Complex Roman Names

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KWHSS 2020
Curriculum vitae

- Minored in Latin
- Current Palimpsest Herald
- Serpent Herald
- Maintain the Medieval Names Archive
- Companion of the Order of the Laurel
Where can you find these slides?

- At my website, www.yarntheory.net/ursulageorges/
- In the 2020 KWHSS *Proceedings* (eventually)
Aims and scope

Complexity might mean…

- Complexity in time
- Complexity in social role
- Complexity in name structure
Aims and scope

Complexity might mean…

▶ Complexity in time
▶ Complexity in social role
▶ Complexity in name structure

This class will feature some examples of all of these phenomena.
Roman timeline

509 BCE  Roman republic created
264-146 BCE  Punic wars
44 BCE  Julius Caesar assassinated
27 BCE  Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus is granted the titles of Augustus and princeps
43 CE  Claudius begins the conquest of Britain
212 CE  Edict of Caracalla extends Roman citizenship
324 CE  Byzantium (Constantinople) becomes new imperial capital
395 CE  Eastern and Western empires split
Roman hierarchy

Between about 338 BCE and 212 CE, within territory controlled by Rome, and focusing on men . . .

- Roman citizens
  - Patricians
  - Plebeians
    - Liberti (freed people)
- Peregrini (foreign subjects)
- Enslaved people
Slavery in ancient Rome

Slavery in the Roman Republic and Empire was:

- Pervasive
- Cruel
- Inextricably tied to class and status
Slavery in the Roman Republic and Empire was:

- Pervasive
- Cruel
- Inextricably tied to class and status
- Viewed as a model by later societies.
Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen (2014):

*The Material Life of Roman Slaves seeks a way to make slaves appear or, more accurately, it searches for ways to see them—to make slaves visible where other evidence tells us they were in fact present.*
Name structures by class and social role

**Figure:** Photo by D. Herdemerten, CC BY-SA 3.0
Some general sources for Roman name structure

  ▶ Very useful appendix on Roman name structures.
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Tria Nomina
Names for citizens

Example
Titus Cornelius Felix

- Praenomen
  - From a short list
  - Often abbreviated or dropped completely
Tria Nomina
Names for citizens

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- Nomen gentilicium
  - Family name
  - Often ends in -ius
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Names for citizens

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➤ Praenomen
  ➤ From a short list
  ➤ Often abbreviated or dropped completely

➤ Nomen gentilicium
  ➤ Family name
  ➤ Often ends in -ius

➤ Cognomen
  ➤ Most personal (but still maybe inherited)
Duo Nomina
Names for women from citizen families

Example
Valeria Tusca

- Nomen gentilicium
  - Family name
  - Same as father’s nomen, but ending in -a (and usually -ia)
Duo Nomina
Names for women from citizen families

Example
Valeria Tusca

- Nomen gentilicium
  - Family name
  - Same as father’s nomen, but ending in -a (and usually -ia)
- Cognomen
  - Most personal
  - Might be inherited (with -us changed to -a)
Women’s praenomina

Question
Did women ever use praenomina?
Women’s praenomina

Question
Did women ever use praenomina?

Answer
Yes! (At least in a few handfuls of examples.)
Sources for women’s praenomina

Some praenomina used by women
As analyzed by Mika Kajava

- Appia
- Fausta
- Gaia
- Gnaea
- Lucia
- Marcia
- Paulla/Polla
- Postuma
- Publia
- Quarta
- Quinta
- Salvia
- Tertia
- Tiberia
- Titia
- Vibia
Caveat

Women’s praenomina were VERY, VERY RARE.
If Dad was a citizen... 

Filiation

Examples

- Marcus Sulpicius Marci filius Felix
- Valeria Quinti filia Tusca
If Dad was a citizen...  
Filiation

Examples

▶ Marcus Sulpicius Marci filius Felix
▶ Valeria Quinti filia Tusca

After the gentilicium, children of citizens could insert...

▶ The father’s praenomen
  ▶ In the genitive (change -us to -i)
  ▶ But usually abbreviated

▶ The word *filius* 'son' or *filia* 'daughter'
▶ Usually abbreviated and sometimes omitted entirely.
Men who could vote

In formal contexts, a citizen who could vote included the name of his voting “tribe” (tribus).

Examples

- Marcus Valerius Marci Quirina Firmus
- Lucius Calpurnius Collina tribu Longus
Men who could vote

In formal contexts, a citizen who could vote included the name of his voting “tribe” (tribus).

Examples
▶ Marcus Valerius Marci Quirina Firmus
▶ Lucius Calpurnius Collina tribu Longus

▶ Legendarily only 3, eventually 35 tribes
▶ Usually abbreviated in names
▶ After the father’s praenomen, before the cognomen.
### Roman tribes

*The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*

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<td>Voturia</td>
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Daughter of one citizen, wife of another

Example

*Sulpicia Praetextata Crassi uxor*
(daughter of Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus Peticus and wife of Marcus Licinius Crassus)
Daughter of one citizen, wife of another

Example

Sulpicia Praetextata Crassi uxor
(daughter of Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus Peticus and wife of Marcus Licinius Crassus)

▶ Uses the husband’s cognomen
  ▶ In the genitive (change -us to -i)
▶ Adds the word *uxor* 'wife'
▶ Fairly rare construction
Adopted men
In the Republic and early Empire

Example

- The eldest son of Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus was adopted by a man named Quintus Fabius Maximus. He became Quintus Fabius Maximus Aemilianus.
Adopted men
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- Start with the adoptive father’s name (possibly including the cognomen)
- Take the birth nomen and change -ius to -ianus. Use this as a new (possibly extra) cognomen.
Other reasons to use an -ianus cognomen

- Related to an adopted person
- Referencing another important family nomen (for instance, your mother’s)
Other reasons to use an *-ianus* cognomen

- Related to an adopted person
- Referencing another important family nomen (for instance, your mother’s)

**Example**

*Titus Flavius Vespasianus*
Adoptive names could get complicated!

Testamentary adoption
A citizen could leave another citizen property and his name in his will. The pre-“adoption” name usually goes second, but other permutations are possible.

Example
Gaius Caecilius Cilo inherited from his uncle Gaius Plinius Secundus, becoming Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (“Pliny the Younger”).
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And even more complicated!

- A son of *Sextus Curvius Sexti filius Voltinia Tullus*

  The Titius Marcellus may reference his mother's family.
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- A son of *Sextus Curvius Sexti filius Voltinia Tullus*
- Whose cognomen was *Lucanus*
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So far, we’ve seen constructions including... 

- Praenomen + Nomen 
- Praenomen + Nomen + Cognomen
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Long names

Question
How incredibly long could names get?

Answer
Very! This is known as polyonymy (“many names”).

Example
Quintus Roscius Coelius Murena Silius Decianus Vibullius Pius Iulius Eurycles Herculanus Pompeius Falco

▶ Consul in 108 CE
▶ Often went by Q. Pompeius Falco.
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A rule of thumb

In polyonymous Roman names, the name that a person went by in informal situations usually falls **at the end**.
Frequency of complex names

Question
Were polyonymous names actually common?
Frequency of complex names

Question
Were polyonymous names actually common?

Answer
Yes, and their frequency increased over the first few centuries of the Roman empire.
Sources for polyonymous Roman names


Sources for polyonymous Roman names

Sources for polyonymous Roman names


Gallivan’s statistics

Senatorial men

In the first through third centuries CE...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Praenomen + Nomen</td>
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<td>Praenomen + Nomen + Cognomen</td>
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<td>Praenomen + Nomen + 2 Cognomina</td>
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<td>Polyonymous Name</td>
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<table>
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<th>Name type</th>
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<td>7.3</td>
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<td>Nomen + Cognomen</td>
<td>62.1</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polyonymous Name</td>
<td>14.8</td>
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Freed people

Examples

- Marcus Laelius Marci libertus Donatus
- Maecia Marci liberta Haline
Freed people

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A person manumitted by a citizen used...
Freed people

Examples

- Marcus Laelius Marci libertus Donatus
- Maecia Marci liberta Haline

A person manumitted by a citizen used...

- A praenomen, if male (often the former owner’s)
Freed people

Examples

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A person manumitted by a citizen used...

- A praenomen, if male (often the former owner’s)
- The former owner’s nomen
  - Change -us to -a for a woman
Freed people

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A person manumitted by a citizen used...

- A praenomen, if male (often the former owner’s)
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- The former owner’s praenomen in the genitive case (change -us to -i), followed by...
- The word libertus ‘freed man’ or liberta ‘freed woman’
  - Both are often abbreviated
Freed people

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- The word libertus ‘freed man’ or liberta ‘freed woman’
  - Both are often abbreviated
- The former given name as a cognomen
But what if the former owner was a woman?

Figure: L. Terentius Amphio and Terentia Rustica

This inscription shows the symbol ♀ followed by an L.
But what if the former owner was a woman?

Figure: L. Terentius Amphio and Terentia Rustica

This inscription shows the symbol Ç followed by an L.

- The Ç or backwards C stands for Gaiae or Caiae ‘of Gaia’.
- Sometimes expanded as mulieris ‘of a woman’.
Names of non-citizens

Examples

- Lucco Treni filius
- Ammilla Lotiusi filia
Names of non-citizens

Examples

- Lucco Treni filius
- Ammilla Lotiusi filia

- Given name
- Father’s name in the genitive (change -us to -i if possible, -ii can shorten to -i)
- filius ‘son’ or filia 'daughter' (often abbreviated and potentially omitted entirely)
Names of slaves
As recorded in Roman inscriptions

Examples

- Eutychus Marci Tulli servus
- Silvana Publi Mummi Sisennae serva

- Given name
- Owner’s name in the genitive (change -us to -i if possible, -ii can shorten to -i)
- servus or serva ‘slave’ (often abbreviated and potentially omitted entirely)
Some changes over time

Figure: Mosaic of the empress Theodora
Praenomina disappear

- Praenomina start becoming rare in the middle of the second century.
- By c. 300 CE, even senators and their families are skipping them.
Edict of Caracalla
Constitutio Antoniniana

In 212 CE, the emperor Caracalla issued an edict:

- All free men in the Empire were now Roman citizens.
- All free women had the same rights as Roman women.

Figure: M. Aurelius Severus Antoninus (Caracalla)
Question
It’s the third century, and now you’re a Roman citizen! What’s your *nomen gentilicum*?

Answer
*Aurelius* (or *Aurelia*, for women), just like Caracalla’s.
This could get confusing. . .

In 219 CE records of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, the scribe made a column with *Aurelius* for everyone’s name.
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**Compare and Contrast**

- Aurelius Bassus Tiberini
- Aurelius Julius Marinus
- Aurelius Flavius Euclides
Beginning with the reign of Constantine the Great (ruled 306–337 CE), elite people used Flavius or Flavia (often abbreviated Fl) as their primary nomen.

**Figure:** Flavius Valerius Constantinus (Constantine the Great)
Examples

- Flavius Paulus Andreas
- Flavius Rufius Petronius Nicomachus Cethegus
- Flavia Cyria
- Flavia Romana