable period before the *Constitutio* many ex-soldiers and imperial slaves will have received it in the same way as previous generations did C. Iulius, T. Flavius, M. Ulpius, etc.; not all M. Aurelii attested after 212 can be assumed to be of New Romanity. On the one hand, not all citizens enfranchised subsequent to 212 will have been Aurelii; for they will have adopted the nomen (and perhaps practices) of whomsoever was their respective patron. On the other, those apostasizing from traditional gentilicia will have swelled the ranks of Aurelii to some extent. Despite these considerations, the overwhelming majority of Aurelii in the generations immediately after 212 may be considered New Romans. Thus the rapid and dramatic change in the composition of the governing élite in the later third century may be detected. Within a decade of Gallienus' removal of the senatorial monopoly of major military commands the first of the new generals, recruited from not merely non-aristocratic but even New Roman backgrounds, had reached the point at which they could aim for the throne. No less than seven of the thirteen emperors who reigned between Gallienus and Diocletian bore the names Marcus Aurelius.⁷²

V. NAMING PRACTICES IN THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

The Greek '-ios' Suffix and the Signum

One of the most striking aspects of late Roman onomastics is the high proportion of cognomina ending in '-ius'. These names are not to be confused with gentilicia but rather originated in Greek practice where the suffix had long been common in theo- and hierophoric names (e.g. Ἀπολλώνιος, Ἐρμαῖος). However, sometime in the second century A.D., Hellenophones had begun to employ it for a new purpose. Suffixed to straightforward vocabulary words, both denominative and verbal, it was used to create new expressive names, often stressing abstract qualities, which thus had the character of nicknames (e.g. Δρακόντιος, Γελάσιος). Having perhaps arisen in response to widespread homonymy in relatively closed communities, they were first employed as extra names in a way reminiscent of Roman cognomina.⁷³ By 212 they had become established among Greek speakers as single names in themselves and their popularity soared so that by the mid-fourth century they had eclipsed the classical compound to become the single most common form of name in Greek.⁷⁴ As a curious side-effect of the nomen's decline in currency, the possessive -ius suffix, with which in Latin it had been so closely associated, was freed for this new onomastic use. Thus in the course of the third century its use spread rapidly into the Latin West, at first only by borrowing the new Greek coinages but soon also by the creation of new formations on Latin roots, such as Equitius or Honorius.⁷⁵ It may have been the coincidence of lexical termination with the Latin comparative adverb that suggested to Latin speakers the novel coinages from present participles (e.g. Amantius, Florentius, Lactantius).

Until the early fourth century the Roman upper classes limited their employment of these -ius formations to nicknames, known as signa (especially favouring formations on Greek

⁷⁰ *CIL* III.1228 Apulum, cited by P. Veyne, 'Le «prénom» de Naucellius', *RPh* 3^{me} série 38 (1964), 256. Veyne was evidently disturbed that the term 'praenomen' which in classical usage denoted the diacritical element was by the fourth century being used to denote the invariable nomen.

⁷¹ Ammianus xxviii.4.7.

⁷² M. Aurelius Valerius Claudius (A.D. 268–270), M. Aurelius Claudius Quintillus (270), M. Aurelius Probus (276–282), M. Aurelius Carus (282–283), M. Aurelius Carinus (283–285), M. Aurelius Numerius Numerianus (283–284), and M. Aurelius Iulianus (284/5).

⁷³ I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 49. D. W. Hobson,

'Naming practices in Roman Egypt', *BASP* 26 (1986), 189f.

⁷⁴ Of the 140 individuals with Greek names recorded on inscriptions culled from the index of C. M. Rouché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (1988), 339–42, which covers A.D. 250–650, 61 (43 per cent) are of the -ios/-ia type.

⁷⁵ The earliest Latin -ius cognomen known to I. Kajanto (*Onomastic Studies*, 29) is borne by the pantomimist M. Aurelius Augg. lib. *Agilius* Septentrio (*CIL* xiv.2113 and 2977) in 187 or 192, but they were not common amongst the freeborn until the late third century.

roots), and did not use them as given names. The signum, Dogmatius, of C. Caelius Saturninus who was adlected *inter consulares* by Constantine is probably the product of this learned humour; δόγμα being an equivalent for *Senatus Consultum*.⁷⁶ On epitaphs these novel signa were often detached from the body of the name, being placed above the main text in the form of an invocation in the vocative. Even in the later fourth century, when the -ius names became used as regular cognomina among the senatorial aristocracy, they continued to be incised separately, reluctant as this group was to accept such a non-traditional form into the body of their names.⁷⁷

The new -ius suffixed names originated in both Greek and Latin as extra names before being employed as regular cognomina given at birth and were simply the development of a natural potentiality in the onomastic system. Their popularity in Latin was a symptom of the eclipse of the nomen, but did not cause it. As might be expected, the -ius formations caught on as regular given names more rapidly among the New Romans and those communities where there was a strong admixture of non-Italian stock than in those Old Roman circles where the nomen gentilicium remained in everyday use. Nevertheless the identity of their lexical termination made it possible to assimilate the signum to the position of the gentilicium as a convenient shorthand method of referring to an individual with multiple nomina. While there is no reason to assume that the Tetrarchic emperors initiated this shorthand practice, they may have popularized it, since they did substitute their theophoric signa for their nomina on occasion.⁷⁸ The metathesis can be observed for private citizens in the scribal formula for the consulship of L. Aurelius Valerius Proculus *signo* Populonium in A.D. 340, who appears as simply *Populonium* Proculus in the dating formula of papyri, and perhaps already in the case of the enigmatic *Ionius* Iulianus (cos. 325).⁷⁹

Aurelius and Flavius as Indicators of Status

Within a century of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* the New Romans, and those Old Romans who had abandoned the use of the gentilicium, had developed a novel onomastic usage for the Latin nomen. Since New Romans primarily perceived their names 'M. Aurelius' as signifying simply citizenship rather than family relationship, the idea that the nomen signified patrilineal ancestry had been severely weakened. It is this perception of the function of the nomen that explains the otherwise astonishing development of the 'status' nomen, the most striking characteristic of Late Roman onomastics. Naturally such an obvious phenomenon has not passed unnoticed. However despite its importance it has received surprisingly little attention. A failure to focus on the development of Roman onomastics in the third century after 212 has led either to misdiagnosis or only partial comprehension of its causes and dynamics.

Recourse to papyrological and epigraphic corpora reveals that Aurelius remains the most frequently attested nomen in Late Antiquity.⁸⁰ However, from the early fourth century Flavius suddenly displaces Iulius as the second most common. In the Christian epigraphy of Rome and Carthage the ratio of attestation is roughly 11:4 (Aurelius : Flavius).⁸¹ However the nomen Flavius was concentrated in the higher echelons of society, to the extent that in *PLRE* 1 (A.D. 260–395) it is approximately one and three-quarter times more common than Aurelius. It represents more than half the attested nomina in *PLRE* 2 (A.D. 395–527) and is so ubiquitous as to not be worth indexing in *PLRE* 3 (A.D. 527–641). The origin of the nomen is no mystery; it was borne by the dynasty of Constantine and most of his successors. However the phenomenon starts too quickly and the number of eminent persons involved is too great for it

⁷⁶ E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Period* (memorial edn, 1887), 390 Δόγμα 3.

⁷⁷ I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 38–48.

⁷⁸ e.g. Maximinus in the heading of an imperial letter, recorded by Eusebius, Ἰώβιος Μαξιμίνος Σαβίνω (*HE* ix.9a.4) and Galerius as Iovius Maximianus on *ILS* 661 from Solva (Noricum).

⁷⁹ *PLRE* 1, Proculus 11 (full name: *CIL* vi.1690, 1691) appears as Populonium Proculus in the dating formula of, e.g., *P.Col.* vii. 148, 149, etc.; for full references see R. S.

Bagnall *et al.*, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (1987), 215 (hereafter *CLRE*). The consistency of the formulae precludes the possibility of a simple misunderstanding of the syntax of their names. I will argue the case for Iulianus *Ionius* fully elsewhere.

⁸⁰ e.g. F. Preisigke, *Namenbuch* (1922), D. Foraboschi, *Onomasticon alterum papyrologicum* (1967), and the indices of *ICVR*.

⁸¹ Based on the figures of I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 16.

to be credibly attributed to imperial enfranchisement of barbarians or slaves. It has similarly been noted that a high proportion of Tetrarchic soldiers and officials bore the nomen Valerius. However 'die neue flavische Aristokratie', as it was termed by András Mócsy, long defied specific definition.⁸² Three articles by James Keenan have amply demonstrated that throughout Egyptian papyri from the fourth to eighth century those individuals called Flavius are generally in a superior position to those called Aurelius in any one document.⁸³ This was clearly so predictable to the scribes that drafts and exemplars for loan contracts could be drawn up in which the nomina of the lender and borrower were filled in as Flavius and Aurelius in anticipation, leaving gaps for the cognomina which were never filled.⁸⁴ Keenan has rightly emphasized that the Flavius/Aurelius divide could not be equated with that between *honestiores* and *humiliores* which separated citizens into two classes in respect of legal privileges and penalties. For instance, not all municipal decurions are Flavii by any means, whereas they would be classed as *honestiores*. Furthermore the nomen of these Valerii and Flavii behaves unlike a normal Roman gentilicium, since it could clearly be passed from husband to wife but conversely was not universally heritable. Only amongst the most illustrious does it appear hereditary. The children of soldiers called Flavius are often Aurelii. Moreover individuals added what we may term the 'dynastic' nomen to, or placed it instead of, their own gentilicia on achieving an elevated position in the community; e.g. Valerius Dioscurides Iulianus, *curator* of Oxyrhynchus in 322/323, had been simple Aurelius Dioscurides Iulianus in 315.⁸⁵

The essence of this phenomenon was undoubtedly the commemoration of benefaction, being analogous to an individual's adoption of a gentilicium resulting from a grant of citizenship. In fact as early as the age of Hadrian certain members of the élites of the cities of the Aegean rim had prefixed 'P. Aelius' to their nomenclature as if considering the emperor their patron, although they did not owe their citizenship to him.⁸⁶ Valerius and Flavius are symptoms of a similar expression of gratitude to the emperor, but one arising from the specific social and political conditions of the Late Empire. For, it was an easy step for those to whom the nomen no longer connoted ancestry but rather status to replace it by that of the reigning dynasty on taking up 'an imperial *dignitas, honor, administratio, ...* [or work] in an imperial *militia*'.⁸⁷ This explains the peculiar onomastic employment of the dynastic nomen compared with traditional gentilicia. Being concomitant with imperial rank, the dynastic nomen obeys the same rules; being adopted only when the rank was conferred, hereditary only when the rank is hereditary, and transferable to one's spouse again only when the rank was so transferable.⁸⁸ So that with the arrival of the dynastic nomen the default nomen system has been transformed into one indicating status. In cases where the dynastic nomen was added to existing nomina the result can be differentiated from straightforward polyonymy by the predictability of its placement. In the case of Valerius it is employed as the ultimate, in the case of Flavius as the primary, nomen. Hence, rather than examples of secondary gentilicia, those of the Tetrarchic governor of Flaminia et Picenum, M. Aur. Val. Valentinus, and the son of Constantine's praetorian prefect C. Caelius Saturninus, C. Fl. Caelius Urbanus, are better understood as dynastic nomina.⁸⁹ Both this oscillation and the switch from Valerius to Flavius as the higher status-nomen are the natural result of a change in imperial dynasties.

Valerius originated as the gentilicium of C. Valerius Diocles who, considering his obviously Greek cognomen of not sufficient dignity, disguised it in a more Latin form — Diocletianus — on gaining the throne in 284. In the absence of natural sons, this was

⁸² A. Mócsy, 'Der Name Flavius als Rangbezeichnung in der Spätantike', in *Akte des int. Kongresses für griechischen und lateinischen Epigraphik, Wien 1962* (1964), 261; G. M. Browne, *P.Mich.* x (1970), introduction, 55.

⁸³ J. G. Keenan, 'The names Flavius and Aurelius as status designations in later Roman Egypt', *ZPE* 11 (1973), 33–63; idem, part 2, *ZPE* 13 (1974), 283–304 and 'An afterthought on the names Flavius and Aurelius', *ZPE* 53 (1983), 245–50.

⁸⁴ J. G. Keenan, *ZPE* 53 (1983), 250.
⁸⁵ He is plain Αὐθῆλιος Διοσκοουρίδης Ἰουλιανός in *P.Oxy.* 2585 (Oct./Nov. 315), but Οὐαλέριος Διοσκοουρίδης Ἰουλιανός *curator* in *P.Oxy.* 42, 900, 2767, and 1509 (322–323).

⁸⁶ P. Aelius Vibullius Rufus at Athens, P. Aelius Fla-

vius Apollonius at Miletus, and P. Aelius Otacilius Moschus at Pergamum, on whom see O. Salomies, *APNom.* 62 n.8.

⁸⁷ J. G. Keenan, *ZPE* 11 (1973), 63.

⁸⁸ The dynastic nomen is surely best seen as the natural accompaniment of rank conferred by certain appointments rather than the result of individual imperial codicils in each case as J. G. Keenan would have (*ZPE* 11 (1973), 40). For the transferability of *honor* to the spouse see *CTH* II.1.7 of 10 November 392.

⁸⁹ *PLRE* 1 Valentinus 12 (and cf. stemma 27, where a family connection with the Symmachi is proposed on the basis of the combination 'Aur. Val.', borne also by Symmachus 6); Vrbanus 4.

established as the nomen of the dynasty when Diocletian made his comrade-in-arms M. Aurelius Maximianus a co-emperor in 286, at the same time creating a fictive brotherhood by the expedient of exchanging nomina, producing the elder brother C. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus and the younger M. Aurelius Valerius Maximianus. When in 293 the imperial college was doubled by the recruitment of two Caesars, each to be lieutenant and designated heir to an Augustus, a change in naming strategy was forced. Mutual exchange of nomina being impractical between four and in any case not representative of the relationship of fictive filiation, each of the new Caesars adopted the senior Augustus' nomen after their own (as Maximian had done), in conjunction with the praenomen of their immediate superior. So Galerius Maximianus, Diocletian's Caesar, became C. Galerius Valerius Maximianus and Flavius Constantius, Caesar to Maximian, became M. Flavius Valerius Constantius.⁹⁰ In this fashion two artificial dynasties were created: the C. Valerii (*signo* Iovii) descended from Diocletian and the M. Valerii (*signo* Herculii) descended from Maximian. This assumption of Valerius by Diocletian's colleagues may indeed be the very inspiration of the dynastic nomen.⁹¹

Continuing the Tetrarchic pattern in the guise of heir to the Herculan dynasty, Constantine naturally assumed the nomina Marcus . . . Valerius. So his full nomenclature in 306 was M. Flavius Valerius Constantinus. After defeating the rival claimant M. Aurelius Valerius Maxentius in 312 and after C. Galerius Valerius Maximinus, the heir to the Jovian dynasty, was eliminated in 313, the ambiguity of Constantine's position on the dynastic arrangements is apparent in his nomenclature. He allowed his partner Licinius to pretend that the Tetrarchic scheme would be continued; that he would continue the Herculan and Licinius the Jovian dynasty.⁹² Constantine played down the Herculan connection, ceasing himself to propagate the praenomen as part of his official nomenclature. Moreover in the wake of the civil war of 316, when Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantinus and the younger Licinius were elevated as Caesars, in Licinius' realm they were regularly termed Valerii whereas Constantine himself pointedly omitted Valerius from their nomina. In the West they are always called Flavius Iulius Crispus and Flavius Claudius Constantinus; their ancestral gentilicium being the one consistent element. By this Constantine stressed his hereditary claim to the throne by blood and explicitly rejected the Tetrarchic arrangement. However by this time the principle of the dynastic gentilicium as a status-nomen was already established. Thus on Licinius' defeat in 324, Constantine's gentilicium, Flavius, became definitively entrenched as the nomen indicating higher status. Not only was it borne by his sons as their ancestral gentilicium but also by their successors, so that it became established as the definitive imperial nomen. For, with very few exceptions, the emperors of the rest of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries were from families of non-aristocratic military backgrounds. They belonged to the new élite created by imperial service, whose members had naturally replaced their original nomina with the dynastic Flavius on taking up an imperial *militia*. Flavius thus became self-perpetuating as the nomen of the emperors.⁹³

Simultaneously to these developments, the new respectability of Christianity popularized Hebrew and Aramaic names from the scriptures (e.g. Johannes, Maria, Thomas), as well as compound formations reflecting Christian interests (e.g. Anastasius, Bonifatius, Theodorus,

⁹⁰ As he is correctly called by T. E. Gregory, *ODB*, 524f. The form C. Flavius Valerius Iulius Constantius, given by *PIR*² (F 390) is a chimaera produced by cross-breeding the evidence of the ill-informed (a few milestones) with the plain wrong (the *Historia Augusta*). The more cautious *PLRE* 1 (Constantius 12) does not give him a praenomen and sensibly rejects the Iulius. The 'Caius' of the milestones is hardly surprising given a public which had become unaccustomed to varying praenomina, the last imperial dynasty to differentiate them having been that of Septimius Severus.

⁹¹ For the 'Iulius Aurelius' adopted by the Palmyrenes in 212, perhaps commemorating a special favour of the empress Iulia Domna, as a possible precursor see D. Schlumberger, 'Les gentilices romains des Palmyréniens', *BEO* 9 (1942/43), 53-82. A more certain example of the

phenomenon may come as early as the 240s, i.e. the 'Iulius' adopted by Sentius Malchus βουλευτής, σύνδικος καὶ ἐπιμελητής of Philippopolis in Arabia in a dedication to the emperor M. Iulius Philippus (A. Segal, *Town Planning and Architecture in the Province of Arabia* (1988), 95-100 No. 401a, cf. No. 395).

⁹² Licinius even celebrated the arrangement by the creation in 314 of the twin provinces Aegyptus Iovia and Herculia, on which see T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (1982), 211.

⁹³ The only exceptions are four Western emperors of the fifth century: Petronius Maximus (455), Iulius Valerius Maiorianus (457-461), Libius Severus (461-465), and Anicius Olybrius (472), all but Majorian from the Italian senatorial aristocracy.

Theodosius).⁹⁴ This in itself did not undermine the Roman binominal system. These 'Christian' names were simply absorbed by the system as cognomina in the same way as any other alien names. Nevertheless John Chrysostom's exhortation to his flock to give their children saints' names rather than those of their ancestors has recently been cited as the Church advocating the abandonment of gentilicia. In reality Chrysostom was advising the selection of cognomina with Christian connotations, not the suppression of gentilicia.⁹⁵ In fact papyrus evidence shows that the Church developed its own status-nomen. 'Abba' (father) is frequently found prefixed to the name of the ordained as an indicator of clerical status instead of a secular individual's Aurelius or Flavius.⁹⁶

Status-Nomina and Gentilicia Side by Side

It is, in fact, rather uncommon to find the dynastic nomen and the traditional gentilicium together in an individual's nomenclature. For, while the official use of the imperial court, the dynastic nomen was never compulsory. The independently-minded aristocracy of Rome were especially reluctant to use a nomen which not only behaved in a fashion unsanctioned by the *mos maiorum* but also implied a dignity dependent on imperial service.⁹⁷ Nevertheless New Romans, such as Egyptian scribes, not unnaturally tended to credit the dynastic nomen, either through indifference or ignorance of the proper nomen, to all those in imperial employ even if those concerned would not use it themselves. Frequently Roman senators of the old aristocracy, attested in glorious polyonymy in inscriptions put up by themselves or their circle, simply have Flavius prefixed to their diacritic cognomen elsewhere. This contrast explains Ausonius' reference to the 'tria nomina of the more noble'.⁹⁸ Their use of gentilicia, let alone praenomina, contrasted with the *parvenus*, raised to prominence through service in the civil or military command of the late Roman state, who rarely bore anything but Flavius. Indeed the Antiochene Ammianus Marcellinus considers the sporting of obscure and grand-sounding gentilicia one of the symptoms of the pretentiousness of the aristocracy of Rome.⁹⁹

Where late Roman usage might legitimately be accused of perverting the traditional order of the tria nomina is in the rare cases in which an individual's diacritic did not coincide with any cognomen. Such an instance is the polyonymous consul of 486, Fl. Decius, who belonged to the noble Caecinae Decii.¹⁰⁰ He was probably the son of Caecina Decius Basilius (cos. 463) and younger brother of Caecina Decius Maximus Basilius (cos. 480).¹⁰¹ A third Basilius, Decius Marius Venantius Basilius (cos. 484), whom I prefer to consider a cousin rather than brother, distinguished himself from his homonymous relatives as Fl. Venantius.¹⁰² I would suggest that our Decius (cos. 486) also bore Basilius as ultimate cognomen and was thus similarly known by another of his names in order to avoid confusion. It was the general expectation, that the ultimate name always served as diacritic, which provoked his transposition of Decius into final position in the inscription which provides his full nomenclature: Caecina Mavortius Basilius Decius (*ILS* 827, Terracina). An unorthodox order it is true; but such use of a gentilicium as diacritic is surely insufficient evidence on which to claim that 'the

⁹⁴ The adoption of Christian names was examined by R. S. Bagnall, 'Religious conversion and onomastic change in early Byzantine Egypt', *BASP* 19 (1982), 105–24 to estimate the rate of conversion and was criticized by E. Wipszycka, 'La valeur de l'onomastique pour l'histoire de la christianisation. A propos d'une étude de R. S. Bagnall', *ZPE* 62 (1986), 173–81; cf. Bagnall, 'Conversion and onomastics: a reply', *ZPE* 69 (1987), 243–50.

⁹⁵ A. P. Kazhdan, *ODB*, 1435. John Chrysostom, *Sur la vaine gloire et l'éducation des enfants* (A.M. Malin-grey, 146) 648–51: Μηδεις τοίνυν εις τὰ τῶν προγόνων σπενδέτω καλεῖν ὀνόματα τὰ παιδία, τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τοῦ πάππου καὶ τοῦ ἐπιπάππου, ἀλλ' εἰς τὰ τῶν δικαίων, τῶν μαρτύρων, τῶν ἐπισκόπων, τῶν ἀποστόλων.

⁹⁶ On the use of 'Abba' by clergy see J. G. Keenan, *ZPE* 13 (1974), 283–304.

⁹⁷ On the different employment of Flavius between the

élites of East and West see *CLRE*, 26–40. They were similarly reluctant to replace the traditional *vir clarissimus* by new titles such as *illustris* or *spectabilis*.

⁹⁸ Ausonius, *Opuscula* 16. *Griphus ternarii numeri* 80: 'tria nomina nobiliorum'. Known only as Decimus (*not* Decimus cf. *CLRE* 292f.). Magnus Ausonius, we are, ironically, ignorant of the poet's own praenomen.

⁹⁹ Ammianus xxviii.4.7: 'Praenominum [i.e. nomen] claritudine conspicui quidam (ut putant) in immensum semet extollunt, cum Reburri et Flavonii et Pagonii Gereonesque appellentur, ac Dalii cum Taraciis et Ferasiis, alisque ita decens sonantibus originum insignibus multis.'

¹⁰⁰ *PLRE* 2 Decius 2 and stemma 26, 1324.

¹⁰¹ *PLRE* 2 Basilius 11 and 12.

¹⁰² Considered as another son of Basilius (cos. 463) by *PLRE* 2 Basilius 13, and *CLRE*, 503.

distinction between the old *tria nomina* had by now almost entirely disappeared'.¹⁰³ Certainly this Decius had not forgotten its significance since in the very same text he goes out of his way to emphasize his membership of the *gens Decia* — 'ex prosapie Deciorum'.

As I have argued, then, Late Antiquity, far from being a period in which 'the distinction between the given name and the *nomen gentile* appeared blurred',¹⁰⁴ was rather one in which the Roman world was divided between those who employed two co-existing systems, both sharing the diacritic cognomen: the one prefixing ancestral gentilicia, the other the default-nomina, Aurelius or Flavius. To individuals whose status remained the same as their parents', the nomen fulfilled both functions and they may never have reflected on the dichotomy. The long-heralded loss of the praenomen, filiation by praenomen and the redundancy of voting tribe, did not fundamentally undermine the classical gentilicium-based system. In fact, the last datable inscription from Volubilis in Mauretania, of A.D. 655 precisely, happens to be the epitaph of one Iulia Rogatiana.¹⁰⁵ Both the default-nomina, where they are best documented in the Egyptian papyri, continued to be used for over sixty years after the Arab conquest; e.g. Fl. Titus, *dux* of Arcadia and the Thebaid on 30 July 699, and Fl. Basilius, pagarch of the village of Jkow in 710.¹⁰⁶ Examples of almost as late a date can be mustered from both manuscript and epigraphical sources from both Latin and Greek areas still within the Empire. For instance, an Istrian diplomatic codex attests a certain Fl. Parsinus, *praefectorius vir gloriosissimus* at Caesena in 680, and an inscribed copy of a constitution of the emperor Flavius Iustinianus (II) himself, dated to September 688, survives at Thessalonica.¹⁰⁷ The dynastic nomen survived also in the western successor kingdoms, being copied along with other Roman ranks and titles by the barbarian kings. Thus Paul the Deacon relates how Authari took the name Flavius 'ob dignitatem' when he became king of the Lombards in 584.¹⁰⁸

VI. NEW ROMAN POLYONYMY

The organs of the imperial state which emerged from the third century, independent of the Senate and the senatorial order, spawned a new nobility, ennobled by service in its high offices, which in time developed its own élite naming practices. For the same reasons as the old aristocracy these were again symptomized by polyonymy. However, because its bearers were primarily those of New Roman background, this polyonymy was based on cognomina rather than gentilicia, since they had none but default status-nomina to their name. Family cognomina were instead employed to commemorate descent through several generations. A typical example is Fl. Areobindus Dagalaiphus Areobindus (cos. 506), son of Fl. Dagalaiphus (cos. 461) and grandson of Fl. Ariobindus (cos. 434). His first two cognomina clearly commemorate his noble forebears, while the last is his own diacritic.¹⁰⁹ A similar example from the West is bishop Gregory of Tours, whose full name Georgius Florentius Gregorius commemorates his father Florentius and paternal grandfather Georgius.¹¹⁰ The choice of his diacritic, Gregorius, may have been influenced by the name of his maternal great-great-grandfather Gregorius Attalus Bishop of Lingones (mod. Langres) c.506–539 or his grandson's, Gregory's anonymous maternal grandfather.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ A. D. E. Cameron, 'Polyonymy in the Late Roman aristocracy: the case of Petronius Probus', *JRS* 75 (1985), 173.

¹⁰⁴ A. P. Kazhdan, *ODB*, 1453.

¹⁰⁵ *IAM* II.608: 'D.M.S. Memoria Iulia Rogatiana(a) de Altava Ko(o)ptativa cui fili et nep(otes) fec(e)r(unt), vix(it) ann(os) pl(us) m(inus) LXXVI d(i)sc(essit) in p(ace) an(no) p(rovinciae) DCXVI'. The gentilicium was clearly still in use in Altava when she was born in A.D. 579. The last datable example of the full classical formula is C. Matrinus Aurelius C.f. Lem(onia tribu) Antoninus on *ILS* 6623, Hispellum (Umbria) from 333/337.

¹⁰⁶ *SB* 9460 (Arsinoë), l. 3: Φλ. Τίτω ευκλεεστάτω δουκι Ἀρχαδίας καὶ Θηβαίδος; *P.Lond.* 1540 (Coptic document with Greek subscription): Φλ. Βασιλείου (sic) τῶν (sic) ἐνδοξοτάτων πάγαρχων.

¹⁰⁷ On Fl. Parsinus see T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and*

Officers, 272. Φλάυιος Ἰουστινιανός in ll. 1 and 2–3 of the text provided by A. A. Vasiliev, 'An edict of the emperor Justinian II, September 688', *Speculum* 18 (1943), 5–6.

¹⁰⁸ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Longobardorum* 3.16.

¹⁰⁹ *PLRE* 2 Areobindus 1, Dagalaiphus 1, and Ariobindus 1. An analogous example is the Egyptian magnate Fl. Strategius Apion Strategius Apion (cos. 539), possibly 'son of Strategius, grandson of Apion, great-grandson of Strategius' (*PLRE* 3 Apion 3); for his ancestors see *PLRE* 2, 1325 stemma 27 and Strategius 8, Apion 2, and Strategius 9.

¹¹⁰ *PLRE* 3 Gregorius 3, Florentius 2, and Georgius 1.

¹¹¹ *PLRE* 2 Attalus 1; see also *PLRE* 3, 1545 stemma 12. On the family's wider eminent connections see T. S. Mommaerts and D.H. Kelley, 'The Anicii of Gaul and Rome', in J. F. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: a Crisis of Identity?* (1992), 111–21.

However the structure could be a lot more complicated. For instance, the consuls of 517 and 518 who are generally identified as grandnephews of the emperor Anastasius, Flavius Anastasius Paulus Probus Sabinianus Pompeius Anastasius and Flavius Anastasius Paulus Probus Moschianus Probus Magnus, and whose nomenclature cannot be understood in terms of patrilineal ancestry alone. Apart from their principal diacritics, which were as usual their last names,¹¹² their names differ only in the fourth and fifth cognomina.¹¹³ In explanation of the fourth cognomen Alan Cameron has identified Anastasius and Magnus as cousins,¹¹⁴ the respective issue of marriages of the generals Sabinianus (cos. 505) and Moschianus (cos. 512) to anonymous daughters of a certain Magna, who married a brother of Anastasius. This would be Paulus (cos. 496), the emperor's only recorded brother. Of the first three cognomina shared in common, this explains the first two: Anastasius after their great-uncle the emperor; Paulus after their maternal grandfather.¹¹⁵ On the other hand the significance of Probus is more mysterious. The repetition of the name Probus in third and penultimate position within Magnus' nomenclature might suggest commemoration of homonymous individuals from separate branches of his ancestry; an explanation of this phenomenon in some cases. According to Cameron, the young consuls' penultimate names, Pompeius and Probus, were both family names of the house of Anastasius. Pompeius was certainly borne by their mother's cousin Pompeius (cos. 501) and the son of his brother Hypatius (cos. 500).¹¹⁶ Furthermore Cameron has plausibly argued that Pompeius was the cognomen of the emperor Anastasius' father.¹¹⁷ However his case for Probus as a family name of the imperial house is weaker. Although a third nephew of the emperor was Probus (cos. 502), I suggest that he belonged to the same branch of the family as the mothers of Anastasius and Magnus rather than being a younger brother of Hypatius and Pompeius. For the chronicler Marcellinus *comes* explicitly states that they were all cousins (*consobrini*),¹¹⁸ which implies that he was the son of Paulus and Magna. In this case the young consuls' third cognomen commemorates their noble uncle.¹¹⁹ So there is no basis for identifying Probus as a cognomen of Anastasius' forefathers, which might suggest that it was introduced through Paulus' marriage to Magna. Perhaps her father was a Probus.¹²⁰ It is notable that Probus occurs again in Magnus' name in an analogous position to Pompeius in Anastasius' — the only other divergence in their polyonymy. Therefore I propose that the significance of their penultimate cognomina might be commemoration of their respective mothers, the otherwise anonymous daughters of Paulus and Magna (i.e. a Pompeia and a Proba? — see stemma below).

Whatever the true details, this clearly demonstrates that, as with gentilicial polyonymy, polyonymy of cognomina was not used simply to commemorate a unilateral but also bi- and multilateral ancestry. It is the familiar concern to celebrate an illustrious pedigree which produces the otherwise somewhat peculiar repetition of cognomina within an individual's name.

Yet another type of polyonymy can be discerned for the first time in the generation born c. 500. Recorded examples are very few but, as with polyonymy in general, it may have been more widespread than the surviving examples suggest, since when recorded in other sources

¹¹² *PLRE* 2 Anastasius 17 and Magnus 5; they are simply (Flavius) Anastasius and (Flavius) Magnus in consular fasti, chronicle entries, and the consular formulae of contemporary papyri. Their full names are known only from their consular diptychs: *CIL* v.8120.2, XIII.10032.5a + b (Anastasius); *CIL* XIII.10032.6 (Magnus).

¹¹³ Needless to say 'Pompeius' here is simply a cognomen, no doubt inspired by the nomen of the great Republican general, but without any gentilicial force.

¹¹⁴ A. D. E. Cameron, 'The House of Anastasius', *GRBS* 19 (1978), 261; cf. *PLRE* 2 Anastasius 17 and Magnus 5, which considers them possibly brothers.

¹¹⁵ A near contemporary parallel example of the commemoration of the maternal grandfather is Flavius Licerius Firminus Lupicinus of Arles (*PLRE* 2 Lupicinus 3), who was grandson of a certain Firminus and nephew of bishop Magnus Felix Ennodius of Ticinum (*PLRE* 2, 1320 stemma 19) and who was sent to Milan for his education in 503. Licerius was the name of his paternal grandfather.

¹¹⁶ *PLRE* 1 Hypatius 6 and Pompeius 2; brothers according to Theophanes, A.M. 6024.

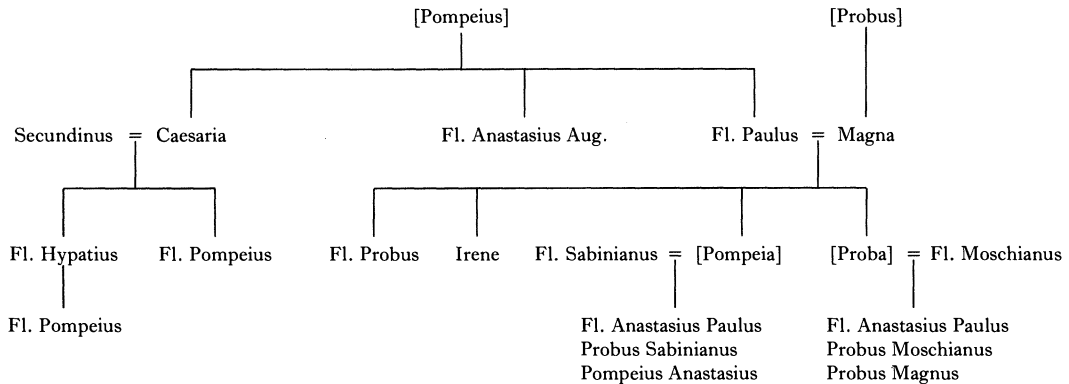
¹¹⁷ A. D. E. Cameron, *GRBS* 19 (1978), 229–62.

¹¹⁸ The wording of Marcellinus (under A.D. 532): 'Hypatius, Pompeius et Probus genere consobrini...', would be peculiar if they were simply *fratres*, as Cameron argues. In its restricted sense *consobrini* designates sons of a mother's sister but was frequently employed to mean child of parent's brother or sister (cf. *TLL* 4, 473f., Lewis and Short, 434, *OLD*, 417), which allows a plausible identification of Probus as a son of Paulus.

¹¹⁹ The full nomenclature of the consul of 540, Fl. Marianus Petrus Theodorus Valentinus Rusticus Boraides Germanus Iustinus (*PLRE* 3 Iustinus 4), similarly acknowledged his uncle Boraides as well as his father Germanus; see *PLRE* 2, 1315 stemma 10.

¹²⁰ Note that the marriage of Paulus and Magna's daughter Irene to Olybrius (cos. 491) introduced the cognomen Proba (their daughter) into the Areobindi (*PLRE* 2, 1309 stemma 3) as well as Magnus, on which see A. D. E. Cameron, *GRBS* 19 (1978), 273ff.

HYPOTHETICAL STEMMA OF THE HOUSE OF ANASTASIUS



these same individuals are always known by a single cognomen.¹²¹ A notable example is Fl. Marianus Michaelius Gabrielius Petrus Iohannes Narses Aurelianus Limenius Stephanus Aurelianus the praetorian prefect of Italy in 554/568. The length of his nomenclature is the result of prefixing so-called 'devotional' or 'Christian' names to his secular polyonymy.¹²² In Aurelianus' case his first four cognomina represent the baptismal names (here clearly commemorating the Virgin Mary, Archangels and St Peter), the last five certainly family cognomina, while the Iohannes might belong to either group. These baptismal names imply no family relationship with others bearing similar groupings. Thus the imperial scribe of the mid-/late sixth century who wrote to the landowners of Hadrianopolis in Pontus, Fl. Soterius Marianus Michaelius Gabrielius Ioannes Theodorus Nicetas Theodorus Bonos Eutropius Olympius Ioannes, should not be considered a relative but rather someone bearing the same class of baptismal names; that in which 'Marianus' is the common feature.¹²³ A feature of this type of polyonymous nomenclature that does not appear to have attracted attention is that not only does the group of holy names always precede the secular but it also always obeys theological precedence: aspects of the Godhead before the Virgin, the Virgin before the archangels, the archangels before the apostles, and the apostles before ordinary saints and martyrs.¹²⁴ The example of a second class of baptismal names based on combinations of Iohannes, Theodorus, and Menas, which appears to be distinctively Egyptian (e.g. Fl. Ioannes Theodorus Menas Narses Chnoubammon Horion Hephaestus), suggests that they may proclaim dedication to, or invoke the protection of, the saints of specific cult centres.¹²⁵ Hence the increasing popularity of the cult of the Theotokos (e.g. at Blachernae) may be responsible for the high frequency of Marianus.

¹²¹ e.g. Fl. Marianus Iacobus Marcellus Aninus Addaeus, *praefectus praetorio Orientis* 551, *praefectus urbis Constantinopoleos* 565 (full name: *SB* 5.8939) is called simply Addaeus by Procopius (*Anecdota* 25.7).

¹²² *PLRE* 3 Aurelianus 1; in common with all the other known examples, he is probably an easterner since not only was he an appointee of Constantinople but moreover the orthography of his names ('Michaelius Gabrielius' instead of regular Latin 'Michaelis Gabrielis') suggests such an origin. The devotional nature of his nomenclature was first recognized by M. Gelzer, 'Altes und Neues aus der byzantinisch-ägyptischen Verwaltungsmisere, vornehmlich im Zeitalter Justinians', *Archiv für Pap.* 5 (1909-1913), 359f. n.5.

¹²³ D. Feissel and I. Kaygusuz, 'Un mandement

impérial du VI^e siècle dans une inscription d'Hadrianopolis d'Honoriate', *Trav. et Mém.* 9 (1985), 397-419.

¹²⁴ Other bearers of this 'Marian' religious polyonymy from *PLRE* 3 are: Apion 3 (cos. 539), Athanasius 3 (*dux Thebaidis* ?566-568) and 8 (proconsul of Asia sixth/seventh century), Callinicus 4 (*dux Thebaidis* 568-569/70), Ioannes 21+22 (at Miletus c. 536) Iulianus 19 (*dux Thebaidis* 578), Iustinus 4 (cos. 540).

¹²⁵ *PLRE* 3, Hephaestus, *praefectus praetorio Orientis* A.D. 551-52 (cf. Dioscurus 8, Iacobus 1, and Thomas 10). On the cult of the martyr Menas, with its pilgrimage centre at Abū Mīnā where the emperor Arcadius had built a basilica, see F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 12.1 (1933), 323-98.

VII. THE END OF THE ROMAN NAMING SYSTEM

While the two systems existed side by side for four hundred years there is no doubt that the default-nomina, in a majority from the outset, were constantly gaining ground. The arrival of new populations further weakened the Italian concentration. Nevertheless, while that great preserver of traditional *mores*, the senatorial aristocracy of Rome, continued to play a significant role in the state, it was still felt necessary for those who counted themselves Romans to bear a nomen in official contexts. However after the old aristocracy's Italian power base was undermined by the devastation of the sixth century and those that fled to Constantinople had been absorbed by the eastern court, it is not surprising to find recorded gentilicia becoming rarer and rarer.¹²⁶ The default-nomina themselves were jettisoned within little over half a century after the disappearance of gentilicia. They no longer served any purpose after the disappearance of both the binominal model and the state hierarchy which supported the status distinctions they marked. Certainly by the time the early ninth-century Patriarch Nicephorus was revising his *Historia syntomos* (or a later copyist was transcribing the text from uncials to modern Greek cursive) the system can no longer have been generally understood in Constantinople. Otherwise the blunder of giving the emperor Heraclius' son Fabius the name Flavius as his diacritic would not have been committed, even if the confusion is easily understandable palaeographically (i.e. ΦΑΒΙΟC v. ΦΛΑΒΙΟC).¹²⁷

The disappearance of the nomen meant that after approximately 1,400 years the Roman naming system returned to a more typical Indo-European single-name system. The diacritic cognomen passed naturally into the single name, which when necessary was qualified by patronym, occupational noun, descriptive adjective, or a combination. These qualifications have fossilized into the modern European surname at different rates. This did not happen until as late as the early nineteenth century on the North German seaboard,¹²⁸ has yet to do so in Iceland, and in Greek and Russian a compromise has been reached whereby the individual name is succeeded by the patronym and then a surname which can be either occupational, descriptive, or a fossilized patronymic.

CONCLUSIONS

The fluid nature of onomastic practice reflects its susceptibility not only to linguistic factors but also political and social developments. I have argued that the most dramatic transformations coincide with those periods of greatest political and social upheaval. Since the divergence of the Italian system from the single-name system is lost in prehistory, at opposite ends of over nearly a millennium and a half of historical evolution stand 'T. Flavius' and 'Fl. Titus'; binominal nomenclature composed of etymologically identical elements which no longer denote the same concepts.

In much the same way as there is a tendency for Augustus to be seen as the culmination of Roman history, the fact that the heyday of the tria nomina coincides with the most studied period of Roman history and literature has given rise to the normative position accorded them. I have suggested that the period of their ubiquity was relatively brief and represents not one but, more accurately, two stages in the development of Roman naming practice, masking, as it does, the transition from one binominal system to another. In the first instance the use of a third name was restricted to the aristocracy's patronymic cognomen. The majority of the population maintained their binominal practice. Indeed, even once the cognomen was popularized, address by two names remained the norm; a factor which allows diacritic shift to be so accurately traced. For the traditional naming system was not impervious to the social and political changes brought about by imperial expansion. I consider that it was the onomastic

¹²⁶ On the eclipse of the old aristocracy see T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 21–37.

¹²⁷ Nikephoros, *Brief History* (C. A. Mango, 11.8). An earlier draft (the incomplete MS L) retains the original form Φάβιον, which, as Mango comments, is to be prefer-

red since 'Flavius is a mere *gentilicium*.' Of course so is Fabius, but it is an ancient gentilicium used as a cognomen, whereas Flavius is a mere status-nomen.

¹²⁸ E. Fraenkel, *RE* 16, column 1659.

practice of foreign enfranchisees which was responsible for transforming the cognomen into an individual signifier which then annexed the praenomen's diacritic function. It was under the influence of this practice, rather than the senatorial aristocracy's use of the patronymic cognomen, that the mass of the native population adopted a cognomen. The rapidly following fossilization and redundancy of the praenomen was the logical result. This returned Romans to a fundamentally binominal system. It should be stressed that throughout this onomastic revolution the gentilicium retained its central function. That this is not immediately apparent is a consequence of the extended afterlife granted to the praenomen by cultural and bureaucratic traditions formed in an earlier age, not to mention the powerful model of classical literature. Therefore, I argue, the tria nomina of the early Empire were inherently transitory, rendering explanations implicating barbarian and aristocratic fashions, Christian names, or weakening state control unnecessary.

I have proposed that another socio-political development, again associated with the extension of the citizenship, was responsible for undermining the hitherto stable gentilicium-based system; namely, the onomastic practices developed by the new citizens created by the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. The monopoly of the system developed by the peoples of archaic Appennine Italy to emphasize generational continuity (in the male line only) over individuality was undermined by damaging the close conceptual link between the nomen and patrilineal ancestry. Having escaped a thorough inculcation with the Roman binominal habit, the New Romans of A.D. 212 maintained their ancestral single-name system, to which they merely prefixed the newly-acquired Roman nomina 'M. Aurelius' as a symbol of citizenship. The gentilicium Aurelius had become a default-nomen to be entered in official records but not used in common parlance. Had the Old Romans retained political and cultural hegemony in their Mediterranean empire-state they might have been successful in propagating their attitude to naming strategies amongst the newer citizens. However there was no time for those now Romanized politically to be absorbed culturally.

I suggest, therefore, that the initially confusing aspect of late Roman nomenclature is the result not of any slide of the classical tria nomina into anarchy but rather of the concurrent use of two different naming systems, which were themselves internally coherent. Old Romans, Italian and peregrine alike, continued to employ the binominal system based on a hereditary gentilicium. New Romans, on the other hand, applied their alternative notion of the significance of the nomen to the social order to produce a system of default-nomina varying according to status. The ordinary mass of the free population retained the 'M. Aurelius' of Caracalla's grant while those with an *honor* in the imperial hierarchy adopted the nomen of the reigning dynasty. The situation is further complicated by individuals who are variously referred to under one or other system or who themselves switch between the two parallel practices. This may represent a greater degree of variation than in the classical period but it is far from a descent into anarchy.

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