

Epigraphical Research in Fifteenth-Century Iberia: the Case of Francesc Vicent



Fig. 1. CIL II 4071 = II²/14, 819
Tarragona, Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona

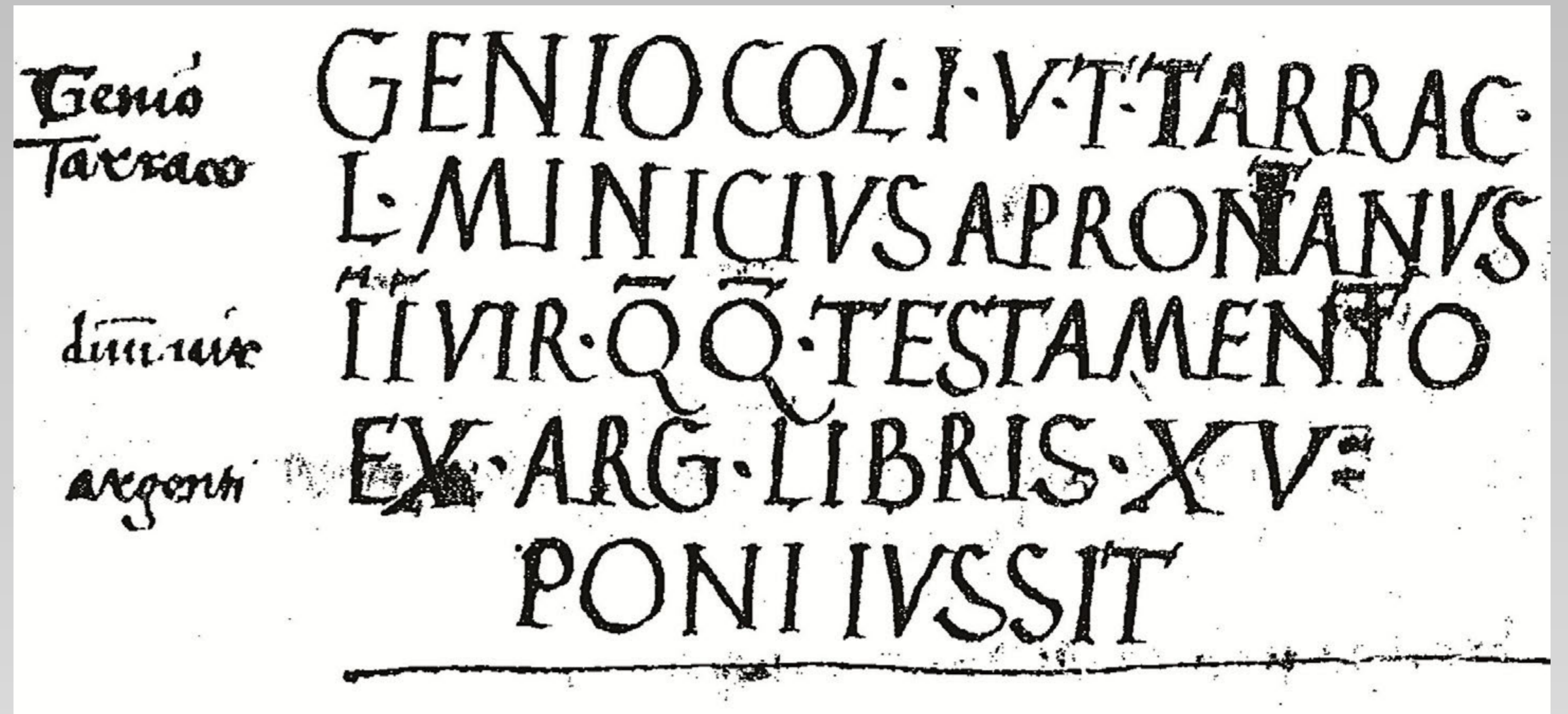


Fig. 4. Francesc Vicent. CIL II 4231 = II²/14, 1155
Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 20.11.Aug. 4º, f. 187v

Fig. 2. Francesc Vicent. CIL II 4071 = II²/14, 819
Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 20.11.Aug. 4º, f. 179v

Fig. 3. Francesc Vicent. CIL II 4104 = II²/14, 932
Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 20.11.Aug. 4º, f. 181v

Fig. 5. Francesc Vicent. CIL II 4197 = II²/14, 1118
Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 20.11.Aug. 4º, f. 188v

Francesc Vicent and the *Antiquus Hispanus*

Antiquus Hispanus is the name given by E. Hübner to the unknown author of one of the oldest Hispanic epigraphic collections (see CIL II, VI-VII; Oldenberg 1877). The lost original would have been used by several European humanists, namely C. Peutinger, M. Sanudo, the so-called *codex Filonardianus*, Apianus & Amantius (1534) and M. de Sieder, who dated his copy in 1503; this led Hübner to conclude that the archetype would have been written in the last years of the 15th century. In our ongoing re-examination of the *Antiquus Hispanus*, we have been able to relate two Catalan humanists' sylloges to the *Antiquus*: the ones written by Pere Miquel Carbonell and Francesc Vicent (see González Germain – Carbonell 2009). Our current research indicates that these two humanists, who were in contact with each other, present the first phase of the stemma for all the inscriptions coming from the territories of Catalonia and Valencia, and that they could actually be the authors of this section. Although Carbonell's compilation has recently been the focus of attention—though not directly related to the *Antiquus*—, the second has never been thoroughly studied; and yet it is his manuscript that presents the most complete and accurate copy for this whole section and preserves the oldest structure of all *Antiquus'* testimonies. The presence of some of these very inscriptions in Ermolao Barbaro's *Castigationes Pliniana* of 1492 marks the *terminus ante quem* for this phase, making it almost contemporaneous with Giovanni Giocondo's or Pietro Sabino's sylloges. In the next few lines, I will focus the attention in the epigraphical method applied in Francesc Vicent's compilation. Of course, this work might be the result of his own research, but it could also be due to the *Antiquus Hispanus*—if they are not in fact the same person.

Formal features of Vicent's sylloge

Francesc Vicent (Tortosa, ? – Tarragona, 1523), lawyer, Latin poet and antiquarian, was prior of Tarragona since 1484 (see Toldrà 2003). His sylloge—now in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 20.11.Aug. 4º—is dedicated to Pere de Cardona—Archbishop of Tarragona since 1515—while he was still the bishop of Urgell (1472-1515). Classical inscriptions are divided into four sections: from Tarragona, whole (ff. 179v-195v) and broken ones (ff. 196-200v); from Saguntum (ff. 201-206v) and from elsewhere (ff. 207-216v). The texts are arranged in one column, with some words and expressions copied in the margin of the paper, in some cases developing abbreviated forms. Except in the fourth section, the epigraphs do not normally mention any specific location, and on very few occasions are they accompanied by a brief commentary. Inscriptions are written in capital letters, with the constant effort to maintain the verse division, sporadically also noting links between letters, interpunctuations, *l longae*, etc. All this detailed information (as well as the commentaries) will disappear in the next testimonies of the *Antiquus*, which always present the texts in lower case and in *scriptio continua*. An example of the reliability of Vicent's copy can be observed in CIL II 4071 = II²/14, 819 [Fig. 1-2]. In contrast to all subsequent tradition, Vicent is the only one to respect the verses division, to note down both the *nexus* on *Apronianus* (but not the one on *testamento*) as well as the indication of *uncia*, and to report correctly the abbreviated name of the *Col(onia) I(ulia) V(rbs) T(riumphalis) Tarraco(n)*.

Contextualising the epigraphical text

The commentaries of the inscriptions shed new light on the method and interests of their author. They are mostly concerned with the state of preservation of the stones and, less often, with their precise location or some orthographic aspect. The use of the first person corroborates the idea that the same person was responsible for their analysis. In three cases (CIL II²/14, 930 and 944; CIL II 4278), Vicent copies the same text twice, stating that he has found elsewhere a very similar inscription. These duplicates—also found in later manuscripts—were not taken into consideration by Hübner, but Alföldy, in his *Römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* (1975), could still find the two identical copies of CIL II 4278 (RIT 353-354). One of the longest notes refers to CIL II²/14, 932 [Fig. 3], an honorary inscription for Maximian. Not only does it specify that the inscription is found in *capella Sancti Iacobi in ecclesia Tarraconensi sub altari et pallio*, but also from the final word of the epigraph (*eorum*) it is inferred that Diocletian would have been mentioned in the other part of the stone, which he cannot check due to its present placing (*hoc tamen pronunc scire et uidere non potui, quia lapis... est afixus iunctusque parieti*). Another element that allows us to value Vicent's method is the accuracy displayed in interpreting the abbreviations of the texts. And here the number of mistakes is quite high: if he develops correctly *p(ecunia) s(ua) f(ecit)* and *f(aciendum) c(urauit)*, he is less successful in interpreting *VI Aug. as ui(cario) Aug(usto), u(ir) c(larissimus) as V c(onsul)* and even *h. s. e. s. t. l. as h(eredes) s(epulcro) e(odem) s(epeliantur) t(estatus) t(estamento) l(egitimo)*. Many of his deductions (correct or not) come from parallels drawn from the same sylloge: thus, his development of *Pal(atina tribu) as Palmensi* [Fig. 4] can be explained by the presence of one *L. Aufidius Q. f. Velina Secundus Palmensis* in another inscription [Fig. 5].

Preliminary conclusions

An overall appraisal of Francesc Vicent's sylloge leads to contradictory results. His accuracy in copying the texts and his interest in both linguistic and archaeological aspects are only comparable, at the end of the 15th century, with those of eminent epigraphists such as Giocondo. Yet the knowledge displayed, as far as classical epigraphy is concerned, seems to be far below his contemporary Italian fellows. My hypothesis is that, unlike most antiquarians, Vicent carried out his sylloge without collating it with previous compilations, and with the sole help of Carbonell. In fact, Vicent is not known to have had any direct contact with European humanists. This explains why he did not possess a copy of Valerius Probus' *De notis antiquis*, which was found—even before the *editio princeps* of 1486—in many Italian sylloges. In view of his lack of a specific education—and regardless of the errors and flaws of his sylloge—the interpretation of epigraphic texts through a faithful transcription and the establishment of internal parallels shows a systematic, innovative and autodidactic method for approaching ancient epigraphy.

Bibliography

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