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IMPERIAL SLAVES AND FREEDMEN IN THE BRICK INDUSTRY

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 122 (1998) 238–246

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The economic importance of the building industry in Rome under the early empire, though difficult to quantify with any precision, was immense.¹ In the public sphere alone, for the rebuilding of the city in the aftermath of the fire of AD 64 through the first into the second century, particularly during the ambitious building programmes of Trajan and Hadrian, the demand for bricks and tiles of all kinds was vast. By their nature these have survived in great quantities, often *in situ* in buildings, many thousands of them stamped at the production stage as an accounting procedure for provenance and quality control.

These brick stamps, necessarily in compressed form, not only serve the trade function of variously naming the ‘clay district’ (*figlinae*) from which the bricks came and the name of the person undertaking or overseeing their production (*offinator*) but, from the beginning of the second century, they also provide valuable social as well as economic information about who were the landowners (*domini*) of the properties (*praedia, figlinae*) on which the bricks were produced. In addition, the stamps provide unusually precise chronological data in the form of consular dates that appear on many, but by no means all, stamps from AD 110 to 164, and especially in the period 120 to 150² and, in the absence of consular dating, less precise but significant dating criteria in the type or shape of the stamps (e.g. rectangular, semicircular, orbicular etc.) and in the artistic symbols (*signa*) included in the design of the stamp.³

This rich lode of material has been exploited for historical purposes for more than a century since the publication of *CIL* 15, pt. 1 in 1891, edited by H. Dressel. The most notable contributions have been those of the American scholar Herbert Bloch in the period preceding and following the Second World War, particularly his masterly use of brick stamps for the history of the building industry in Rome, and more recently the admirable work on the Ostian material and the definitive publications of the team of Finnish scholars, led from the early 1970s until his death in 1987 by Jaakko Suolahti, especially those of Margareta Steinby and Tapio Helen.⁴ Given the comprehensiveness of the Finnish Institute’s programme, there might seem little left to cover. Questions remain, however, over the use of some brick-stamp formulae to differentiate who were landowners (*domini*) from those who were production foremen (*offinatores*), socially at least quite different groups.⁵ Land ownership in the vicinity of Rome was always a prime interest of the senatorial and equestrian orders. This included ownership of the brick-producing districts with access to the river Tiber, until from about early in the reign of Hadrian when these became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the emperor and his close relatives. By the third century the ‘brick lands’ had become a virtual Imperial monopoly. What role did the members of that other Imperial *familia*, the freedmen and slaves of the Familia Caesaris, have to play in this process, either in the course of their domestic service or as owner-entrepreneurs in their own right?

The roll-call of slaves and freedmen in the Familia Caesaris appearing on brick stamps to date is 23, comprising 11 *Augusti liberti*, 9 *Caesaris servi*, 2 *vicarii* and 1 *liberti servus*. This total includes one whose status as a freedman is doubtful (No. 13) and one who appears twice, both as slave and as freedman (Nos. 5 & 15).

¹ For some construction costs of building in Italy during the period, see Duncan-Jones (1974: 124–6, 157–62).

² See Helen (1975: 9–11).

³ On dating, see esp. Steinby (1975).

⁴ See esp. Bloch (1947, 1948); Steinby (1975, 1987); Helen (1975).

⁵ On private *domini*, see esp. the work of Setälä (1977).

First, the slaves.⁶

1.	<i>App.</i> 156	Gratus Ti. Caesaris (servus)	Tiberius
2.	1404, S 370	Sabinus Nerei C. Caes(aris) (servi) vicarius	Gaius
3.	814	Antimachus Cl(audi) Ionici Caesaris Augusti l(iberti) (servus)	mid-1st C.
4.	919, cf. <i>LSO</i> 10,11	Castus Caesaris Augusti (servus)	mid-1st C.
5.	941, cf. 1149	Clonius Caesaris (servus) = T. Flavius Aug. l. Clonius	mid-1st C.
6.	1128	Eleuther Caesaris (servus)	1st C.
7.	1128	Sinda Caesaris (servus)	1st C.
8.	1231	Ius[tu]s Caesar(is) servus	1st C.
9.	S 240}	Atimeti (duo) Caesar(is) (servi)	1st C.
10.	S 240}		
11.	S 537	Ampliatius Pyrami, Encolpi Aug(usti) disp(ensatoris) arcari vic(arius)	2nd C.
12.	810	{Anteros Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(vus)	AD 123
	811	{Anteros Severi(anus?) Caesaris n(ostri) (servus)	pre-123
	812–13	{Anteros Caes(aris) (servus)	post-123

All but two of these are from the first century, from the reign of Tiberius onward, and the brick stamps on which they appear are of the simplest form containing only their names, usually in the genitive case, and do not make any reference to the location or the owner of the property where the bricks were produced. As slaves of the reigning emperor, it is unlikely that these *officinatores* were engaged in the brick-making business as entrepreneurs in their own right and most unlikely that they were employed as production foremen in the service of any *dominus* other than the emperor himself. There is plenty of evidence that persons other than Imperial slaves and freedmen acted as *officinatores* on estates owned by the emperor, including even some slaves of independent masters (686, 709),⁷ but none of Imperial slaves and freedmen as *officinatores* on estates of independent owners. This is even less likely in the case of three of the twelve slaves on the list above who have a status one and even two levels lower than that of *Caesaris servus*. Even in this small number of stamps we have examples of a slave *vicarius* of an Imperial slave (No. 2), of the slave of an Imperial freedman (No. 3), and, indeed, of a slave *vicarius* of the slave *arcarius* of an Imperial slave *dispensator* (No. 11)!

The remaining item on the list (No. 12) presents complications of a more serious kind. Land in the neighbourhood of Rome was always at a premium. This included the ‘clay district’ land (*figlinae*), whose owners at least from the beginning of the second century, when their names first appear on brick stamps, were predominantly members of the senatorial order and increasingly of the Imperial family itself. It is strange indeed then to find on a one-name brick stamp of the year 123, a *slave*, albeit an Imperial slave, Anteros Caes. n. ser. (810; cf. 811–813), claimed as the *dominus* of such land – 810: ‘(opus) dol(iare) ex fig(linis) Anterotis Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(vi)’. On his other (undated) stamps he is clearly just the *offinator*, in charge of brick production – 811a–c: ‘(opus) dol(iare) Anterotis Severi(ani?) Caesaris n(ostri)’. 812: simply ‘Anterotis Caes(aris)’. cf. 813. Moreover, the additional name ‘Severi’ that occurs in 811 only serves to compound the difficulty. If it is resolved as an *agnomen* ‘Severi(anus)’, Anteros is the *former* slave of a master named *Severus*. If the name is complete in the genitive case, the master would have to be an Imperial slave himself, ‘Severus Caesaris n. (ser.)’, and

⁶ Brick stamp reference numbers are to *CIL* 15, Part 1, unless otherwise stated. A number preceded by S (e.g. S 370) refers to Bloch’s 1948 supplement to *CIL* 15.1; *LSO* = Steinby/Helen, *Lateres signati Ostienses* (1977–8); *App.* = Steinby’s appendix to *CIL* 15.1 (1978–9). For details see Bibliography.

⁷ On Aprilis Aquiliae Sozomenae (ser.) ‘ex praedis Caes(aris) n.’(709), who subsequently appears after manumission as C. Aquilius Aprilis on stamps 358–62 of AD 123–125, working for the emperor (Hadrian) at the *figlinae Oceanae* (358), see Helen (1975: 105).

Anteros would be a *vicarius*, the slave of an Imperial slave.⁸ *Severus* is a common enough slave or ex-slave name in the *Familia Caesaris* – 17 at the last count (11 freedmen, 6 slaves), and another 11 *Severae*. There is even a *Severus* available (1447) on a brick stamp of precisely AD 123, but without the Imperial status indication. That omission could just tip the scales in favour of the *agnomen* alternative ‘Severianus’ as in that case *Severus*, the former master, need not have been an Imperial slave.⁹

Land, like property of every kind including slaves, could form part of a slave’s *peculium*. But ownership of such land under Roman civil law remained with the slave’s master, who would be the legal *dominus*.¹⁰ The emperor’s slaves, like other slaves, did have access to funds up to the value of their *peculium*, either to purchase their own manumission or for investment elsewhere, and some, particularly the most senior Imperial slave financial officials, the *dispensatores*, could amass enough wealth to fund public benefactions of various kinds in the provinces and sometimes in a less ostentatious way in Rome itself. But I am not aware of any Imperial slaves publicly displaying such wealth by way of purchasing or possessing land as legal owners. Nor could they. This was an objective that had to wait for manumission and citizenship as freedmen, if they were wealthy enough to follow the example of Pallas, Narcissus or a Trimalchio.¹¹

From his other brick stamps Anteros was simply the *officinator*, presumably operating on land belonging to the emperor. These are dated by Bloch¹² to both before and after the year 123. Thus 811a–f, which alone contain the postulated *agnomen* ‘Severi(anus)’, are earlier than 123, before the use of such *agnomina* by Imperial slaves and freedmen ceased early in the reign of Hadrian;¹³ but 812 and 813, ‘Anterotis Caes(aris)’, ‘Anterotis Cae(saris) / P’, which discard both the *agnomen* of 811 and the phrase ‘ex fig(linis)’ of 810, are dated by Bloch from the locations in which they were found to the period *after* 123.¹⁴ On the other hand, if Anteros *were* a *vicarius* of an Imperial slave, *Severus* Caes. n. ser., before AD 123 (as in 811a–f, the earliest of his brick stamps), and subsequently became a *Caesaris servus* himself by that year, that would explain the absence of ‘Severi’ from stamps 810 and the later ones 812 and 813. In any case Anteros is just as unlikely to have oscillated between the roles of *dominus* and *officinator* as he is unlikely to have been a landowning *dominus* in the first place.¹⁵ Either Bloch’s dates for 812 and 813 are wrong or the significance of the phrase ‘ex fig(linis)’, on which alone the slave’s supposed title to landownership is based, is in this context misinterpreted.

The use of the word ‘figlinae’ varied over time.¹⁶ Broadly speaking, *figlinae* + adjective (e.g. 310: ‘de figlinis Marcianis’) from the first through the second centuries indicated the *place* of manufacture, not the owner of the land. In the early second century, when the word ‘praedia’ first appeared, *praedia* + genitive and *figlinae* + genitive were used interchangeably to indicate the name of the *dominus*. By the

⁸ See Chantraine (1967: 335, no. 300); Weaver (1972: 91 n. 4, 217 n. 3).

⁹ Steinby (1987: 78) opts for the most unlikely possibility, a hybrid ‘Anteros Severus Caes(aris ser.)’. Chronology alone rules out the emperor Severus.

¹⁰ Setälä (1977: 59) states baldly: ‘It was quite possible, however, for a slave, particularly an Imperial slave, to be the rightful owner of land’. What special rights Imperial slaves had to *legal* ownership of land are difficult to envisage.

¹¹ On *dispensatores* and *vicarii*, see Weaver (1972: 200–6, 212–23); for benefactions by *Caesaris servi*, see esp. Boulvert (1974: 217–20); for *Augusti liberti* as landowners, see Boulvert (1974: 204–6).

¹² Bloch (1947: 17).

¹³ Chantraine (1967: 366–7); Weaver (1972: 217).

¹⁴ The completion of the mysterious ‘P(?)’ in line 2 of 813 remains unsolved. It could, not inconceivably, be read as line 1 of its circular stamp; see *LSO* Vol. 2, Plate 123, nos. 686–7. The reading ‘(ex) p(raedis)’, however, has found no favour.

¹⁵ On the value to the master (*dominus-paterfamilias*) of his slave’s *peculium* in order to limit his financial liability for contractual agreements by his slave, see D. Johnston, *Law and commercial life of Rome, Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997), 53–65, at 56ff. Especially interesting, in view of the Imperial slave *vicarii* represented on the brick stamps, is the suggested role of *servi vicarii* in contracts so structured as to keep the *dominus-paterfamilias* at a further remove from the actual conduct of business than would be the case if his own slave were directly involved. See Johnston, art. cit. 61ff.

¹⁶ See especially the careful analysis of Helen (1975: 45–75).

late second century, *praedia* + genitive indicates *dominus*, while *figlinae* (+ adjective) continues to indicate place of manufacture, and *opus (doliare)* + genitive (as the simple genitive earlier on one-name stamps) indicates the *officinator*. For the latter, *ex officina* + genitive is also used. In this period all three elements regularly appeared.

A source of confusion arises, however, when *figlinae* + genitive occasionally appears on the same stamp as *praedia* + genitive. This is certainly found later in the second century, e.g. 757 = *LSO* 643: ‘ex praedis Aug(usti) nos(tri), ex f(iglinis) Pompei Heli’; and already by mid-century, e.g. 731: ‘opus dol(iare) ex pr(a)ed(is) Umidi Quadrati et Anniaes Faustinae, ex f(iglinis) Sex. Apri Silvini’; and even *ex figlinis* + the name of a slave in the genitive, e.g. 299: ‘ex prae(dis) T. S(t)atili Maximi, opus dol(iare) ex fig(linis) Fortunati’;¹⁷ and especially 1063: ‘op(us) dol(iare) ex p(raedis) Dom(itiae) Luc(illae), ex fig(linis) Quartionis’. Contrast with this last example, however, 1064: ‘ex figlinis Lucillaes, (opus) Quartionis’, where the same two names occur but in the regular formula by which Lucilla is clearly the *domina* and Quartio a slave *officinator*.¹⁸ For the reign of Hadrian one might add the parallel case of Flavius Probus (1054 & 1055), on which see further below (p. 244).

The only explanation, short of assuming a straightforward error or that there could be two quite separate *domini* on the same property or part thereof, and no one designated as *officinator*, is that ‘figlinae’ here is used as equivalent of ‘officina’, and thus the attached genitive indicates the *officinator*.¹⁹ The notion that there might be two separate *domini*, one owning the *praedia* and the other the *figlinae*, is ruled out by the assumption alone that in two of the four cases above a slave would have to be the owner of the *figlinae* and, as Helen suggests (*loc. cit.*), four maker’s errors are three too many. The question then is how far back into the second century, when binominal stamps first appeared, can this be traced. I suggest that the same usage can be detected on single-name stamps as well, as far back as early in the reign of Hadrian, in particular in the case of the Imperial slave Anteros. In the anomalous stamp 810 of AD 123 discussed above he is not an improbable (impossible?) *dominus* but an *officinator*, along with all his fellow Imperial slaves in the business, just as he appears on his other stamps 811–813 before and after that remarkable date.

In this context we must consider the Imperial freedmen on brick stamps. They are:

13. 387	Ti. Iulius (Aug. l.?) Optatus	early 1st C.
14. 2399	Ti. Claudius Aug. l. Potiscus	mid-1st C.
S 461 = <i>LSO</i> 1228	Ti. Cla(udius) Potiscus	
15. 1149, cf. 941	T. Flavius Aug. l. Clonius = Clonius Caesaris (servus)	late 1st C.
16. <i>App.</i> 150	[T. F]lavius [---]orus Au(g). l.	late 1st C.
17. 777 = <i>LSO</i> 655	Adiutor Aug. l.	1st C.
18. 2324 = 14.4091	Erasinus Aug. l.	1st C.
19. 2170 = 11.6689	Genethlius Aug. l.	1st C.
20. 745, <i>LSO</i> 636	Cocceius Aug. lib. Primigenius	1st-2nd C.
21. 569 = <i>LSO</i> 487	Abasc(antus) Aug. l.	Trajan
22. 461–70	Agathyrsus Aug. lib.	a.123–152
23. 1531 = 5.8110	Vital(is) Aug. n. libert(us)	late 2nd C.

The status of Ti. Iulius Optatus (No. 13) is doubtful. He has generally been identified with Ti. Iulius Aug. l. Optatus Pontianus, *procurator* and *praefectus classis* (10.6318 = *ILS* 2815) who also appears on a military diploma dated to 11 December, 52 (10.769 = 16.1 = *ILS* 1986) as Ti. Iulius Augusti lib.

¹⁷ For date see Setälä (1977: 188–9).

¹⁸ Helen (1975: 72–5).

¹⁹ Helen (1975: 75).

Optatus, commander of the fleet at Misenum.²⁰ On the dubious basis that ‘he had the official career of a knight’ he is classed as *dominus* of the *figlinae Ocianae* by Setälä and not reckoned as an *Augusti libertus* in this role.²¹ The same Optatus, however, is still registered as *Augusti libertus* on the formal fleet diploma in the latter part of the reign of Claudius,²² at least fifteen years after he was freed by Tiberius and over a decade *after* the likely date of the brick stamp (387). This reads: TI IULI OPTATI / DE FIG OCIANIS.²³ On its own, such a single-name stamp at this period should be read as referring not to the *dominus* but to the *officinator* of the *figlinae Ocianae*, in the same way as Helen reads the comparable first-century stamp 310: ‘de figlinis Marcianis / St. Marci Rabbaei’.²⁴ The identification of the two Ti. Iulii Optati is at best speculative. For chronological reasons Ti. Iulius Ti. f. Fab. Optatus, the *duovir* who dedicates the Tarracina inscription 10.6318 = *ILS* 2815 to (the deceased?) Optatus Pontianus, if he is his son,²⁵ is unlikely to be the *officinator* on the brick stamp. Least of all is this Ti. Iulius Optatus Aug. l. to be identified, as has happened, with Claudius Optatus Aug. l. *proc(urator) portus Ostie(n)sis* (14.163 = 15.7146 = *ILS* 1533). *Optatus* is a very common slave and freedman name at all periods,²⁶ not least in the Familia Caesaris where there are some two dozen examples. The Ti. Iulius Optatus on this early first-century brick-stamp should be registered as an *officinator* not as an adventitious ‘equestrian’-freedman *dominus* and, in the absence of status indication, removed from our list of Imperial freedmen.

Nos. 14–19, from the first century, and No. 23, dated to the late second century,²⁷ are all simple single-name stamps of *officinatores*, without further detail as to location. Note, however, the alternative form of Ti. Claudius Aug.l. Potiscus (No. 14), Ti. Cla(udius) Potiscus (S 461) without status indication and with the rare abbreviation ‘Cla(udius)’; and in No. 16, the even rarer abbreviation ‘Au(gusti)’ in the status indication which, if correct, is not found elsewhere, except when fragmentary, e.g. 14.3635 = *ILS* 1585: T. Aelius Au[g. l.] Euhodion. The inscriptions of T. Flavius Aug. l. Clonius (No. 15) and of Clonius Caesaris (servus) (No. 5) together show that service as *officinator* could continue after manumission across the bridge between slavery and freedom. There is no terminology in any of these inscriptions to indicate that there is a difference of function or responsibility between slave and freedman *officinatores*. From these stamps of the first century at least, when the identity of *domini* is not revealed, we may assume that freedmen as well as slaves of the emperor worked in the service of the emperor on *figlinae* presumably owned by the emperor.

Some confirmation of this comes with the earliest second-century *officinator* in this group, a freedman of Nerva, Cocceius Aug. lib. Primigenius (No. 20), whose stamp is the earliest, indeed the only Imperial freedman or slave to name his *dominus* – ‘ex fig(linis) Caes(aris) n(ostri)’, i.e. whoever was the reigning emperor, in this case probably Trajan.²⁸

²⁰ E.g. *PIR*² I 443, Bloch (1947: 222); Chantraine (1967: 329–30); Weaver (1972: 8); Steinby (1975: 67).

²¹ Setälä (1977: 39); cf. Steinby (1975: 67).

²² Two other Imperial freedmen were also prefects of the Misene fleet in the following period – Anicetus under Nero, and Moschus under Galba and Otho; cf. Boulvert (1970: 141–2 + n. 327).

²³ This stamp, which is of a semicircular early-to-mid-1st C. type, is dated by Bloch (1947: 222, 336) to construction during the reign of Gaius.

²⁴ See esp. the discussion in Helen (1975: 47–53, at 52).

²⁵ As conjectured by Stein, *RE* 10. 684.

²⁶ See Kajanto (1965: 77, 296); Vidman (1980: 301–2).

²⁷ 15.1531 = 5.8110.166, on the basis that ‘n(ostri)’ in the freedman status indication is late and rare. See Weaver (1972: 56–7); Chantraine (1967: 196–9).

²⁸ Cocceius Primigenius might easily have been registered also as the first and only woman *officinator* in the Familia Caesaris. The corrected reading of 745 = S 587 = *LSO* 636 is found in Steinby’s *Indici complementari* at (1987:213, 214): ‘ex fig(linis) Caes(aris) n(ostri) ab Coccei Aug(usti) / lib(erti) Primigeni’ (for the anomalous *ab* + *genitive* case, cf. *op. cit.* 122). Dressel (1891) read 745 as ‘ab Cocceia [Aug.] lib. Primigeni(a)’, which Bloch (S 587) corrected to ‘ab Cocceia A(uli) lib(erta) Primigeni(a)’, thus eliminating a member of the Fam. Caes.; cf. Helen (1975:107 + n. 53). *LSO* reverted to Dressel’s interpretation, until finally Steinby’s (correct) solution adopted above.

The case of Abascantus (No. 21), however, the next Imperial freedman in chronological sequence, is more problematic. 569 reads: Sulp D F ABASC AUG L, i.e. '(opus) Sulp(icianum) d(e) f(iglinis) Abasc(anti) Aug(usti) l(iberti)', an orbicular brick stamp, firmly dated by Steinby to the period of Trajan.²⁹ The Ostian variation LSO 487 consists of a rectangular for an orbicular stamp shape, to distinguish the different size of bricks produced.³⁰

Setälä³¹ registers Abascantus as *dominus* of the land on which the 'clay district' of the *figlinae Sulpicianae* was located, on the assumption that the formula 'de figlinis + genitive' always indicates ownership of the land in question. On the basis of a single-name stamp, which at least implies that he was also the *officinator*, he becomes one of only two freedmen of any kind in the brick stamp corpus to be classed as *domini*. Both happen to be *Augusti liberti*. This in itself is no cause for rejection. The obstacle to legal ownership of land by slaves that confronted us above in the case of the Imperial slave Anteros (No. 12) does not apply to formally manumitted ex-slaves who are Roman citizens, nor even to informally freed slaves who are Junian Latins and enjoy the *ius commercii*. Indeed, the landowning status of the other Imperial freedman in the brick stamps who is classed as a *dominus*, Agathysus Aug. lib. (No. 22), is confirmed in several different binominal stamps dated between 123 and 152. He is discussed in more detail below.

Abascantus, however, although dated to the second century, appears only on one-name stamps using the 'de figlinis' ownership formula. This is by no means unusual. When, however, early in the second century, for whatever reason, the name of the landowner (who of course had always existed previously) began to be added to those of the maker of the actual bricks and the location where they were produced, binominal stamps necessarily came into fashion and increasingly in association with the formula 'ex praedis' (property in general) rather than 'ex figlinis' (specific 'clay district'). It is perhaps surprising that, if Abascantus were so exceptional as a freedman in attaining landowner status in this context, he did not take either opportunity to make this clear. The stamp used is about as compressed as it could be for the purpose, but it still includes the Imperial status indication 'Aug. l.'. Other brick stamps of the period from the *figlinae Sulpicianae* are binominal, e.g. 576: '(ex) figl(inis) Caec(iliae) Quint(ae), T. Fl(avi) Romani, (opus) Sulp(icianum)', where Caecilia Quinta is undoubtedly the landowner and T. Flavius Romanus the *officinator*. Others again name only one person, e.g. 563a–f: 'M. Vinic(i) Pantag(athi), (opus) Sulp(icianum)', where Vinicius Pantagathus from his Greek *cognomen* is assumed to be ex-slave or at least of freed descent and an *officinator* and the property from which the bricks derive is denoted, as usual, by the local epithet 'Sulpicianum'. When, however, on single-name stamps the name (in the genitive case) is preceded by the phrase 'ex figlinis' or 'ex praedis', that person is regularly taken to be the *dominus/a*, e.g. 575: 'ex figlinis Caecil(iae) Quintae Sulpiciani(s)' where Caecilia Queta is known from another source (576 above) to be the owner. Is she now also running the business as *officinator*? Plenty of women are found in this role on the brick stamps (see p. 9 below).

The pattern of those involved in the production of *opus Sulpicianum* is complex precisely in the early second century where Abascantus is placed. The list of those associated with the *figlinae Sulpicianae* who are classed as *domini* in this period alone only up to the year 123 reaches a dozen and there are over thirty who could be either *domini* or *officinatores*.³² But fifteen years later the emperor was the sole *dominus* on stamps of the *opus Sulpicianum*.³³ What signs are there of Imperial ownership in the period up to 123 to prepare us for the subsequent rapid takeover? Apart from the important stake

²⁹ Steinby (1975: 90). A version was recorded by Marini (1884) as: 'd f Abasc Aug Sulp' (Dressel (1891: p.169).

³⁰ Cf. Steinby, LSO ad loc.

³¹ 1977: 43, 250, 266. Cf. Steinby (1975: 90).

³² See especially the list in Steinby (1975: 89–92), who allows that many on these predominantly single-name stamps could be *officinatores* (cf. Dressel's list, CIL 15.1, p. 157).

³³ Steinby (1975: 91).

of Domitia, the long surviving widow of the emperor Domitian, who appears on numerous stamps (548–558) mostly dated to 123, the only Imperial link we have is the freedman Abasc(antus) (569).³⁴

The same question arises as that discussed above in the case of Anteros Caesaris n. ser. (No. 12). Was the phrase ‘ex/de figlinis’ sometimes already used in this period as the equivalent of ‘ex officina’ = ‘opus’, with the following genitive naming the *officinator*, not the *dominus*? Particularly significant in this regard is the single-name stamp 1055 = LSO 814: ‘d(e) f(iglinis) Fla(vi) Prob(i)’ (which incidentally uses the same unusual abbreviation ‘d. f.’ as in 569). Flavius Probus, when he also occurs on a binominal stamp of the year 135, is an *officinator* on the estate of Domitia Lucilla, mother of the future emperor M. Aurelius, viz. 1054 = LSO 813: ‘op(us) dol(iare) ex pr(aedis) Dom(itiae) Lucil(lae) F(lavi) P(robi), Pont(iano) et Atilian(o) cos’. We can get back even earlier to the vintage year for brick stamps, AD 123, with 1466 = LSO 1071: ‘ex pr(aedis) C. Tarr(?) Titian(i) (ex) fig(linis) L. Clodi Phil(?)’; cf. 1453.

Unless our Abascantus was a wealthy and favoured freedman landowner rarely found under Trajan, with a previous career in the Imperial administration, which would more easily fit with one of the surviving Abascanti Aug. liberti from the Flavian era than one of the Trajan’s own manumissions,³⁵ it seems prudent at least to put a question mark on the claims of this Abascantus to join the ranks of the brick industry *domini*.

No such doubts as to wealth, landownership and perhaps Imperial favour apply to the remaining freedman, Agathyrus Aug. lib. (No. 22). Already prior to 123 he was part-owner of one of the most prolific brick-producing estates near Rome, the *praedia Quintanensia*, which he shared with the exceptional consular M. Annius Verus (*cos. ord. III*, 126), who in 121 was consul for the second time and also *praefectus urbi* and became the grandfather of the future brick magnate and emperor, M. Aurelius. Agathyrus was most probably a freedman of Trajan, although he is often thought not to have been an Imperial freedman at all but a long-lived freedman of an *Augusta*, Trajan’s wife Pompeia Plotina, who died about the same year 121/122. This is based on the probable identification of him with the Agathyrus Aug. lib. who put up a double dedication to Plotina Augusta at Aricia (14.2161a–b).³⁶ That association, however, is not conclusive that he was *her* freedman: he does not use her *nomen* ‘Pompeius’ as do all the other identifiable freedmen of Plotina,³⁷ but always the standard ‘Aug. lib.’/‘Aug. l.’ for *Augusti liberti*.

Whatever his influence at court, Agathyrus is a special case. He is the only freedman to use the ‘ex praedis + (possessive) genitive’ formula used exclusively for property ownership (e.g. 468: ‘ex pr(aedis) Agathyrsi Aug. lib.’), and which, even when (rarely) followed by an adjective – e.g. 462: ‘ex pr(aedis) Quintane(n)sib(us)’ – differs significantly in meaning from ‘ex figlinis + adjective’ which expresses place of manufacture.³⁸ Though a freedman, he remained an owner of the *praedia Quintanensia* for a record thirty years or more, for the first dozen years or so until 135 with his fellow *dominus* M. Annius Verus and in the process sharing or taking over from him an *officinator*, Q. Pomponius Ianuarius (465 = S 578 = LSO 426; 808 = LSO 676). The two *domini*, although of such greatly differing status, may also

³⁴ Other stamps are later. 567: ‘Sul(picianum) ex figulin(is) Caes(aris) n(ostri)’ is dated to 138; stamp 568: ‘ex of(f)ic(in)a Caesaris n(ostri), op(us) Sulpicia(num)’ is probably about the same date.

³⁵ The two most likely candidates would be Abascantus of Staius, *Silvae* 5.1, who was *ab epistulis* under Domitian and was still in office in 95 when the *epicedion* for his wife Priscilla was written. He is not to be identified with Abascantus (*PIR*² F 195), who was a *cognitionibus*, possibly under Domitian, but more likely under Nerva or Trajan, if he outlived Scopus the celebrated charioteer of Domitian’s reign (*PIR*² F 359). See Weaver, *Echos du Monde Classique* 38, n.s. 13 (1994), 343ff., 359f. None of the four Abascanti known to have been freed by Trajan – 6.8479 = *ILS* 1602 (a middle-ranking *tabularius operum publicorum*), 8627, 18408 = 35306, *RAC* 3, 1926, 177 – would be at all suitable, but there could have been others.

³⁶ E.g. Dressel (1891: 132), Helen (1975: 146), *AE* 1981, 639; Bloch (1947: 209; but cf. 1948: 113 no. 578); Chantaine (1967: 45 n. 16); Weaver (1972: 66 n. 4); Boulvert (1974: 205 n. 39).

³⁷ 6.1878 = *ILS* 1912; 3082 = *IG* 14.331; *AE* 1958, 184.

³⁸ See the careful discussion of this distinction by Helen (1975: 62–71) and his comment (*ibid.* 71) on 462 & 463.

have collaborated even more closely, with each specialising in different sizes of bricks, the larger bipedales and sesquipedales being produced by Agathyrus, and the smaller bessales by Annius Verus.³⁹ This kind of association cannot be matched by any other Imperial freedman nor can the length of his ownership tenure. His dated stamp types are variously spread over the years 123, 135, 150, 151 and 152.⁴⁰ They use the formula 'ex praedis + genitive case' for naming the *dominus* which was first introduced in the second century, except for the undated 462/3 (above) and 469 which retains 'ex f(iglinis)'. Two binominal stamps put the matter beyond doubt by also naming an *officinator*, as usual in the simple genitive with 'opus (doliare)' understood⁴¹ – 464 = LSO 425: '(opus) T. Octaveni Grati, ex p(raedis) Agat(hyrsi) Aug(usti) l(iberti), Apr(oniano) et Paet(ino) cos' (AD 123); 465 = LSO 426: 'ex pr(aedis) Agat(hyrsi) Aug(usti) l., (opus) Q. Pomp(oni) Ianuar(i)', also dated to 123. A possible third case is L. Cl(odius) Beryllus (S 118).⁴²

The exceptional performance of Agathyrus emphasizes by contrast the rather meagre record of achievement in the brick industry by other Imperial freedmen – less than a dozen altogether and barely three at its peak in the period of Trajan and Hadrian, constituting less than 2% of persons named in the brick stamps. This is well out of step with the rapidly increasing proportion of the brick-producing lands owned by the emperor.⁴³ This of course cannot take into account the unknown proportion of the total number of workers in the industry who do not appear on the stamps. But we are concerned with those in key positions, *domini* and *officinatores*, who might reasonably seek or be required to be named on the stamps. It should be noted that scholars are increasingly confident that, by contrast with most other kinds of inscriptions, we already have examples of almost all brick stamp types used in their time and that new names will not be easy to find.⁴⁴ Indeed, over the last half century, apart from variants of existing stamps, only one more slave and one freedman (Nos. 1 & 16) have been added to the list from the Familia Caesaris, neither of great significance.

This is no great testimony to widespread entrepreneurial activity on the part of the Imperial freedmen in particular. It is not to be expected from Imperial slaves who, like others' slaves, would work at the behest and in the interest of their masters, most, no doubt, well below the level of *officinator*. But Imperial freedmen too, including those who had previously worked in the industry as slaves, appear not to have continued on or progressed to the role of *officinator* in any numbers, and even fewer to have purchased land in the 'clay districts' themselves.

This may reflect a different view of the emperor's interest in the brick industry in the second century. The emergence on the stamps for the first time of the term 'praedia' and the names of the *domini* who owned them, and perhaps even consular dating as an accounting device, suggest a new emphasis on financial control rather than direct investment in the process of production. Direct involvement in industrial activity of this kind was not characteristic of the senatorial order, including emperors, and the brick industry may not have been any exception. Instead of their own slaves and their *vicarii*, this could be left more and more to independent entrepreneurs to whom the 'clay land', the means of production, would be leased at a profit by its owners. Factors to consider are not only the changing pattern of ownership of these 'clay districts' near Rome with increasing concentration in the hands of the emperor, but also the role of a new kind of *officinator* in the organization of Roman brick production as building activity expanded into the second century. Such changes have been admirably

³⁹ As pointed out by Setälä (1977: 53), referring to Bloch (1947: 209) and Steinby (1975: 80).

⁴⁰ For detailed references on the *praedia Quintanensia* and Steinby's critique of Bloch's chronology, see Bloch (1947: 204–10); Steinby (1975: 78–80); and the succinct account of Setälä (1977: 52–4).

⁴¹ See Helen (1975: 89–99).

⁴² Suggested by Bloch (ad loc.) and Steinby (1975: 80).

⁴³ For the methodological problems involved in the study of the brick stamps, see Helen (1975: 1ff.) and, for the numbers and status of persons involved, esp. 22–7.

⁴⁴ See Helen (1975: 13 + n. 16).

documented and analysed by Helen.⁴⁵ The fact that women are recorded not only as *domini* but also now as *officinatores* is especially suggestive. Nineteen of them are found in the brick stamps, comprising according to Helen about 6% of all known *officinatores*, compared with 30% of *domini* who are women.⁴⁶ Indeed, nearly half of these (8/19) are women who from their *nomen* have no obvious connexion with the Imperial family but yet are recorded as *officinatores* who have emperors as *domini*. All nineteen on the list except perhaps one, Augustina (182), are free and possibly freeborn. None are certainly freedwomen. This has interesting implications for the role of *officinatores* in general who, at least from the second century, are socially quite varied while lower in status than the landowning *domini*. Women of any status, whether free or slave, are unlikely to have worked as supervisors on the floor of a Roman brick factory. They are much more likely to have filled the economic role of providing finance rather than labour and thus to be among the contractors or tenants holding the lease of a business. Moreover, there are a dozen cases of *societates* or more than one *offinator* named on a given stamp, among whom are three women.⁴⁷ This again implies financial not labour input into a business operation.

Outsourcing of the emperor's direct involvement in the actual management of production using tenant entrepreneurs would have changed the role of both his slaves and freedmen in the brick industry. This perhaps goes some way to explaining the inverse ratio between the rapidly developing Imperial ownership of the means of brick production and the premature disappearance of the *Familia Caesaris* from the brick stamps in the course of the second century.

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⁴⁵ The list is now reduced to 19 names with the conversion of Cocceia A./Aug. lib. Primigeni(a) to an Imperial freedman (No. 20). See n. 28 above.

⁴⁶ See the list in Helen (1975: esp. 89ff.).

⁴⁷ See Helen (1975: 113–15).