

There Are No *cursus honorum* Inscriptions. The Function of the *cursus honorum* in Epigraphic Communication.¹

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There is no such a thing as *cursus honorum* inscriptions. This may come as a surprise to those who know me as someone who throughout most of his academic life has dealt with such inscriptions. Yet, at least for the past 15 years, I have been trying to avoid this rather misleading term. For this term suggests that there were inscriptions whose *primary function* was to present the *cursus honorum* of a person. But this was not the case.²

Each inscription had a specific primary function in the period in which it was written and set up in public. This was valid for the whole Greek-Roman era, just as it remains so for our times. Just think of the inscriptions that you encounter everywhere on the walls of the Hebrew University: they record for posterity the names of those who donated a certain part of the building. Thus, ‘building inscriptions’ commemorate the fact that a certain person or community paid for the building or part of it. As an example, let me recall the well known inscription of Marcus Agrippa on the architrave of the Pantheon: *Marcus Agrippa cos. tertium fecit*; it stands there in letters more than 70 cm. high.³ Agrippa, Augustus’s most trusted and intimate friend, erected this building — a deed to be known and preserved for eternity by means of the inscription — and this is what happened in fact. It functions as a building inscription. A similar message was recorded and noted by the inscription on the arch of Titus at the top of the Velia in Rome, according to which the *Senatus Populusque Romanus* built this arch *Divo Tito, divi Vespasiani filio, Vespasiano Augusto*.⁴ No explicit reason is given for the building of the

¹ This paper was first presented at the conference in honor of the publication of Joseph Geiger’s book: *The First Hall of Fame. A Study of the Statues in the Forum Augustum*, Leiden 2008, held on January 26th 2009 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. On the whole, the text of the lecture has been retained, only somewhat expanded and elaborated with footnotes. For the translation into English I am indebted to Hannah M. Cotton, Avner Ecker and Tanya Tolubajew. Some issues discussed here have already been examined in other publications. They are repeated here, as necessary, in order to draw additional conclusions. My previous papers relevant to the present study are: (1) ‘“Tituli honorarii”, curriculum vitae und Selbstdarstellung in der Hohen Kaiserzeit’, in: *Acta colloquii epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.-6. sept. 1991 habiti* (= *Comm. hum. litt.* 104), Helsinki 1995, 211 ff. (= ‘Tituli honorarii curriculum vitae e autorappresentazione nell’ Alto Impero’, in: W. Eck, *Tra epigrafia, prosopografia e archeologia*, Rome 1996, 319 ff. This collection also contains more elaborate versions of several additional papers). (2) ‘Elite und Leitbilder in der römischen Kaiserzeit’, in: *Leitbilder der Spätantike — Eliten und Leitbilder*, ed. J. Dummer and M. Vielberg, Stuttgart 1999, 31 ff. (3) ‘Auf der Suche nach Personen und Persönlichkeiten: *Cursus honorum* und Biographie’, in: *Biographie und Prosopographie. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von A.R. Birley*, ed. K Vössing, Stuttgart 2005, 53 ff.

² Preliminary references to the problem of terminology in W. Eck, ‘Lateinische Epigraphik’, in: *Einleitung in die lateinische Philologie*, ed. F. Graf, Stuttgart 1997, 92 ff. = *Epigrafia Latina*, in: *Introduzione alla Filologia Latina*, ed. F. Graf, Rome 2003, 131 ff.

³ *CIL* VI 896 = 31196 = *ILS* 129 (Rome); for the height of the letters see *CIL* VI p. 4303.

⁴ *CIL* VI 945 = 31211 = *ILS* 265 (Rome).

arch, but the reliefs within the passage speak clearly: they refer to Titus' victory over Jerusalem. Many more examples of such building inscriptions could be added.

Dedications to deities were a related but different category. Any inscription placed on the architrave of a temple is a dedicatory inscription, which may also be termed a building inscription, like Agrippa's inscription on the Pantheon. However, not every dedicatory inscription was a building inscription. Such texts were placed on different objects as well, for example on altars or under statues of gods, like the object or the statue that was erected by a *vexillatio* of the *legio III Cyrenaica* for Jupiter Optimus Maximus Sarapis in the year 116 AD in Jerusalem.⁵ This double purpose was also often found in grave inscriptions: on the one hand a grave inscription implied the building of a mausoleum, and on the other hand, it served as a memorial inscription for the deceased, meant to commemorate his name for his contemporaries as well as for future generations. Take for example the grave inscription for M. Nonius Macrinus discovered only a few months ago in Rome. The inscription was placed on a mausoleum probably more than 10 meters high on the bank of the Tiber. The fragments give us an idea of the size and grandeur of the original memorial construction. The text itself informs us that the homonymous son of the deceased had this monumental grave built for his father, *consul suffectus* in the year 154, and for his mother, whose name we did not know until now.⁶ But above all, the inscription and monument are meant to preserve the memory of the senator.⁷ In addition to the *tituli* related to the building of the tomb, there are numerous simple grave inscriptions, well over 40.000 examples in Rome alone, inscribed on larger marble slabs or smaller ones attached to individual graves of single persons. These inscriptions do not speak of the erection of a monument but merely of the death and burial of individuals, whose memory will thus live on.⁸

⁵ *CIL* III 13587 = *ILS* 4393 (Jerusalem): [I]ovi Optimo Maximo Sarapidi pro salute et victoria Imp(eratoris) Nervae Traiani Caesaris Optumi Aug(usti) Germanici Dacici Parthici et populi Romani vexill(atio) leg(ionis) III Cyr(enaicae) fecit. Since the inscription was brought to Istanbul but has since disappeared, we know nothing about the exact form of the stone. Indeed, the assumption is that the stone had a square block form. Thus it could have been part of a wide altar or could even have served as a base either for a statue of the God, or, more probably, for a Serapis foot as a symbol for the god himself. On Serapis feet, which were found in the Roman Empire, see L. Castiglione, 'Zur Frage der Sarapis Füße', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 97, 1971, 122 ff.; K. Lemke, *Das Iseum Campense in Rom*, 1994.

⁶ *PIR*² N 140.

⁷ The text which may be determined from the photograph on the internet, reads approximately: M NONIO M F FAB M[A]CRINO [COS PROCOS ASIAE XV VIR SACRIS FACIVNDIS SODALIS ANTONINIANVS] / COMITI LEG IMP ANTONINI AVG EX[PEDITIONE GERMANICA LEG AVG PR PRAETORE PROVINCIARVM PANNONIAE] / INFERIORIS ITEM PANNONIAE SVP[ERIORIS CVRATORI ALVEI TIBER LEG LEG XIV GEMINAE PRAETORI TRIBVNO PLEBIS LEG] / PROVINCIAE ASIAE QVAESTO[RI TRIBVNO LEG XVI FLAVIAE DECEMVIRO STLITIBVS IVDICANDIS] / PATRI OPTIMO ET FLAVI[---- MATRI----] / M NONIV[S MACRINVS FILIVS].

⁸ The distinction between a *titulus*, testifying to the setting up of a grave, and between the individual grave inscription is not always taken into account in the statistical evaluation of funerary inscriptions.

Recording the memory of an individual also played a part in many inscriptions displayed under statues. They enumerated the honours held by a person and therefore were almost universally labelled by scholars as “honorary inscriptions.” However, this term is also wrong or, at least, very problematic, if I am right in using this English term to mean the same as the German *Ehreninschrift*, which means that the inscription itself embodied the honour. But, so far as I can see, this was never the case in the Roman context. Such inscriptions recorded, in stereotyped form, the decision passed by a city, by a *collegium*, or by one or more private individuals, to pay an appropriate tribute to a person, in the form of a statue or a portrait.⁹ Frequently it was specified that an inscription should be put under the monument, and sometimes the wording of the inscription was prescribed. This happened, for example, in a decision of the municipality of Herculaneum probably in the Augustan period. The council decided the following: *statuam equestrem ei poni quam celeberrimo loco ex pecunia publica inscribique M(arco) Nonio M(arci) filio Men(enia) Balbo pr(aetori) proco(n)s(uli) patrono*.¹⁰ This example shows quite clearly that the actual honour consisted in the construction of a statue itself, in this case an equestrian statue, as is explained by the inscription seen by everyone who visited the *locus celeberrimus* in Herculaneum. The importance of the image, that is the statue, as the crucial part of the honour, is highlighted by the absence of any inscription when the monument stood in the self-explanatory context of a private house, as we see in many examples from Pompeii. In the public space, inscriptions had to be set on the base, under the statue, in order to explain who was honoured with a statue and, of course, by whom.¹¹

All these different functional types of inscriptions: building inscriptions, various dedications, inscriptions on tombs and under statues etc., are also connected with the topic that was the starting point of this lecture: the *cursus honorum*, the sequence of public functions fulfilled by a person during his lifetime. A few examples will illustrate the variety of forms that the *cursus honorum* takes in epigraphic texts.

The following building inscription¹² was found in Barcino in Spain, home town of the senatorial family the the Minicij Natalis:¹³

⁹ Numerous examples in *ILS*,

¹⁰ *AE* 1947, 53 = *AE* 1976,144 (Herculaneum): [*Qu*]od *M(arcus) Ofillius Celer* *IIvir iter(um) v(erba) f(ecit) pertinere at municipi dignitatem meritis M(arci) Noni Balbi respondere d(e) e(a) r(e) i(ta) c(ensuerunt): [Cu]m M. Nonius Balbus quo hac vixerit parentis animum cum plurima liberalitat(e) singulis universisque praestiterit placere decurionibus statuam equestrem ei poni quam celeberrimo loco ex pecunia publica inscribique M. Nonio M. f. Men. Balbo pr(aetori) proco(n)s(uli) patrono, universus ordo populi Herculanie(n)sis ob merita eius item eo loco quo cineres eius conlecti sunt aram marmoream fieri et constitui inscribique publice M. Nonio M. f. Balbo exque eo loco parentalibu(s) pompam duci ludisque gymnycis qui soliti erant fieri diem edici unum in honorem eius et cum in Theatro ludi fient sellam eius poni c(ensuerunt).*

¹¹ In some dedications this was more often as important as the person to whom the honour was primarily directed; cf. W. Eck, ‘Statuendekanten und Selbstdarstellung in römischen Städten’, in: *L’Afrique, la Gaule, la Religion à l’époque romaine. Mélanges à la mémoire de M. Le Glay*, ed. Y. Le Bohec, Brussels 1994, 650 ff.

¹² *CIL* II 4509 = *ILS* 1029 = *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* IV Nr. 30 (Barcino) with photo.

*L. Min[icius L. f. Gal. Na]talis cos. procos.
 provinc. [Africae sodalis Augus]talis leg. Aug. pr. praet. divi Traia-
 ni Part[hici et Imp. Traiani Ha]driani Aug. provinc. Pan-
 nonia[e superioris curator a]lvei Tiberis et riparum et
 cloacar[um urbis leg. divi Trai]ani Parthici leg. III Aug. leg. di-
 vi Traia[ni Parthici leg(ionis) --- doni]s donatus expeditione Dacic[a]
 prima a[b eodem Imperatore] corona vallari murali aurea
 has[tis puris III vexillis III] leg pr. pr. provinc. Africae pr.
 trib. pl. q. p[rovinc. --- IIIv]ir viarum curandarum et
 L. Minicius L. f. [Natalis Quadro]nius Verus f. augur trib. pl.
 desig. q. Aug. et [eodem tempore leg. p]r. pr patris provinc. Africae tr.
 mil. leg. I Adiut. p. f. l[eg. XI Cl. p. f. leg. XIII Ma]rt. Vic. IIIvir monetalis a. a. f. f.
 balineum c[um port]icibus solo suo et
 [ductus aquae] fecerunt.*

Two members of this family appear in the text. The inscription was engraved on a large marble slab and comprises fourteen lines: the text talks about the construction of a bath, including the porticoes and the appropriate aqueduct, by the senator L. Minicius Natalis and his son L. Minicius Natalis Quadronius Verus. This crucial statement, the primary cause for erecting the inscription, was placed only in the last two lines. It was written with much larger letters, so that the observer could be reminded of the deeds of the donors, namely the act of benefaction by two senators for their home town. If one starts reading the text from the beginning, it would take a while to arrive at this statement. The first twelve lines, the “overwhelming” part of the text, were filled with the names of the two Minicii Natales, father and son, and especially with the *cursus honorum* of both. The *cursus honorum* of the father ran in inverse order: it began with his proconsulate in Africa and ended with the Vigintivirat. Likewise, that of the son went from his role as *tribunus plebis*, the post to which the young senator was designated at the time of writing, down to the Vigintivirat. In Barcino, their home town, it was unnecessary, of course, to describe the rank of both; everyone knew this family, which was the most prominent in the community of this not-so-big provincial town. In order to identify the authors of the benefaction, it would have sufficed to record their names alone on the building inscription — at most the father’s consulate, the summit of his career, could have been mentioned so as to place him in the senatorial hierarchy, whereas the son’s social position was already determined by the father’s. However, this obviously did not satisfy the two senators. They wished to document each and every one of their offices in the service of the empire in order to make it clear how closely connected both father and son were to the emperors Trajan and Hadrian. The inscription documented the succession of positions achieved over many decades in the imperial service as members of the imperial elite.

A second example, again from the documentary corpus of this family, and once more from Barcino, also stressed service in the imperial elite, but in a different context and in a different type of inscription. The text probably comes from the same bath, whose construction was recorded in the inscription just mentioned. But this time the inscription was not concerned with the act of construction itself, but with the public honouring of a

¹³ See *PIR*² M 619. 620.

benefactor. Only part of the inscription was preserved, but this is enough to reconstruct the text and identify the procedure.¹⁴

[L. Minicio L. f. Gal, Natali Quadronio Vero]
 [cos. procos. prov. Africae auguri leg. Aug pr. pr. prov. Moesiae inferioris]
 [curatori operum publicorum et aedium sacrar. curatori viae Flaminiae]
 [praef. alimentor. leg. Aug. leg. VI Victr. in Britannia praetori tribuno pleb.]
 [candidato quaestori candi]dato Im[p. et eodem temp. leg(ato) pr. pr. patris]
 [provinciae Africae diocese]os Cart[haginiens. tribuno milit. leg. I Adiutor. p. f.]
 [item leg. XI Cl. p. f. item leg. XI]III Gem. [Mart. Victr. IIIvir monet. a. a. f. f.]
 [colonia [Iul]ia Car[thago ex Africa (?)]
 [ex decreto ordini]s posu[it ob merita patrono (?)]
 [col. Barcin. quadrigam (?) v]etus[tate collapsam restituit]
 [---] curant[e ---]
 [---]Iv]iro q[ui]nquennali ---]

The son, Minicius Natalis Quadronius Verus, was honoured in the inscription some thirty years after the construction of the bath. However, the honour had nothing to do with the bath or with its construction. It concerned Minicius' activity as proconsul in the province of Africa, and originated in the city of Carthage. Minicius Natalis was appreciated for his good service to this city during his proconsulate in Africa, probably around 154. The city therefore decided to pay its respects by erecting a statue in his home town, but not a "normal" *statua pedestris*. They wished him to be displayed in public standing on a *quadriga*, thereby demonstrating the gratitude of the *caput provinciae*, and they placed the statue in the central room of the large public baths in Barcino, built by his own family, and visited regularly by all those going to the baths.¹⁵

Similar statue-tributes for proconsuls of Asia and Africa are known from many cities throughout the empire, for these were the highest positions to which senators could aspire (aside from being *praefectus urbi* in Rome). We find inscriptions beneath all these statues, containing the name of the honouree as well as the fact that he was *proconsul Africae* or *Asiae*.¹⁶ For Minicius Natalis Quadronius Verus, the son, we have precisely such a statue in Lepcis Magna with the following laconic text:

L(ucio) Minicio [Natali]
 Quadron[io]
 Vero proco[nsuli]
 Afric(ae) patr[ono]
 Lepcitani pu[bl(ice)].¹⁷

But often these texts also cover the entire career of the honouree prior to the erection of the statue, as in the case of the inscription placed under the Quadriga of Minicius Natalis in the baths of Barcino. A partial *cursus honorum* of the younger Minicius Natalis

¹⁴ *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* 4, 34 = W. Eck and F.J. Navarro, 'Das Ehrenmonument der Colonia Carthago für L. Minicius Natalis Quadronius Verus in seiner Heimatstadt Barcino', *ZPE* 123, 1998, 237 = *AE* 1998, 804 (Barcino).

¹⁵ See Eck and Navarro (n. 14 above).

¹⁶ For examples of inscriptions for *proconsules Africae* see B.E. Thomasson, *Fasti Africani*, Göteborg 1996, *passim*.

¹⁷ *IRT* 536 (Lepcis Magna).

already existed in the building inscription for the baths in Barcino mentioned before, but since that inscription had been erected he had made tremendous progress and reached the highest position in the senatorial hierarchy, the proconsulate of Africa, as had his father before him. The well-informed citizens of the city of Barcino knew of course just how far their most prominent citizen had risen in the imperial hierarchy. Nevertheless, the long climb to the top had to be recorded in detail. We may safely assume that this detailed enumeration received the imprimatur of the honouree, but we can also prove that this was the case on the basis of a text from southern Etruria.

Minicius Natalis the son had ties there; probably the family had bought land in southern Etruria, since, by Trajan's order, all candidates for senatorial office had to invest at least one third of their property in Italian land. Minicius Natalis junior built a sanctuary for several unidentifiable deities in the vicinity of today's Viterbo, and had a dedicatory inscription engraved there. The names of the gods appeared in Greek. In addition to the gods' names, this long inscription mentioned the name of the senatorial dedicator and his entire *cursus honorum*, from the first office to the last, as proconsul of Africa.¹⁸ It is clear that Minicius Natalis junior himself was responsible for the dedication, since after the gods' names in the dative case, his name and career appear in the nominative case. But we can go further and prove that the text was authored by him in this form and in this formulation, since it contains a distinctive and almost idiosyncratic element, which does not recur in a stereotypical *cursus honorum*. One of the offices in the inscription from Viterbo was described as follows: *[quaest(or) candid(atus) Aug(usti) et eodem tempore leg(atus) pat]ris sui [pr]ovinc(iae) [Africae]*, i.e. 'quaestor as candidate of the emperor and at the same time legate of his own father in Africa'. And if this is not enough to prove the personal touch, let me add that this is by no means the only text where we find this formulation: this element recurs in almost identical phrasing in all the inscriptions that mention the *cursus honorum* of this senator. I note first the four inscriptions from his home town Barcino. The building inscription from the baths, previously cited, was the earliest to contain this element:

*q(uaestori) Aug(usti) et [eodem tempore leg(ato) p]r(o) pr(aetore) patris provinc(iae) Africae.*¹⁹

The dedication by Carthage under the *quadriga* for the senator in Barcino featured almost identical wording:

*[quaestori candi]dato Im[p(eratoris) et eodem temp(ore) leg(ato) pr(o) pr(aetore) patris provinciae Africae diocese]os Cart[haginiens(is) --- colon]ia [Iul]ia Car[thago ex Africa].*²⁰

¹⁸ CIL XI 3002 = IG XIV 2260 (Viterbo): [---]βαλ [---]ριω [---]μω και [---]ς θεοῖς.
[L. Minicius L. f. Natalis cos. aug. pr]ocos. prov. A[fricae leg.] Aug. pr. pr. prov. Moesiae in[ferioris curat. oper. publicor. et ae]dium sacrar[um curator] viae Flaminiae [praef. alimentor. leg. Aug. leg. VI] Vic[t]r. Britannia [praetor trib. pleb. candidatus] [quaest(or) candid(atus) Aug. et eodem tempore leg. pat]ris sui [pr]ovinc. [Africae trib. mil. leg. I Adiut. p. f. item leg. XIII Gem.] Mart[iae] Vi[ctr. III]vir monet. a. a. a. f. f.]

¹⁹ CIL II 4509 = CIL II 6145 = ILS 1029 = *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* 4, 30 (Barcino).

²⁰ *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* 4, 34 = AE 1998, 804 (Barcino).

One of the clients of the senator, a certain L. Sempronius Carpio, also used this formulation in Barcino:

*q(uaestori) candid[ato divi] Hadriani A(u)g(usti) et eodem tem[pore] leg(ato)
prov(inciae) Africae dioeceseos [sic!] Carthag(iniensem) proco(n)s(ulis) patris sui...
L(ucius) Sempronius Carpio clie(n)s.*²¹

We find the same text under an honorary statue which the *seviri Augustales* erected for him in Barcino:

*[q(uaestori) candidato divi Hadriani Aug(usti) et eodem tempo]re leg(ato) prov(inciae)
A[fricae dioeceseos Car]thaginiens(ium) proco(n)s(ulis) pat[ris sui].... IIIIIviri Augustales
ob m[erita] eius.*²²

Finally, the formulation appears again on the base of a statue that the Decurions of Tibur set up for him:

*quaestori candidato divi Hadriani et eodem tempore legato prov(inciae) Afric(ae)
dioeceseos Carthaginien(sis) proconsulis patris sui ... decuriones Tiburt(es).*²³

If we include the building inscription from the temple in the vicinity of Viterbo, there are altogether six epigraphic texts with the *cursus honorum* of Minicius Natalis Quadronius Verus attesting that he was *quaestor candidatus* of Hadrian and at the same time responsible for the *dioecesis Carthaginiensis*, as his father's legate in Africa. This twofold function can only mean that although he was the Emperor's own candidate for the quaestorship and therefore elected *quaestor Augusti*, Hadrian had no need for him in this function and therefore allowed him to assist his father during the latter's proconsulate in Africa.

The two ranks in his career, combined in this way, must have carried a particular significance for him. That they are present in this identical formulation in inscriptions which go back to different dedicators forces us to conclude that the texts were conceived by the honouree himself. Nothing else can account for the identical wording in inscriptions in Barcino, in Tibur and near Viterbo. The dedicators must have obtained Natalis' permission not only for honouring him with a statue, but also received from him the very text which should go with the statue. Minicius Natalis therefore had his written *cursus honorum* updated and at his immediate disposal, to be handed over on request. Of course, he would also attach his own portrait — how else could a statue be set up for him bearing his own accurate portrait?

However, the fact that a senator's account of his career was always up-to-date and ready at hand was not unique to this *consularis* from the Tarraconensis; it was part and parcel of the lifestyle of many senators, a lifestyle which was played out in public, and intended to leave an impression on the public sphere.²⁴ The major concern of such senators lay in displaying their person to their contemporaries and no less to future generations. Take Pliny the younger as an example, with his famous, partially preserved,

²¹ CIL II 4510 = *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* 4, 32 (Barcino).

²² CIL XIV 4511 = *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne* 4, 33 (Barcino).

²³ CIL XIV 3599 = D. 1061 (Tibur).

²⁴ See W. Eck, "'Tituli honorarii'", curriculum vitae und Selbstdarstellung in der Hohen Kaiserzeit' (n. 1 above).

inscription from Comum, where he displayed his full *cursus honorum* as well as all his benefactions to his home town for all to see. This text, part of which can be seen in San Ambrogio in Milan, was presented to the public in the library founded by him in Comum, probably established after his death and in accordance with his last will and testament.²⁵

Moreover, the example of another senator, a contemporary of Pliny, shows that the continuous updating of the *curriculum vitae*, i.e. the written version of the *cursus honorum*, was by no means unique to the consular senator from Barcino in Spain, but rather a feature common to many members of the contemporary elite.

Q. Glitius Atilius Agricola, one of the most outstanding senators during the reigns of Domitian and Trajan, came from Augusta Taurinorum, not very far from Comum.²⁶ Domitian sent him as legate to the province of Belgica, where he also served for a short period under Nerva. In 97, he became *consul suffectus*, together with L. Pomponius Maternus (and not, as was supposed for a long time, with the much better known Cornelius Tacitus).²⁷ He was honoured in his hometown with numerous statues at various stages of his career, namely with *statuae equestres*, but not with equestrian statues that stand on solid and massive stone bases. These statues stood on a plate that rested on top of two *trapezophora*. This type of equestrian statuary became known only a few years ago, following a publication by my colleague, the archaeologist Henner v. Hesberg, and myself. An inscription that accounted for the statue was engraved on the frontal *trapezophoron*.²⁸ There were at least eight such monuments and inscriptions for Glitius Agricola in Augusta Taurinorum.²⁹ The tributes were made by several cities or groups of individuals at various stages in this senator's career, and the accompanying texts on the *trapezophora* kept up with his progress, adding the new offices occupied as Glitius Agricola's career went on. The earliest ones belonged to the period before Nerva's death. In both these texts his governorship in Belgica was formulated in the normal way:

[lega]to pro praetor. [im]p. Nervae Caes. Aug. provinciae Belgicae.³⁰

First the governor's title, followed by the name of the emperor and finally the province.

²⁵ On the reconstruction of the inscription see G. Alföldy, 'Die Inschriften des Jüngeren Plinius und seine Mission in Pontus et Bithynia', *Festschrift für St. Borzsák, AAntHung.* 39, 1999, 21 ff. = in: Idem, *Städte, Eliten und Gesellschaft in der Gallia Cisalpina*, Stuttgart 1999, 221 ff.; on the function of the inscription W. Eck, 'Die große Pliniusinschrift aus Comum: Funktion und Monument', in: *Varia Epigraphica. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Epigrafia, Bertinoro, 8-10 giugno 2000*, eds. A. Bertinelli and A. Donati, Faenza 2001, 225 ff.; Id., 'Rome and the Outside World. Senatorial Families and the World They Lived in', in: *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space*, eds. B. Rawson and P. Weaver, Oxford 1997, 73 ff.

²⁶ *PIR*² G 181; Alföldy in: *Städte, Eliten* (note 25 above), 229 f.

²⁷ W. Eck and A. Pangerl, 'Zwei Konstitutionen für die Truppen Niedermösens vom 9. September 97', *ZPE* 151, 2005, 185 ff.

²⁸ W. Eck and H. v. Hesberg, 'Tische als Statuenträger', *MDAI (R)* 111, 2004 [2006], 143 ff.

²⁹ *CIL* V 6974-6987 (Augusta Taurinorum); on the one Greek text in this series see briefly F. Battistoni, 'Missing Relative?', *ZPE* 2009 (in press).

³⁰ *CIL* V 6574 = *ILS* 1021 (Augusta Taurinorum).

This governorship of Belgica was mentioned in five other texts, more or less completely preserved. However, in all of them, in explicit contrast to the normal sequence just illustrated, the name of the province preceded rather than followed the emperor's name, now the *divus Nerva*:

*legato pro pr. provinc. Belgic. divi Nervae.*³¹

This peculiar sequence would not be that disturbing if not for the fact that in four of these texts, his consular governorship of Pannonia, which followed his consulate, appeared in the 'normal sequence' — that is, the name of the emperor, now Trajan, comes before that of the province:

*legat. pro pr. imp. Nervae Caes. Traian. Aug. Germ. Dacici provinc. Pannon(iae).*³²

The 'perverse' order in which Q. Glitius Atilius Agricola's governorship of Belgica was stated is found in several inscriptions, each with a different dedicator. This calls for an explanation, especially since the normal order was kept in the two texts written while Nerva was still alive. One may suggest the following explanation: Glitius Agricola drafted or dictated to his *amanuensis* his *curriculum* already in Nerva's time in the normal sequence with the name of the province following that of the living emperor:

legatus pro pr. imp. Nervae Caes. Aug. provinc. Belgicae.

Subsequently, after Nerva's death, when an occasion arose which called for an update of the *curriculum*, Glitius Agricola or his secretary "proofread" the text. They realised that the formula *imp. Nervae Caes. Aug.* implied a living emperor, a fact which was no longer correct: in other words, it had to be replaced by that of a dead emperor, i.e. *divi Nervae*. They must have crossed out the name in the text, and put *divi Nervae* in the margin instead (just as we do when proofreading our texts). When preparing the next 'fair copy' of the *curriculum*, the clerk adopted the correct form of Nerva's name, but placed it in the wrong place: it now followed the name of the province. Copies of the updated *curriculum* were now made, *reproducing* the mistaken sequence in several inscriptions. The governorship of Pannonia, however, which followed later, was added with its various elements in the right sequence. No one seems to have noticed then, nor now for that matter, this peculiar and divergent sequence.³³

This and other examples show that many, if not all, senators in the early and high imperial age directly or indirectly produced such written *curricula*. These texts were then handed to those who required them for producing the inscription accompanying the statue whenever they were honoured. People like the Minicii Natales or Pliny the Younger used this *cursus honorum* whenever they erected buildings, made dedications to the gods or honoured another person. Pliny writes in a letter that he had built a temple in the town of Tifernum Tiberinum, whose patron he was. Very likely he ordered a similar building also to be erected in Hispellum, today's Spello.³⁴ The city is located south of

³¹ *CIL* V 6975. 6976. 6977 = *ILS* 1021a. 6978. 6980 (Augusta Taurinorum).

³² *CIL* V 6976-78. 6980; cited from V 6977 = *ILS* 1021a (Augusta Taurinorum).

³³ W. Eck, "Tituli honorarii", *curriculum vitae und Selbstdarstellung in der Hohen Kaiserzeit* (n. 1 above), 224 f. = *Tra epigrafia* (n. 1 above), 325 f.

³⁴ Plinius, *epistula* 4, 1, 4.

Perugia and Assisi on the river Clitumnus. From there we have the fragment of an inscription,³⁵ which shows that Pliny was not content with having his benefaction mentioned in the inscription associated with the building (obviously a temple) erected there, but had provided, probably in his testament, for his entire career to be mentioned in this inscription as well. This request was carried out, as can be inferred from the fragment.

A *cursus honorum* was neither a biography nor a *curriculum vitae* in our sense of the word, although this term is often used to describe it. The *cursus honorum*, as the two words making up the phrase imply, was restricted to the performance of public functions. Strictly personal elements were totally absent. The *cursus honorum* was meant to show what was done for the *res publica* and in its service. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of *cursus honorum* in republican times was relevant only for members of the senate, those who were elected to serve as magistrates. Nor is it surprising that for many centuries before Augustus, a full *cursus honorum* appeared only on funerary inscriptions. In this respect too our records convey a true reflection of reality: a *cursus honorum* was an adaptation of the *laudatio funebris* in epigraphic form, and therefore used only for the dead.³⁶ When a life was over, when service for the *res publica* was completed, the achievements of an individual could be measured, and even balanced, in comparison and in competition with other members of the ruling class.³⁷

At the very end of the republican period, but more probably only since Augustan times, this form of summing up a life which had come to an end was transferred from the dead to the living, and not as stock-taking, a balance sheet to be produced by those already at the end of their senatorial career, but on the contrary, the form was taken up by those still in their prime, in the midst of their activity. The contribution of a life not yet finished may already be accepted as a *cursus*. The building inscription of the Minicii Natales mentioned the *cursus* of the son only up to the point that he became tribune of the plebs.³⁸

More important, however, was the extension of this form to people who never received a public commission, an assignment from the people, in the strict sense of the word — that is, by election. This epigraphic form was very quickly picked up by senior functionaries appointed by a single person, especially by the Princeps. We find it already

³⁵ CIL XI 5272 = AE 1999, 612 (HisPELLUM): [G(aius) Plinius L(uci) f(ilius) Ouf(entina) Caecilius Secundus co(n)s(ul) augur] [Xvir stlit(ibus) iudicand(is) trib(unus) mil(itum) leg(ionis) III Galli]ca[e] [sevir eq(uitum) R(omanorum) quaestor Imperatori]s trib(unus) plebis pr(aetor) [praef(ectus) aer(arii) milit(aris) praef(ectus) aer(arii) Saturni cur(ator) alvei] Tiberis ex s(enatus) c(onsulto) prof(consulari) potestate legatus pr(o) pr(aetore) provinciae Ponti] et Bithyniae et legatus [in eam ab Imp(eratore) Caes(are) Nerva Traiano Aug(usto) missus testame]nto [fieri] iussit.

³⁶ W. Eck, 'Senatorial Self-Representation: Developments in the Augustan Period', in: *Caesar Augustus. Seven Aspects*, eds. F. Millar and E. Segal, Oxford 1984, 129 ff., esp. 133 ff.

³⁷ Compare also S. Panciera, 'L'epigrafia Latina nell' passaggio dalla repubblica all' impero', in: Idem, *Epigrafi, epigrafia, epigrafisti*, Rome 2006, Vol. I, 83 ff.

³⁸ See above p. 82.

in the Augustan period in the grave inscription of the equestrian *procurator* Octavius Sagitta.³⁹ The following functions were named there:

As *Ivir quinq(uennalis)*, he served three times, and then *praef(ectus) fab(rum)*, *praef(ectus) equi(tum)*, *trib(unus) mil(itum) a populo*, *procurat(or) Caesaris Augusti in Vindalici(!) et Raetis et in valle Poenina per annos IIII et in Hispania provincia per annos X et in Suria biennium*. One could hardly have given his career in more detail, and it is far less conventional than the career of a senator, but it was still the summing up of a life that had come to an end. By contrast the senate of Capua honoured the knight Vitrasius Pollio, procurator of Tiberius, with a statue and a similarly detailed description of his past career, probably still in his lifetime. The text mentioned the financial procuratorship in the two Gallic provinces of Aquitania and Lugdunensis, an equestrian prefecture and the post of *quinquennalis* in Capua.⁴⁰

From the Augustan age on, this specific form of describing one's official life spread from the living and the dead of the senatorial class to members of all social groups, who assumed public offices in one form or another, in the broader sense of the term, including offices not strictly conferred by the *res publica populi Romani*. Amongst them were people from the ruling classes of colonies and municipalities, like L. Anicius Paetinas of Salona, under whose statue an inscription tells us that he was *quattuorvir iure dicundo* and *quinquennalis*, also *praefectus quinquennalis* of Drusus Caesar Germanicus as well as of P. Dolabella, *pontifex* of the colony and *flamen* of Iulia Augusta (Livia), in Salona, and finally *praefectus fabrum*.⁴¹ Even freedmen adopted this form of self-presentation. A telling example is that of Marcus Caelius Phileros, who listed his activities as *accensus* of Titus Sextius in Carthage in Africa and his duumvirate in Clupia and Formiae on the grave of his wife, Flora Fresidia, and another freedman.⁴² Therefore it does not come as a surprise that soldiers of different ranks adopted this form as well as imperial freedmen like M. Ulpus Phaedimus who was Trajan's *a potione* and later *a laguna et tricliniarches*, *lictor proximus* and *a commentariis beneficiorum*. He accompanied Trajan during the Parthian campaign and died in Cilician Selinus on 12 August 117, just five days after his patron.⁴³

³⁹ ILS 9007 = AE 1902, 189 = AE 1977, 241 (Superaequum): *Q. Octavius L. f. C. n. T. pron. Ser. Sagitta Ivir quinq(uennalis) III praef(ectus) fab(rum) praef(ectus) equi(tum) trib(unus) mil(itum) a populo procurat(or) Caesaris Augusti in Vindalici et Raetis et in valle Poenina per annos IIII et in Hispania provincia per annos X et in Suria biennium*.

⁴⁰ CIL X 3871 = AE 1981, 230 (Capua): *[--Vitr]asio G(ai) f(ilio) / [--- P]ollioni / [procu]ratori / [Ti(beri) Caes(aris) Augu]sti Gallia/[rum Aquit]aniae et / [Lugdunens]is praef(ecto) eq(uitum) / IIIIvir(o) / [quin]q(uennali) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)*.

⁴¹ CIL III 14712 = ILS 7160 (Salona): *L. Anicio L. f. Paetinati IIIIvir. iure dic. quinquennal., praef. quinq. Drusi Caesar. Germanici, praefec. quin. P. Dolabellae, pontifici, flaminii Iuliae Augustae, praef. fabr. praefectur Phariac. Salonitan. See also AE 1902, 61.*

⁴² CIL X 104 = ILS 1945 (Formiae): *M. Caelius M. l. Phileros accens. T. Sexti imp. in Africa Carthag., aed., praef. i. d. vectig. quinq. locand. in castell. LXXXIII aed. Tell. s. p. fec. Ivir Clupiae bis Formis Aug. aedem Nept. lapid. varis s. p. ornav. Fresidiae N. l. Florae uxori viro opseq(entissimae) Q. Octavio (mulieris) l. Antimacho karo amico.*

⁴³ CIL VI 1884 = ILS 1792 (Rome): *M. Ulpio Aug. lib. Phaedimo divi Traiani Aug. a potione item a laguna et tricliniarch. lictori proximo et a comment. beneficiorum vixit ann. XXVIII abscessit Selinunte pri. Idus Augus. Nigro et Aproniano cos. reliquiae treiectae eius III*

Thousands of such texts could be cited and all of them make it eminently clear that the inscriptions were not meant as a display of a *cursus*, but that the *cursus* was used in different contexts to introduce people, either by others who wished to do so, or because the relevant persons themselves wished to be presented in this way. Furthermore, the *honores*-element was often inapplicable, as in the case of Caelius Phileros and M. Ulpius Phaedimus, whose functions could not be described as such. However, the *cursus honorum* model was extended to all sorts of public activities, since nothing else could serve as a better introduction to a person, nothing located him better in his social and political context.

This model often turned out to be a very egocentric way of self-representation, even when the ultimate goal of the inscription was quite different, as the last example will clarify.

Cn. Octavius Titinius Capito, also known from the younger Pliny's letters, received Nerva's permission to erect a statue of Iunius Silanus, who had been murdered under Nero, in the forum.⁴⁴ The inscription Capito ordered to be put under the statue is not preserved, but two other inscriptions set up by him in Rome allow us to surmise the format and formulation of the inscription in honour of Iunius Silanus. As *praefectus vigilum* under Trajan, Capito had portraits of Trajan and some statues of the gods made for the seven barracks of the Roman fire brigade cohorts. The first of the two known inscriptions placed under Trajan's portrait reads as follows:⁴⁵

[I]mp(eratori) Caesari Nervae Traiano
 Aug(usto) Germ(anico)
 [Gn(aeus) Oc]tavius Titinius Capito, praef(ectus)
 [coh(ortis), trib(unus)] mil(itium), donatus hasta pura, corona
 [vallari, proc(urator)] ab epistulis et a patrimonio
 [iterum ab epi]stulis divi Nervae,
 [eodem auctore ex] s(enatus) c(onsulto) praet(oriis) ornamentis,
 [ab epistulis tertio Im]p(eratoris) Caesaris Nervae
 [Traiani Aug(usti) Ger(manici), pr]aef(ectus) vigil(um).

The text of the inscription consists of nine lines: the letter-size in the first two, which refer to the emperor Trajan whose portrait was dedicated by Capito to a unit of the vigils, hardly exceeds that of the letters of the seven lines which follow — all dedicated to his own career. A “normal” (and appropriate) text introducing Trajan's portrait to the observer would have presumably taken up four lines and looked like this:

Imp(eratori) Caesari divi Nervae filio)
 Nervae Traiano Aug(usto) Germanico
 pontifici maxim(o) tribun(icia) potest(ate) III
 co(n)s(uli) III patri patriae,

Nonas Febr. ex permissu collegii pontific. piaculo facto Catullino et Apro cos. dulcissimae memoriae eius Valens Aug. lib. Phaedimianus a veste ben. mer. fecit.

⁴⁴ Plinius, *ep.* 1. 17. For further details see W. Eck, ‘Auf der Suche nach Personen und Persönlichkeiten’ (n. 1 above).

⁴⁵ *CIL* VI 40489 (Rome). A comparable text is found e.g. in *CIL* VI 32929 = *ILS* 2700 from Puteoli: M. Artorius Priscillinus fulfilled a *votum* towards a god not named in the text and cited his entire career.

Two lines would have sufficed for Octavius Titinius Capito in his current post as *praefectus vigilum*:

*Gn(aeus) Octavius Titinius Capito,
praef(ectus) vigil(um).*

In contrast, in Capito's text it is the dedicator himself who is in the spotlight. Obviously, this was *not* regarded as *lèse-majesté*, otherwise Capito would have desisted; it was acceptable and in harmony with the spirit of the time.

This uneven division of the text was also no coincidence, as proven by the dedication of a statuette of the god *Volcanus*; in fact the wording was almost identical:⁴⁶

*Gn(aeus) Octavius Titinius Capito,
praef(ectus) cohortis, trib(unus) militi(um), donat(us)
hasta pura, corona vallari, proc(urator) ab
epistulis et a patrimonio, iterum ab
epistulis divi Nervae, eodem auctore ex
s(enatus) c(onsulto) praetoriis ornamentis, ab epistul(is)
tertio Imp(eratoris) Nervae Caesar(is) Traiani Aug(usti) Ger(manici),
praef(ectus) vigilum, Volcano d(ono) d(edit).*

Here the text began and almost ended with Capito's name and career, whereas the dedication to *Volcanus* occupied merely the second half of the last line; in other words the entire text was nothing more than a self-presentation of the *praefectus vigilum*.

It would be tempting to say that this is an example of a *cursus* inscription. But the text as a whole functioned as a dedication to the patron god of Rome's fire brigade. This primary function, as often as not, was almost eclipsed behind the secondary one, to convey another message, that of the self-representation of a particular individual. Hence the difficulty in explaining the term '*cursus* inscription'.

Why was the *cursus honorum* in the Roman public sphere so persistent and so generally adopted by such a variety of social groups, although by its inner logic, as well as traditionally, the *cursus honorum* was to be associated exclusively with the Roman magistracies and accordingly with senatorial families? I can find no direct explanation for this in the sources. However, we may find a clue in the association of the increasing frequency and the growth in popularity of the *cursus honorum* with a particular period. This coincidence may provide the clue.⁴⁷ Everything points to the Augustan principate as the watershed: what was originally used only for the dead was now being used for the living; and from that period on, more and more positions mentioned in the *cursus honorum* were not given by popular vote but rather by the Princeps, even in the case of senators. But the Princeps also employed non-senators, that is equestrians and freedmen, in his service, and the functions filled by the latter did not differ fundamentally from those filled by senators. There was no reason for others not to use the same format of self-representation used by the senators.

Perhaps an even more decisive and concrete incentive is to be found in the public display of the *cursus honorum*, alongside the *elogia*, of very many *viri illustres* in

⁴⁶ *CIL* VI 798 = *ILS* 1448 (Rome).

⁴⁷ See the studies by W. Eck referred to above, 'Senatorial Self-Representation' (note 36) and S. Panciera, 'L'epigrafia Latina nell' passaggio dalla repubblica all' impero' (note 37).

Augustus' *forum* — the subject of Joseph Geiger's book.⁴⁸ The Roman past was present in this forum through the "inscribed statues" of people who achieved their own fame and glory in the service of the *respublica*. However, not merely did Augustus turn the *cursus* into a marker, an essential element of public recognition, he also provided for the future that whoever was honoured by the senate with *ornamenta triumphalia* would receive a *statua triumphalis* in his forum, with a full or at least partial *cursus honorum*. We do not have very many concrete examples, as pointed out rightly by Joseph Geiger, but we may well rely on the evidence of many statues with inscriptions of this kind. One could not escape the impact of this statuary-epigraphic pageant in the heart of the vast empire. The power of the images created by Augustus was complemented and enhanced by that of the words, of the epigraphic formulas. Statues and epigraphic formulas were powerful elements in the Augustan culture, which shaped world history for hundreds of years to come, not only in Rome and its *fora*, but also in the provinces, including Iudaea/Syria Palaestina. The career of Valerius Valerianus, written on a column base in Caesarea Maritima, was a late reflex of the Augustan prototype.⁴⁹

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⁴⁸ Geiger, *The First Hall of Fame* (n. 1 above).

⁴⁹ K. Holum and C. Lehmann, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, Boston 2000, no. 4: *L. Valerio Valeriano p[roc. prov.] Syr. Palaest. provinc. [---] praeposito summ(a)e [feliciss. expedit.] Mesopotamenaе adv[ersus Arabos] praepos. vexil. feliciss. [expedit.] urbic. itemq. Asianaе [adversus] hostes publicos pr[ae]p. eq. gentium] peregrinarum adver[sus ---] proc. Cyprae praef. a[lae I Hispan.] Campagonum in Dac[ia trib. c(o)hort. I] mil(l)iariae Hemese[norum c. R. in] Pannonia praef. c(o)ho[r]tis --- in ---, --in] Pannonia. Mevius Romanus (centurio) [leg(ionis) VI Ferr.] f. c. Antoninianaе [strator(?)] eius viro i[n]compara]bili.*