

Quintius Lutatius Longinus and his wife Lunia in a funerary inscription from Gozo

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A marble funerary inscription¹ of the Roman period is recorded by A.A. Caruana to have been discovered in Gozo in the district known as *It-Tomba*, in Victoria²; the place-name itself also denotes a funerary context: *Tomba* – in Italian – meaning a tomb. But Caruana seems to be confusing the exact location of *It-Tomba* (in Victoria) with the whole area which, in Classical antiquity, contained the extra-mural necropolis of the town of Gozo.³ On the basis of burial finds, this necropolis appears to have been contained within the entire area starting from Victoria's suburb Ghajn il-Kbira to St Augustine Square (in Victoria) and extending through Vajringa Street and St Francis Square to Ghajn Qatet and Archbishop Pietro Pace Streets ending at Tal-Ibrag on the eastern outskirts of Victoria but extending also northwards to Republic Street and the surrounding area. Therefore, if we are seeking the location of the inscription's discovery through Caruana's documentation, we have to take *It-Tomba* as understood by Caruana and, thus, the discovery's location could have been anywhere in the above-mentioned area. However, having always been in Augustinians' hands (*infra*), it is likely that the inscription had been found somewhere near the Augustinians' friary in Gozo, indicating St Augustine Square or its immediate vicinity as the most probable location of the inscription's discovery. Without mentioning his sources, J. Bezzina claims that this inscription was found in 1845 by Don Carlo Borg.⁴

The text of the inscription as recorded by Caruana ran as follows (textual reconstruction⁵ and translation are provided by the present writer):-

Q(VINTVS) LVTATIVS Q(VINTI) F(ILIVS)
QVIR(INA TRIBV)
LONGINVS VIVOS SIBI ET
IVNIAE C(AII) F(ILIAE) VERAT[----]
VXORI SANCTISSIM<A>E FECIT

Quintus Lutatius Longinus, of the Quirine tribe and son of Quintus, prepared (this grave) for himself and for Iunia, his most virtuous wife and daughter of Caius, in their lifetime.

In Caruana's times, this sepulchral inscription was kept at the Augustinians' friary in Valletta where it was brought from the friary of the Augustinian fathers in Rabat (Malta) to whom it had been earlier presented.⁶ But, on contacting the Augustinian fathers of Valletta, the present writer was informed that no inscription of the sort exists at present in their friary and that, if it was ever kept there, it must have been probably lost when the friary was hit during the Second World War.

The inscription throws some light on the social status of this couple living in Gozo evidently before the 3rd century A.D. (*infra*).

First of all, their use of the patronymic (i.e. the respective fathers' names) in their respective nomenclatures shows that both of them were freeborn.⁷ As indicated by his enrolment in the Quirine tribe (a rural tribe), Quintus Lutatius Longinus was a Roman citizen, although not by birth but by being granted Roman citizenship at some stage in his life as shown also in the case of the majority of Roman citizens, themselves also ascribed to the Quirine tribe and known to us from most of the surviving Roman inscriptions in Malta and Gozo. Every Roman citizen



Figure 1:
St Augustine Square,
Victoria, Gozo: the
possible location of the
funerary inscription's
findspot.

belonged to one of the 35 voting-tribes / voting-districts which, from early times, formed the basis of voting in the assemblies of the Roman People.⁸ The Quirine tribe, which (together with the Veline tribe) was established in 241 B.C.⁹, was specifically created for enfranchised (Roman) citizens. However, by the late 2nd century A.D., the inclusion of the voting-tribe in the *tria nomina*¹⁰ of Roman citizens started to disappear from inscriptions¹¹ and, thus, this phenomenon places our inscription probably not later than the end of the 2nd century A.D.

Moreover, it is to be noted that Quintus Lutatius Longinus' Roman citizenship was granted to him before emperor Caracalla extended Roman citizenship to all freeborn inhabitants of the Roman Empire in 212 A.D. and, therefore, must have been a special favour or a privilege he achieved perhaps on account of any merits of his or of any of his fore-fathers.

If, on the other hand, the initials *CF* (in the third line of the inscription) – standing for *Caii Filiale* (daughter of Caius) – are taken to stand alternatively for *Clarissimale Feminale* (most distinguished lady), they would indicate, in that case, a senatorial rank for his wife Iunia¹²: perhaps being the daughter of a member of the *Ordo Decurionum* (or, the local senate / council) of the Gozo *municipium*.

Furthermore, from her own name Iunia we can also deduce that the family name / *nomen gentilicium* of her father Caius must have been Iunius, as the woman in Roman society used to be known by the feminine form of the family name of her father and retained her name even when she got married, adding to it the husband's *cognomen* in the genitive case showing that, once married, she “belonged” to her husband legally.¹³ Thus, after getting married to Quintus Lutatius Longinus, Iunia must have added to her name the genitive form of her husband's *cognomen*: Longini; though this does not appear in this inscription.

As a *matrona* / married woman, Iunia must have had the right of wearing the *stola*. The *stola* was a long dress with a sort of flounce at the bottom, the *instita* (a symbol of a chaste Roman *matrona*), that thoroughly covered the woman to her feet.¹⁴ A possible indication of Iunia's chastity may be the reference to her – in the last line of the inscription – as an *uxor/i sanctissimale* (most virtuous wife).

We may remark that Quintus' family name / *nomen gentilicium* (i.e. Lutatius) is also met with in another inscription from Gozo which is now kept in the Gozo Archaeology Museum. This inscription¹⁵ of the 2nd half of the 2nd century A.D. was set up by Marcius Marcianus

in honour of ---- Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus, *patronus* of the Gozo *municipium*. And, following what we have said above in connection with the father's family name, the same family name (i.e. Lutatius) is also indirectly met with in another inscription from Gozo, which is also kept in the Gozo Archaeology Museum. This inscription¹⁶ of the first half of the 1st century A.D. is dedicated to Julia Augusta (Livia Drusilla), second wife of the first Roman emperor Augustus and mother of the second emperor Tiberius from an earlier marriage with Tiberius Claudius Nero. In this inscription, she is identified with the goddess Ceres.¹⁷ The dedication is made by the priestess Lutatia, daughter of Caius. In the light of what we have said earlier (*supra*), the family name / *nomen gentilicium* of Caius, Lutatia's father, must have been Lutatius. Thus, the common family name shared by Varenianus – or perhaps, his adoptive father¹⁸, by Lutatia's father and by Quintus does indicate that all of them somehow hailed from the same *gens* / family, namely the plebeian family of the Lutatii.

This couple (Quintus Lutatius Longinus and his wife Iunia) is likely to have found the final resting place somewhere in present-day St Augustine Square or its immediate vicinity in Victoria and, as in ancient Mediterranean cultures the dead were not allowed within the precincts of the living, their burial's location must have formed part of the necropolis which was to be found outside the walls of the Roman *oppidum* (or, town) of *Gaulos* / Gozo; also in accordance with the regulation, laid down in the Twelve Tables and normally observed until the late (Roman) Empire, requesting that all burials, whether of corpses or of cremated remains, had to take place outside the city / town.¹⁹

References

- 1 Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, X, 7511.
- 2 A.A. Caruana, *Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities in the Group of the Islands of Malta*, Malta, 1882, p.154.
- 3 ID., *Ancient Pagan Tombs and Christian Cemeteries in the islands of Malta explored and surveyed from the year 1881 to the year 1897*, Malta, 1898, p.11.
- 4 John Bezzina, 'Fdalijiet tal-Imghoddi misjuba fir-Rabat t'Ghawdex u fl-Idwar Tieghu(1)' in *Festi San Ġorġ*, Gozo, 1995, p.69.
- 5 Textual reconstruction given here follows the epigraphic conventions as in Lawrence Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, London, 1991, p.140. Although, to be grammatically correct, VIVOS in the second line of the text should be VIVIS, it is hereby being

reproduced as recorded by A.A. Caruana.

- 6 A.A. Caruana, *Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities in the Group of the Islands of Malta*, Malta, 1882, p.154.
- 7 While freedmen and freedwomen (i.e. ex-slaves or freed slaves) carried the name of their former master in their official nomenclature, generally adding a Greek *cognomen*, freeborn citizens enjoyed the right of carrying the patronymic (i.e. the father's name) in their official nomenclature.
- 8 Lawrence Keppie, *op. cit.*, p.19 and Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, New York, 2003, pp.50-1.
- 9 Edward Coleiro, *The Story of Rome*, Malta, 1974, p.158; Andrew Lintott, *op. cit.*, p.50; and J.E. Sandys (ed.), *A Companion to Latin Studies*, Cambridge, 3rd edn, 1921, p.264.
- 10 As required by the Gracchan *lex repetundarum*, Roman official nomenclature of male citizens consisted of three main elements in the following order: 1. the *praenomen*: forename or the name given on birth; 2. the *nomen* or *nomen gentilicium* (usually ending in *-ius*): the *gens* (or family) name followed, first, by the patronymic (or father's name) and, then, by the name of the voting-tribe to which, as a Roman citizen, the individual was ascribed; and 3. the *cognomen* (sometimes, two *cognomina* and, rarely, even more): a sort of a nickname which served as a distinguishing factor.
- 11 Lawrence Keppie, *loc. cit.* See also Ida Calabi Limentani, *Epigrafia Latina*, Milano – Varese, 1968, p.160 wherein she states that the indication of the tribe tends to disappear from inscriptions in the 3rd century A.D.
- 12 J. Stevenson, *The Catacombs. Rediscovered monuments of early Christianity*, London, 1978, p.161.
- 13 Joseph Busuttill, The Ceres Inscription. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, Malta, 1972, V, 2, pp. 158-9; Ida Calabi Limentani, *op. cit.*, p.157; and Lawrence Keppie, *op. cit.*, p.20.
- 14 Amy Richlin, 'Carrying water in a sieve: class and the body in Roman women's religion' in Karen L. King (ed), *Women and Goddess Traditions in Antiquity and Today*, Minneapolis, 1997, pp.346. 363. For *instita* as a symbol of a chaste Roman *matrona*, see Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 1.31-32.
- 15 Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, X, 7506.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 7501.
- 17 Joseph Busuttill, *op. cit.*, p.156-7.
- 18 Already in republican times, one could have more than one *cognomen*. In republican times, the second *cognomen* (or *agnomen*: often, a personal epithet) could have come about as a result of adoption. In such a case, the adopted son used to adopt the *tria nomina* of his adoptive father, turning his own *nomen* into a second *cognomen* / *agnomen* ending in *-anus* (see Ida Calabi Limentani, *op. cit.*, p.158). Thus, Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus may have been adopted by a certain Varenianus Lutatius Natalis, whose *tria nomina* he may have adopted, turning his own *nomen* Aemilius into Aemilianus, adding it as a second *cognomen* / *agnomen*. In such a case, his original *praenomen* and *cognomen* would remain unknown to us.
- 19 J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, Baltimore, 1996, p.48.