

IGNAZIO TANTILLO

MEMMIUS VITRASIVS ORFITUS: *SIGNO* HONORIUS?

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 190 (2014) 271–278

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

MEMMIUS VITRASIVS ORFITUS: *SIGNO HONORIUS*?¹

The senator Orfitus is a familiar figure among scholars of late Roman history: Ammianus Marcellinus left an evocative, albeit ambivalent, portrait of this powerful aristocrat, who was twice *praefectus urbi* (in 353–355/6 and in 357–359) and likely married to an imperial princess². He is also mentioned in a dozen inscriptions that provide his complete name: Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus. Four of them, unfortunately lost – which form a homogenous series of dedications set up in his Roman *domus* by several professional *corporata* when he was at the end of his career –, are believed to add a further onomastic element to the previous ones: his *signum*, Honorius³. He is thus registered in historical and prosopographical works as Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus *signo* Honorius⁴. I strongly suspect that this assumption is wrong.

The four urban dedications all have the same incipit: *Honori / Memmio Vitrasio Orfito v(iro) c(larissimo) ...* The word *Honori* in the first line is reportedly written in larger letters, inside a crown⁵. I would like to draw attention on the fact that the termination in *-i* of Orfitus' presumed *signum* is somewhat odd⁶. Detached *signa* on honorary inscriptions in the fourth and fifth century usually end in *-ii*, not in *-i*. Kajanto, in his work on *supernomina* (1966, p. 67), which remains the main reference on the subject, is categorical: “in *CIL VI*, where the inscriptions of the senatorial class are divided into ante- and post-Diocletian periods, the detached *signa* of the former group invariably end in *-i* (1367, 1397, 1424, 1507), those of the latter group, which were much more numerous, as invariably in *-ii*.” The same pattern, with a chronological watershed around the first years of the fourth century⁷, can be observed in Lepcis Magna, whose extraordinarily rich evidence provides thirty eight inscriptions with a detached *signum*, more than a third of the total from the whole empire⁸. Kajanto consequently does not include this occurrence of Honorius in his list of this *signum*, which contains only a couple of African epitaphs and a third century statue base from Timgad⁹.

However, the situation might not be quite so straightforward or so simple. What we generally call ‘detached signa’, which are so easily recognisable on inscriptions, can actually correspond to various onomastic elements. I have no intention here of entering the intricate question of various types of *signa*, of proper and false ones or of *cognomina* used as *signa* ...¹⁰ But what I would like to make clear is that I will look at the matter not from an onomastic point of view, but from that of epigraphic use. Also, for sake of brevity, I will therefore use the term *signum* in a rather generic sense, instead of talking about ‘detached

¹ I wish to thank Julia Lenaghan for the stimulating discussion on Dogmatius' inscription. I have also profited from criticisms of Silvia Orlandi. The texts of inscriptions are normally reproduced from the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss/Slaby and checked on the original editions.

² See Cameron 1996.

³ *CIL VI* 1739–1742 (= *LSA*-1441–1444).

⁴ E.g. *PLRE I*, pp. 651–653; Chastagnol 1962, pp. 139 and 140 nt. 140; Arnheim 1972, p. 126.

⁵ Cfr. *CIL VI* p. 4874 *ad* 1739–1742.

⁶ Their being encompassed in a crown is also surprising: I do not know any parallel for such a practice.

⁷ Termination in *-i*: *Leptis 51* (ca. 250); *Leptis 50* (second half of the 3rd cent.); *Leptis 52* and *53* (last years of the 3rd/beginning of the 4th cent.); *Leptis 46* (295–305). Earliest occurrences of termination in *-ii*: *Leptis 45* (tetrarchic age; not later than ca. 305); *Leptis 32* (ca. 303).

⁸ Tantillo 2010, p. 201; Kajanto counted eighty-three honorary inscriptions with *signa* from the whole empire, twenty-three of which from Lepcis (1966, p. 64); both Kajanto's and my figures include all the various types of detached epigraphic *signa*.

⁹ Kajanto 1966, pp. 63 and 83; *AE* 1919, 33, Caesarea of Mauretania; *CIL VIII* 15630, Mustis, Africa Proconsularis; *CIL VIII* 26582 = *ILTun* 1424 = *ILS* 9018 = *Dougga* 70, Thugga, Africa Proconsularis: *HONOR[II] / A(ulo) Vitellio Pap(iria) Felici Honorato / eq(uiti) R(omano) ...* The word *Honor[II]* is engraved on the upper moulding, in much larger letters than those of the rest of the text; Dessau read *Honor[ati]*: but, even if there is enough space for such a restoration, that would result in a decentred line: see *Dougga* 70. The probable termination in *-i* is not at odds with the chronology. There is no difficulty in admitting it could be an actual *signum*.

¹⁰ See Cameron 1995, pp. 256–257; also Cameron 1985, esp. pp. 172–174; a useful, although rather formalistic analysis of *signa* in Salomies 2012, who focuses on onomastics. Cf. also Salway 1994, pp. 136–137 and Niquet 2000, pp. 124–126.

onomastic element in the genitive or vocative case' (which would be more precise). Considering the question from such a more comprehensive point of view, one might be willing to admit that it is not impossible to find onomastic elements used as detached labels, terminating in *-i* also in the fourth century (as we shall see). Still one should also admit that Kajanto's assertion remains substantially true: when we find a *single* name, with *no further* specifications (such as for example *V.C.*), engraved over the text of a honorary inscription in the fourth or fifth century, this virtually always ends in *-ii*¹¹.

Let us return to Orfitus' inscriptions. If we discard the *-i* termination argument and consider the four stones as a possible exception to common usage (and not a rule), then we should turn our attention to a couple of other late inscriptions.

The first one is the dedication to Caelius Saturninus (*CIL* VI 1704 with pp. 3173 and 3813; *LSA*-1266), a Constantinian *homo novus*, set up by his son in the 330's. I transcribe the first three lines of the text following the recent edition by Di Stefano Manzella and Orlandi (1997):

Dogmatii / honori. / C(aio) Caelio Saturnino v(iro) c(larissimo) / ...

The first line is written on the plinth of the statue which was discovered, together with its base, in 1856, within the foundations of Palazzo Filippini (via della Pilotta). The connection between the statue and the base is widely accepted, and there is no reason to reject it.¹² If we accept the pairing, then *honori* cannot be a *signum*. By editing *Dogmatii / honori*.¹³ Di Stefano and Orlandi connect the line engraved on the statue's plinth to the first line on the base (and consequently translate: "in onore di Dogmatius"). This is rather strange: we have no parallels for such use, and also why do we find *Dogmatii honori* instead of *honori Dogmatii* which sounds much better in Latin? In fact the connection is probably not necessary.

There is a third late dedication which can help us to trace the roots of such a formula. It comes from Chiusi/Clusium (*CIL* XI 2115 = *ILS* 6611 = *LSA*-1623):

Hon(ori) / L(ucio) Tiberio Maefanati Basilio v(iro) e(gregio), ex praetoribus XV pop(ulorum), / defensori ordinis et civium, / decuriali urbis aeternae, / ob hoc quod fide cives suos / populumq(ue) Clusinum integritate / gubernarit, amore dilexerit, / largitate sublebarit, / humanitate fov'erit, pro merito ergo benef/ciorum universi statuam lae/tantes votis omnibus obtulerunt.

This inscription is not precisely dated, but the reference to the honorand's office of *decurialis Urbis aeternae* points to the fourth century, while the title of *vir egregius* suggests that we ought to place the honorand before, or not longer after, ca. 326 (i.e. Constantinian reform of the equestrian order and disappearance of *egregiatus*)¹⁴. The *HON* in larger letters in the first line is unanimously read *Hon(ori)* or *Hon(orii)* and mostly believed to be the *signum* of Basilius¹⁵. Such an attribution is surprising. I do not know of any other occurrence of a shortened *signum*, while abbreviations as *hon(ori)*, *hon(orem)* and such like are, on the contrary, very common. One should admit, then, that *Hon(ori)* is an exceptional case, unparalleled in late antique epigraphy. However, I think we should follow another way.

A number of inscriptions, of various categories and from different regions of the Empire, present in their incipit the formula *HONORI*, sometimes shortened to *HON(ORI)*. The latter ought to be distinguished from dedications to the deity *Honos*, such as the frequent *Honori et Virtuti* made by an individual or a group who appear in the nominative case (and also from types as *honori aquilae* ... also followed by the

¹¹ In fact when we find a name terminating in *-i* in the first line, this is one of the proper names of the honorand (see Kajanto 1963, p. 45; 1966, p. 66); thus, occurrences such as *Venanti / v.c. / cos.* (*CIL* VI 1716a), *Fl. Olbi Auxenti Drauci* (1725), *[Cl.] Claudiani v.c.* (1710), *Petroni Maximi* (1749) can not be considered exceptions.

¹² For further details see *LSA*-1266 [C. Machado] and *LSA*-903 [J. Lenaghan]; cf. Di Stefano Manzella, Orlandi 1997. Doubts about the connection of the statue to the base are raised by La Regina 1973–1974, p. 335 nt. 4.

¹³ It would be perhaps better edited as *Dogmatii // honori*.

¹⁴ Lepelley 1992, p. 360 with nt. 19. He is not listed in *PLRE*.

¹⁵ C. Machado *ad LSA*-1623; Machado, Ward-Perkins 2012, p. 45; also Lepelley restores *Hon(orii?)*, implicitly accepting that we have here a *signum*. Dessau edited *Hon(ori)* with no further explanation; no commentary either in *CIL*; Liou 1969, p. 55, who discusses extensively this document, is cautious. See also Cecconi 1994, p. 191 with nt. 68.

name of the dedicators at the nominative). These are also related to the *in honorem* (e.g. *domus divinae*) type. I will focus on the most significant examples.

In a very few cases the nature of *honori* is specified, such as in this marble *tabula* dated probably to the reign of Alexander Severus (see Alföldy *ad CIL*):

*CIL VI 41182: Honori / togae virilis / L(uci) Clodi Tinei / Pupieni Bassi / c(larissimi) i(uvenis) / curionis / Tineius Eubulus lib(ertus) / matris ipsius c(um) s(uis).*¹⁶

But in most cases the *honori* is directly related to the name of the honoured person, referred to in the genitive case. This is the most frequent form to be found anywhere across the empire:

CIL V 3401 = ILS 6696 (Verona, 2nd cent.¹⁷), large bronze tablet: Honori / M(arci) Gavi M(arci) f(ilii) / Pob(lilia) Squilliani / eq(uo) pub(lico), IIIvir(o) i(ure) d(icundo), / IIIvir(o) a(edilicia) p(otestate), v(iro) b(ono), / curator Vicetnor(um), / apparitores et / limocincti / tribunalis eius.

AE 1956, 33 (Altinum, late 2nd cent.¹⁸), bronze tabula ansata: Hon(ori) / C(ai) Saeni C(ai) f(ilii) Sc(aptia) Veri / eq(uo) p(ublico), IIIv(iri) i(ure) d(icundo) II, Lau(rentium) Lav(inatium), / cur(atoris) r(e)r(um) p(ublicarum) Vicet(inorum), Atr(ianorum), / Opit(erginorum), / L(ucius) Acutius Marcellus cliens.

CIL XII 3165 = ILS 5680 (Nîmes, second quarter of 3rd cent.¹⁹), marble panel: Honori / Q(uiti) Soloni Fabi Severini e(gregii) v(iri), / ob merita eius praeterita et / praesentem liberalitatem / quo maturius balineum usibus / plebis exhiberetur, fabri tign(arii) Nem(ausensium).

In the inscriptions listed above and in many other similar cases (*Honori* + name in the genitive)²⁰, I obviously exclude that *HONORI* may be intended as a *signum*. Why? Firstly the genitive case of the honorands' names; secondly the possible abbreviation (*HON*); thirdly the chronology of some of the documents, which appear to be too early in date (the first *signa* appear at the very end of the second century, and do not become common before the middle of the 3rd).

There are also some mixed dedications which confirm that we have no *signum* here. Firstly, let us consider those where *honoris* is connected with *genius*.

CIL V 7468 = ILS 6745 = RICIS II 513/101 (Industria, Liguria, 2nd cent.²¹), large bronze tablet: Genio et honor(i) / L(uci) Pompei L(uci) f(ilii) Pol(lia) Heren(niani) eq(uitis) Rom(ani) eq(uo) pub(lico), / q(uaestoris) aer(arii) p(ublici) et alim(entorum), aedil(is), / Ilviro, curator / kalendarior(um) rei p(ublicae), / collegium pasto/phorum Indus/triensium patro/no ob merita. / T(itus) Grae(-) Trophimus Ind(ustriensis) fac(iebat).

There are a half dozen more dedications *genio et honor(i)* of a living person²². Elsewhere *honori* is connected with *memoriae*, commemorating something done 'in honour and in memory' of a dead person:

¹⁶ This is clearly the same idea that could be expressed through the formula *ob honorem togae virilis* (*CIL VI 1504 = V 2089 = ILS 1125; CIL X 7346 = ILS 1083*).

¹⁷ For its date, cf. Jacques 1983, p. 311 n. XXIX.

¹⁸ For its date, cf. Jacques 1983, p. 332–334 n. XLV.

¹⁹ For its date, cf. Burnand 2006, p. 563.

²⁰ *ILAlg II 2, 6435* from Henchir Zehada, Numidia, 2nd/3rd cent., described as "linteau quadrangulaire" (Pflaum interpreted the word *Honori* as a *signum*); *CIL V 4354 = InscrIt X 5, 144* and *CIL V 4353 = InscrIt X 5, 143* from Brixia, dated to the first quarter of the 3rd cent. (G. Gregori, *ad InscrIt*), both on limestone bases; *AE 1926, 130* from Ravensbos, Belgica, 2nd/3rd cent., bronze table; *CIA 112 = AE 2004, 1323* from Dyrrachium, Macedonia, 1st cent.? (see Mitthof 2012), limestone panel. Occurrences where it is shortened to *HON*: *CIL V 2168*, Altinum, 2nd cent.?, bronze *tabula ansata*; *InscrIt X 5, 194*, again from Brixia, 2nd cent.?, tall limestone stele. Further occurrences of the *honoris*-type: *CIL X 6580 = 6581* (Velitrae); *IX 3689* (Marruvium); uncertain: *VIII 6950 = ILAlg II 1, 481* (Cirta).

²¹ L. Bricault *ad RICIS*.

²² See in particular: *CIL V 5892 = ILS 6731* from Milan; second half of the 2nd or early 3rd cent. (on this inscription see also Mitthof 2012, p. 233); type of support not specified, probably a base: *Gen(io) et [h]on(ori) / P(ubli) Tutili / Callifontis ... et / Iun(oni) Publiciae ... et Iun(oni) Tutiliae ... Constantii vivatis / L(ucius) Romatius / Valerian(us) et / Vocatia / Valeria cum / fili(i)s clientes*. Note that the aforementioned persons possess an actual *signum* (*Constanti*); *AE 1932, 73* (Milan); type of support not specified. *CIL V 4449 = InscrIt X 5, 238* (Brixia, early 3rd cent.?); tall limestone parallelepiped, not a statue base; for description and dating see Gregori, *ad locum*.

CIL XIII 1567 (Gabali/Lanuejols, Aquitania, 2nd cent.), monumental lintel: *Honori et memoriae Luci Pompon(i) Bassul(i) et L(uci) Pomp(oni) / Balbin(i) filiorum pi(i)ssimorum, L(ucius) Iulius Bassianus pater / et Pomponia Regola mater aedem a fundamento us/que consummationem exstruxerunt et dedicaverunt / cum aedificiis circumiacentibus.*

CIL II 6181 = *ILS* 3232 (Aqua Calidae, Hispania cit., 2nd cent.), marble base: *Apollini / Aug(usto), ho/nori mem/oriaequae L(uci) / Aemili L(uci) fil(ii) / Quir(ina) Celat(ani), Porcia / Festa fili (!) / karis-simi (!) / L(ocus) d(atu)s d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*²³

Further comparable occurrences can be found in various areas²⁴. Let us finally consider a couple of remarkable cases, in which *honori* is followed by the name of the living ‘honorand’ or of the dead in the dative case.

CIL III 6235 = 7599 = *IScM* V 163 (Troesmis, early 3rd cent.); described as a “limestone votive altar”²⁵: *Honori / C(aio) Valerio / Longinia/no, flamin(i), / qu(aestori), aed(ili), Iviro / mu(nicipii) Tr(oesmensium), Iul(ius) He/rculanus / aed(ilis) op(timo) socro.*

AE 1978, 50 (Rome, ?²⁶); funerary urna: *Honori / P(ublio) Carvilio Fellici patrono / incomparabili fecit P(ublius) Carvilius Victor / libertus.*

In both these texts, *honori* must have had the same meaning it possesses in the previous inscriptions.

To recapitulate. The formula *honori* in the incipit, used in different types of inscriptions, occurs in most of the Latin speaking provinces. It became sufficiently common that it could be, at least in some geographical contexts, shortened. It could be associated with the *genius* referring to living persons, or to *memoria*, referring to the dead. In many cases it is difficult to say what kind of practice the *honori*-dedications were related to. There are surely some funerary dedications, but most of them are no doubt “honorary” in character, even if, judging from formulary and by supports, they were not necessarily related to statues or monuments; in any case, they have a marked private character. From a formal point of view it is noteworthy that a not insignificant number of them are on bronze tablets (which can explain the relative rarity of this typology) or on marble slabs, both of which may have been pinned on walls, perhaps in the private houses of the honorands²⁷. Lastly, we might also note that *honos*-type inscriptions often originate from *liberti* and *clientes* honouring their patrons²⁸.

Syntactically, the standard formulary was placed in the genitive of the person who was celebrated as worthy of the *honos*. Apparently, this formulary became itself a sort of label of this type of inscription, so that, sometimes in the third century, it was possible to inscribe *honori* and then to make a customary dedication in the dative case. Note the tendency to switch from the genitive to the dative case also in the above quoted *CIL* V 7468 = *ILS* 6745 = *RICIS* II 513/101: *Genio et honor(i) L(uci) Pompei L(uci) f(ilii)*

²³ Compare the dedications to deities from Aquileia made *in honorem* or *in memoriam* of someone (e. g. *InscrAqu* I 131; 143; 177; 345; 350).

²⁴ See also *CIL* II 7, 271 = *CIL* II 5522 (Corduba) and *CIL* III 6476 = 10856 (Siscia, pann. Sup.).

²⁵ Mommsen (*ad CIL* III 6235) edited *honore* and wrote: “honore (id est opinor honoris causa)”; reading was eventually corrected by Domaszewski (*CIL* III 7599). For the date, see Aparaschivei 2007, p. 93.

²⁶ The dating of this *urna* to the 1st century AD by Pensabene 1977 is based on stylistic arguments (type of decoration) which do not seem to be conclusive; lettering suits as well a later date.

²⁷ Among the quoted pieces of evidence: *CIL* V 2168; *CIL* V 3401 = *ILS* 6696; *AE* 1956, 33; *AE* 1926, 130; *CIL* V 7468 = *ILS* 6745 = *RICIS* II 513/101 are all written on bronze tables; *CIA* 112 = *AE* 2004, 1323 is a limestone panel with holes for its fastening to some kind of support; *CIL* XII 3165 = *ILS* 5680 is a marble panel, perhaps connected to a statue base, since the inscription is engraved on the reverse side of a previous dedication on which the formula *l.d.d.d.* can be restored; but this of course does not exclude a reuse in a private context.

²⁸ In the above mentioned evidence: *CIL* V 5892 = *ILS* 6731; *CIA* 112 = *AE* 2004, 1323; *CIL* VI 41182; *AE* 1956, 33; *AE* 1978, 50 (single or groups of *clientes*); *CIL* XII 3165 = *ILS* 5680; *CIL* V 7468 = *ILS* 6745 = *RICIS* II 513/101 (entire *collegia* honouring their own patrons); cf. *CIL* V 3401 = *ILS* 6696. In addition see also *CIL* X 1895 = *ILS* 7311a (Puteoli).

*Pol(lia) Herenniani ... Ilviro curator(kalendari)or(um) rei p(ublicae), collegium pastophorum Industriensium patrono ob merita ...*²⁹.

I believe that this can explain our fourth century dedications: they are heirs of such a tradition. It is certainly so in the cases of Basilius and of Saturninus; and almost certainly in the case of Orfitus' inscriptions. Here, one may wonder if the presence of this formula has something to do with the fact that Orfitus' statues were erected by his *clientes* – the professional *corpora*³⁰ – in the private space of his *domus*.

Let us now consider another case. *CIL* VI 1682 = *ILS* 1220 = *LSA*-1394, a statue base now in the Louvre Museum, honours Anicius Paulinus iunior, consul in 334 and urban prefect in 334–335; it was set up some time after his prefecture. I transcribe the first two lines following Henzen:

Honorii Ammii M[a]nio Caesonio Nico/macho Anicio Paulino v(iro) c(larissimo) cons(uli) ordinario ...

Here the inscription gives the 'correct' fourth century termination in *-ii*. But the position of the *signum* is rather unusual. We would expect to find it engraved on a separate line, over the rest of the text (often somewhere on the upper mouldings: now Tantillo 2010, pp. 201–203). Actually, the same personage, Paulinus, appears in another inscription, which attributes to him another '*signum*' or rather one of his *cognomina* as epigraphic *signum* (*CIL* VI 1683 = *ILS* 1221 = *LSA*-1395):

Amnii iun(ioris). / Anicio Paulino iun(iori) c(larissimo) v(iro) ...

In this case the first line is well set over the rest of the text, in accordance with common practice. The habit of taking a *nomen* or *cognomen* and making an epigraphic *signum* out of it is also well attested³¹. We may – of course – surmise that the same person could have had several *signa*, or more correctly, that various elements of his onomastic could have been used as epigraphic detached labels, that is to say as identifying tags, engraved in a separated position. Let us focus on another aspect. The first inscription has a private character: Paulinus was honoured as *patronus* by his *clientes* of the *corpus coriariorum* (the inscription ends: *in mira memoria adque in omnia iustitia sua corpus coriariorum patrono digno statuerunt*), probably in his *domus* (the actual provenance of this base is unfortunately unknown). The second inscription registers a rare and exclusive public honour: this statuary monument was petitioned by the Roman people (presumably through acclamations), 'with the testimony of the senate' (which means that the senate approved and forwarded the request to court) and by decision of the emperors (*petitu populi R(omani), testimonio senatus, iudicio dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) triumphatoris Aug(ustorum) Caesarumq(ue) florentium*). It was certainly erected in the Forum of Trajan, where the base was found.

One might think that this supports the idea that *signa* were mainly conceived for domestic use³². But this is not the case. In September 2013, thanks to the courtesy of the Services des Antiquités du Louvre, I was able to inspect the stone³³. The examination showed, beyond any possible doubt, that the reading *HONORII* is wrong. One can easily discern that it was written *HONORI L. AMMIO*. In other words, the second "I" is in fact an "L", the shortened *praenomen* of this aristocrat (fig. 1). I will return to this monument, which deserves closer investigation, in a forthcoming paper. For the moment, I will just say that this shows that Paulinus had no proper *signum* (in the more restricted sense, that is a nickname, often

²⁹ Cfr. also *CIL* V 3401 = *ILS* 6696 and the dubious occurrence, again on a bronze slab, from Roermond in Belgica (H. Finke, *Neue Inschriften*, in *BRGK* 7, 1927, n. 307): *Hon[ori] / T(it-) Terti[ni-] / [- - -]NV[- - -] / dec(urion-) Ilvi[r-] / Mansuet[- - -] / Macrin[- - -]*; the editor hypothesized a dedication in the dative case.

³⁰ Though he is not styled *patronus*, there is little doubt that Orfitus was honoured as such: Chastagnol 1962, p. 139 is positive ("diverses corporations dont il était le patron").

³¹ *Auchenii / Anicio Auchenio Basso v.c. ... (CIL VI 1679); Honoratiani / ... / Fl. Honoratiano v.c. ... (CIL VI 1722)*; in most cases this terminates in *-i*: cf. the inscriptions and bibliography quoted at nt. 11.

³² See Cameron 1985, p. 172 (with whom I fundamentally agree).

³³ I would like to thank Madame Agnès Scherer, of the *Département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines* at the Musée du Louvre, for the kind support. I also wish to thank my friend and colleague Christophe Goddard (CNRS), who accompanied me during the visit and gave me many helpful suggestions.



Fig. 1

Greek-sounding, terminating in *-ius*, that was not normally part of ordinary nomenclature); and that *HONORI* in the *coriarii* dedication should be written with a minuscule *h*, representing nothing more than the old formulary, often used in dedications by *clientes*.

We have seen that Kajanto implicitly did not consider such occurrences as *signa*. This was also the opinion of Mommsen (1865, p. 300) who, by comparing the two dedications set up by Coelius Saturninus' son Urbanus, observed³⁴: “Nam ita explicandum esse id quod praescribitur in altero *honori* nec cogitandum esse de Honorii nomine proprio inde colligitur, quod idem praescriptum esse invenitur titulo Anicii Paulini Iunioris consulis ordinarii a. 334 [CIL VI 1682 = ILS 1220] quodque Saturnini signum non Honorii fuisse, sed Dogmatii, ex ipsa eius statuæ subscriptione colligitur.”

This was also the position of Dessau, who examined the problem in further details. In his treatment of the inscription of Anicius Paulinus, Dessau even edits the text as follows: *honori{i}*. *Ammio Manio Caelsonio* etc. explaining in a note: “*honori lapis (videtur accipiendum esse ut supra N. 1214 et infra N. 1243, non pro agnomine Honorii).*” The two inscriptions referred to by Dessau are CIL VI 1704, the dedication to Caelius Saturninus Dogmatius, and CIL VI 1724, one of those in honour of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus. In a further note to the inscription of Dogmatius (ILS 1214 = CIL VI 1704) he added as further parallels CIL V 3401 = ILS 6696 and CIL XII 3165 = ILS 5680, two of the occurrences we have discussed above.

For whatever reason, the views of Mommsen and Dessau received little support. The interpretation of *HONORI* as a *signum* has prevailed, and most recent editions of such texts either do not take into account the view of these two great German scholars³⁵, or explicitly refuse it³⁶. In my opinion, this was not a step forward.

³⁴ The other one is CIL VI 1705 = ILS 1215: *C(aio) Caelio Saturnino v(iro) c(larissimo) / praefecto praetorio / C(aius) Caelius Urbanus v(ir) c(larissimus) / consularis patri.*

³⁵ G. Alföldy and F. Mitthof (ad CIL VI 1682, p. 4733) assign to the honorand the name Ammius *signo* Honorius.

³⁶ F. Mitthof (ad CIL VI 1739, p. 4784) is unambiguous: “vocabulo *Honori* coronae ut videtur inscripto non eadem res et voce *in honorem* significatur (aliter Dessau...) sed – ut intellexerunt auctores complures – signum *Honorii*.”

Two further late occurrences of *HONORI*

Are there similar cases where the *honori* formulary has been wrongly interpreted as *signum*? I suspect so, or at least I believe that we should be aware of this possibility.

The *tabula patronatus* for Aurelius Evagrius offered by the *Cluvi(e)nses Carricini* (*Suppl. It.* II, *Histonium* 3 = *AE* 1975, 367), dated to 384, begins with the following words: *Honori / patrone vivas felicem et venerabilem s(a)eculo / [huic u]niversi Cluvi(e)nses Carricini ... HONORI* is written in larger letters between a small palm and a *hedera*. The following words *patrone vivas* suggest that *HONORI* was actually intended as a name. Thus, La Regina and Buonocore are probably right in considering it a *signum*³⁷. A further argument in favour of this interpretation could come from Aradius Proculus' series of *tabulae patronatus*: in two of them his *signum*, *Populonii* (but with termination in *-ii*), is inscribed over the text (*CIL* VI 1684 and 1687). In addition to them, there are at least two further similar, but not completely coherent, occurrences of this use: *CIL* II 7, 188 (dated to 247: *Armeni Felix / vac. / ...*) and *CIL* X 478 = *ILS* 6114 (dated to 344: *Helpidi homo felix / deus te servet. / ...*). Note the termination in *-i* in both of them, indicating that here a proper name in the vocative is intended. Still I would not entirely exclude the possibility that in the *tabula* offered by the *Cluvi(e)nses Carricini*, the incipit *HONORI* also has a different meaning. The use of inscribing the *signum* or the name of the *patronus* is not a rule. And, more interestingly, there is also another example of *tabula* in which *HONORI* is in the incipit. This comes from Minturnae and must be dated to the late fourth or fifth century (*AE* 1954, 27 = *ILMN* 1, 589): *Honori / Flavio T(h)eodoro v(iro) l(audabili), / ob eius infinita beneficia, (h)onestissimus populu(s) / civitatis Minturnensium / patrono dignissimo / posuerunt (!)*. To sum up: in both cases the term *honori* could thus be intended as the old celebrative formula for celebrating the *patronus*; this is a less likely solution, but still one we should not entirely disregard.

Conclusions

Had Orfitus a *signum* or not, this was most likely not Honorius. The same can be said about Paulinus. Saturninus and Maefanas Basilius surely never had such a *signum*. There is even a chance that some of the other occurrences of *Honorius* in inscriptions actually do not correspond to *signa*.

What I tried to show is that when we find such an expression at the beginning of a text (often, but not always, in this typical graphic presentation, i.e. detached from the rest), we should not automatically consider it a name, and that we should be conscious of the existence of a tradition which had nothing to do with *signa*.

The historical meaning of this short note is surely marginal. My only hope is that it will contribute to a better understanding of the value of these onomastic tagging elements we call *signa*. Only when we accept how little we know about them, can we really begin to study them and shed a little more light upon them.

Bibliography

- Aparaschivei 2007 – D. Aparaschivei, Le culte impérial et les flamines municipaux en Mésie Inférieure et Mésie Supérieure, in *ArchBulg* 11, 2007, pp. 91–100.
- Arnheim 1972 – M. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford 1972.
- Burnand 2006 – Y. Burnand, *Primores Galliarum, II, Prosopographie: sénateurs et chevaliers romains originaires de la Gaule de la fin de la République au IIIe siècle*, Bruxelles 2006.
- Cameron 1985 – A. Cameron, Polyonymy in the Late Roman Aristocracy: the Case of Petronius Probus, in *JRS* 75, 1985, pp. 164–182.
- 1995 – A. Cameron, Avienus or Avienius?, in *ZPE* 108, 1995, pp. 252–262.
- 1996 – A. Cameron, Orfitus and Constantius: A Note on Roman Gold-Glasses, in *JRA* 9, 1996, pp. 295–301.
- Cecconi 1994 – G. A. Cecconi, *Governo imperiale e élites dirigenti nell'Italia tardoantica. Problemi di storia politico-amministrativa (270–476 d.C.)*, Como 1994.

³⁷ M. Buonocore (*ad Suppl.It.*); La Regina 1973–1974, p. 335 nt. 4.

- Chastagnol 1962 – A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire*, Paris 1962.
- Di Stefano Manzella, Orlandi 1997 – I. Di Stefano Manzella, S. Orlandi, Dedicata onoraria e carriera di Caius Caelius Saturninus, in I. Di Stefano Manzella (cur.), *Le iscrizioni dei cristiani in Vaticano. Inscriptiones Sanctae Sedis* 2, Città del Vaticano 1997, pp. 267–269 with plate 3.5.1 a–e.
- Jacques 1983 – F. Jacques, *Les curateurs des cités dans l'Occident romain de Trajan à Gallien*, Paris 1983.
- Kajanto 1963 – I. Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies in the Early Christian Inscriptions of Rome and Carthage*, Helsinki 1963.
- 1966 – I. Kajanto, *Supernomina. A Study in Latin Epigraphy*, Helsinki 1966.
- La Regina 1973–1974 – A. La Regina, *Cluvienses Carricini*, in *ArchClass* 25–26, 1973–1974, pp. 331–340.
- Lepelley 1992 – C. Lepelley, Permanences de la cité classique et archaïsmes municipaux en Italie au Bas-Empire, in *Institutions, société et vie politique dans l'empire romain au IVe siècle ap. J.-C. Actes de la table ronde autour de l'oeuvre d'André Chastagnol*, Rome 1992, pp. 353–371.
- Leptis – I. Tantillo, Catalogo dei monumenti iscritti (con contributi di L. Del Corso e F. Bigi), in I. Tantillo, F. Bigi (cur.), *Leptis Magna. Una città e le sue iscrizioni in età tardoromana*, Cassino 2010, pp. 313–493.
- Liou 1969 – B. Liou, *Praetores Etruriae XV populorum. Etude d'épigraphie*, Bruxelles 1969.
- LSA – R. R. R. Smith, B. Ward-Perkins (dir.), *Last Statues of Antiquity Database*. <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk>.
- Machado, Ward-Perkins 2012 – C. Machado, B. Ward-Perkins, A Population of Statues, in A. Bravi (cur.), *Aurea Umbria. Una regione dell'impero nell'era di Costantino*, in *Bollettino per i beni culturali dell'Umbria. Quaderno 6 / Bollettino per i beni culturali dell'Umbria* 5, 10, Viterbo 2012, pp. 37–45.
- Mitthof 2012 – F. Mitthof, Adnotationes Epigraphicae III, in *Tyche* 27, 2012, pp. 231–233.
- Mommsen 1865 – Th. Mommsen, De Caelii Saturnini titulo, in *Memorie dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza archeologica*, 2, 1865, pp. 298–332.
- Niquet 2000 – H. Niquet, *Monumenta virtutum titulique. Senatorische Selbstdarstellung im spätantiken Rom im Spiegel der epigraphischen Denkmäler*, Stuttgart 2000.
- Pensabene 1977 – P. Pensabene, in *Antichità di Villa Doria Pamphilj*, Roma 1977, pp. 128–129 n. 151 with pl. C.
- Salomies 2012 – O. Salomies, Réflexions sur le développement de l'ononastique de l'aristocratie romaine du Bas-Empire, in C. Badel, C. Settiani (cur.), *Les stratégies familiales dans l'antiquité tardive*, Paris 2012, pp. 1–26.
- Salway 1994 – B. Salway, What's in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastic Practice from c. 700 B.C. to A.D. 700, in *JRS* 84, 1994, pp. 124–145.
- Tantillo 2010 – I. Tantillo, I costumi epigrafici. Scritture, monumenti, pratiche, in I. Tantillo, F. Bigi (cur.), *Leptis Magna. Una città e le sue iscrizioni in età tardoromana*, Cassino 2010, pp. 173–204.

Ignazio Tantillo, Università di Cassino e del Lazio meridionale
 ignazio.tantillo@fastwebnet.it