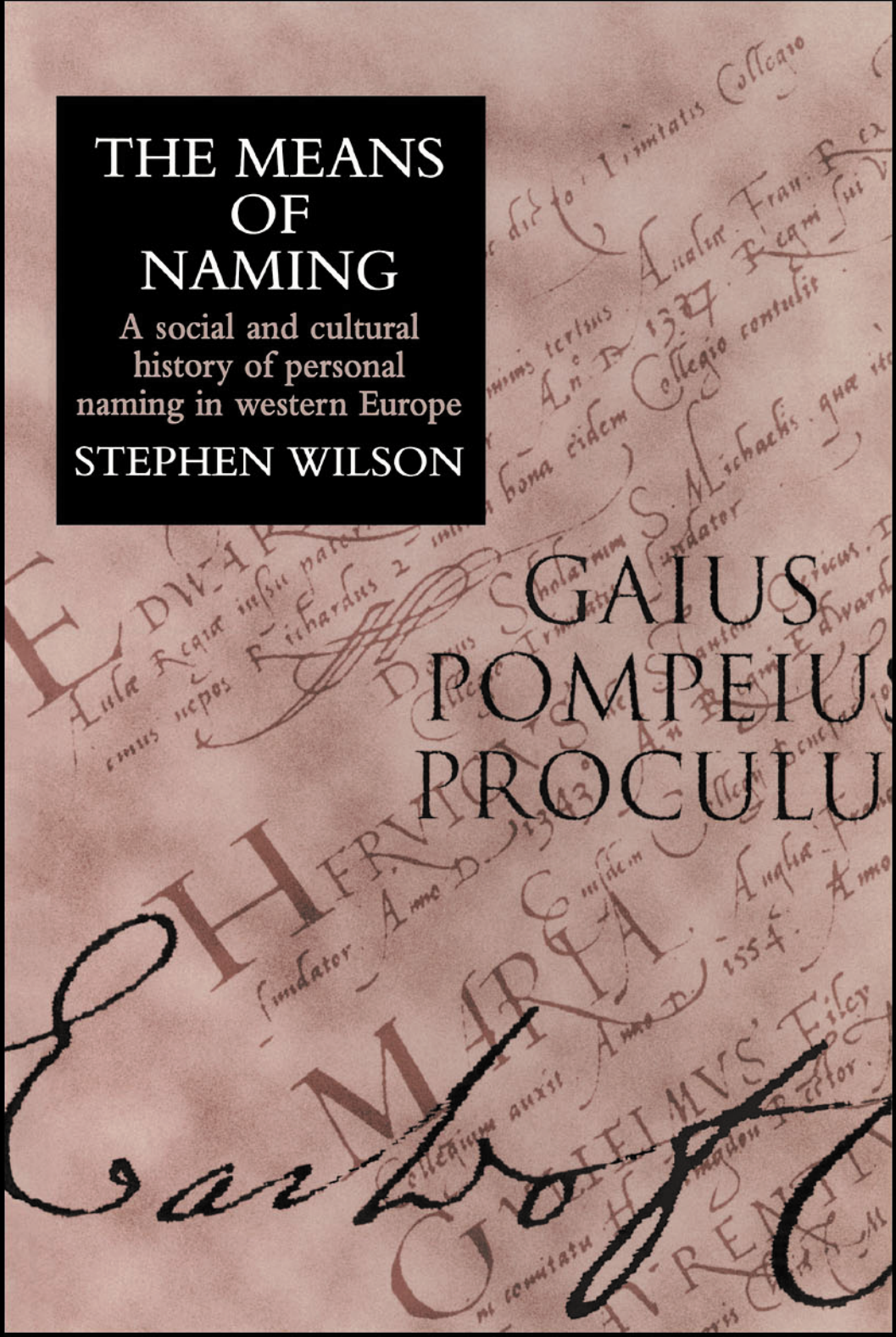
THE MEANS OF NAMING

A social and cultural history of personal naming in western Europe

STEPHEN WILSON



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To my mother

"For love of unforgotten times"
Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses*

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Preface

> A historian aware of the difficulties of his métier…does not decide readily to retrace in a few hundred pages an extremely long evolution, obscure in itself and moreover insufficiently known.[1]

Most historians have not been very interested in the names of those whose lives and activities they study. "These people are little more than names" is a typical dismissive comment.[2] Where more information about characters from the past is available, historians get names wrong; they modernize their spelling or translate them into their own language; they invent names that the people concerned never had. While convenient and familiar, such procedures in effect tamper with historical evidence in a way that would not be acceptable in other circumstances. Even historians of the family until very recently either ignored the fact that their subjects had names or interpreted the thinking behind their choice from a purely modern perspective.

However, the need for serious name studies has long been recognized and acted on by scholars in other fields, notably in philology and social anthropology, though comprehensive accounts are missing. "It is unfortunate", wrote Pitt-Rivers in 1976, "that there is yet no anthropological account of the history of naming systems in Europe."[3] This book seeks to meet that need, though it looks only at Britain, France and Italy, and it must be regarded as an essay in a field which still remains very patchily worked. Medieval names attracted a fair degree of scholarly interest earlier in this century; and Roman names have been adequately covered more recently. But investigation of early modern and modern names has only just begun, with the development of a special interest in the topic in France among historians (and some sociologists) from around 1980. Little work has been done in Britain. Though partly based on original research, this book relies mainly on the work done by others,

which is acknowledged in the notes and bibliography. Its shortcomings are its own.

As its title indicates, the book is about the means of naming, that is the ways in which individuals were named rather than the meaning of names in the old-fashioned etymological sense. It is very much, however, about the meaning of names in a much broader sense, and it derives from the conviction that to elucidate this is essentially a task for the historian.

Linguisticians and philosophers have clearly separated words and names. For John Stuart Mill, proper names were "meaningless marks set upon things [or persons] to distinguish them from one another".[4] Or, as Camille Jullian put it in 1919, names are "sterilized words", words that have lost their original meanings and have come to be employed as simple labels.[5] Put yet another way, "words connote and names denote". A name "has no lexical meaning, or rather…whatever lexical meaning it may have had, or still retains, does not interfere with its denotative function". Thus Stella is the girl next door and not the Latin name for a star, when she is referred to; Baker is the name of her father, who happens to have inherited that family name, and who may be a chartered surveyor or a dustman. But Nicolaisen, whose exposition we follow, has rightly objected that this distinction is simplistic. Instead of an absolute contrast, there is a continuum: "Words which have become names never totally cease to be words, nor can names ever fully deny their lexical origins."[6] Were this not the case, for example, the vast repertoire of children's nicknames making word-play with other names would be impossible.

Moreover, there are meanings and meanings. One should not confuse the absence of lexical meaning in a name with total lack of meaning.[7] Names of all kinds have associations, flavours; they are evocative, and carry messages that are no less powerful for being ambiguous. Novelists, poets, advertisers, and creators of names for film stars and other performers are expert in these meanings of names. They know that Obadiah Slope or Smallweed is a suitable name for an unattractive character; that sonnets addressed to Pamela or Cynthia sound more serious than ones to Molly or Nell; that Parson's Mead or The Beeches will sell houses or attract elderly people more than Pigg Lane or The Four Winds; that Gary Grant has more appeal than Alexander Archibald Leach, and Mario Lanza than Alfredo Arnold Cocozza.

Nicolaisen also points out that there are onomastic fields, or sets of names appropriate in particular contexts. Thus "in the naming of children, parents depend on a conventionally accepted" repertoire of personal names, from which few depart.[8] This is largely different from the repertoire of names for animals or houses. Within the personal name repertoire there are names for boys and names for girls, few of which overlap; and all names have a penumbra of connotations. It is these which are significant in guiding choice and not the literal meaning of the name. How many parents calling their baby girls Cynthia in the 1930s to the 1950s in the USA and the UK wished to give them one of the titles of the Greek goddess Artemis? How many had read the Elegies of

the Roman poet Sextus Propertius relating to his mistress of that name? And, if they had, would they have named their dear ones after a woman presented there as both promiscuous and cruel?

As Zelinsky expressed it in 1970, "each forename is a one-word poem", but he added "in an undecipherable language",[9] which is not really true. The meanings are complex, multiple and shifting, as the example of Cynthia shows, but they are not totally obscure. Names, moreover, like other words, 'only have meaning…in relation to other names".[10] They are part of a system. First names or forenames are distinct from second or family names, which are distinct again from nicknames, though each also interconnects with the others. Different particular names have belonged to these different categories at different times. Indeed, the categories themselves have evolved. So names are connotative, but in a way that requires social and historical analysis to explain. And beyond individual names, naming systems must be described and analyzed.

Names identify individuals and are often the focus of a person's sense of identity, but the name also "defines an individual's position in his family and in society at large; it defines his social personality".[11] In other words, it classifies a person. Zonabend writes that the name is "a mnemonic tool whose function is to mark out the different fields of reference of the society in question: the kinship field, the social field, the symbolic field", placing the individual in each.[12] So, to take the modern European or North American name, the family name attaches the person to a family as a legitimate child; the first name or names may indicate place and roles within the family; a nickname may in addition say something about the status and past behaviour of the person or the family. Different functions may be more important in different kinds of society. In "traditional" societies individuation may be less stressed; in modern societies more. In some societies names may be more obviously central to and expressive of the total structure than in others. Among the Iatmul of New Guinea, for example,

> the naming system is indeed a theoretical image of the whole culture and in it every formulated aspect of the culture is reflected. Conversely, we may say that the system has its branches in every aspect of the culture and gives its support to every cultural activity. Every spell, every song…contains lists of names. The utterances of shamans are couched in terms of names… Marriages are often arranged in order to gain names. Reincarnation and succession are based upon the naming system. Land tenure is based on clan membership and clan membership is vouched for by names.[13]

The situation in Europe was not so far removed from this.

Names may also register progress through the life cycle, with appropriate changes of names at puberty, marriage, death of father and so on. In all

societies, too, and more so in complex ones, a single individual is known by a variety of names depending on the role he or she is playing and the milieu of reference. So there will be one name used by close relatives of origin, another by spouses and lovers, another by children, another by friends, another in public, another at work, and so on. Again, names here serve as a kind of social map, placing individuals in the broader multi-dimensional landscape.

But, as we have stressed, naming systems and categories themselves change and develop and they must therefore be investigated historically and in the long term. We shall therefore begin with Ancient Rome and take the story through the Middle Ages, when the modern European system evolved, down to the present.

We have already implicitly broached questions of terminology, which are problematic given the long time-span. In this book we will use terms employed by contemporaries themselves, where these are appropriate or necessary, as with the Ancient Roman system. We will also use our own objective terms. The modern "Christian name" and "surname" will generally be avoided. First, we will be dealing with situations in which the modern dual-category name is not operative, where people have only single names or sometimes more than two. Secondly, we need to distinguish between names that come first and names that have a specific Christian meaning or origin. Where more than one name is given, therefore, "first name" will be used for the former, while "Christian" will be reserved for the latter. Then the other name, which becomes the family name, is best designated as the "second name" and then the "family name". The English "surname" can be confused with the French "surnom", which is a nickname. For second names that are not hereditary we sometimes use the established term "by-name", keeping "nickname" on the whole for unofficial names used in addition to official ones, which means in the modern context in addition to the first and the second or family name. For additional first names, we use "second first name" or later "middle name". All this will, it is hoped, be clear in practice. A glossary of other technical terms is provided.

We discuss the issues of documentation through the book, but a general point in this area may be made here. For much of the historical period, we only have access to official recorded names. These are themselves significant, but they may not be the names in everyday use. We have earlier glimpses but only in the modern period is name usage reasonably clear.

I have incurred debts in writing this book. For providing information and material I am grateful to Edward Acton, James Casey, Richard Gordon, Oliver Logan, Neil MacMaster, Jane Martindale and especially René Lévy. Norman and Sarah Crowder kindly supplied me with the Crowder-Woodward and Wylie-McDougall genealogies, which they have researched. David Harris and Sue Julier of the Inter-Library Loan department of the University of East Anglia dealt patiently and efficiently with my many requests for often abstruse items. Helena Spurrell word-processed a good part of the manuscript.

PART I

Ancient Rome

CHAPTER ONE

The name system: individual and family

We know more about the names of ancient Romans than those of many other historical societies as a result of what has been called their "epigraphic habit".[1] The Romans liked to place inscriptions on buildings, on statues, at shrines and on tombs, paying honour to or commemorating particular people. These individuals' full names were inscribed, and on monuments so were those of the persons who had erected them. Indeed the name of the commemorator was frequently more prominent that that of the commemorated, since it was the duty of heirs to put up tombstones and to show that they had done so. Monuments were usually in durable stone, and over 300,000 inscriptions are known from all over the Roman Empire and from most periods. Inscriptions have been widely and ingeniously used by historians to investigate different aspects of Roman society, starting with naming practices.

Of course, the evidence of inscriptions can be misleading. Most are from Italy and from the first and second centuries AD, leaving other places and times underrepresented. Again, some people, some classes of people, were much more likely to have inscriptions made than others, most obviously those with something to boast about and those who could afford to pay a stone-cutter. So the rich and famous are more likely to have their names recorded than the poor and the obscure; men more likely than women; Latins than Greeks. The upwardly mobile, as we should say, seem also to have been especially anxious to record their successful ascent of the slippery pole. Freed slaves and new provincial citizens particularly wanted to have their new names recorded, while those who had already made it, whether high aristocrats or ordinary free-born proletarians, were less interested. But with these caveats inscriptions are a marvellous source of information and may be complemented by literary material. What do both tell us about Roman names?

The *tria nomina*

As every schoolboy used to know, the Romans had three names, the *tria nomina,* for example Gaius Julius Caesar, the Dictator; Marcus Tullius Cicero, the orator; or Quintus Horatius Flaccus, the poet. All these three lived in the first century BC when this classic system was firmly established and legally prescribed. Roman citizens were officially registered in this style, together with the all-important filiation indicating their fathers and even grandfathers or great-grandfathers, and the tribe or voting district to which they belonged. So Cicero's full official name was Marcus Tullius Marci filius Cornelia Cicero, Marcus being also his father's name and Cornelia his tribe. This would all usually have been abbreviated to M.Tullius M.f.Cor. Cicero.

Of the three elements of the name proper, the first was known as the *praenomen* and was a man's personal given name; the second, known as the *nomen* or *gentilicium,* placed him in his *gens* or kinship group; and the third, the *cognomen,* was either a personal nickname or epithet acquired during a man's lifetime or an inherited name indicating a branch within the wider kinship group or clan. So by 200 BC the large *gens Cornelia* (distinct from the tribe of the same name) was divided into a number of branches, whose members were called Cornelii Cethegi, Cornelii Lentuli, Cornelii Scipii, and so on.

Much ink has been used to account for this supposedly unique Roman system of nomenclature. Where did it come from? When and why did the Romans adopt it? Given the paucity of evidence before about 200 BC, any answers to these questions must be mainly speculative, but some things one can say. First, other three-name systems have existed and do exist in other parts of the world. Secondly, it seems reasonably certain that originally Romans did have single names like other Indo-European peoples. "As to names", Appian wrote in the second century AD, "Roman citizens formerly had only one each; afterwards they took a second, and not much later, for easier recognition, there was given to some of them a third."[2] Livy's *Histories* and other evidence confirm that a two-name system of *praenomen* plus *gentilicium* predated the three-name system at Rome and in other areas of central Italy from the sixth century BC. It seems that the Romans developed a more complex nomenclature as their society became more complex and as they developed a powerful and expansionist state. Having two and then three names was a mark of social distinction, as it had been among the Etruscans from whom the Romans borrowed much, and it became a privilege of citizens. At the same time the *tria nomina,* carefully recorded by officials in five-yearly censuses, served the interests of the state, facilitating the task of recruiting soldiers, taxing and arranging elections among growing numbers of citizens. "Easier recognition" was essential to the functioning of Roman society, and nowhere more so than in the city of Rome itself, whose population grew rapidly in the last two centuries BC to reach around a million by the

first century AD. One must add that the *tria nomina* were especially characteristic of the Roman Republic and its participatory political system and tended to die out when that was replaced by the authoritarian Empire.

The nineteenth-century German historian Theodor Mommsen believed that Rome's political bias was reflected in the uniform and limited style of Roman names (nearly all ending in *-us*) and their restricted stock, which he contrasted with "the luxuriant and poetical fullness of those of the ancient Greeks"[3] This restraint is never more obvious than with the *praenomen*.

Praenomina

Exhaustive trawls of literature and inscriptions have yielded 64 known *praenomina,* but in practice this total should be greatly scaled down. The unknown author of a book on names written in the first century AD said that there were about 30 and half this number were in common use. As we have seen, the commonest *praenomina* were usually abbreviated when placed with other parts of the name: A. for Aulus; M. for Marcus; T. for Titus; C. for Gaius; Cn. for Gnaeus, and so on. The last two incidentally show the great age of *praenomina,* since they refer to a time when these names were spelled with C.

There is no doubt that in the Republican period the *praenomen* was a real personal name. It was bestowed shortly after birth; it always came first in the order of a man's names; and it was used to address him and to refer to him either alone or in combination with one of his other names. Romans themselves, like Varro, believed that *praenomina* originally had a meaning and were chosen by parents for their children for this reason. So a Manius was born *mane* or in the morning; a Lucius *luci* or at dawn; while a Marcus was born in March. These sound like folk etymology, or explanations invented after the fact, though some *praenomina* clearly do refer to birth circumstances. Postumus was a child born after his father's death, for example; Vopiscus was the sole survivor of twins. Spurius had been a respectable *praenomen* used by consular families in the second century BC, but it acquired the meaning "illegitimate" in the first century, apparently because its abbreviation Sp. was so similar to that for "sine patre filii" or "without a father". Ordinals may once have indicated real birth order, though, if so, it is hard to see why Quintus and Sextus should have become the most common.

Other *praenomina* were wish-names or names aimed at giving protection. It has been argued that both Lucius and Marcus really mean "bright" or "renowned", while Gaius expressed the "joy" of parents at their child's advent. Servius, a name which later fell into disuse, meant "protected". Other names suggest a link with the ancestors, and perhaps the idea, common elsewhere, that the new-born replaced or reincarnated a

past member of the family. So Aulus may mean "little grandfather", and Manius may be related to the Maniac or spirits of the dead.

The choice of *praenomina* also had geographical and social dimensions. Many originated in particular areas of Italy, though they lost their ethnic flavour in time. Again, certain names/"belonged" to particular aristocratic families. So Caeso was used in the early Republic by the Fabii and then from around 200 BC became almost a monopoly of the Quinctii. Appius was especially associated with the Claudian *gens,* even being used to designate public works and monuments for which they had been responsible: the via Appia (Appian Way), the acqua Appia (Appian aqueduct), the forum Appii. Another rare aristocratic *praenomen* was Nero, of which only three examples appear in Republican inscriptions. The future emperor took the name when he was adopted by his uncle Claudius in AD 50. It had been the *praenomen* of his grand-uncle, consul in 9 BC, though it was also used as a *cognomen* by the Claudii. Such aristocratic *praenomina* were rarely abbreviated and some, like Appius, were not transmitted to emancipated slaves as most *praenomina* were.

Sometimes particular *praenomina* were avoided by families. Marcus Manlius, who saved the Capitol from being taken by the Gauls in 390 BC, was subsequently condemned to death on a charge of sedition and flung from the Tarpeian rock. According to Livy, following this disgrace to the family, "the Manlian *gens* made a decree forbidding anyone henceforth to bear the name Marcus" and no patrician member subsequently did.[4] Marcus was banned later for the Antonii and Lucius for the Claudii in similar circumstances.

Not only was the stock of *praenomina* in common use very small, but of those used an even smaller number greatly predominated over the others. Of the seventeen appearing more than ten times in Republican inscriptions, six or seven appeared over a hundred times and two, Lucius and Gaius, over five hundred times. Families habitually used only a few *praenomina* and the choice became more restricted over time. Under the Republic it was usual for the eldest son to have the same *praenomen* as his father but for other sons to have different ones. From the mid first century AD, however, the custom had developed of giving the same *praenomen* to several sons. This meant that uncles and nephews, cousins, and then fathers and sons and brothers, came to have the same *praenomina*. At the same time emancipated slaves and new citizens took the *praenomina* of their masters, patrons or sponsors. The first name therefore lost any distinguishing function it may have had.

One reaction to this situation on the part of great families was to adopt new *praenomina* from their stock of other names. Africanus Fabius Maximus and Paullus Fabius Maximus, brothers who were consuls in 10 and 11 BC, had famous family *cognomina* as their *praenomina*. The younger Pompey similarly had his father's *cognomen* Magnus. More generally, the *praenomen* tended to die out, being replaced by the *cognomen* as the significant personal

name. The *praenomen* was less used in literature in the first century AD. It was omitted from lists of soldiers in the second century AD, and it began to disappear from inscriptions of the lower classes at the same time. Only the high aristocracy clung to the *praenomen* as a badge of rank, and some of them continued to do so down to the end of the Roman Empire.

Gentilicia

The *gentilicium* or *nomen* was a man's most important public name during the Republic and early Empire. *Gentilicia* took a number of forms but nearly all were adjectival in style, ending in -ius, for example, Antonius, Aurelius, Sempronius. Many had specific meanings and probably derived from nicknames: Cassius from *cassus* (empty); Fabius from *faba* (bean); Curtius from *curtus* (short); but such meanings were almost certainly not something that anyone was aware of after the name became established. Similarly some *gentilicia* indicate a particular geographical or ethnic origin. Oppius, Tittius and Tattius are Sabine; Caecina, Maecenas and Spurinna Etruscan. But these associations were again forgotten in time. There were about 150 *gentilicia* in use in the Republican period, but with the expansion of Roman rule and the extension of citizenship, thousands of new ones were added to the original corpus. A recent compendium lists over 10,000.

There is evidence that the *gentilicium* was originally a patronymic, that is a name taken from the father's name. By the classical period, however, it was an authentic hereditary family name and indicated membership of a *gens* or clan. Both men and women took the *gentilicium,* and it was transmitted in the male line. The *gens* in turn derived its name from a real or supposed agnatic ancestor: "the Claudii are descended from a Clausus; the Caeculi honoured as chief of their race the hero Caeculus; the Calpurnii, a Calpus; the Julii, a Julus".[5] Fifty of the *gentes* were believed to be descended from the Trojans, though few of these survived into the historical period. Sixteen of the rural tribes had the names of *gentes,* for example Aemilia, Claudia, Cornelia, suggesting an ancient identity between them. Some of these ancient *gentes* remained undivided down to the time of the later Republic and they had many functions: religious, legal, social and political. They performed rites related to their clan founders. Livy relates, for example, that during the occupation of the Quirinal Hill by the Gauls in 390 BC a member of the Fabian *gens* still went there in ceremonial dress to sacrifice on the appointed day. Much later, according to Ovid and Macrobius, the cult of ancestors was confined to agnatic kin.

Gentes owned property in common, and intestate succession still devolved on the *gens* in later Roman law. The famed authority of the *paterfamilias* over his children was tempered by the requirement that he consult a family council before taking any drastic steps, particularly with implications for

inheritance. This may indeed reflect an earlier situation in which he was the head of a co-resident family grouping, and there is evidence of agnatic relations living together much later on. Incest prohibitions and the pattern of marriage also reflect the strength of agnatic ties. Roman girls married young—in their mid to late teens—a phenomenon usually associated with extended kindreds. Restrictions on who could marry whom operated until the mid third century BC within the agnatic group to the seventh degree, that is all the descendants in the male line from the same great-grandfather; but they did not extend to maternal relatives to the same degree or to kin in the female line. Much later, a woman's male relatives retained some controls over her even after she married. Guardianship over women without immediate kin was entrusted to agnatic clansmen; and women could not make legacies without consulting the same relatives.

When Marcus Manlius was indicted in 384 BC, the fact that he was not supported by his kinsmen was much remarked upon, according to Livy. People recalled that in similar circumstances Appius Claudius had been helped by "all the Claudian *gens*".[6] Modern historians have followed in this track, analyzing politics in the later Republican period in terms of interest groups based on extended kinship ties. The importance of maintaining the *gentilicium* may also be seen in the prevalence of adoption among the childless, and the practice of making a son-in-law marrying an heiress take his wife's family name. The *gentilicium,* in short, reflected the general saliency of the *gens*. It defined the circle of kin",[7] and defined it widely.

The structure of Roman families changed from the later Republican period, and this changed the significance of the *gentilicium*. First, cognatic ties came to supersede the traditional agnatic ones. Most obviously the incest rules were changed, reducing their scope from the seventh to the fourth degree but extending them to all relatives in the male and female lines. *Gentilicia* from the maternal side of a family came to be used as *cognomina* or even as *gentilicia* proper if the in-laws were sufficiently prestigious. The first-born son of M.Crassus Frugi, consul in AD 27, for example, was called Cn.Pompeius Magnus, taking none of his father's names but all those of the great Pompey, who was his mother's great-grandfather. And much more than snobbery was involved in such ploys. A family might only be able to survive through the female line, as was the case with the Julio-Claudian emperors. Cognatic ties and the names that went with them also allowed the development of networks of influence and protection. This change is also evident in a switch in emphasis in ideology from the agnatic *gens* to the broader *domus,* which encompassed physical house, household with slaves and retainers, as well as the circle of cognatic kin and affines.

Secondly, especially among freedmen, there was a tendency for the nuclear family of couple and children to become the main social unit rather than the *gens*. As emancipated slaves, freedmen had no *gens* of their own and were attached as clients to the *gens* of their former masters, taking their *gentilicia*

along with their *praenomina*. But neither of these was their real name, and they both tended to atrophy over the generations as close links with the patrons were lost. With emancipation, too, and the extension of citizenship to provincials, there was a proliferation of persons bearing the great Republican *gentilicia* and especially those of the emperors under whom they had been enfranchised. The devaluation of these *gentilicia* is indicated by the fact that the most common came to be abbreviated in inscriptions: Ael. for Aelius, Cl. for Claudius, and so on.

The third development was the hiving-off of branches of the *gens* through the device of adopting *cognomina,* which takes us to the third name.

Cognomina

The *cognomen* was the last element in the full Roman name to become established. The first definite example is found in a funeral encomium dating from around 300 BC, and the *cognomen* did not become common in inscriptions until a century later. But, since the man referred to in the encomium, L.Cornelius Scipio Barbartus, already has a double *cognomen,* it is clear that the process of name formation must have begun much earlier. Among the consuls recorded by Livy for the years 467–408 BC about two-thirds have *cognomina,* and among those for 400–357 BC, 85 per cent. *Cognomina* may have been interpolated here from a later period, but it is unlikely that all or even most of them were and the figures clearly indicate a trend. By the period 222–146 BC, when information is more reliable, over 85 per cent of consuls have one *cognomen* and around 10 per cent have two. Of censors over the same period, more than 90 per cent have one and 10 per cent two *cognomina*. Having long been customary and being "firmly established" in inscriptions by the mid second century BC, *cognomina* were, however, still omitted from official documents, and especially laws and decrees of the Senate, down to the second century BC. They began to appear in such documents around 120 BC, "becoming regular only in the age of Cicero",[8] when they also had to be registered with the other names.

Cognomina originated among the aristocracy and were for long confined to this group. Some plebeian *gentes* indeed, like the Antonii, made a point of not adopting them. At first they were personal nicknames. Many of the *cognomina* of the oldest families relate to individual attributes, moral and physical. Among the former, for example, are Cato (prudent), held by M.Porcius Cato, the censor of 184 BC; Pius, earned by one of the Metelli for his piety towards his father; and Severus (strict), borne by a tribune of the plebs, Q.Varius Severus, in 90 BC. Less pleasant characteristics were also preserved, for example Varro and Brutus, both of which mean stupid. Physical characteristics were more commonly alluded to, both neutral and complimentary like Cincinnatus (curly-haired), Pulcher (beautiful, noble) or

Rufus (red or red-haired), but more frequently uncomplimentary. So we have consuls from the Caecilii Metelli and the Cornelii Scipiones in 142 and 222 BC called Calvus (bald-head); members of the latter family called Nasica (big nose); an emperor called Galba (fat belly); and another called Nerva (sinew or penis). The list could go on: Crassus (fat); Scaevus or Scaevola (left-handed); Macula (with moles); Varus (bow-legged); Caecus (blind). The elder Pliny gives a long list of *cognomina* relating simply to defects of the eyes. Bad habits could also earn their special names: Aleator (dice-player); Bibulus (drunkard); Cunctator (ditherer). The paradox has often been noted that such pejorative names became in time a mark of noble birth, proudly adopted and passed on to descendants. This reverses the usual way that complimentary nicknames were given as a joke to those with the opposite traits, like the dwarf musician in an ode of Propertius called Magnus.[9]

Cognomina had a range of other derivations and meanings. A family might have its native place recalled or its foreign origin underlined; hence Camerinus from the town of Camerinum in Umbria (Sulpicii); Medullinus from Meduluum (Furii Camilli); Regillensis from Regillus, a *cognomen* of the *gens* Claudia, later abandoned. Some of these might later be confused, deliberately or not, with *cognomina* indicating victories won by family members over Italian cities in Rome's early wars. Residence in different districts of the city of Rome might also be indicated, for example Capitolinus borne by the *gens* Manlia; or Aventinensis borne by the *gens* Genucia. These also might be lent more fanciful meanings, as we shall see.

There were also occupational *cognomina:* Pictor (painter); Faber (smith); Pollio (polisher of arms); Metellus (mercenary), for example. Pliny the Elder claimed that

> the earliest *cognomina* were derived from agriculture: Pilumanus belonged to the inventor of the pestle for grinding corn (pilum pistrinis); Piso came from pounding corn (pisendo); and again families were named Fabius (bean) or Lentulus (lentil) or Cicero (chick-pea), if one of them was the best grower of some particular crop. One of the Junii was called Bubulcus because he was very good at managing oxen.[10]

All kinds of other objects and animals provided *cognomina:* Scipio (staff); Dolabella (pick-axe); and so on; and they were also derived from both *praenomina* and *gentilicia*.

Sometimes *cognomina* originated in a particular incident or event that seemed striking or representative. Livy relates that Titus Manlius fought in single combat with a Gaul in 361 BC, killing his opponent and taking the chain from around his neck: "Amidst the rude banter thrown out by the soldiers in a kind of verse was heard the *cognomen* Torquatus (the man with a chain or necklace), and thereafter this epithet was adopted as an honoured

cognomen."[11] According to Suetonius, the later emperor Caligula gained his *cognomen* as a child "from an army joke, because he grew up among the troops and wore the miniature uniform of a private soldier, including the *caligula,* or half-boot."[12] In some cases, such explanations are clearly later rationalizations or legends placing a heroic gloss on a name more mundanely acquired.

Livy tells again, for example, how C.Mucius failed in an attempt to assassinate the king of Clusium in 508 BC. When arrested he placed his hand on the sacrificial altar, allowing it to be burned off "in order to show how cheaply Romans regarded their bodies" in warfare. He was thereupon freed and was "afterwards known as Scaevola, from the loss of his left hand".[13] As we have seen, Scaevola is more likely to mean simply left-handed. Similarly, tradition had it that M.Manlius received his *cognomen* Capitolanus for his exploit in saving the Capitol; but the name is found among the Manlii and other *gentes* before 390 and almost certainly refers to place of residence. Divine intervention was invoked to explain the *cognomen* Ahenobarbus, borne by a branch of the Domitii, from whom the emperor Nero was descended. The founder of this branch, L.Domitius, had a vision of Castor and Pollux foretelling the Roman victory at Lake Regillus in 498 BC. "As a sign of their divinity", Suetonius writes, "it is said that the gods stroked his cheeks, and turned his black beard to a ruddy hue, like that of bronze."[14] His descendants retained both red beard and the name that went with it. Syme shows that this story was invented much later, probably around 35 BC; far from being a very ancient Roman name, Ahenobarbus came from Illyria via the Abruzzi.

M.Manlius Torquatus was given his *cognomen* by the troops. This was not unusual. In a harangue before a battle in the Samnite Wars, M.Valerius referred to "my *cognomen* of Corvinus, which you men have given me with Heaven's sanction".[15] Later many generals were granted honorific *cognomina* related specifically to successful campaigns. The first authentic case seems to be that of Valerius Maximus, who was given the *cognomen* Messala after capturing the city of Messana in Sicily in 263 BC, though both Livy and Plutarch provide earlier examples. Plutarch states that C.Marcius who captured the Volscian city of Corioli in 493 was given the *cognomen* Coriolanus by a vote of the Senate. Later official sanction for such names became normal, and they came to refer to whole conquered nations. So P.Cornelius Scipio was formally granted the *cognomen* Africanus after his defeat of the Carthaginians in 201 BC. Many others followed over the next century and a half: Asiaticus, Macedonicus, Allobrogicus, Gaetulicus. A related practice was the adoption of the name of an office held with distinction. So M.Porcius Cato was given the additional *cognomen* Censorinus. C.Scribonius was known as Curio. The *cognomen* Flaminius used by the Quinctii derives from a member who was *flamen dialis* (a priestly function) in the mid third century BC.

All these *cognomina* were bestowed by other people, but, in exceptional cases, individuals chose their own. The mid-fourth-century dictator L.Manlius Imperiosus incurred widespread hatred, according to Livy, "on account of his *cognomen,* which offended a free state and had been assumed out of pride and ostentation".[16] Another dictator, Sulla, took the name Felix or the fortunate one, and the Senate ratified this in 82 or 81 BC. Similarly Gn. Pompeius (Pompey) gave himself the *cognomen* Magnus. This points forward to the grandiloquent names-cum-titles taken by the emperors, which we will discuss separately. During the Empire, too, emperors took over the function of bestowing honorific *cognomina,* and, in some, cases, of removing them.

New personal *cognomina* were still being coined among the élite in the late Republic and early Empire. Cicero refers, for example, in a letter in 45 BC to Ventidius Bassus adopting the *cognomen* Sabinus in the hope that such a name "with its connotations of ancient virtue" would help him in his canvassing for the quaestorship.[17] Sometimes such *cognomina* were what we would call nicknames, like that of Cicero's friend Atticus, who acquired his because he had lived for a long time in Athens and was a devotee of Greek culture. Cicero also indicates that people remained aware of the "meaning" of established *cognomina*. He often used them as the butt of jokes and attacks in his own speeches and advised others to do the same.

However, by this time most *cognomina* had long been family names. They became hereditary at an early date, in some cases indicating the demarcation and then the hiving-off of branches or segments within a *gens*. This point was well made by Fustel de Coulanges in 1864:

> The Cornelian *gens* was for a long time undivided…all its members alike bore the *cognomen* Maluginensis and that of Cossus. It was not until the time of the dictator Camillus that one of these branches adopted the further *cognomen* Scipio. A little later another branch took the *cognomen* Rufus, which it replaced afterwards by that of Sulla. The Lentuli do not appear till the time of the Samnite Wars, the Cethegi not until the second Punic War. It is the same with the Claudian *gens*. The Claudii remained for a long time united in a single family, and all bore the *cognomen* of Sabinus or Regillensis, a sign of their origin.

There were no branches over seven generations. Only in the eighth do "we see three branches separate, and adopt three *cognomina,* which became hereditary with them. These were the Pulchri, who continued during two centuries; the Centhones, who soon became extinct; and the Nerones, who continued to the time of the Empire."[18] Many other *gentes* went through the same process.

In some cases the careful preservation of a string of *cognomina* reflects a segmentation of a pure agnatic type, where the branches remain firmly and

clearly attached to the trunk from which they successively spring. Among the Cornelii, for example, we have P.Cornelius Scipio Nasica Corculum, *pontifex maximus* in 150 BC. Corculum was a personal *cognomen,* apparently a tribute to his legal learning; actually it meant "little darling". Nasica was a family of the Scipio segment of the Cornelian *gens*. In other cases, the original *gentilicium* might be dropped, the *cognomen* effectively taking its place. So the Caecilii Metelli were always known simply as the Metelli, to which further *cognomina* were added; the Fabii Maximi as the Maximi; the Calpurnii Pisones as the Pisones. Both these cases should be clearly distinguished from the practice found later in the Empire of selecting or accumulating names from both one's father's and one's mother's families. Again, it is a contrast between agnatic and cognatic filiation, though it is true that in the earlier period people could be as selective about the transmission of *cognomina* as they were about other elements of their names.

The double *cognomina* of the Calpurnii Pisones Frugi had great social cachet and were passed on intact through four generations or more down to the mid first century BC. Then a son of L.Calpurnius Piso Frugi, praetor around 112 BC, was adopted by a certain M.Pupius. He took his adopted father's names as was usual but added to them the two famous *cognomina*. His son dropped the Pupius. Despite a further adoption in the next generation, the *cognomen* Frugi continued to appear in three further generations. A younger son in the fifth generation from M.Pupius reverted to the full ancestral name: L.Calpurnius Piso Frugi, adding Licinianus which came from his grandfather's name of adoption.

This takes us to another important function of the *cognomen*. Adoption was not uncommon among the aristocracy in both the Republican and early imperial periods. It ensured the perpetuation of lines among an élite that seems often to have been either unwilling or unable to reproduce itself. Syme comments that "sons of the blood enjoyed no kind of organic or mystical preference".[19] The rule if a child or a man were adopted was that he take the full name of his adopted father adding as a *cognomen* "the *gentilicium* of his natural father with the suffix *-anus* (or *ianus*)".[20] Thus the general L.Aemilius Paulus, who achieved the further *cognomen* Macedonicus after his victory over the king of that country in 168 BC, had two sons. One was adopted by Q.Fabius Maximus and took his names plus that of Aemilianus after his natural father. The other son was adopted by P.Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the elder son of the great Africanus, and he took the name P.Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor. More simply, the future Augustus, originally C.Octavius Thurinus, became C.Julius Caesar Octavianus on being adopted by Caesar, though he soon dropped the reminder of his humble origins.

After the time of Sulla, the rules were less clear-cut or they were not closely followed. M.Valerius Messalla Appianus, consul in 12 BC, was a Claudius Pulcher by birth; adopted by M.Messalla, of an equally aristocratic family, he chose to emphasize his natural family's peculiar *praenomen* in his new

cognomen. The original name of Cicero's friend Atticus was Q.Pomponius; adopted according to the terms of his will by his natural uncle Q.Caecilius, he became officially Q.Caecilius Pomponius Atticus, but he seems hardly to have used this name, continuing to be known as Q.Pomponius or Q.Atticus. Imperial adoptions could lead to especially complex transmissions of names. The emperor Hadrian, P.Aelius Hadrianus, for example, adopted as his heir in AD 138 T.Aurelius Goionius Arrius Antoninus, a man aged 52, who changed his name to T.Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus and succeeded as emperor in the same year as Antoninus Pius. He had in turn adopted his young nephew M.Annius Verus, who took the name M.Aelius Aurelius Verus and was known on becoming emperor as Marcus Aurelius.

Attractive *cognomina* could also become the object of competition among families. The Manlii, to whom the *cognomen* Torquatus "belonged", died out in the early Empire. Augustus granted the name to the Nonii Asprenas, but the Junii Silani also laid claim to it. It was borne by a D.Silanus, consul in AD 53, and by his nephew.

Much of this discussion applies exclusively to the Roman élite. However, from around 100 BC *cognomina* began to be taken up by other inferior social groups, though they did not become general for ordinary citizens and soldiers until the reign of Claudius. New citizens, whether enfranchised foreigners or emancipated slaves, adopted the *tria nomina,* including the *cognomen,* in ways that we will look at later. To a lesser extent free proletarians did the same. The result was a vast multiplication in the number of *cognomina,* and changes in their functions, shapes and meanings. A recent study has shown that under 10 per cent of *cognomina* are found in both the Republican and the late imperial periods. Ninety per cent of the later names are new. Already among the élite of the Republic, the *cognomen* could sometimes serve as the first name. Or the *cognomen* could become the family name, as we have seen in the segmentation process among noble *gentes*. For freedmen and other new citizens, the *cognomen* was usually their original personal name, to which the first two Roman names taken from ex-master, patron or sponsor were a somewhat formal attachment. These various tendencies made the *cognomen* the most important name element.

At the same time the form of *cognomina* changed. There always had been more variety in the style of *cognomina* than in that of the other names. Suffixes in *-a, -o, -io* and *-or* (e.g. Cinna, Galba, Seneca; Cato, Cicero; Buccio, Pollio; Nicanor, Pictor) are found alongside the more familiar in *-us* in the Republican period. Later there was even more diversity. A greater foreign element, especially Greek, was introduced; participle names like Clemens or Crescens appear; and a wider range of suffixes is found. The suffix *-ianus,* previously almost restricted to adopted persons, became very common, for example; also suffixes in *-lus*. In general shorter forms gave place to longer ones, especially diminutives. So alongside the older Fronto, one finds Frontonius

and Frontonianus; alongside Firmus one finds Firminus, Firmianus and Firminianus; and so on. Kajanto lists 19 variants on Maximus.

In terms of meaning, the range also increased. Pejorative *cognomina* of the old type tended to die out, and there was an opposite preference for complimentary and/or protective names. Felix was by far the most popular *cognomen* among legionaries in the imperial period. Names referring to the body accounted for 35 per cent of the total in the Republican but only around 12 per cent in the imperial period. Names referring to mental or psychological qualities, by contrast, increased. Wish-names like Felix, Faustus, Fortunatus and Victor became much more popular, rising from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. Theophoric names or those giving religious protection, like Martialis or Saturninus, also increased from under 1 per cent to 5 per cent. There were also *cognomina* derived from other names; ethnic, geographical and occupational *cognomina;* ones taken from flora and fauna; ones taken from the calendar.

Women's names

Nearly all that we have written so far applies exclusively to men, who alone took part in public life and had full civic and legal rights. In the Republican period, women usually had only one name, a feminized version of the *gentilicium,* such as Caecilia, Claudia or Cornelia.

The absence of female *praenomina* has puzzled scholars. They are virtually unknown under the Republic, and only 70–80 exist in the 200,000-odd inscriptions from the Empire. It seems that female *praenomina* did exist in archaic times but that they fell out of use. One indication is the use of Gaius and Gaia as type names for husband and wife in the Roman marriage formula. Women retained *praenomina* in other parts of Italy, notably Umbria and Etruria, down to the early years AD, and the few *praenomina* from later times tend to be borne by rural provincial women and those of inferior status. Where they are used, *praenomina* are feminized versions of the male names, Lucia, Quinta and Gaia being the most common. They were also abbreviated.

The emphasis on the *gentilicium* as the female name par excellence was apparently specific therefore to the Roman élite, though the custom may then have been followed in other parts of society. "It is as if the Romans wished to suggest very pointedly", Finley wrote, "that women were not, or ought not to be genuine individuals but only fractions of a family."[21] This is made very clear where the *gens* has segmented, but the segment has not (yet) achieved its own appropriate female name. So one gets a woman called Cornelia Scipionum gentis. The *gentilicium* was a label placed on women to be used in the game of dynastic marriages and successions. Her link with her original *gens* could never be broken unless

she changed her name, which was virtually unknown, and for the family into which she married she remained a permanent reminder and advertisement of their alliance.

By this means, too, daughters could perpetuate lines where male succession failed, as it often did among the late Republican aristocracy and most notably in the Julio-Claudian imperial house. Augustus, we have seen, was adopted by C.Julius Caesar, who had no son. Caesar's sister Julia (1) had married M.Atius Balbus, and their daughter Atia married C.Octavius, Augustus' father. So Caesar was Augustus' uncle in the maternal line. Augustus had one child, a daughter, Julia (2), who was married off three times in succession. From one of her marriages—to M.Vipsanius Agrippa—there were children, two boys called Caesar, a daughter, Julia (3), and two named after Agrippa. After the two Caesars died, Augustus eventually adopted Tiberius as his heir. Tiberius was the son of Augustus' second wife Livia Drusilla and of Ti.Claudius Nero and had his father's name. He was forced to divorce his wife and marry Julia (2), but this marriage produced no children. Immediate succession to Tiberius went to a grandchild of Julia (2), however. Her daughter by Agrippa, Agrippina (1), had married Germanicus Caesar, the son of Nero Claudius Drusus and Antonia Minor, who was the daughter of Octavia (1), Augustus' sister and her second husband M.Antonius. The child of Agrippina (1) and Germanicus, Gaius Caesar Caligula, was thus doubly descended from Augustus' father in the female line. Caligula was succeeded by his uncle, Ti.Claudius, the brother of Germanicus. Claudius had two daughters, Claudia Antonia and Octavia (2), and was succeeded by his stepson, Nero, whom he had adopted. Nero was the natural son of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and Agrippina (2), who was Germanicus' daughter and Claudius' niece and fourth wife. Nero married Octavia (2), Claudius' daughter by his third wife and cousin, Messalina, and they in turn had a daughter, Claudia. The rules of succession were not fixed, and actual succession as emperor depended on circumstance, intrigue and violence, as any reader of Suetonius and Tacitus knows. But it is clear that attempts were continuously made to bind together and to perpetuate the Julian and then the Claudian lines by adoptions, serial polygamy, endogamy and by using and reinforcing succession in the female line. Naming played an important part in these procedures and particularly in the last.

This still leaves the question of individual identification. Numbers of Julias, Antonias and Octavias were as potentially confusing to contemporaries as they are to historians. First, it is clear that the *gentilicium* was in the Republican period also the primary name for address and reference. In his letters Cicero addresses his first wife as Terentia and his second as Publilia. His beloved daughter is Tullia or Tulliola, a pet version. If he wants to identify other women more closely, he uses their relationship to fathers or husbands; for

example, Annia, "the daughter of C.Annus, the senator"; Auria, "your brother's wife"; "the two Lucretias, daughter of Tricipitinus and wife of Conlatinus". Within families a number of descriptive distinguishing names were used: Major and Minor, as for boys; ordinals: Secunda, Tertia, and so on; and pet names. Here Posilla and Paulla, Paula or Polla, seem to have been especially common as names for little girls.

Some women in the late Republican period did have more than one name. The daughter of Q.Caecilius Pomponianus Atticus was called both Caecilia and Attica. Varro mentions a woman with large breasts called Mammosa, which sounds like an equivalent of male corporeal *cognomina*. But the use of *cognomina* proper by women, whether inherited or personal, was virtually unknown at this time, and we are dealing here with privately used alternative names or nicknames. So the mistress of M.Antonius, the triumvir, was an actress called Cytheris, whose "real" name was Volumnia, as an ex-slave of Volumnius Eutrapelus. Stage-names were obviously not typical, but slaves and freedwomen, like their male counterparts, did at this time often take the master's or patron's name, usually in addition to their own individual name. The order of these names was quite frequently inverted, for example Euclesis Cestia, Danais Annia, Grata Plotia.

From the time of the early Empire, upper-class women began to be given and to inherit *cognomina,* for example Aemilia Lepida and Corellia Hispulla; and women with two or three names become frequent in inscriptions and literature. On birth registers mothers and female children are "always designated by two names", the *gentilicium* plus a personal name "used like a *cognomen*".[22] Women in Pliny's letters nearly all have two names, and he refers to them by their *cognomina* alone or their *gentilicia* plus *cognomina*. In the later Empire, women joined in the accumulation of names that characterized the upper classes.

In the Republican period it is obvious that a woman did not change her name at marriage; it remained the *gentilicium*. She might, however, add her husband's name in the genitive; for example, Caecilia Metelli Crassi was the wife of M.Licinius Crassus. There are a few cases also of wives' names preceded by their husbands' *praenomina*. Under the Empire, adding the husband's to the wife's name became more usual. In a late example, a provincial woman of the *gens* Liguria married to C.Albucius Menippus was called Liguria Procilla quae et Albucia. In another case, three of her husband's names, the *gentilicium* and two *cognomina*, were inserted between the wife's own two names: Valeria Tossia Pia Sabina Euhemeria—all in the feminine.

This leads to a final general point in this area: there was a very strong tendency in Roman nomenclature for female names to be derived from male ones. This is true of *praenomina* and *gentilicia,* where there are no distinct female names in the historical period, and also of Latin *cognomina,* most of which are formed by feminizing male exemplars, often with diminutive suffixes as well: Petronilla, Priscilla, Saturnina, Felicitas. Very few *cognomina* were

given to men and women in the same form; and very few female names were without male equivalents. Kajanto lists Amabilis, Elegans, Suavis and a few others. Some names with apparently feminine endings were in fact exclusively male names, like Aquila, Catalina and Pica.

Transmission of names

Under the Republic and the early Empire, the conventions for transmitting names were comparatively simple and reasonably well followed.

As we have seen, the eldest son usually inherited his father's *praenomen,* while the other sons were given different names from the family stock. So Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, consul in 285 BC, had two sons, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Manius Aemilius Lepidus. The first had three sons called Marcus, Lucius and Quintus. The eldest in the line of both brothers had the names Marcus and Manius respectively over at least three generations. Where this rule was in operation, there could be a break in the use of the eldest son's *praenomen,* where an eldest son was childless. This was overcome in some cases by giving the name to a nephew or other relative. Lucius and Quintus Volusius Saturninus were the elder and younger sons of Lucius Volusius Saturninus, consul in AD 3. The former was, it seems, unmarried and certainly without offspring, so his brother called his eldest son Lucius, giving his own name Quintus to his second son. M.Aemilius Lepidus, son of the consul of 46 BC, similarly, had no children. His brother Quintus had children, but they were probably named before their uncle died in 30 BC. Whatever the reason, the next Marcus Aemilius Lepidus was the son of the first's cousin Paullus.

In some families, the eldest son's name was less distinctive, or was given to the sons of younger sons when their first-born uncles did have offspring or the prospect of it. Gaius Licinius Varus, consul in 236 BC, a younger son, gave his son the name Publius, the name of his father, his elder brother and the latter's eldest son, Publius Licinius Crassus Dives, consul in 205 BC. His brothers Marcus and Gaius both called one of their sons Publius, although the consul had a son of the same name. This tendency led eventually to the custom of giving all sons the same *praenomen*. For example, seven members of the immediate family of the emperor Vespasian (AD 69–79) had the *praenomen* Titus: himself, his brother, their four sons and one of their grandsons. As we have noted, this led to the withering away of the *praenomen* as a useful name.

In some families a different convention can be detected: the alternating of *praenomina* from one generation to the next. The rare *praenomen* Caeso occurred in every other generation of the Quinctii Flamini. Another example is found in the family of the emperor Nero, the Domitii Ahenobarbi. Nero's name was originally Lucius; his father, consul in AD

32, was Gnaeus; his grandfather, consul in AD 16, was Lucius again; and so on back for at least another two generations.

The *gentilicium* was of course the family name and was inherited from the father by all legitimate children. The rule was very rarely departed from. Syme mentions a senator of the Augustan period, Postumius Sulpicius, who had his grandmother's *gentilicium*. She belonged to a family otherwise extinct. L.Nonius Asprenas, consul in AD 6, was married to Calpurnia, and they had three sons. The first was called after his father, but the other took the names Nonius Asprenas Calpurnius, thus adopting the *gentilicia* of both father and mother. This became a much more common practice later on.

As we have seen, the *cognomen* was increasingly inherited also, becoming among the aristocracy another family name. The practice of giving different brothers different *cognomina* did survive however. The three sons of Q.Metellus Macedonicus, consul in 143 BC, were called Balearicus, Diadematus and Caprarius. The son of Q.Metellus Balearicus was Q.Metellus Nepos, consul in 98 BC. He gave the name Nepos to his younger son, but the elder was called Celer. Macedonicus had a brother L.Metellus Calvus, consul in 142 BC. His sons were Delmaticus and Numidicus, while the latter's son had the *cognomen* Pius.

From the end of the Republican period, while hereditary *cognomina* became more predominant, selectivity in the transmission of *cognomina* is also evident, and derived *cognomina* began to be used, influenced perhaps by popular usage. So the son of M.Messala Corvinus was called Messalinus from his father's *gentilicium,* and his daughter was Messalina, the notorious wife of the emperor Claudius.

Cognomina were also taken from the mother's side of the family. The best-known example from the early Empire is that of the emperor Vespasian or Vespasianus himself, whose name derived from his mother Vespasia. He handed on his *cognomen* to his elder son, the future emperor Titus, while the younger again derived his *cognomen* Domitianus from his mother's name Domitilla. Both these *cognomina* passed in the next generation to the elder branch of the Flavian family. Here the saliency given by the imperial role overruled patrilineal descent. But again this represented a more general trend, too, with *cognomina* being chosen more generally from both sides and not necessarily passing in the main male line—all indicative of a weakening of the sense of lineage.

CHAPTER TWO

Name and status

Rome was a society of legally constituted ranks or orders. First, there were citizens and non-citizens. Citizens were registered by the censors in five classes according to wealth below which were the propertyless proletarians. There were three distinct grades within the first class: senators, equestrians and decurions. Although membership of these grades was not legally hereditary, in practice it was. A tiny élite monopolized power, wealth and high culture. But there was a degree of social mobility which varied from period to period without ultimately upsetting the overall framework. The élite did not reproduce itself biologically, and "new men" had therefore to be recruited. Factors countervailing the hereditary tendency in the Republican period were the need to get elected to office and generally the requirement that high office be maintained in a family for it to retain high rank and this was not a foregone conclusion. In the imperial era, emperors often favoured those from outside the élite who were more dependent on them, but they were unable to do without the aristocracy. Below the citizens were free-born non-citizens and a large number of slaves. Rome was peculiar among slave-owning societies in that emancipation was readily granted, and there was a constant flow therefore of ex-slaves into the citizen body. This body was also greatly increased as Rome expanded its frontiers. At all levels, status was expressed in nomenclature.

Aristocratic names

Members of the old aristocracy were very conscious of their ancestry. Masks of the dead were kept in family shrines and these embodied the family names. Livy refers to generals acquiring "glorious *cognomina* for their illustrious families and inscriptions for their funeral masks".[1] An aristocrat was also clearly recognizable to others by name. "I have only to read the list of candidates' names", Cicero declared in a speech, "and I shall say: This man

is of consular, that man of praetorian family."[2] A century and a half later Tacitus refers to "the great names" of Scipio, Silanus and Cassius, and of Faustus Cornelius Sulla, implicated in a plot against Nero.[3] Attacks on the power of ancient names were a further tribute to that power. Cicero, who was a new man, the first in his equestrian provincial family to hold the consulate, remonstrated in a letter in 50 BC to Appius Claudius Pulcher, who had preceded him as governor of Cilicia, about constructions being put on the fact that he (Cicero) had not gone to meet Appius on taking over from him. It was being suggested that an Appius Claudius deserved such a courtesy from a mere Tullius, but Cicero objected: "Why, even before I had attained the honours which are most magnificent in the eyes of men [i.e. the consulate], those names of yours never excited my admiration as such; no, it was the men who bequeathed them to you that I thought great."[4] The same point is made more fully, explicitly and savagely in Juvenal's *Eighth Satire,* written at the end of the first century AD: "Why should someone be called noble, who is unworthy of his ancestry and distinguished in nothing but his famous name?"[5]

There were divisions within the aristocracy or nobility, also marked by names. The early history of the Republic had been dominated by a conflict between the patricians and the plebeians. Not only were the *gentes* in each grouping labelled by their *gentilicia,* as we shall see, but only the former at first had *cognomina*. Of consuls and military tribunes, offices held by patricians, 68 per cent had three names in the period 467–408 BC, but only 10 per cent of tribunes of the plebs. In the period 400–357 BC, the percentages were 61 per cent and nil respectively. The plebeians broke the patrician monopoly of power and high office in the fourth century BC, and also adopted the *tria nomina*. Indeed, this was one means together with intermarriage by which plebeian *gentes* were incorporated into the patrician élite. All this blurred the original division and there could be genuine uncertainty by the time of the late Republic as to whether a family were patrician or plebeian. This did not mean, however, that the distinction had lost all significance. Patricians still had exclusive control of certain priesthoods and new patrician *gentes* were being created in the time of Augustus. In his speech *Pro Sulla,* Cicero felt obliged to defend himself against the reproach that he was not of patrician origin: "Not all men are able to be patricians and, to tell the truth, they do not even care about it; nor do men of today think that they are your inferiors because they are not patricians."[6] The status, moreover, of most families was obvious from their names. There were two groups within the patriciate: the *maiores* and the *minores*. The former comprised the Aemilii, the Claudii, the Cornelii, the Fabii, the Valerii and possibly the Manlii; among the latter were the Quinctii, the Servilii and the Sulpicii. Leading plebeian *gentes* included the Antonii, the Aquilii, the Caecilii, the Calpurnii and the Flavii. Some *gentes* had both patrician and plebeian branches; others transferred or claimed to

have transferred from the one to the other, usually so that members could become eligible for plebeian posts, notably the tribunate.

All elements of the aristocratic name had cachet, but none more so, after *praenomina* and *gentilicia* had been broadcast via emancipation and enfranchisement, than the *cognomen*. For long, of course, it had been a privilege of the aristocracy, and at first of the patriciate. We have seen that early plebeian office-holders can be distinguished by their lack of *cognomina*. Indeed, these were later interpolated in the *fasti* (lists of major officeholders) to bestow retrospective high status. Several leading plebeian *gentes,* for example the Antonii and the Fufidii, still had no *cognomen* in the late Republican period, though by this time that peculiarity had itself become a distinctive sign.

Usage is most significant, too. In Cicero's time, aristocrats were "in formal contexts…both referred to and addressed by *praenomen* plus *cognomen,* and in less formal circumstances by *cognomen* alone". So, in writing, Cicero refers to C.Cotta for C.Aurelius Cotta, to P.Dolabella for P.Cornelius Dolabella, and so on. By contrast, men of lesser status were referred to by *praenomen* plus *gentilicium* or by *cognomen* alone, if familiar. A man of inferior standing could be admitted within the circle of the highest social class by naming him in the aristocratic manner. This is something that Cicero, himself, ardently desired and earned by his fame as an orator and his achievement of the consulate. In his letters, he nearly always refers to himself as M.Cicero and not M.Tullius, unless he is writing to close friends and family, and in the later part of his career he was usually addressed as M.Cicero also by other upper-class men. As Adams concludes, "the regular use of *cognomina* was…a mark of aristocratic society rather than of reciprocal address between equals of other classes."[7] This mode of naming was characteristic of a relatively small, relatively informal, unprofessionalized élite, most of whose members knew each other. It was also a relatively open élite, absorbing new men so long as they conformed to its customs. And the new men, like Cicero, could usually hardly wait to do so.

Nevertheless, uncertainties about status were present and never more so than in the period of "revolution" around the end of the Republic and the start of the Empire. The old aristocracy lost its independence, though it retained social prestige and some political power in the new order. Many families had been decimated in the purges of Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and Domitian. The last emperor of noble stock was Galba in AD 69. But the process of biological wastage and rapid turnover of political personnel were longer-term and more decisive factors. Only two-fifths of consuls in the last two centuries of the Republic had a consular father, "only a third of consuls had a consular son."[8] During the Empire there was a similar movement, extending further down the scale of the élite. Senators lost their monopoly of high civil and military offices to equestrians and others. At the same time geographical expansion opened up the élite, and an international aristocracy emerged. In these

circumstances, the old naming conventions were profoundly affected in ways that we will examine more generally later. Immediately, two phenomena may be briefly pointed out.

First, aristocratic names were usurped. Cicero refers to "men of lower rank forcing their way into another family of the same name".[9] Occasionally such men may have been related to the noble houses whose names they used, but often the name was simply assumed without any justification though a fraudulent genealogy might be constructed to go with it. Another ploy used by those on the ascent was to drop the *gentilicium,* which betrayed their humble origin. M.Vipsanius Agrippa, a soldier of obscure beginnings, was a friend and associate of Octavius and rose with him. He became consul three times and married first a Claudia Marcella and then Octavius', now Augustus', daughter Julia. His son was called M.Agrippa, before being adopted by Augustus with the name Agrippa Julius Caesar. Such procedures were far more prevalent in the imperial period, when legislation was fruitlessly introduced to ban them.

Titles are an extension of or a substitute for names, when the name alone does not sufficiently proclaim or indicate a person's function or high status. They had not been prominent in the early Republic, but their importance increased with the enlargement, formalization and changing role of the élites. *Vir nobilissimus* or *vir clarissimus* was used for nobles or consulars in the time of Cicero; *splendidus* for senators and equestrians related to them. The title of *equus romanus,* originally purely functional, became an honorific sign of rank. In the Empire titles multiplied, both as adornments of hereditary élites no longer associated by right or in fact with power, paralleling the accumulation of names, and as adjuncts of a much more bureaucratic administration. Senators had the title *clarissimus,* which was extended to their wives and children; equestrian civil servants were rewarded with the titles of *vir inlustris, vir egregius, vir perfectissimus;* praetorians were called *vir eminentissimus;* and so on. By the second century AD, all such titles had become fixed.

Imperial names and titles

The nomenclature of the emperors developed from that of the late Republican aristocrats. We have seen that when C.Octavius was adopted by C.Julius Caesar, he took the latter's name. He later called himself Imperator Caesar and when the Senate voted him the honorific *cognomen* Augustus, he used the three names: Imperator Caesar Augustus. Imperator was a title given to generals between the time of their victories and their triumphs, and in the time of the Civil Wars some like Caesar and Pompey had taken it permanently. It conveyed the idea of authority and could also be used by magistrates. Its use as a *praenomen* was a novelty but one in line with contemporary aristocratic taste.

Caesar, of course, was a *cognomen* of the *gens* Julia, and substitution of the *cognomen* for the *gentilicium* was an extension of élite emphasis on this part of the name. Augustus as a *cognomen* was also in line with a more general tendency to take grandiose names, for example Pompey's Magnus. Augustus, in effect constructed a new name for himself that was both revolutionary and a development of existing trends, all couched in the traditional framework of the *tria nomina*. This symbolized his general policy of conservative revolution.

Nearly all subsequent emperors used these same three elements with variations. Imperator, abbreviated as Imp., became the prime imperial title from the time of Vespasian. Caesar was always used, being also given to the heir to the throne from the time of Hadrian. Augustus, too, was abbreviated. The emperor's personal names were also incorporated into his official name. In some cases, for example, Imp. Caesar Vespasianus Aug. and Imp. Nerva Caesar Aug., the personal name was the *cognomen;* both *praenomen* and old *gentilicium* were dropped or rather replaced by the Augustan imperial *praenomen* and *gentilicium*. Here the old *gentilicium* remained in use as the name given to freedmen and new citizens under imperial aegis: Julius for Augustus and Tiberius; Cocceius for Nerva; Ulpius for Trajan; and so on. With Marcus Aurelius a different option began of retaining the old *tria nomina* and inserting it within the imperial triad.

The early emperors retained the filiation. The fuller version of Augustus' name was Imp. Caesar Divi Juli f. Augustus, i.e. son of the deified Julius. But this form was soon replaced by taking the name of one's predecessor in lieu of real or adopted father, which was a way of claiming and proclaiming legitimate right to the throne. So Trajan took the name of Nerva; and Antoninus Pius of Hadrian. Septimius Severus, who came to the throne in AD 193 after a power struggle, used both the name of his immediate predecessor Pertinax, killed by the troops in that year, and those of a string of earlier rulers, reputable and disreputable, from whom he thus alleged descent: "son of the deified Marcus Aurelius, brother of the deified Commodus, grandson of the deified Antoninus Pius, great-grandson of the deified Hadrian, and great-great-grandson of the deified Trajan".[10]

Emperors also accumulated *cognomina* or pseudo-*cognomina*. These could derive from real military victories like those of Republican generals, but they were not always actively earned. So Marcus Aurelius became Armeniacus, then Parthicus, Germanicus and Sarmaticus. Diocletian had Germanicus and Sarmaticus four times conferred on him; Britannicus and Persicus twice; and Armeniacus, Medicus, Adiabenicus and Carpicus once each. Some of these names or titles were inherited. There were also general laudatory names like Augustus. Trajan received the epithet Optimus in 114; and it was also given to Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. Pius and Felix were used by Commodus, Septimius Severus and Caracalla; Invictus by Commodus and Caracalla. Marcus Aurelius began the custom of adding Maximus to his

triumphal epithets, for example, Parthicus Maximus. The Augustan title Pater Patriae was held by nearly all emperors, and 56 emperors were deified, which meant that they were referred to in posthumous inscriptions as Divus, as we have seen. The title *Dominus Noster,* abbreviated to D.N., was used by Caracalla around 200 and then regularly by Diocletian and his successors, who placed it in front of or instead of Imp.

A number of emperors were known at the time and/or since by nicknames. So C.Caesar Augustus Germanicus was Caligula; and Imp. Caesar M.Aurelius Antoninus Augustus was the proper name of both Caracalla and his successor Elagabolus. These names did not appear in inscriptions, though they are found in literary texts.

Slave names

Rome was a society in which a high proportion of labour was provided by slaves. They performed a great variety of tasks, working in mines, quarries, galleys and other public works and on large agricultural estates but also in households as personal servants, providers of sexual and medical services and secretaries. They acted too as business agents, factors and farm bailiffs for their masters, and as private and public entertainers. Some had considerable independence and were "highly skilled and cultured". Slaves belonged to individuals but also to towns and other bodies and to the State (later the Emperor); some belonged to other slaves. These different activites and positions meant that there was an internal hierarchy of slavery, which gave some a large degree of privilege and power and could lead out eventually to freedom. Slavery was not necessarily thought of as a permanent degrading status. Slaves were obtained in the wars of imperial expansion which continued over centuries from the early Republic to the early Empire; by trading, often exploiting or taking over existing trading structures managed by Greeks, Phoenicians and others; and increasingly in the Empire, when these external sources of supply dried up, by breeding. "Slaves were concentrated in Roman Italy, the heartland of the empire", where there were 2 million at the end of the first century BC out of a total population of 6 million.[11]

In general slaves had a single name, which was followed in inscriptions by that of their owner, either in the genitive case or in adjectival form; for example, Martialis C.Olii Primi or Martialis the slave of C.Olius Primus; Eros Aurelius or Eros belonging to the Aurelii. Surviving slave collars follow the same pattern, reading like the identification tags attached today to pet dogs: "I am called Januarius, I am the slave of Dextrus"; or the slave's name might be omitted: "I am a slave; my master is Scholasticus", in this case followed by the master's address.[12] An early form of slave name was similarly anonymous for the slave: Marci puer, Quinti puer, i.e. Marcus' boy, and so on. These names, often contracted to Marcipor or Marpor, Quintipor, etc., died out

towards the end of the Republic. Varro associated slave anonymity with actual practice and its decline with the expansion in the numbers of slaves: "In a house where there is only one slave, there is need for only one (generic) slave name, but in a house where there are many slaves then particular names are needed."[13] The stress on the master's name and hence on the slave as his or her possession was continued later when slaves were accorded more than one name. Successus Valerianus Publicus, for example, was Successus, formerly the slave of Valerius, now the slave of the State; Anna Liviae Maecenatiana was Anna, slave of Livia, formerly slave of Maecenas. This form followed the usual rules of nomenclature with reference to the owner replacing the filiation and mention of the previous owner following that for adoptees. The slave was clearly placed and his servile status indicated. This was sometimes further emphasized by inserting s. or ser., abbreviations for "servus", after the owner's name.

Certain special categories of slave had distinctive nomenclature. Public slaves belonging to the State or to cities had the status indicator "servus publicus", from which "servus" was frequently omitted: for example, Herodes publicus; Laetus publicus populi Romani. During the Empire, two names were more common, with the second name referring usually to the previous owner who had sold the slave to the State, for example, Fortunatus publicus Sulpicianus; or Bithus publicus Paullianus. The names of slaves of towns and cities could take the same form, but there were several variants. The terms "colonorum" or "coloniae", often abbreviated in the inscriptions and referring to the status of the town, could be used; the name of the town could be added to the slave's name; and the term "vilicus" might be preferred to "servus". So we have Priscus colono. Aquil. s., from Aquileia, or Zosimus municipium Vercellensium vilicus, from Vercelli. Similar reference could be made to previous owners. Both types of public slave could also have their often important occupations attached to their names, something also found among the imperial slaves who were to some extent their successors. Diodumenus publicus aquae Annesis and Laetus publicus populi Romani…aquarius aquae Annionis Veteris both worked for the water services of Rome; Felix arcarius republicae Neapolitanorum was municipal cashier of Naples.

"To the single personal name,…the emperor's slaves added the distinctive mark of status 'Caes(aris) ser(vus)' or 'Aug(usti) vern(a)', or simply 'Aug(usti)' or 'Caes(aris)'" with the "servus" understood. From the Flavian period the form Caes. n.(ostri) ser. became predominant, for example: Victorinus Caes. n. ser.; or Maximus Caes. n. vern.. Since slaves belonged to individual emperors rather than to the imperial household, reference to individual reigning emperors was retained in slave nomenclature (unlike that of imperial freedmen) until the time of Trajan at least. "With the Flavians [too,] the *praenomen* 'Imp(eratoris)' appeared in the slave indication for the first time" and then became regular.[14] Caesaris came to predominate also in slave status indication, with Augusti being used for freedmen. This again reflects a difference in the

position of the two, slaves being attached to the emperor via his private family name, freedmen via his public title or *cognomen*. The distinction was never water-tight, however, and Augusti tended to prevail later with increasing institutionalization of imperial slaves, and with the introduction from the end of Hadrian's reign of the use of Augustus for the reigning emperor and Caesar for the heir. Public and imperial slaves sometimes had second names proper, often names in *-ianus* derived from previous masters but also chosen at will. Public slaves called Aemilianus or Cornelianus seem to have had no links with the noble families concerned, but rather to have been displaying rank by abandoning the single slave name and imitating the nomenclature of the free-born.

The usual status indicator for the slave of a slave was "servus vicarius"; while "liberti servus" signified the slave of a freedman. So the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, the slave and then freedman of a freedman of Nero, was formally Ti.Claudius Epaphroditus lib. servus Epictetus.

How did slaves obtain their personal names, and what kinds of name were they given? Little direct information is available about name-giving. Varro, however, relates that "when three men have bought a slave apiece at Ephesus, sometimes one derives his slave's name from that of the seller Artemidorus and calls him Artemas; another names his slave Ion, from Ionia, the district, because he has bought him there; while the third calls his slave Ephesius, because he has bought him at Ephesus".[15]

Obviously traded or captured slaves would have had names before they became slaves and these might sometimes be retained. Dealers would also bestow names, often ones indicating desirable qualities in their merchandise. Purchasers of slaves might find it convenient to keep a name that a slave already had, so long as it was not too alien or hard to pronounce, or, as Varro suggests, they might wish to exercise their power of possession by imposing a name of their own choice. Slaves bred by owners might be named by them, though again liberality or laziness might leave naming to the natural parents of the child, to the slave family. In all this there would be the constraining element of what was thought to be a suitable slave name.

Some of the principles lying behind the naming of slaves may be inferred from the names themselves, about which we are much better informed, though inevitably it is privileged household slaves, slaves on their way to emancipation about whom we know most. A very few slaves bore original "barbarian" names, such as Banobal, a Phoenician temple slave mentioned by Cicero; or Tiridas; Bargates; Bithus; Lullu. Though slaves often came from the Middle East, especially in the later Republican period, oriental slave names are rare. Often these "real" exotic slave names were translated into Latin names that sounded similar, for example Dorimachus from the Thracian Drimachus or Acme from the Syrian Hacma. More commonly, slaves were given "ethnic" names indicating their real or supposed origin. Names could also be indicative of the slave markets at which slaves were bought, like Varro's Ephesius. Ethnic