# *PROPER NOUNS AND THEIR ABBREVIATION IN SOME LATIN EPIGRAPHIC TEXTS*[1]

***Abstract:****The Latin epigraphic language is special mainly by the use of abbreviations. Proper nouns are often abbreviated, whether it is about anthroponyms, or the names of some places and their inhabitants, military units, families, provinces, countries, all of them commonly being abbreviated, either totally or partly. The names of persons or tribes (certain Latin inscriptions also contain the name of the tribe of the main character to whom the inscription is usually dedicated) are proper nouns which are almost invariably abbreviated. There is even an abbreviation rule for tria nomina: the praenomen is always abbreviated, sometimes the nomen gentile as well, whereas the cognomen is hardly ever abbreviated. A special case refers to imperial titles which are often subject to abbreviation as far as their components are concerned. The Latin proper nouns in the epigraphic texts are the best examples for the abbreviation process proving once again the pragmatism of the language of the Eternal City.*

***Key words:*** *proper nouns, abbreviation, Latin, epigraphy, rule.*

The Latin language is the perfect expression of Roman pragmatism and, at the same time, it is the accurate reflection of the amazing civilization promoted by the City of Seven Hills all around the lands that it dominated. *Scripta manent* (Written words remain) is the Roman phrase which was fully demonstrated by the multitude of Roman inscriptions in the entire Roman Empire. By their love for writing, the Romans managed to remain immortal, offering to the next generations rich information on their lifestyle and the military, ethnic and geographic realities. Latin inscriptions represent a special linguistic case, mainly by the abbreviation phenomenon, as well as by their grammar.

The abbreviation was used in Roman inscriptions as an economical manner of writing, especially because the writing material was not easy to handle, to get, to use (the inscriptions were not ordered by any kind of person, they were dictated by a certain material level and social status).

In time, after a long practice, a certain code of shortenings was established as a rule in most Latin inscriptions. For instance, ***LEG.*** became the most common abbreviation of the term *legio, -onis n.* = legion f. – the basic military unit of the Roman army; ***IMP.*** was the abbreviation of the initial term of *imperator, -oris* n. = general m., subsequently, at the time of Augustus, it was the term designating both the first name and the function of the emperor (Petolescu, C., 2001:41-54.); ***D. M.*** is the abbreviation which is often found in funerary inscriptions, having an apotropaic role for the deceased, the gods *Mani* being the protecting gods of the souls of the dead, their mentioning also appearing as a sacrifice (Balaci, A., 1992:237.); ***COS.*** is, together with ***LEG.*** the most useful and frequent abbreviation in Roman inscriptions, actually a special abbreviation of the term *consul, -is* n. = consul, m., the highest rank in Roman ordinary republican magistracies (Cizek, E., 1998.) etc.

Our study deals with the proper nouns of certain Latin inscriptions, selected from IDR or ISM, epigraphic collections from our territory, because we considered it important to analyze the abbreviations of some localities that still exist (for example, Drobeta) or the mentioning of certain regions, such as Tomis. The analysis of the proper nouns in the inscriptions we selected offers the opportunity of having a new view on the

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Romans' religion, since many names of Roman gods were present (some as the result of a religious syncretism, e.g. = ***I.O.M*** and ***S.I.M***.), but especially on the nominal structure of the Romans. The best known and recognized studies on Roman onomastics were carried out by Kajanto (Kajanto, I., 1982.) and other foreign researchers, but unfortunately they are not available in Romanian libraries.

Our paper continues our concern for Roman onomastics (Strechie, M., a., 2008: 289-294.; Strechie, M., b., 2011:200-206 and Strechie M., c., 2011: 137-144.), but at the same time it attempts to study the Roman inscriptions from Romania, from the perspective of the Latin onomastics and their abbreviations.

The selection of the inscriptions in our translation was dictated by the economy of this paper. This selection was also a special one since it analyzes Roman names falling into various categories: gods, emperors, persons, military units, localities, families or months as seen from the inscriptions below. The study of the inscriptions subject to analysis involved a translation work on our part as well, and the Latin epigraphic style did not make it easy, since it is a concise style with a rather difficult grammar: ablative absolute, periphrastic conjugation, use of specific landmarks of the Roman calendar such as ***nonae, -arum*** n. = *the fifth day of the month, and in March, May, July and October, the seventh day* f. pl. (Guțu, Gh., 1993: 271.) etc.

The selection of the inscriptions in this study was made from all the volumes of IDR, each inscription being mentioned as named by the authors. The purpose of the selection was to present in the study the representativeness and variety of proper names, the continuity of certain Latin proper appellatives in the Romanian language (the name of some towns or regions), but also the demonstration of the cosmopolitism and Romanization of some families and beliefs, highlighted by the proper names we selected. Even if it is about names of persons, of gods, imperial tiles or names of peoples, all the selected proper names are illustrative and at the same time similar to the proper names frequent in the Latin inscriptions all over the world, and the abbreviation used for the names in these inscriptions is, as a rule, the same as in almost all the Latin inscriptions in the regions formerly ruled by Rome.

Following the analysis, we noticed that all the creators of the inscriptions that we approached had deep and correct knowledge of Latin, they used the cases correctly, they made the right agreement, and more than that, they were also able to express certain emotions by using superlatives and demonstrating once again the incontestable value of these testimonies carved in stone for the linguistic-stylistic study and not only.

IDR III/$_2$, 9; CIL, III, 7983 (*********Inscripțiile Daciei Romane*, Vol III/$_2$, *Dacia Superior*, 1980: 35.)

***M(arcus) Iul(ius) Pap(iria tribu) Iustus*** *dec(urio)*
*col(oniae) ob hon(orem) pontif(icatus)*
*campum cumsuis*
*aditibus clusitet*
*statuam posit.*

***Marcus Iulius Iustus,*** *of the* ***Papiria*** *tribe, decurion (counsellor) of the colony placed, in honour of the pontificate, a statue in the field that he enclosed by his own means.*

In the case of this inscription, one can notice the appellative of a Roman citizen, with his *tria nomina* and the name of the tribe.

As a rule, the name of the tribe (Petolescu, C., *op. cit*.: 28.) is indicated in the Roman inscriptions only with regard to the Roman citizens of the Italic peninsula. One can notice that the *praenomen*, the first name (*Ibidem:* 25.), **MARCUS** is abbreviated to **M.**,



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the *nomen gentilicum* or family name is also abbreviated to **IUL**., the tribe is **abbreviated** to **PAP**., only the cognomen is in full **IUSTUS**, quite common in Latin inscriptions. The translation of *iustus adj.*= the right one, being the appellation or nickname of our character.

IDR III/$_2$,10 (*Ibidem*: 35.)

***T(itus) Anchar(ius) Octavius***
*dec(urio) col(oniae)* ***Sarm(izegetusae)*** *metrop(olis)*
*patronus dec(uriae) XV*
*porticum per pedes*
*XXXXV*
*ob honorem patronatus*
*ex suo fecit.*

***Titus Ancharius Octavius****, decurion (counsellor) of the colony-metropolis* ***Sarmizegetusa,*** *a patron of decury XV, made at his expense, in honour of the patronate, a 45 ft portico.*

We have selected this inscription not so much for the name of the character, but mainly for the name of the colony-metropolis **Sarmizegetusa,** abbreviated to **SARM.**, in many Latin inscriptions the name of Decebal's capital occurs several times without the desinence of the genitive **SARMISEGETUS**. The hero of this inscription is **TITUS**, a first name contracted to **T., ANCHARIUS,** the name with Greek reverberations, abbreviated to **ANCHAR.**, and the *cognomen* is not abbreviated, **OCTAVIUS**, in translation *the eighth.*

IDR II, 1; CIL, III, 8017 (*******Inscripţiile Daciei Romane*, volumul II, *Oltenia şi Muntenia*, 1977: 21.)

***Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) Div(i) Hadriani fil(io)***
***Divi Traia(ni) Part(hici),***
***Nepot(i), divi Nerv(ae)***
*pronep(oti),* ***T. Aelio Hadriano Antonino Aug(usto) Pio,*** *pont(ifici) maxim(o),*
*trib(unicia) pot(etestate) VIII,*
*imp(eratori) II, co(n)s(uli) IIII, P(pater) p(atriae),*
*Respublica munic(ipii)*
***Hadriani Drobet(ensium)***
*Dec(reto) dec(urionum).*

*The Republic of* ***Hadrian****'s municipality of the* ***inhabitants of Drobeta,*** *by a decree of the decurions, put the inscription for* ***Emperor Cesar, son of Dev Hadrian, grandson of Dev Traianus Parthicus, great grandson of Dev Nerva, Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antonius Augustus Pius,*** *pontifex maximus, with the eighth tribunician power, imperator (a general, military leader of a high rank) two times, a consul four times, father of the country.*

In this Latin epigraphic text, we have the imperial name of **ANTONINUS PIUS** and the name of the inhabitants of the town of **DROBETA.**

Thus, the imperial name is the following **IMPERATOR CESAR TITUS AELIUS HADRIANUS ANTONINUS AUGUSTUS PIUS,** followed by the filiation (actually the whole line, the grandfather and great grandfather also being mentioned) and all the imperial prerogatives. What is interesting is the abbreviation of first names and nicknames of the grandfather and great grandfather, therefore **TRAIAN PARTHICUS** is abbreviated to **TRAIA. PARTH**., and **NERVA**, the great grandfather of the emperor to whom the inscription is dedicated, is abbreviated to **NERV.**



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As for the imperial name in this epigraphic text one can mention the following abbreviations: **IMP.** for Imperator, **CAES**. for Caesar, **T.** for Titus and **AUG**. for Augustus. These abbreviations can be explained, since all these appellatives are part of the imperial first name, especially because all the other names belong to the family and the cognomen, here **PIUS**= the peaceful one, the faithful one.

The name of the inhabitants of Drobeta is shortened to **DROBET.** In other Latin inscriptions one can see another abbreviation of this name. **Hadrian** is the proper name which has no abbreviation here, not even because of the filiation.

IDR II, 18 (*Ibidem:* 31.)

***I(ovi) O(optimo) M(aximo)*** *sac(rum)* ***Iunoni Reg(inae)***
***[I]ul(ius) Val(erius) Emerit(us)*** *[prae] fectus co[h(ortis)...]*

***Iulius Valerius Emeritus****, prefect of the cohort in honour of* ***Jupiter the Best and the Greatest*** *of the sacred ones, to* ***queen Juno…***

The epigraphic text above is of a religious nature which, although the proper noun is in honour of the head of the Roman pantheon, and this noun is followed by the superlatives forming the name of the god, abbreviates his appellative, by the first initials, which does not apply to the main goddess of the same pantheon, Juno. Thus, **IUPPITER OPTIMUS MAXIMUS** is abbreviated **I. O. M,** and as far as the name of **IUNONA** is concerned, only the noun denoting her quality is abbreviated, **REGINAE**= to the queen, by **REG.** Latin is correctly used here, especially because Iuppiter has a special declination, the lapidary craftsmen used the dative form **IOVI** correctly**.**

The one putting the inscription has all the *tria nomina* abbreviated **IUL.** for the first name **IULIUS**, **VAL.** for the surname **VALERIUS** and **EMERIT.** for the cognomen **EMERITUS**, translated as *a soldier who finished his military service, a veteran.* (Guțu, Gh., *op. cit.*:154.)

IDR II, 34; CIL, III, 14484 (*Ibidem*: 38.)

***D(is) M(anibus)***
***Iuliae Gratae***
***Filiae Iuli(us) Strato***
*(centurio) leg(ionis) IV* ***Fl(aviae)***
*Et* ***Aelia Adaucta*** *par(entes) fecerunt.*

***To the gods Mani*** *and* ***Iulia Grata****, the daughter, the parents made the inscription****: Iulius Strato*** *a centurion of Legion IV* ***Flavia*** *and* ***Aelia Adaucta.***

In this case, we have an funerary inscription due to the dedication to the gods Mani, with their standard abbreviation used in the Latin epigraphic texts **D. M.,** also dedicated to **IULIA GRATA,** a daughter whose name is not abbreviated, since apparently, it was a rule that feminine proper nouns should not be abbreviated, especially because the appellative of the mother of this Iulia is not abbreviated, **AELIA ADAUCTA,** as compared to Iulia's father, whose appellative is abbreviated **IUL.** for **IULIUS,** also named **STRATO** and who was a centurion of Legion IV **FLAVIA,** abbreviated like the first name where he originated **FL. (FLAVIUS, FLAVIA).**

IDR II, 49 (*Ibidem*: 49.)

***D(is) M(anibus)***
***M(arcus) Arrius Saturninus***
*dec(urio) m(unicipii)* ***H(adriani) D(robetensium)*** *vix(it) ann(is) XVI.* ***Arria Saturnina***
*soror et heres, iuxta voluntate testamenti faceundum curavit.*
***To the gods Mani,***



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***Marcus Arrius Saturninus**, a decurion (counsellor) of the municipality of **Hadrian** of the **inhabitants of Drobeta** lived for 16 years. **Arria Saturnina,** his sister and heiress, took care of the inscription as she also had to do with regard to the wish in the will.*

We have a funerary epigraphic text again with the abbreviation **D. M.** for **DIS MANIBUS,** the dative case being used correctly, the noun *deus* also having a special declination, used by the makers of the inscription in the right manner. The inscription is fulfilled at the order of a sister and heiress whose name is not abbreviated, just as in the previous inscription **ARRIA SATURNINA.** The first name **M.** from **MARCUS** (a first name quite frequently found among the Romans, a derivation from Mars, the god) being the only abbreviated name, the surname **ARRIUS** and cognomen **SATURNINUS** being written in full. One can notice that women did not have *tria nomina* as a rule; they appeared with two appellatives of which one was the surname.

What is extremely interesting in the case of this inscription is the abbreviation of the municipality of Hadrian of Drobeta, here abbreviated by **H.** from **HADRIAN** and **D.** from **DROBETENSIUM.** The inscription is also important by the analysis of the passive periphrastic conjugation *faceundum = he had to do,* demonstrating at the same time a testamentary stipulation of the deceased for whom the funerary monument is erected.

IDR II, 145 (*Ibidem:* 84.)

***S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)** pro salute*
*sua suorumque, **C(aius) Ant(onius) Iulianus***
*v(otum) l(ibens) m(erito) s(olvit).*

***Caius Antonius Iulianus** willingly and worthily fulfilled his oath to the **Undefeated Sun Mithra**, for his health and the health of his family.*

Just as the previous religious inscription was dedicated to Jupiter, this epigraphic text contains a dedication to a god resulted from the combination of ancient gods with the gods of the populations conquered by Rome, one of the gods who appears in several Latin inscriptions is this **SOL INVICTUS MITHRA,(THE UNDEFEATED SUN MITHRA)** abbreviated to **S. I. M.** Various oriental influences are obvious in the names of some Roman gods such as Sol Invictus Mithra.

Along the same line, the name of the one who puts the inscription is abbreviated both in the first name **C.** for **CAIUS,** but also in the surname **ANT.** for **ANTONIUS,** the *cognomen* being written in full - **IULIANUS**.

IDR II, 204 (*Ibidem*: 112.)

***D(is) M(anibus)***
***C(aius) Crispinus C(ai)** fil(ius) **Claudia (tribu) Firmus Aspendo***
*v(eteranus) leg(ionis) I **It(alicae)***
***Aureliae Severae** co(n)iugi v(ixit) an(nis) XXVI et nepotibus*
***Aur(eliae) Primillae** s(uis) ben(e) me(rentibus) pos(uit).*

***To the gods Mani** and to **Aurelia Severa**, wife, who lived for 26 years and to his grandsons/ nephews and **Aurelia Primilla, Caius Crispinus Firmus Aspendo** put the inscription, the son of **Caius** of the **Claudia** tribe, a veteran of Legion I **Italica** for those who deserved it.*

It is a funerary inscription again, one in which the proper nouns are partially abbreviated, but we have selected the inscription because of an abbreviation of the appellative of a woman, **AUR.** for **AURELIA,** probably imposed by the economy of the epigraphic text. The names of the gods protecting the dead is standardly abbreviated **D. M.,** the first name of the man who puts the inscription is also abbreviated by the



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Latin epigraphic rules to **C.** for **CAIUS,** so is the filiation, but the other appellatives are not abbreviated, not even the name of the tribe, the character being a polyonym: **CAIUS CRISPINUS FIRMUS ASPENDO** of the **CLAUDIA** tribe. In exchange, the unit where he served, since at the time of the inscription he was a veteran, is abbreviated to **IT.** from **ITALICA,** an appellative showing the origin of this military unit. The feminine names are **AURELIA SEVERA** and **AURELIA PRIMILLA**, of which the latter is abbreviated as previously mentioned, and they actually are those to whom the inscription was dedicated, **PRIMILLA** also representing a diminutive form of the proper name **PRIMA** (the first), an appellative coming from an ordinal numeral.

IDR I, 3; CIL, XVI, 163 (***Inscripţiile Daciei romane,* volumul I, 1975: 77. )

Partially

*.....A(nte) d(iem) VI non(as) [Iul(ias)]*

***C(aio) Ennuciano Silone***

***L(ucio) Catilio Severo***

*Consulibus*

*Coh(ortis) I* ***Britton(um)*** *mill(iariae)* ***Ulpiae*** *torquat(ae)* ***C(ivium) R(omanorum)***

*cui pra(e)est* ***M(arcus) Aemilius Bassus*** *ex pedite*

***M(arco) Ulpio Sacci*** *f(ilio)* ***Longino Belgo*** *et* ***Vitali*** *f(ilio) eius.*

.....

*.....Before the sixth day of the Nonae of July*

*While they were consuls:* ***Caius Ennucianus Silonis*** *and* ***Lucius Catilius Severus*** *gave the military diploma to cohort I consisting of Britons with 1000 people,* ***Ulpia*** *of the* ***Roman citizens*** *with distinctions, which is led by* ***Marcus Aemilius Bassus*** *of the infantry, to* ***Marcus Ulpius Longinus Belgus, son of Saccus*** *and to* ***Vitalis,*** *his son…*

The inscription above is part of a military diploma, a sort of citizenship certificate for the military men of the Roman auxiliary troops. We have selected this text on the basis of the occurrence of several proper names: names of months, of Roman consuls, clans who also give the name of some Roman military subunits. From the grammatical point of view, one should notice the correct use of the accusative case, required by the preposition *ante* (as a rule for the expression of dates), but also of the Ablative absolute constructions: *consulibus* = being consuls, while they were consuls.

We thus find out that the names of months were abbreviated by the Romans similarly to first names or other abbreviated names: **IUL**. which corresponds here to the month of July, but it was also used for the abbreviation of the first name or the name of Julius, as previously mentioned; the names of the consuls were abbreviated only in the first name **C**. for **Caius** and **L.** for **Lucius;** there are names of families/ clans as well **BRITTON.** For the genitive plural of **Brittanis**= Briton, inhabitant of Britannia, which give the name of their military unit **cohors I Brittonum**, also called **ULPIA torquata,** at the same time specifying the legal status of the soldiers *cives Romani* = Roman citizens, abbreviated to **C. R.**, (it is known that clan names were considered by the Romans proper names, and especially their names) but in the case of this Roman military unit the number of military men is also specified; the name of the one leading the military subunit and of other characters are partially abbreviated, i.e. their first names are shortened: **M.** for **MARCUS**, of these characters, one is a polyonym (it has more than consecrated *tria nomina*) ***MARCUS ULPIUS LONGINUS BELGUS***.

ISM II, 180 (16) (***Inscripţiile din Scythia Minor*, volumul I, 1983 (seria a 2-a); vol. II, 1987: 207.)



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***D(is) M(anibus)***
***M(arcus) Ulpius Longinus*** *ex dec(urione) vet(erano) bul(ata)* ***Tomitan(orum)***
*se viv[o] sibi et* ***U[l]piae Aquilinae***
*c[o]niugi suae mem[o]riae fecit in praedio sua.*
***To the gods Mani,***
***Marcus Ulpius Longinus****, of the veterans and of the council of the noblemen in* ***Tomis,*** *made the inscription for himself during his life and in memory of his wife* ***Ulpia Aquilina*** *on his property.*

This Latin epigraphic text is a funerary inscription, too, dedicated by a husband to his wife, called **ULPIA AQUILINA,** a name which is not abbreviated, unlike the names of gods to **D. M.** or that of the husband whose first name is shortened according to the frequent rule, to **M.** We have selected the inscription because of the name **TOMITANORUM** (the genitive pl. of **Tomitanus** = an inhabitant of Tomis, ancient Greek colony on the shore of the Black Sea), here abbreviated to **TOMITAN**.

ISM II 263 (99) (*Ibidem*: 260.)

***D(is) M(anibus),***
***C(aio) Numerio Val(enti),***
*mil(iti) [l]eg(ionis) XI* ***Cl(audiae)*** *et*
***C(aio) [D]omitio, L(ucius) Sextilius Fuscus****,*
*(centurio) coh(ortis) I* ***Thra(cum)*** *he(res) b(ene) m(erentibus) p(osuit).*
***To the gods Mani***
*To* ***Caius Numerius Valens****, a military man of Legion XI* ***Claudia*** *and to*
***Caius Domitius,*** *those who were worthy,* ***Lucius Sextilius Fuscus,*** *a centurion of cohort I of the* ***Thracians,*** *an heir put the inscription.*

This last inscription that we selected in our study, a funerary one again, contains no less than six proper nouns, each more or less abbreviated. Thus, the inscription starts by the imprecation brought to the gods Mani, visible in the abbreviated formula **D.M.,** then there appear the persons to whom the funerary monument is dedicated and the one who ordered it. From among the persons who dedicate it, one can mention **CAIUS NUMERIUS VALENS** whose first name is abbreviated to **C.,** and whose cognomen **VALENS** is also abbreviated (less often yet) to **VAL.**, then another **CAIUS DOMITIUS** with the first name contracted just like the previous one, and the person having ordered the monument is **LUCIUS SEXTILIUS FUSCUS** with the first name abbreviated to **L.** In the case of this inscription, the abbreviations used for Legion XI **CLAUDIA**, abbreviated to **CL.**, are very interesting**,** mainly due to the mentioning of the Thracians - **THRACUM**, a form of the genitive plural, abbreviated to **THRA.**, by cohort I which **LUCIUS SEXTILIUS FUSCUS**, the heir of the deceased, was part of.

These are some of the proper nouns selected from certain Latin epigraphic texts and their analysis in this paper with regard to abbreviation. One can distinguish some rules, even if there are not many epigraphic texts: 1. The first name is mostly abbreviated in a concise manner, usually by the initial; 2. The name is rarely abbreviated (abbreviation appears in three cases of the 11 inscriptions); 3. The cognomen of the characters is also rarely abbreviated (here 3 of 11); 4. The names of gods are abbreviated by initials (**D.M., I.O.M, S.I.M.**); 4. Feminine names are rarely abbreviated (here 1 of 11); 5. The names of goddesses are also extremely rarely and partially abbreviated; 6. The names of tribes are partially abbreviated as a rule, the last part of the proper noun being contracted, just as in the case of family or locality names, considered proper nouns (in some cases they are abbreviated like a first name or by the first initials); 7. The imperial title uses the abbreviation of the components of the power



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of this institution, the kinship and less the nominal components; 8. The names of the Roman military subunits are partially abbreviated as well, preserving at least two letters of the proper name (**IT. CL. FL.)**.

In conclusion, the proper names in certain Latin inscriptions on our territory, names that we selected and analyzed, define the beliefs of the agents of Romanization, their military service, their socio-professional status and at the same time they attest once again the inclusion of Dacia in the Romanization area, mainly visible by the Latinization of the names of some Dacian localities such as Sarmisegetusa. The lapidary craftsmen on the territory of the Roman province Dacia proved good knowledge of Latin, using it correctly, even making use of special constructions of the Latin language.

We hope that this study will arouse the interest of philologists in the Latin of inscriptions.

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