



THE RENAISSANCE NOMENCLATURE OF THE *FASTI CONSULARES**

Abstract: In 1546 one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the Renaissance took place, the so-called *Fasti consulares*, panels upon which were engraved the succession of Roman magistrates. These epigraphs were named in several ways, reflecting how they were understood by the scholarly community and what their reception would be, given the growing sensitivity to artefacts from antiquity. Their nomenclature was problematic from the very beginning. Only the thorough cross-referencing of textual and material sources could provide a term which eventually expressed their real essence. The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the phases that brought this find to acquire the denomination of *fasti* in early modern times, and to discover what precisely contributed to this choice.

Keywords: *Renaissance; Antiquarianism; Epigraphy; Chronology; Fasti.*

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INTRODUCTION

In 1546 one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the Renaissance took place in the heart of the Roman Forum.¹ Between the Temple of the Dioscuri and the Church of Santa Maria Liberatrice, a group of scattered marble panels were unearthed, upon which were engraved the succession of Roman magistrates and triumphs from the foundation of the city to the first century BCE. The importance of this relic was immediately understood and triggered a profound interest among the erudite environments of the time. The humanist Gentile Delfini rearranged the panels according to their assumed original order; under Michelangelo's supervision they were put on display in the Palazzo dei Conservatori. Shortly thereafter, antiquarian scholars from all over Europe began working on the epigraph thoroughly in an attempt to decode its inscriptions, determine its authorship and dating, verify its reliability and compare it with the other historical sources available at the time. In this vivid intellectual context, the finding acquired the denomination of *Fasti Capitolini* or more generally *Fasti consulares*. This was not a passive choice. It reflected instead a cultural dynamic displaying how it was understood by the scholarly community, and what its reception would be given the growing sensitivity to artefacts from antiquity. However, two questions still remain unanswered: 1) Why was this list of names, ordered in yearly progression, given the label of *fasti*? 2) How did this word end up corresponding with its meaning in the vocabulary of the sixteenth century? In fact, this equation of word and object did not happen automatically, in that until then *fasti* was almost exclusively taken as a synonym of *calendarius*.

* This work refers to ATRA – “Atlas of Renaissance Antiquarianism” H2020-MSCA-IF-2016, G.A. n° 745704.

¹ DEGRASSI 1947, 1-12; HENZEN 1863, 415-425; MCCUAIG 1991, 141-59; MAYER 2010, 29; STENHOUSE 2005, 103-12.

The term *fasti* descends² from the Latin *fas*, which signifies “that which is divinely sanctioned”; the opposite of the term *nefas*. Its origin is uncertain: it either derives from *fēs-/ *fas<*d^h(e)h₂s (as do *festus*, *feriae*, and *fanum*) or from *fā<*b^heh₂ (as do *fari*, *fama*, *fabula*, and *fatum*). These two possibilities had already been established in antiquity, from the etymology given by Varro (LL 6, 29: *Dies fasti per quos praetoribus omnia verba sine piaculo licet fari*) and the meaning attributed to the term by Vergil (*Aen.* 1, 205-206: *tendimus in Latium sedes ubi fata quietas / ostendunt: illic fas regna resurgere Troiae*). However, we do not have any records (at least for the classical period) of the divergence between *fas*, intended as “law of the gods,” and *ius*, intended as “law of humans,” as established by Servius (*Georg.* 1, 269: *fas et iura sinunt: i. e. divina humanaque iura permittunt, nam ad religionem fas, ad homines iura pertinent*).

Paulus Diaconus’ abridgment of Festus’ *De verborum significatione* explains why this word was used in relation to calendars. This semantic shift was traced to a pre-republican age: to be precise, the days in which kings held public speeches and performed sacrifices were labelled as *fasti* and recorded in books designated for this function (*Verb. Sign.* 311, 1: *Quando rex comitiavit fas, in fastis notari solet, et hoc videtur significare, quando rex sacrificulus divinis rebus perfectis in comitium venit*). The *fasti* here mentioned were essentially almanacs, contributing to creating a full “description of the year” (*Verb. Sign.* 78, 4: *Fastorum libri appellantur, in quibus totius anni fit descriptio*); that is, establishing the fixed dates which regulated the moments of public life (*Verb. Sign.* 83, 6: *Fastis diebus iocunda fari licebat; nefastis quaedam non licebat fari*).

Within the *corpus* of Latin literature, a vast array of occurrences of this word explicitly signifying “list of magistrates” can be found.³ For example: Cicero (*Ad Att.* 4, 8b, 2: *in codicillorum fastis futurorum consulum*; and *Ad Att.* 5, 12, 5: *nos retinet quasi enumeratione fastorum*), Livy (9, 18: *paginas in annalium magistratumque fastis percurrere licet consulum dictatorumque*), Lucan (5, 396-397: [...] *tantum caret ne nomine tempus / menstruus in fastos dispinguit saecula consul*), Suetonius (*Aug.* 10, 3: *Augustum appellaretur et ita fastos referetur*), Tacitus (*Ann.* 3, 18, 1: *ne nomen Pisonis fastis eximeretur*), Trebellius Pollio (*Hist. Aug.* 23, 14, 10: [...] *scriptum invenimus in fastis: “Valeriano imperatore consule”*) and many other writers of the *Historia Augusta*, Lactantius (*Div. In.* 6, 4, 21: *ii sunt qui ad gerendos magistratus omnem vitae suae operam curamque convertunt, ut fastos signent et annis nomen inponant*), and Isidore of Seville (*Orig.* 6, 8: *Fastorum libri sunt, in quibus reges vel consules scribuntur a fastibus dicti, i. potestatibus*). But the most relevant sources in this regard are represented by Ausonius (*De fastis* 1, 1: *digessi fastos et nomina praepetis aevi*) and Cassiodorus (*Variarum libri* 2, 1: *dare fastis nomen [...] terrenam curiae claritatem, ut per annorum numerum decurrat gratia dignitatum et beneficii principum sacretur memoria saeculorum*), who suggested some kind of connection among the word *fasti*, chronology and the lists of magistrates.

From the examples given, it is clear that the term

² PRESCENDI 2007, 358-359; RÜPKE 2007, 361-365; ERNOUT-MEILLET 1951, 217-219;

³ RÜPKE 2007, 361-365; MOMMSEN 1859, 208 n. 394;

fasti passed from a context tied to the calculation of time (as in calendars) to history (as in the lists of magistrates). This subtle but essential turning point for the entire issue had already been discussed and resolved in 1859 by Theodor Mommsen, in his *Römische Chronologie bis auf Caesar*.⁴ In the chapter entitled *Die älteste Fastenredaction*, Mommsen affirmed that these lists (which he defined *Eponymenliste*) were specifically related to the composition of calendars, in terms of both substance (*in der Sache*) and form (*in der Sprache*). In the first case, the consuls who gave the name to the year created a link between human chronology and divine time. In the second, the meaning of the word was expanded from one object to another (i.e., from the calendars to the lists of magistrates). This was a natural progression since, during that period, these lists of magistrates most likely appeared as a sort of attachment or appendix to the calendars themselves (*ein Anhang des Kalendars war*), and so became two parts of the same whole. Therefore, in calendars and in magistrates’ lists, the “natural year” and the “civil year” coexisted and contributed to the development of the conception of time in the classical age.⁵

Albeit this awareness was reached only in the nineteenth century, the debate on how these series of magistrates should be termed and what their relationship with the ancient calendar was had already taken place during the Renaissance. More significantly, the fact that in this period the word *fasti* was intended to mean the lists of consuls along with the calendar implies that somehow Renaissance scholars had already reached Mommsen’s conclusions. The distinctive factor of this process lies in the re-discovery of the epigraph of the Roman Forum, which led early modern scholars to recognize what the literary sources already described, but that until then had no material counterpart. The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the phases that brought these lists to acquire the denomination of *fasti* already in early modern times, and to discover what precisely contributed to the development of this cultural pathway.

FASTI BEFORE THE FASTI

Before 1546, there were other catalogues of Roman magistrates circulating among humanists and in erudite environments.⁶ Some of these catalogues actually came from the same group of epigraphs as the *Fasti consulares*, as determined already during the fifteenth century (*ante* 1471) by Andrea Santacroce (*lapis de ruinis Capitolii habitus*).⁷ Nevertheless, a precise and coherent denomination was still far from being reached.

The most credible *terminus ante quem* for the first identification of these lists is 1488, when Giulio Pomponio Leto and Angelo Poliziano entertained an epistolary correspondence in which they talked about this type of epigraph, it being a prominent finding at the time.⁸ In these letters, they refer to those ancient inscriptions also known as *Fasti Venusini*, composed by a Roman calendar (with only

⁴ MOMMSEN 1859, 208-210; see also MATZAT 1883; HOLZAPFEL 1885; SOLTAU 1889.

⁵ MAZZARINO 1966, 2.2, 415 n. 555.

⁶ DE ROSSI 1853, 4-7; MOMMSEN 1863, 293-296; HENZEN 1863, 467-474.

⁷ MIGLIO 1991, 198.

⁸ POLIZIANO 1522, 26-30; DE ROSSI 1853, 16-22.

the months of May and June surviving) along with a list of consuls and censors dating back to the Social War of the first century BC. These two engraved marble panels were exhibited at Castel Capuano in Naples during the fifteenth century. Nowadays, the originals are lost; only a transcription remains in an epigraphic book compiled by the humanist and artist Fra' Giovanni Giocondo, made after a journey in Southern Italy. This collection has been transmitted in several copies, of which the most relevant exemplar is stored at the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona (ms. CCLXX, 245).⁹ Before reproducing the text of the *Fasti Venusini*, Giocondo noted their provenance and typology: [...] *Apud eundem est haec pars Kalendarii, quae reperta fuit in agro Venusino*.¹⁰ The caption *pars Kalendarii* underlines the fragmentary aspect of the finding. However, the same entry also included the list of magistrates. This was preceded by a short gloss, reporting *TABELLA FACTA A BELLO MARSICO*.¹¹ This means that this *tabella* was recognized as a different part (although still as a part) of the calendar.

During Giocondo's stay in Rome, this manuscript passed into Pomponio Leto's hands. As soon as Pomponio learned of the newly discovered *Fasti Venusini*, he transcribed the pages with their text and immediately informed Poliziano:¹²

A Venusia Apulorum allata sunt marmorea in tabula: obscuro loco ibi latebant fragmenta aliarum tabularum, ubi annus integer erat; [...] Mitto et quaedam monimenta rerum, eodem in loco reperta [...] Romae fere idem, sed multo ante, verum fine caret.

Pomponio talks about an archaeological excavation from which various epigraphic fragments emerged. Among those worthy of attention, he mentions a calendar (*annus*), and some historical documents (*monimenta rerum*), which resembled a similar fragment discovered in Rome years before (*Romae fere idem, sed multo ante*).

Poliziano responded substantively:¹³

Sed et semestre calendarium mire fuit gratum et quam ais tabulam bello Marsico factam; quae si eadem est, quam Romae obiter legerim, vereor ex fide sit exscripta.

He approached the finding as if it comprised two pieces, a *calendarium* and a *tabula*, each having a different purpose – a different interpretation of the finding to the one given by Pomponio. In the first part, Poliziano used a more accurate word (*calendarium pro annus*); in the second, a less accurate one (*tabulam pro monimenta rerum*). As to whether this choice was provoked by the absence of a common technical term, it is difficult to say; however, one could infer that this lack of vocabulary encouraged scholars to not be too specific when applying a definition to the finding, with

the aim of not compromising the understanding of its real nature. Furthermore, Poliziano, just like Pomponio, demonstrates a full grasp of the knowledge available at his time on the subject, comparing the transcription he received with the one obtained from the list previously found in Rome (*quae si eadem est, quam Romae obiter legerim, vereor ut satis ex fide exscripta*).

This Roman epigraph was also known elsewhere. For example, Ermolao Barbaro in his *Castigationes Plinianae* of 1493 described it with the same words utilized by his fellow scholars Pomponio and Poliziano:¹⁴

*In tabula antiquissima hodie ostenditur Romae his verbis [...]
In eadem tabella nominantur et alii plerique*

From these two occurrences, the diffusion of the lists of Roman magistrates emerges in the scholarly investigations of the Renaissance. Above all, the role of Pomponio Leto was crucial: he was responsible for circulating this information throughout the scholarly community. Just as he had done earlier with Poliziano, he passed the transcripts of these findings on to Barbaro (*indicavit hoc ante omnes mihi Pomponius Laetus*). In consideration of this, a hypothesis could be made that the words *tabula* and *tabella* reached Barbaro through Pomponio, originating denominations which echoed respectively the ones formulated by Poliziano and Fra' Giocondo.

Pomponio's impact on the question of these Roman epigraphs is also attested to in other sources. For example, in Francesco Albertini's *De Roma prisca*, published in 1515, he was identified as one of the witnesses to their rediscovery:¹⁵

[...] effossa fuere vestigia cum duabus tabulis marmoreis dedicatione ispius teste Pomponius Laetus, qui eas vidisse affirmat.

From this information, it is also possible to infer that Pomponio Leto was aware of the real function of the lists of magistrates, even if he did not call them *fasti*. In fact, in his *De magistratibus* of ca.1474, he affirmed that the years in ancient Roman society were named after the consuls in charge (*ab eorum magistratibus numerus annorum signabat*).¹⁶

The two marble panels mentioned above (*duabus tabulis marmoreis*) were published for the first time in 1521 by Jacopo Mazzocchi in an epigraphic collection entitled *Epigrammata antiquae Urbis*. Nonetheless, the adopted terminology adheres to that currently in use among scholars of the period (*fragmentum in tabula marmorea*), with no further details added.¹⁷

FASTI AS CALENDARS

At approximately the same time, many pieces of Roman calendars emerged from archaeological digs. A collection of these works, published in 1509 by Jacopo Mazzocchi, included the *Fasti Vallensi*, the *Fasti Iuliani* and the

⁹ DE ROSSI 1853, 13; MOMMSEN 1863, 300-302.

¹⁰ DE ROSSI 1853, 11-12.

¹¹ DE ROSSI 1853, 25, 40-42.

¹² POLIZIANO 1522, 26.

¹³ POLIZIANO 1522, 27.

¹⁴ DE ROSSI 1853, 19; BARBARO 1493, VII 9, XIII 13.

¹⁵ ALBERTINI 1515, 48.

¹⁶ LETO 1515, 62.

¹⁷ MAZZOCCHI 1521, 121-122.

Fasti Venusini, and was disseminated by Fra' Giocondo.¹⁸ The latter featured only its calendar, removing the succession of magistrates with which it had been originally associated. The reason for this editorial choice can be understood by looking at the denomination of these lists given by Mazzocchi in his *Epigrammata* of 1521, where they were denoted with the generic *tabula marmorea*, implying that they were perceived as something unrelated to the calendar. With the same interpretation, Aldo Manuzio placed only the calendar of the *Fasti Venusini* as a preface to his edition of Ovid's *Fasti* published in 1516, which he drew from an apograph of Fra' Giocondo's manuscript.¹⁹

What emerges is that both humanists and scholars of antiquity felt that calendars and lists of consuls belonged to different categories of epigraphic findings. The calendars had already been defined by the word *fasti* since Mazzocchi's edition of 1509. This converged with the use of the term in Ovid, who arranged a calendar in verses in his poem entitled *Fasti*. Hence, Manuzio's choice to combine them with the fragment of the calendar from the *Fasti Venusini*. This happened despite Fra' Giocondo providing a manuscript witness that actually tied the two objects together, even if they were presented as sub-units of the same whole. Therefore, the division of this whole into two separate parts (calendar and lists) may be attributed to the very first reception of Fra' Giocondo's account by Pomponio Leto and Poliziano.

This distinction endured in the decades that followed and became even stronger. In his *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis* of 1534, Petrus Apianus once again published the consular list of the *Fasti Venusini*,²⁰ referring to it simply as a fragment reporting the names of magistrates (*Fragmentum superiorum magistratum in nonnullis bellis Romanis*). And a few years later, in 1541, Lilio Gregorio Giraldi issued his *De annis et mensibus*, explicitly establishing the equivalence between *fasti* and calendars (*qualia sunt hodie usitata voce calendaria vocamus*).²¹

FASTI AND NAMES

However, as previously stated, the word *fasti* signified, in the view of many ancient authors, a list of magistrates, transcending the sphere of calendar studies and entering that of historiography. At least one Renaissance publication seems to confirm the existence of this awareness: Alessandro Alessandri's *Dies geniales* issued in 1522. In the section where he attempted to explain the function of ancient Roman pontiffs, he reported that these ministers were assigned to record and transmit the *res gestae* in books called *fasti* and *commentarii*, also known as *annales maximi*:²²

Nam scribae pontificum, qui fastos et commentarios habebant, fidelem custodiam rerum gestarum, qui annales maximi dicebantur [...]

Although this reading does not offer a full

¹⁸ MAZZOCCHI 1509; DEGRASSI 1947, 27; MOMMESEN 1863, 293-412.

¹⁹ MANUZIO 1516, 14-15.

²⁰ APIANUS 1534, 315.

²¹ GIRALDI 1541, 154.

²² ALESSANDRI 1522, 65.

definition of *fasti* as the succession of magistrates in a yearly progression, but only as a genre of historical writing (*custodiam rerum gestarum*), it opens up our understanding of their second nature to unforeseen interpretations. However, during the first half of sixteenth century, this meaning was completely overlooked, neglected or misunderstood because Renaissance scholars could not connect this signifier (*fasti*) with an intelligible object. They could not picture what these *fasti* looked like.

The most glaring example of this situation is represented by Joannes Alexander Brassicanus (1500-1539). In his *Proverbia symmicta*, which was published in 1529, he failed to explain Cicero's expression *ex fastis evellendis*:²³

Cicero pro Publio Sestio proverbio utitur, nimirum improbos et contaminatae vitae homine [...] ex fastis esse evellendos: hoc est memoriam eorum esse penitus abolendam, et nullo unquam tempore mentionem eorum esse faciendam. Quemadmodum Athenienses publico decreto sanxerunt, ne unquam nomina fortissimorum juvenum Harmodii et Aristogitonis, qui libertatis recuperandae gratia Hippiam tyrannum interfecere adorsi erant ferris, indere liceret, authore Gellio lib. 9 cap. 2.

Brassicanus realised that this idiom was related to the erasure of a magistrate's name from the public memory due to poor conduct while holding office, in particular the consulship (*Sest. 33, 20, 23: consules, si appellandi sunt consules quos nemo est quin non modo ex memoria sed etiam ex fastis evellendos putet*). However, he seems to ignore the fact that these names had to be cancelled from somewhere concrete, as in a physical list. In fact, to explain this phrase he did not recall the lists of magistrates – which would have been natural – but instead cited a supposed parallel occurrence in Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*. In a passage of this work, it is stated that a decree was ratified in Athens, which impelled the people to not record the names of two tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton (*ne unquam nomina indere liceret*). The syntagma *nefas ducerent nomina* did the rest, creating an assonance with Cicero's *ex fastis*.

However, a comparison with Gellius's original can shed more light on the genesis of this gloss (*Noct. 9, 2, 10*):

Maiores autem mei Athenienses nomina iuvenum fortissimorum Harmodii et Aristogitonis, qui libertatis recuperandae gratia Hippiam tyrannum interficere adorsi erant, ne unquam servis indere liceret, decreto publico sanxerunt, quoniam nefas ducerent nomina libertati patriae devota servili contagio pollui.

The passage talks about a city law which prohibited the people of Athens from giving the name of these two tyrannicides to their slaves, to prevent these names, which were consecrated to freedom, being polluted by the social status of those to whom they were assigned (*ne unquam servis indere liceret*). The purpose of this prohibition was to glorify

²³ BRASSICANUS 1529, 45-46.

the names, rather than remove them from the memory of the city for misconduct. It is therefore clear why Brassicanus excluded the word *servis* when he cited this passage: it would have contradicted the fact that this erasure was only intended for public figures who were seen in a negative light.

The word *fasti* still had a double meaning in the ancient literary idiom. However, the meaning of the word needed to be refined in order to generate a more substantial awareness of the nature of these ancient sources. Only new concrete evidence could overturn a situation that at the beginning of 1540s appeared impossible to subvert.

SHAPING THE FASTI

A drastic change occurred with the rediscovery of the missing part of the Roman panels listing the consular succession in 1546. This event represented an effective watershed moment, not only in Renaissance epigraphy but in the general development of a full antiquarian awareness. In fact, this discovery fostered methodological meditations which resulted in the growth of the entire discipline.²⁴

If the sixteenth century editions of this inscription are examined closely, a lack of uniformity in the titles is immediately evident. However, compared to the former generations of scholars, the precision of its definition has visibly increased. The denomination *tabula* or *fragmentum*, which focused the attention on the object, were replaced by new formulations attempting to better outline its form and content. The terms utilized to name this finding demonstrate the new attitude towards it: the first was *series*, the second *fasti*, the third *annales*.

The word *series* occurred three times. Bartolomeo Marliani utilized it twice,²⁵ in 1549, the year of the first edition of this epigraph, and in 1555, when a reprint of the former was provided with a preface written by Francesco Robortello. The third occurrence was in Martin Smetius's epigraphic collection, which was printed posthumously in 1588 but dated back to *ante* 1551.²⁶ These works published the text from the ancient inscription, without further additions, respecting the disposition and dimension of each piece, and also maintaining the lacunae within the texts. While Marliani reported only the letters, limiting his survey to the textual sphere, Smetius also reproduced the drawings from each stone on which the texts were engraved, for the purpose of providing a more complete context.

Fasti was the most common word recurring in the following years. Carlo Sigonio²⁷ adopted it first in 1550, reiterating it in all his subsequent editions (in 1555, 1556 and 1559). The same pattern was followed by Onofrio Panvinio²⁸ in 1557 (in the pirated edition of the epigraph published by Jacopo Strada) and in 1558 (the official edition), and by Hubert Goltzius²⁹ in 1566. All these works reported the succession of magistrates in yearly progression based on the Roman epigraph, completed (and amended) thanks to comparisons with literary sources, narrative histories and numismatic evidence.

²⁴ MAYER 2010; FERRARY 1996; MCCUAIG 1991, 141-159.

²⁵ MARLIANI 1549; MARLIANI 1555.

²⁶ SMETIUS 1588.

²⁷ SIGONIO 1550; SIGONIO 1555a; SIGONIO 1556a; SIGONIO 1559.

²⁸ PANVINIO 1557; PANVINIO 1558; FERRARY 1996, 57-59, 110.

²⁹ GOLTZIUS 1566.

The word *annales* appeared only once, in 1560, featured in the title of the last edition of the epigraph conducted by Bartolomeo Marliani.³⁰ With this formulation, he outlined the complete series of Roman magistrates with a commentary placed in the lower part of the page.

If arranged in chronological order, however, these different denominations acquire further meaning, and could tell more about the history of the relic to which they were assigned.

1549 → *series*
 1550 → *fasti*
 1551 → *series*
 1555 → *fasti*
 1555 → *series*
 1556 → *fasti*
 1557 → *fasti*
 1558 → *fasti*
 1559 → *fasti*
 1560 → *annales*
 1566 → *fasti*

From this alternation of the terms it is evident that, in the years following the discovery of these Roman epigraphs, scholars were still attempting to understand what kind of object they were dealing with, and that its nomenclature was still far from being firmly established.

CHRONOLOGY AND FASTI

In light of the above, it is possible to push the discussion even further, by determining why these three terms entered into competition with each other.

The word *series* was probably a result of observation on the part of scholars and expressed a factual denomination (the names on the relic were, in fact, a list or a catalogue). Very likely, it was sustained by parallel occurrences in the titles of other publications regarding chronology in circulation at the time – for example the *Series et digestio temporum* published in 1548 by Heinrich Bullinger.³¹

This relationship between the seriation of public figures (*series*) and the classification of time (*digestio temporum*) was rooted in the renewed historical sensitivity of Humanism.³² In 1498 Annio of Viterbo's *Antiquitates Variae* described the nature of these sources in theoretical terms, stating that the succession in the yearly progression of individuals holding political offices (*ut reges et viri digerant*) was a fundamental tool in establishing a reliable chronology (*Chronographiam id est temporum digestionem*). The redaction of public and official documents (*non discrepare a publica et probata fide*) contributed to calculating time and preserving the memory of historical facts (*quorum memoriam teneant authores*).³³ Thus, the choice of *series* in the first studies on this epigraph was probably made to connect a newly discovered ancient find with an already renowned tradition. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that it also demonstrated how a deeper meditation on and comprehension of the finding itself –

³⁰ MARLIANI 1560.

³¹ BULLINGER 1548.

³² MOMIGLIANO 1950, 285-315; JOHNSON 1962, 126-135; WEISS 1969; BARKAN 1999; GRAFTON 2007; MILLER 2017.

³³ NANNI 1512, 91.

which put material evidence of an official and public list of Roman magistrates arranged in chronological order in the hands of Renaissance scholars – could modify its previous definition in scholarly terms.

The term *fasti*, on the other hand, followed a different path. The choice of this word implied a further semantic shift. In the preface of his edition of 1550, Carlo Sigonio affirmed that this new material finding helped solve contradictions and inconsistencies in narrative histories,³⁴ and filled in the gaps in Roman chronology (*totam magistratum Romanorum descriptionem annuam labantem, et incostantem, eademque imperfectam apud omnes scriptores*). This means that Sigonio did not have mere descriptive purposes for his study of the relics, as did Marliani (*a Bartholomeo Marliano descriptum*) and Smetius. He focused instead on its historiographic utility, wanting to supplement and improve the data on the chronology of magistrates (*magistratum ratio*) which until then had been uncertain, at best.

Very likely, Sigonio alluded to those series of Roman consuls based on information found in Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and published throughout the first half of sixteenth century.³⁵ The first was *Annorum ab eiectionibus regibus digestio*, composed by Gregor Haloander, published as an appendix of the *Codex iuris civilis* edition of 1531; the second was Heinrich Glareanus's *Chronologia sive temporum supputatio in omnem Romanam historia* attached to his commentaries to Livy; and the third was the posthumous *De consilibus Romanorum commentarius*, which was written by Johannes Cuspinianus in 1529, which only came to light in 1553.

Despite the novelty of his approach, Sigonio did not explain the reason why he utilized *fasti* to define the epigraphic findings unearthed in the Roman Forum in any of his editions. However, considering his classical background, he could have easily linked this ancient finding of the succession of Roman consuls to Cicero's syntagma *evellere ex fastis*, of which the epigraph represented concrete and tangible proof – especially because some names appeared to have been erased. There was widespread awareness of the ancient custom of erasing names from these lists in the mid-sixteenth century. For example, in a letter dated 5 June 1557, Antonio Agustín explained to Onofrio Panvinio that he could identify the effacement of the name of Marc Anthony on the epigraph, perfectly matching what Cicero referred to in *damantio memoriae*:³⁶

Il rader il nome di M. Antonio fu fatto a posta come nelli libri di fasti facevano, et Cicerone voleva persuader si facesse contra Gabinio et Pisone se M. Catone non havesse contradetto.

Furthermore, Sigonio had a profound knowledge of Livy's historical work, which he published in 1555 with a commentary appearing in 1556.³⁷ This ancient author led him to establish another parallel with those books that

recorded Roman magistrates referred to in the *Ab urbe condita* (9, 18: *paginas in annalium magistratumque fastis percurrere licet consulum dictatorumque*).

At this point, the semantic range of the word *fasti* again covered both the series of political officers and the calendar. For this reason, in the second edition of Sigonio's *Fasti consulares*, published in 1555, an appendix entitled *Kalendarium vetus Romanum e marmore descripto* was attached.³⁸ This additional section featured a Roman calendar transmitted by the epigraph known as *Fasti Maffeiani*, and was edited by Paolo Manuzio, son of Aldo the Elder. In his preface, Paolo claims he was the first to establish a link between the list of Roman magistrates and the calendar (*Factum est a me sane libenter, ut, com edendi essent Romani fasti, e lapidibus capitulinis descripti, adiungere ad eos kalendarium*), affirming the originality of his choice (*et mea sponte*).³⁹ In his opinion, this combination generated a clearer understanding of the institutional mechanisms of ancient Rome.

However, Paolo adds a significant detail by declaring that he followed the example of his father Aldo (*et patris exemplo spectavi*). The only ancient Roman calendar published by Aldo was the one attached to his 1516 edition of Ovid's *Fasti*, those same *Fasti Venusini* transcribed by Fra' Giocondo which he could find in an apograph. As seen before, the link between the calendar and Ovid's *Fasti* was natural, considering their thematic proximity. In this work, Aldo published only the calendar of the *Fasti Venusini*, excluding the series of magistrates. Therefore, it can be assumed that Paolo saw Giocondo's manuscript as transmitting the calendar and the lists of magistrates as one single item, and that he wanted to replicate this pattern by combining the analogous parts (calendar plus list) in his own publication, which were more complete and better preserved (*Fasti Maffeiani* and *Fasti Capitolini*).

LEXICOGRAPHIC ANALYSES

In his edition of 1558, Onofrio Panvinio explained for the first time the tie between the ancient calendars and the lists of magistrates in the word *fasti*, justifying Sigonio's denomination. Panvinio felt that a full lexicographic analysis of the word was required in order to clear up its meaning and uses in ancient Roman times. The purpose of the first chapter of his work was to achieve this objective (*Cur hi Fastorum nomine appellati fuerint*).⁴⁰ His dissertation discussed the different names given by scholars to this genre (the seriation of magistrates) in the previous decades. He made reference to several appellations, which included *chronologia*, *series*, *syllabus*, *elenchus*, *annales* and *fasti*, in order to point out and refute those which had been used inappropriately.⁴¹ Panvinio rejected *chronologia* because it was too vague and undetermined (*vocabulum nimis amplum*), and he also rejected *annales*, because in his opinion it could not consist of a mere series of names, but needed a commentary or a supportive text, according to Cicero's *De oratore* (*Quibus verbis manifeste constat nuda magistratum nomina nulla*

³⁴ SIGONIO 1550, I-III.

³⁵ FERRARY 1996, 116-117; MCCUAIG 1991, 141-519; HALOANDER 1531; GLAREANUS 1531; CUSPINIANUS 1553.

³⁶ CARBONELL 1991, 141; see also MAYER 1997, 264.

³⁷ SIGONIO 1555b; SIGONIO 1556b.

³⁸ SIGONIO 1555a.

³⁹ SIGONIO 1555a.

⁴⁰ PANVINIO 1558, 113-118.

⁴¹ PANVINIO 1558, 113-114.

ratione annales dici posse, ut quidam exstimarunt). He accepted the terms *series*, *elenchus* and *syllabus*, in that they could be intended as simple lists of magistrates (*nuda magistratum nomina*), without further implications.⁴²

However, the core of his discussion depended on how the word *fasti*, coming from the semantic field of calendars, was utilized also in an historical context. Relying on the definition given by Varro of the syntagma *dies fasti* (the propitious days within the calendar), Panvinio established that *fasti* extended its meaning to the entire calendar through a metonymical process (*Fastorum eiusmodi, quos nos calendaria appellamus*).⁴³ In fact, the calendar itself offered an exact connotation to each day of the year, specifying its peculiar value and purpose (*Postea collectionem eorum dierum, quibus fari ac non fari liceret Fastos appellatam constat, appellatione ducta ab eo quod contentum est, id quod continet*).⁴⁴ From this, Panvinio identified the semantic shift of the word and from this shift drew its definition as a list of magistrates ordered in yearly progression. In fact, just as calendars noted the function of each day of the year, the lists of magistrates acquired the function of an ideal calendar of history, because the consuls in their yearly progression named each year.⁴⁵

Fasti enim dicti sunt etiam hi libri, in quibus nomina magistratum continebantur, qui singulis annis fuere, et praesertim consulum. Nam sicut in superioris generis Fastis, unicuique diei sua solemnia, sive ludi, sive feriae, vel fasti, nefasti, comitialesque dies assignabantur, sic in his, singulis quibusque annis sui adscribebantur magistratus, sive Consules, vel Censores, aut Dictatores fuerint [...]

To defend his position, Panvinio referred to uncountable occurrences found in ancient literary sources (*Sexcenta enim praeterea auctorum loca citari possent, in quibus Fastorum consularium mentio est*).⁴⁶ However, although the textual evidence was solid and convincing, it was not enough. Its reliability could be proven only by cross-referencing it with material findings. And this was possible only after the discovery of the *Fasti Capitolini* in 1546. The fundamental role of this relic was underlined by Panvinio (*perinde ac sunt ij qui in tabulis Capitolinis incisi fuerunt*).⁴⁷ And even more, this finding could also help identify other analogous works circulating at the time, but not yet acknowledged as such, including the *Fasti Venusini* previously published by Mazzocchi and Apianus (*item ij Fasti municipales, qui a Petro Appiano referentur*).⁴⁸

DENYING EVIDENCE

Beside this general picture buttressed by an array of examples, Panvinio's discussion appears to be directed against a specific group of scholars who didn't accept the

word *fasti* as suitable for describing the list of consuls transmitted in the Roman epigraph. His critique seems to prefigure what Bartolomeo Marliani did a few years later in his last edition of this work published in 1560, which was actually entitled *Annales*. Marliani tried to overturn the theses expressed by Panvinio, stating that the word *annales* was more appropriate in consideration of the real nature of the ancient findings (*ratio est, propius ad argumentum rei accedit*). In his view, the series of magistrates should be termed *annales* because that word better represented the source from which the annalistic histories drew the name of the consuls in yearly progression (*quasi singulorum annorum consulum narratio sit, quorum nomina in Annalibus scripta*).⁴⁹

Marliani then tried to contest the dichotomy *fasti/annales*, accusing his opponents of having misunderstood the passage of Cicero's *Pro Sestio*, in which the practice of the erasure from the public records for those political figures who didn't fulfil the duties of their office honestly was determined: *non modo ex memoria, sed etiam ex fastis, evellendos*.⁵⁰ He stated that the opposition *ex memoria/ex fastis* must have carried an actual significance, implying that such erasure took place in two different type of documents: while *ex memoria* concerned the lists of magistrates (*Nam ubi dicit ex memoria, innuit illorum nomen ex serie consulum esse tollendum, et ex memoribus abradendum*), *ex fastis* referred to the narrative histories reporting the facts and the acts of the magistrates in charge (*item ex fastis ut cum nomine rerum gestarum pereat memoria*). The reason for this distinction relied on the etymology of *fasti* as transmitted by Varro – from *fando*, that is, speaking – which implied (in Marliani's opinion) that they consisted of something more extensive compared to a synthetic sequence of names (*nullam prorsus cum nominibus consulum affinitatem*).

In light of these facts, Marliani opted for the term *annales* in order to provide an alternative belonging to a specific category of historical writing to Panvinio's *fasti*. However, Marliani appears less adamant in the pursuit of his position than his rival; he preferred to leave the final judgement to the reader, given the uncertainty of the meaning of both the terms in antiquity. He therefore includes a third possibility: going back to either *series* or *catalogus*, because these two words reflected a neutral aspect of the relic (the fact that it was a list), rather than going into detail of the peculiarities of the genre (*Ideo hos magistratus, seriem aut graeco vocabulo catalogum, forsitan rectius vocaremus. Sed haec lectoris iudicio relinquimus*).⁵¹ As we have seen before, *series* recalled his first title for the edition of 1549; *catalogus* instead was a brand new solution, because it evoked the appendix usually enclosed at the end of the Renaissance editions of the *Codex iuris civilis*, which bore a list of consuls, and was aimed at better understanding the subdivision of historical periods and the comprehension of Roman history (*Catalogus consulum, tum ad discernenda Consitutionum tempora perutile, tum ad totius Romanae historiae cognitionem maxime necessarium*).⁵²

⁴² He probably had in mind works that used the same terms in the titles, FERRARY 1996, 118-120; see also ACCIARINO 2017, 131-154.

⁴³ PANVINIO 1558, 114.

⁴⁴ PANVINIO 1558, 114.

⁴⁵ PANVINIO 1558, 115.

⁴⁶ PANVINIO 1558, 116.

⁴⁷ PANVINIO 1558, 115.

⁴⁸ PANVINIO 1558, 115.

⁴⁹ MARLIANI 1560, *Lect.*

⁵⁰ MARLIANI 1560, *Lect.*

⁵¹ MARLIANI 1560, *Lect.*

⁵² *Codex* 1535.

CONCLUSIONS

From this survey on the different occurrences of the word *fasti* in early modern times in epigraphic and philological publications, some general conclusions can be drawn affecting both the history of the classical tradition and the perception of antiquity during the Renaissance. Together with a renewed interest towards ancient findings and antiquity in general, a specific vocabulary was developed to identify, define and circumscribe those findings, consolidating the bond between denomination and acquisition of knowledge. This was a language of unremitting progress gathered from many literary sources, which was applied to and sometimes manipulated in order to coincide with the newly discovered relics.

In fact, if the term *fasti* could easily be understood with the meaning of calendar (because of its etymology), it was much harder to explain its relationship with the sphere of history, and to clarify why calendars and lists of magistrates were combined. For this reason, after Fra' Giocondo, who depicted them together, the two parts of the same unit were irreparably separated in the first half of the sixteenth century, under the influence of Pomponio Leto and Angelo Poliziano – the cases of Aldo Manuzio, Francesco Albertini, Jacopo Mazzocchi and Peter Apianus demonstrate this fracture.

Only a compelling event, such as the unearthing of the epigraph in the Roman Forum, could change the *status quo*. This discovery forced scholars to rethink the entire question and to develop a systematic reappraisal of the lists of magistrates, which were known in scholarly environments but were never properly investigated.

The nomenclature adopted after 1546 delineates this cultural pattern well. Marliani, Sigonio, and Panvinio raised a hermeneutical debate illuminating the interactions between the ancient texts and the archaeological findings. Their different choices (*series, fasti, annales*), and their attempts to explain them in relation to both the *corpus* of literary sources and the material findings, reflect the evolution of scholarly sensitivity towards the classical tradition. The fact that after this date the word *fasti* was generally acknowledged to mean a “list of magistrates” directly correlates the growth of knowledge to an increase in material evidence.

The Renaissance scholars of the second half of the sixteenth century reached full awareness of the affinity between calendars (*fasti*) and the successions of magistrates (*fasti*), and were perfectly conscious that the word shifted from one semantic sphere to the other. The combination of the *Fasti Capitoloni* and the *Fasti Maffeiani* made by Paolo Manuzio in Sigonio's second edition (1555) was the turning-point in shaping this new dimension.

The question of the genre to which the lists of magistrates belong was a fundamental phase of the process of their denomination. Since the very beginning, scholars perceived they had a link (of sorts) with the transmission of history. The words of Annio of Viterbo actually placed these seriations in a precise theoretical frame, that is, the constitution of a reliable chronology. In this light, Dionysus of Halicarnassus' *De praecipuis linguae Graecae auctoribus elogia*, edited by Robert Estienne and published in 1556, helps to provide further clarification on how the name and

nature of these lists were conceived by scholars. Specifically, in the appendix written by the Polish humanist Stanislaw Ilowski, entitled *De historica facultate*, he infers that the actions of mankind create a parameter which contributes to setting an order in history between natural and civil time:⁵³

Historiam ratione temporum distinguendam esse, et civilis et naturalis ratio docet. [...] ut actiones hominum, quae motus expertes sunt, tempore notentur atque describantur.

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⁵³ ILOWSKI, 1556, 36.

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