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Franziska Beutler und Theresia Pantzer

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NAMES AND SOCIAL DISTINCTION: HOW WERE ROMAN FEMALE *PATRONAE* RECORDED IN THE NOMENCLATURE OF THEIR SLAVES?

The inspiration for this survey came from a correspondence with the Finnish professor and epigraphist Heikki Solin some time ago. I had asked his view on an inscription that he had previously discussed¹:

AE 1998, 336 (Ferentinum)

Demetrius / Serranae Antoni / [m]inister Spei sacr(um)

The inscription records a slave of ‘Serrana, wife of Antonius’. Who she was, is not clear. The name *Serranus/a* itself could technically be either a nomen or a cognomen.² As the latter, it was used by senatorial Atilii during the Republic, and in theory the wife of Antonius could belong to that noble house. It seems, however, more likely, as Solin suggests, that she was a local woman. First, we have no information of any senatorial Atilii owning land (or anything else for that matter) near Ferentinum, where the inscription was apparently discovered.³ Second, the document dates to the early Empire, and the Atilii Serrani were in decline already in the late Republic.⁴ It seems therefore better to assume that the wife of Antonius was a local woman, perhaps belonging to the municipal aristocracy of Ferentinum. The next step would be then to establish whether *Serrana* was her nomen or cognomen. Solin was quite convinced that we are dealing with a gentile name, because, as he claims, among common people it would be unthinkable if a freeborn woman was designated with only her cognomen in the nomenclature of her slave.⁵ This claim, in fact, is what primarily encouraged me to conduct this survey.

Indeed, Solin’s argument seems right. But so far there seems to be no systematic study on how female *patronae* were actually called in the nomenclatures of their slaves.⁶ Such a study seems justified also in light of the fact that, in the Roman world, it is only in the nomenclatures of slaves and former slaves that the person’s identity could be clarified through a reference to a woman. In the case of the freeborn population, such indication, if there was one, was practically always to a male relative (father, grandfather, brother, even son(s)) – but never to a female one. A study of this kind may therefore be of interest also from a gender historical point of view.

The material for this contribution consists mostly of the cases compiled in Solin’s book of slave names from the city of Rome.⁷ For this reason the discussion here will mainly focus on urban inscriptions. My aim is to investigate the different ways, in which female *patronae* could be recorded in the

¹ Solin 1998, pp. 138-140.

² Schulze 1904, p. 371; Solin & Salomies, *Repertorium*, p. 169; as a nomen also *CIL* III 14206,27 (Philippi), attesting *Serrana Sex(t)i f(ilia) Secunda*. Prof. Olli Salomies has also informed me of the existence of another inscription from Philippi, recording a ‘Serrana Secunda’, who perhaps was the same woman (this inscription for some reason is not in the Clauss-Slaby database). Furthermore, the name *Serranus/a* may be a variant of *Serranus/a*, cf. for example *AE* 2009, 1125 = *TitAq* 1, 207.

³ At least there are no mentions in Andermahr 1998.

⁴ The last consul was in office in 106 BCE (see *MRR* 1, p. 552), and from the imperial period we only know one Atilius Serranus (*PIR*² A 1308) and in addition one Nonius Asprenas Calpurnius Serranus (*PIR*² N 125).

⁵ “...sarà qui preferibile intendere Serrana come gentilizio, perché sarebbe assai insolito chiamare la padrona solo con il cognome, a meno con si tratti di una rappresentante femminile della famiglia dei famosi Atilii Serrani, nel qual caso l’omissione del gentilizio sarebbe in qualche modo perdonabile; ma è evidente che abbiamo a che fare qui con gente comune, non con una famiglia senatoria, e tra gente comune non è pensabile che una donna *ingenua* fosse designata con il solo cognome nell’onomastica del suo schiavo. Serrana sarà dunque qui un gentilizio...” Solin 1998, p. 139.

⁶ Manumitted slaves are largely omitted from this survey, but for a future study it might be worth taking them into consideration as well.

⁷ H. Solin, *Die stadtrömischen Sklavennamen: ein Namenbuch*. Stuttgart 1996.

nomenclature of their slaves, and to find out if these styles can tell us something about the background and status of the person in question. I believe that the material, comprising of 446 cases, will suffice to give a general picture of the phenomenon.⁸

From a methodological point of view, it may be worth pointing out that slave names with no patron mentioned at all are by far more common than those with a patron on record, let alone a female patron (we are talking about several thousands of attestations vs. some 446). The fact that the *patrona* is even mentioned may therefore be of some significance for the discussion on such matters as rank and status. In other words, it is naturally more likely for an elite woman to be recorded as part of the nomenclature of her slave than it is for a person outside the upper classes, since this also would also elevate the slave's own standing, although in many cases personal affection and other such factors may obviously also have played a role.

Survey of the material

The following tables are given to illustrate the different onomastic patterns, in which female *patronae* were recorded, and their chronological and social distribution.

Table 1: Onomastic styles attested for female *patronae*:

Nomen⁹: 214		Cognomen: 114¹⁰		Nomen + Cognomen: 108		Other & incertae	
N	131	C	71	N + C	98	<i>Aug.</i>	5
N + g	55	C + g	12	N + f + C	7	N? + C	1
N + f	5	C + f	11	N + C + f	2	N + C?	1
N + <i>Aug.</i>	19	C + <i>Aug.</i>	14	N + N + C	1	N/C?	1
N + <i>ma- ior/minor</i>	3	C + <i>ma- ior/minor</i>	2	-	-	N (+ ?)	2
N + <i>virgo</i>	1	C + patron	2	-	-	-	
-	-	C + C	2	-	-	-	
Total amount: 446							

⁸ Cases where the *patrona*'s name is either too fragmentary or corrupt are omitted. This also applies to some early (before Augustus) and late cases (clearly after 200 CE).

⁹ The total numbers of different styles (i.e. 'Nomen', 'Cognomen', 'Nomen + Cognomen') include cases where the nomen, cognomen, or both, are supplemented with a filiation (f), a gamonymic (g), the title *Augusta* (*Aug.*), or some other descriptive marker (*maior/minor* etc.).

¹⁰ Including nomina used as personal cognomina (same goes for the style, where both a nomen and a cognomen are attested).

Table 2: Chronological distribution of different styles¹¹

Approx. date ¹²	<i>Nomen</i>	<i>Cognomen</i>	<i>Nomen + Cognomen</i>
1st century	187 (87 %)	89 (78 %)	47 (44 %)
Augustus-Nero	138	82	16
After 1st c.	8 (4 %)	20 (16 %)	43 (40 %)
2 nd century	5	19	38
2 nd / 3 rd c.	3	1	4
3 rd c.	-	-	1
1 st / 2 nd c.	16 (7 %)	5 (4 %)	17 (16 %)
1 st / 2 nd / 3 rd c.	2	-	1
?	1	-	-

Table 3: Social distribution of different styles

Status ¹³	Total	<i>Nomen</i>	<i>Cognomen</i>	<i>Nomen + Cognomen</i>
Imperial	197	120	69	3
Senatorial	95	29	25	41
Local aristocracy	9	2	-	8
Uncertain	134	63	18	48
Freedwomen	10	-	2	8

It may be good to start with some general observations. First of all, chronologically the material seems to concentrate on a rather early period: 322 out of 446 cases, i.e. 72 % of the material, dates to the 1st century, and a good deal of these cases can be dated with certainty to the Julio-Claudian time. This is something to be kept in mind throughout this study, as the early chronology is also significant in terms of onomastics. As to the styles themselves, it seems that the most common way of recording a female patron in the nomenclature of a slave was with one name only (i.e. either her *nomen* or *cognomen*), regardless of whether or not the woman in question may have had a more complex nomenclature: this is the case 327 times (out of 446, i.e. 80 %). Women of high aristocracy are well represented here.

¹¹ In tables 2 and 3 such *patronae* are omitted whose nomenclatures are either uncertain or for whom no name is attested.

¹² According to Solin, *Sklavennamen*.

¹³ The categories are somewhat fluid, as a woman from the senatorial group, for example, may have also have been connected to the imperial family. As "imperial" I have generally speaking included such *patronae* who were either daughters, wives, sisters, or in any case close female relatives, of the emperor. As to senatorial women, I have mostly followed Raepsaet-Charlier (*FOS*, see bibliography). In the group defined here as 'Local aristocracy', I have included notable women of local elites but also women who may have well belonged to the highest *ordo*, but of whom we do not have enough information to know for certain. For all we know, they may have also been members of municipal elites (but in any case women of great wealth). Such women are often described in *PIR* as "fortasse femina nobilis".

In these 327 cases with only one name at least 240 *patronae* (73 %) can plausibly be identified as senatorial or imperial women.¹⁴ Here, however, one needs to take chronological factors into account: for example, the fact that many *patronae* were recorded with only a nomen may often be simply explained by the fact that many freeborn women of the early imperial time did not have a cognomen to start with. As to the social distribution of the cases, it is worth pointing out that a small number of women from imperial families form a significant number of all the cases. This is obviously no surprise, given the immense number of imperial slaves and freedmen in Rome.

In 108 cases (or 110, if the uncertain cases are counted) a more complete nomenclature is given (that is, at least a nomen and a cognomen). This is often the case with elite women as well (51 cases at least). But even if some of these women were ladies of old and prestigious houses, many of them came from new or recently senatorial families, or more so, did not use a cognomen that was particularly distinctive in their *gens* (or was distinctively used in some other family). For instance, the epitaph of a slave of an Aemilia Lepida may have referred to the *patrona* simply as “Lepida”, since it was well known that *Lepidus/a* was the hereditary cognomen of patrician Aemilii,¹⁵ but in the case of a Lepida from some other *gens*, it would have probably been preferable to also include the *patrona*’s nomen.¹⁶ To put it another way around: women who represented old and famous aristocratic *gentes* may be recorded with more than one name, to be sure, but women who had a less prestigious background or used a cognomen that was not particularly characteristic to their family, would more rarely appear with only one name, at least in the 1st century.

It is worth pointing out that the cases with both a nomen and a cognomen are chronologically more evenly distributed than the styles with only one name: around 40 % of the cases date to a later period than the 1st century (see Table 2 above): this goes for both senatorial *patronae* and the *incertae*. As to the latter group, there are 48 (out of 108) *patronae*, recorded with a nomen and a cognomen, whose background is uncertain or non-senatorial. A good number of these women were likely themselves of servile origin, which is suggested, amongst other things by their bearing of a Greek cognomen.¹⁷ As to those *patronae* whose cognomina are not Greek, some words may be in place here. A name such as *Baebia Cornelia* (the patron in *CIL VI 9250*) does not in itself tell us much about the bearer. The use of a nomen in place of a personal cognomen is a frequently attested phenomenon of upper-class women of the early imperial time, but there is nothing in particular here that would provide us with any specific clues to the woman’s background (other than the fact that she was wealthy enough to have a *cellarius* but this cannot have been uncommon for people with some wealth in general). Likewise, the *patrona* of *Hermes Cocceiae Bassae actor* (*CIL VI 9118*) was likely a wealthy woman but it is difficult to say anything more precise. The cognomen *Bassa* appears in the senatorial class, mainly on women of municipal extraction, and her full name does resemble that of Cocceia Bassula Numisia Procula (*FOS 264*) – but whether or not there was a connection between the two, remains a matter of speculation. The name *Flavia Sabina*, for its part, attested for another *patrona* (*CIL VI 6647*), is naturally reminiscent of the family of the emperor Vespasian (his father, brother and nephew were, amongst others, called *T. Flavius Sabinus*). It is indeed quite likely that this woman was identical with the senatorial Flavia Sabina from Reate (*PFOS 379*). However, as both *Flavius/a* and *Sabinus/a* were common names in all layers of the

¹⁴ Though it is admittedly sometimes difficult to know the status for certain, when dealing with cases where only a nomen, with no external references, is given. In many cases, however, other contextual information has been helpful; if for instance, the epitaph of a slave of ‘Livia’ is found in a columbarium where multiple slaves of the family of Augustus are buried, it seems clear that we are dealing with no other woman than the empress herself.

¹⁵ Thus: *CIL VI 5477: Philo Lepidaes v(irginis) V(estalis) ser.*; *CIL VI 27034: Seleuco Lepidae M. Silani*. In both cases the *patrona* is, with all likelihood, a daughter of an Aemilius Lepidus.

¹⁶ Unfortunately no inscriptions recording the slaves of senatorial Lepidae from other *gentes* (e.g. Domitia Lepida, Iunia Lepida or Valeria Lepida) are known to us.

¹⁷ About half of the inscriptions date to a rather early time period (i.e. 1st c.), when Greek names in Rome were largely a phenomenon of slaves, peregrines, and the enfranchised class. The situation starts to change by the end of the 1st c., after which Greek names become more common in all layers of the Roman society and appear even in the senatorial *ordo* (because of senators from the Greek East; the using of Greek names by senators from the Latin-speaking West is generally speaking a later phenomenon). But even in the 2nd century, Greek names in Italy were often the domain of slaves and former slaves.

society, the resemblance may also be a pure coincidence.¹⁸ The name of the *patrona* of *Paezon Aquilliaes Bassillaes actor*, attested in two dedications (*CIL* VI 365 & 366), has also a somewhat upper-class flavour to it. A connection to the senatorial Aquilii may come in question, but nothing in particular suggests this. However the case, most *patronae* with a nomen and a Latin cognomen seem to have such names that are in accordance with the onomastic practices of the upper classes.¹⁹

In the case of imperial *patronae*, in particular, the style with only one name was clearly favoured, and this name was often followed by a gamonymic or the title *Augusta* or *diva*. Take for instance Marcia Furnilla, wife of the emperor Titus, for whom the cognomen *Furnilla* is not attested in the nomenclature of her slaves. Instead, she appears as *Marcia Divi T./Titi*, or as in the nomenclature of one of her freedmen, simply as *Marcia*.²⁰ Another good example is Domitian's wife Domitia Longina, who appears either as *Domitia Domitiani* or *Domitia Aug.*, and once as *Domitia n(ostra)*, but never with her cognomen *Longina*.²¹ Other similar examples are numerous.²² Furthermore, there are five cases where no name at all is given, but the imperial *patrona* is simply referred to with the title *Augusta*.²³ In such cases contextual or other information can be helpful, and in any case we must assume that for the contemporaries it was clear who the *Augusta* was.²⁴ Imperial women, however, are a special case of their own and should be treated somewhat separately.

Whenever the female patron is attested with only one item, the most common style seems to be with a nomen (including cases with a filiation, gamonymic or a title²⁵), but chronology is an important factor here: as it becomes clear from the table above, 187 (i.e. 87 %) of all the 214 cases date to the 1st century, when many women did not have a cognomen to start with. This naturally is significant. Imperial women, again, form a large amount of all the cases. For instance, Livia alone appears at least 58 times in the material (mostly simply as *Livia*, and after 14 CE as *Iulia* or *Iulia Aug./Augusta*).²⁶ But the style, in any case, is widely attested not only for imperial but also for other women (see Table 3 above).

Female *patronae* similarly recorded with their cognomen and without a nomen (again, including cases where the name is followed by a filiation, gamonymic or a title, or such descriptive qualifier as

¹⁸ Kajanto 1965 lists 863 men and 588 women with the name *Sabinus/a*.

¹⁹ Besides *Bassa*, *Bassilla* and *Sabina*, we are talking about such cognomina as *Galla*, *Prisca*, *Saturnina* and *Varilla*. On the other hand, we also have such popular names as *Fortunata*, which in fact (according to Kajanto 1965) was the most popular female cognomen with 1094 attestations, none of which, however, from the senatorial class.

²⁰ *Marcia Divi T./Titi* in *CIL* VI 31768; 35456. The freedman is recorded as *Q. Marcius Marciae divi Titi lib. Stichus*, see *Latium* 32-33 (2015-2016), pp. 22-23 °16 (Solín).

²¹ *Domitia Domitiani* in *CIL* VI 8959; 9082; 20492; 19718; 24655; 11569; 7887; 17115; 35337; *AE* 1945, 111 (here also as *Domitia n(ostra)*); *Domitia Aug.* in *CIL* VI 8434; 8850; 8667; *AE* 1945, 112; *AE* 1955, 25.

²² For instance: *Faustina Augustae* (Basso, *Simbologia*, fig. 39); *Plotina Augustae* (*CIL* VI 8696); *Plotina Aug.* (*CIL* VI 8557); *Messallina Aug.* (*CIL* VI 8953 = XV 7148); *Messall[ina] Neronis* (*CIL* VI 6596; 6619; 38303); *Messallina Ti. Claudii Caesaris* (*CIL* VI 8952).

²³ *CIL* VI 9096; 5215; 33275; 5745; 5181.

²⁴ For instance, *CIL* VI 5181, 5215 and 5745 are from columbarii of the family of Augustus, and in some cases further clues are given, e.g. in VI 33275: *Ti. Caesaris et Augustae*; and in VI 5745 another slave of 'Iulia Augusta' is mentioned.

²⁵ In *CIL* VI 33473, *Derceto Aureliae virginis lectrix*, the *patrona*'s identity is further clarified with the word *virgo*, which ought to be taken as an indication of her being a Vestal virgin.

²⁶ Her cognomen *Drusilla*, it seems, was deliberately dropped out from public use after her marriage to Octavian. It is often thought that she altogether abandoned her cognomen after her marriage to Octavian in 38 BCE (hence the editor's comment under *CIL* VI 13179, "in titulis post id matrimonium scriptis cum cognomine ... numquam quod sciam appelletur"; also L. Ollendorf in *RE* XIII.1, 900, s.v. 'Livia Drusilla': "Offiziell führt sie nach ihrer Vermählung mit Octavian das Kognomen Drusilla nicht mehr."; cf. also Kienast 2017, p. 60). In any case the name was *not completely* abandoned (thus cf. Hahn 1990). In the epigraphic data from the Latin West, she seems to be attested as *Drusilla* once, in the epitaph of her freedwoman whose name is styled as *Leivia Drusillae l. Galatia* (*CIL* I² 1258 = VI 13179; although this may also be an earlier inscription), and besides, she seems to appear with the name *Drusilla* in some coins from Romula, Spain (Cohen I² °169; for some reason I could not find this coin in *RPC* 1). In the Greek East, her cognomen is sometimes recorded even in honorific inscriptions between 38 BCE and 14 CE, notably at Eleusis (*SEG* XXIV 212 = *AE* 1971, 439), at Samos (*IG* XII 6,1,390; *IG* XII 6,1,391), and at Thasos (*IG* XII 8,381). In the current material she is *Livia* 44 times, *Iulia* twice, and *Iulia Aug./Augusta* 12 times.

maior or *minor*) provide a total of 114 cases. In these, I have also decided to include the cases where a nomen is clearly used as a personal cognomen, as well as a certain *patrona* who is recorded with not one but two cognomina.²⁷ Returning now to the initial question of whether or not a “common” woman of free birth could be called with her cognomen alone in the nomenclature of her slave, it is time to take a look at the social distribution of these cases. Not surprisingly, the clear majority seem to refer to aristocratic women from prestigious families (94 out of 114, i.e. 82 %).²⁸ Here again it is good to take into account the statistical impact of imperial women: for instance, in 28 cases alone we have one of the two Marcellae (nieces of Augustus; they usually appear simply as *Marcella*, and in two cases the identity is helpfully clarified with *minor*)²⁹. Other imperial women are also frequently attested; take, for instance, the two Agrippinae (wife and daughter of Germanicus)³⁰. Furthermore, the numerous attestations of *Messalina* (often supplemented with the imperial title or a reference to the emperor) can only be understood as referring to the wife of either Claudius or Nero.³¹ In short, in these 91 cases of aristocratic ladies, we do not after all have quite that many different individuals. With this in mind, we may turn our attention to the 20 remaining cases, where the identity and status of the *patrona* is either unclear or clearly non-senatorial.

In two cases, the *patrona* is certainly a freedwoman, as indicated by the marker *liberta*.³² Furthermore, in at least three other cases, the *patrona*'s full name seems to be mentioned separately: in *CIL* VI

²⁷ Nomen used as a cognomen: *CIL* VI 5539, *Paesusae Octaviae / Caesaris Augusti f(iliae) / ornatrici / vix(it) ann(os) XVIII // Philetus Octaviae / Caesaris Augusti f(iliae)*; VI 8827, *Cypaeus Octavi[ae] Aug. f. disp(ensator)*; VI 9037, *Extricata Octaviae Aug. f. sarcinatrix*; VI 8900, *Epityhchan[us] Antoniae C[ae]sar[is] f(iliae) medicu[s]*, in which cases ‘Octavia’ and ‘Antonia’ are (Claudia) Octavia and Antonia, daughters of the emperor Claudius; also *CIL* VI 19747, *Iucundus Liviae Drusi Caesaris f. Gryphi et Vitalis*, ‘Livia’ being (Claudia) Livia (often called “Livilla”), sister of Claudius and Germanicus; and *CIL* VI 877*, *Geminus Iuliae Agrippae f. Germanus*, the daughter of Agrippa of course in reality being (Vipsania) Iulia. As for the woman with two cognomina, she is styled in two inscriptions as *Paulina Asiatica (Epigraphica* 23 [1961], 15 = *AE* 1964, 94; *CIL* VI 28224 = *Epigraphica* 68 [2006], 97). Whether she was the sister of Valerius Asiaticus (*cos.* 94; II 125), as suggested by Kavanagh (2006), or for instance identical to Aemilia Paulina Asiatica (*FOS* 35), makes no difference here, as she clearly was a woman of the highest *ordo*.

²⁸ Often the status is clear enough from information conveyed by the inscription, such as a reference to the woman’s husband or family, or from contextual information regarding, for instance, the find spot. In some cases, the *patrona*'s full name is given elsewhere in the inscription, as in *CIL* XV 1020 (*Op(us) dol(iare) ex pr(aediis) Dom(itiae) Luc(illae) Dionys(i) Luc(illae) / Paetin(o) et Apro(niano) co(n)s(ulibus)*), whereupon she may be identified as a woman of high birth (in this case, as either one of the Domitiae Lucillae, *FOS* 328-329, probably the younger one). Sometimes, even if no such clues are available, the mere cognomen itself can be revealing; thus for example, in *CIL* VI 7001 & 33842 the *patrona*, who is simply styled as *Eburna*, is likely to be a daughter of a patrician Fabius Maximus, as the only other example of the name *Eburnus/a* (an unusual name in itself) is the consul of 116 BCE, Q. Fabius Maximus Eburnus (furthermore, it was fashionable among the early imperial nobility to revive old cognomina that had been previously in use by famous republican ancestors). There is also *CIL* VI 9127 (*Tyrannus Pollae nostrae actor*), in which the mistress is normally identified as Valeria Polla (*PIR*² V 244), but the identity has also been disputed, notably by Kajava (1994, p. 129). However the case, it seems to me that, either way, we are dealing with an elite woman here. The word *nostra* also suggests that the inscription was located in the family premises, which would explain the omission of the nomen.

²⁹ *Marcellae* *CIL* VI 4422; 4423; 4424; 4425; 4436; 4439; 4438; 4441; 4452; 4467; 4469; 4470; 4477; 4450; 4469; 4500; 4514; 4537; 4541; 4564; 4612; 4701; 5197; 9001; 9892; 24149; *Marcellae minoris* VI 4637; 8755.

³⁰ *Agrippinae* *CIL* VI 5206; 8879; 9901; *Agrippinae German(ici)* VI 4387; *Agrippinae German(ici) Caes(aris)* VI 17146 *Agrippinae Germanici Caesaris filiae* VI 8834; *Agrippinae Caisar(is) f(iliae)* VI 8720.

³¹ Often either with the cognomen only or with the title *Aug(usta)*. In some cases the identity is clarified with a reference to the husband or father, e.g. *CIL* VI 8952, *Messallinae Ti. Claudi Caesaris*; VI 6596; 6619; 38303, *Messallinae Neronis*. I also believe that in *CIL* VI 9191, recording *Messallinae[ae] Tauri*, we are to understand *Tauri* as a filiation, i.e. *Tauri (f.)*, like in *CIL* VI 6327 (*Messallinae Tauri f.*), in which case we seem to be dealing with the wife of Nero (who was the daughter of a Stalilius Taurus). A parallel to such an “incomplete” filiation would be *CIL* VI 5198, recording *Iulia Drusi Caesaris*, who must be the daughter of Drusus, not the wife (since the wife was called (Claudia) Livia).

³² I.e. *CIL* VI 6490 & 17091. The latter inscription is quite problematic though: *Egloge Rusticaes A. Germi libertaes sororis*. The most compelling interpretation seems to be that the *patrona* is ‘Rustica, freedwoman of A. Germius’ (instead of, for example, the freedwoman of A. Germius’s sister, which would be an odd way of expressing her identity, to say the least). But in this case we will have to assume that there is an error in either *Egloge* or *sororis*, since otherwise the existence of the latter

7560, recording ‘Cyrilla, *delicium* of Primilla’, we also have a woman called *Livia Primilla*, who, I would assume, is no other than the mistress herself. Similarly, in *Bull.Com.* 69 (1941) 175 °86, the *patrona* of *Euhemeris Secunda(e)* seems to be the ‘Antonia Secunda’ of the same document³³; and in *CEMC* 125 the mistress of *Pyrallis Salviae delic[ium]* must be ‘Volusia Salvia’, who we learn died at the age of 35 years. The fact that these women are already mentioned with their full name naturally explains why their nomen was omitted elsewhere in these inscriptions.

As to the remaining cases, some of the names might also suggest servile origin: we have *patronae* with such Greek, or in any case non-Latin, cognomina as *Dionysia*, *Acte* and *Syrilla*.³⁴ But most of the names seem to be Latin³⁵: *Balbilla*, *Faustina*, *Lamilla*, *Plotilla*, *Prima*, *Quadratilla* (2), *Tertulla*, *Varilla* (2), *Violentilla*.³⁶ I will now briefly go through these cases in an attempt to find out if something can be said regarding their rank and status.

In some cases contextual information can be helpful. If for example the inscription is linked to a larger monument of some upper-class family, the *patrona*, in my view, must either be a member of that family or its former slave. In such cases, the possibility that we might be dealing with “common” women of free birth may therefore be excluded. Thus for instance, the patrons of *Secunda delicium Castoris et Primae* (*CIL* VI 7592) may be identified as freedpersons of the Carvili, from whose columbarium at the Via Appia the inscription is found.³⁷ The same goes for the *patrona* styled as *Varilla*, who is recorded in two epitaphs from the columbarium of the Statilii (*CIL* VI 6411; 6458).³⁸

As to the other cases, most of the cognomina are known from senatorial women of the first and second centuries. *Quadratilla*, for instance, is attested for senatorial Ummidia from Casinum.³⁹ *Violentilla*, for its part, was the name of the wealthy widow attested by Martial and Statius.⁴⁰ *Faustina* is naturally reminiscent of several women of the Antonine dynasty, and at least one senatorial Atilia is known who had the cognomen *Balbilla*.⁴¹ *Tertulla* is also attested for senatorial women, mainly of municipal extraction. It is possible that some of the *patronae* recorded with these cognomina were connected or even identical to the above-mentioned women of senatorial rank. However, for lack of further evidence the matter remains unresolved.

In only a few cases we might actually be dealing with a non-senatorial woman of free birth. Take, for instance, the woman styled simply as *Plotilla* who is known from a Praenestine inscription as the *patrona* of a slave (*CIL* XIV 2341,1: *Onesimi Plotillae ser.*). Dessau suggests that she is identical to the

item would be difficult to explain. Perhaps, then, *Egloge* is to be understood as a genitive (i.e. *-e pro -ae*), thus corresponding to *sororis* – or, perhaps more likely, that *sororis* is erroneously carved and ought to be read as *soror{is}* (the inscription for some reason is not found in the Clauss-Slaby database, despite being in *CIL*). However the case may be, we are certainly dealing with a freedwoman here.

³³ The reading *Secunda(e)* pro *Secunda* is justified, as we can hardly imagine a person called *Euhemeris Secunda*.

³⁴ *CIL* VI 6351, *Felicula Dionysiae*, from the monument of the Statilii, the *patrona* likely being a freedwoman of the family; VI 10475, *Accepte Syriillae*, to whom her *coniunx* T. Flavius Hedonicus set up the inscription. In VI 17898 a female patron is recorded as *Acte n(ostra)*, which also implies that the monument was perhaps located within the family premises (in which case the indication of a nomen would be pointless; cf. *Pollae nostrae*, cit. n. 28 above).

³⁵ This of course does not in itself mean that they could not belong to freedwomen, as well; cf. the first volume of Solin, *Sklavennamen*.

³⁶ For references, see Solin, *Sklavennamen*.

³⁷ The text furthermore records a certain Sp. Carvilius Attalus, and from other inscriptions of the same monument we know two men called C. *Carvilius Castor*, one of which may be identical to the Castor who is mentioned together with Prima. For more discussion on the inscriptions of *liberti* from the *Carviliorum monumentum*, see M. Macciocca’s comments in *LTUR-Suburbium*, 2, p. 65.

³⁸ See Caldelli – Ricci 1999, p. 95 °130; p. 97 °153. *Varilla* is also attested for a senatorial Appuleia and a Nonia, both descending from the patrician Quinctilii Vari (*FOS* 85 & 576).

³⁹ *FOS* 829 & 830.

⁴⁰ Mart. 6,21; 7,14,5; 7,14,5; 7,15,1; 12,3,12; Stat. *silv.* 1,2. Her nomen remains unknown.

⁴¹ *Balbilla* is attested by *CIL* XIV 3585 from Tibur, commemorating her husband M. Accenna Saturninus, proconsul of Baetica (apparently during the reign of Hadrian).

patrona of *Nothus Ruficanae L. f. Plotillae*, recorded in another inscription from Praeneste, approximately from the same period (*CIL* XIV 2862 = *ILS* 3685). This may very well be the case, whereupon we would be dealing with a local woman, perhaps of some influence, but certainly not from a well-known senatorial family. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that she be identical to *Sergia Plautilla*, mother of the emperor *Nerva*, as we also have a contemporary Praenestine epitaph of a slave of *Cocceius Nerva* (possibly the emperor's father; *CIL* XV 2314,1 = XIV 4091,26).

As to the names that are unknown in the senatorial class, *Quartina*, for instance, is not attested for any slave either (at least in *Solin, Sklavennamen*).⁴² The inscription (*CIL* VI 19192) has been dated to the 1st century CE, which may well be. I would, however, suggest that it is earliest from the latter half of the century. This is due to the cognomen itself. As *Quartina* clearly is derived from *Quartus/a*, one would expect such a cognomen to be in common use for some time already. The male version *Quartus* certainly was not in common use at early stages.⁴³ The female *Quarta*, on the other hand, seems to have been an earlier name, and attested as a praenomen—and later as cognomen—already during the Republic.⁴⁴ However the case, the use of a form such as *Quartina* strikes me as a somewhat later form in comparison to its “basic” form *Quarta*. To be sure, the *patrona* of *Helena Quartinaes* may have been a freeborn woman, but already by the end of the 1st century the use of a cognomen in this context would perhaps not be as unexpected as it might have been in earlier times. Regarding *Lamilla*, it is difficult to say anything precise, as this seems to be the only known instance of the name. However, it does resemble the name *Lamia*, which was used, amongst others, by certain senatorial *Aelii* and their offspring.

Concluding thoughts

Some concluding thoughts are in place here. The aim of this survey was to investigate the different onomastic styles in which Roman female *patronae* could be recorded in the nomenclature of their slaves, and to see if these styles may tell us something about the background of the women in question. First a chronological note: it seems that most cases where the *patrona* was recorded with one name only date to the 1st century, and more precisely, to the earlier half of that century, whereas the cases with both a nomen and a cognomen are more evenly distributed over the first two centuries. The latter group furthermore seems to include many *patronae* who themselves were of servile origin. In the clear majority of all the cases we find the style with only one name, whether a nomen or a cognomen (which could be supplemented with further identifying markers, such as a filiation or a gamonymic). In terms of chronology the use of a nomen is by no means surprising, as we are mostly dealing with a time period when personal cognomina were still to be fully established in the Roman onomastic system. But most of the cases where the *patrona*'s nomen is omitted and she was recorded with only her cognomen date to the same time period. The question regarding the social distribution of such cases was the primary catalyst of this study. To no surprise, we are predominantly dealing with women from imperial or well-known aristocratic families. Even if a freeborn woman of a more modest background could probably be designated in a similar way (or at least it was not prohibited), this was by no means a common practice, and the few possible cases may be treated as exceptions to the rule. What can we then say about *Serrana*, wife of *Antonius*, from whom all this started? I believe it is fairly safe to assume that *Serrana* was, indeed, her gentile name, as it was, if not unthinkable, at any rate unusual, for “common” women of free birth to be called by their cognomen alone in the nomenclature of their slaves. Naturally this does not mean that one should rush into hasty conclusions regarding a person's status simply because the nomen is omitted – but it may be a clue.

⁴² One slave called *Quartinus* is on record from the 3rd century, though.

⁴³ For the use of numeral names, see *Salomies 2009*.

⁴⁴ For references regarding the praenomina, see *Kajava 1994*. As a cognomen in the late republican time: *Vesonia L. f. Quarta* (*AE* 2001, 450) & *Albutia Quarta Lic. f.* (*CIL* I² 2140).

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AJPh = *American Journal of Philology*.

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CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

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MRR 1 = T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, 1, New York, 1951.

*PIR*² = *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I. II. III.* Eds. E. Groag, A. Stein et al. Berolini, 1933-2015.

RE = *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

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Tuomo Nuorluoto

Uppsala University

tuomo.nuorluoto@lingfil.uu.se