

The (In)frequency of the Name ‘Erastus’ in Antiquity: A Literary, Papyrological, and Epigraphical Catalog

TIMOTHY A. BROOKINS

Houston Baptist University, 7502 Fondren Rd, Houston, TX 77074, USA.

email: tbrookins@hbu.edu.

Three questions have remained central to the Erastus debate (Ἐραστός ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως, Rom 16.23): the date of *IKorinthKent* 232, the nature of the office of οἰκονόμος (τῆς πόλεως), and the frequency of the name ‘Erastus’ in antiquity. The present article focuses on the third issue. Moving beyond Meggitt’s earlier research (1996, 1999), the author here furnishes a comprehensive catalog of literary, papyrological, and epigraphical occurrences of the name (in Greek and in Latin) in antiquity. The chief payoff of the catalog is two-fold: (1) it provides, for the first time, comprehensive quantitative evidence that the name was in fact rare; and (2) it reveals a significant dearth of attestations from first-century Greece.

Keywords: Erastus, name, οἰκονόμος, Corinthians, epigraphy, *IKorinthKent* 232, Rom 16.23

1. Introduction

Perhaps no figure in the NT has excited so much attention from so little material as Erastus, ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως (‘the οἰκονόμος of the city’, Rom 16.23). Critical in the question of social stratification in the Corinthian church, Erastus has been the subject of spirited debate ever since the 1929 discovery of a Corinthian inscription bearing his name (*IKorinthKent* 232). The brief inscription reads, ‘Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense (*Erastus pro aedilitate s.p. stravit*)’. Since the inscription seemed to date to the first century AD, since the Greek office of οἰκονόμος appeared to be equivalent to the Roman office of *aedilis*, and since the name ‘Erastus’ was thought to be rare, most interpreters since Gerd Theissen’s analysis in 1974

have identified the two men as being one and the same.¹ This would mean that Erastus was among the highest elites in the city, and by far wealthier than most of those in the Corinthian church to which he belonged,² which would lend further weight to arguments that social stratification was among the chief problems that caused divisions to fester in the church (1 Cor 1–4).³

Of the three legs of the debate—the date of the inscription, the nature of the office of οἰκονόμος, and the commonness of the name 'Erastus' in antiquity—significant contributions have been made in the first two areas within just the last three years.⁴ The third area, however, still calls for deeper investigation. While the (in)frequency of the name has been addressed in fairly recent times by Andrew Clarke and Justin Meggitt,⁵ neither of these scholars has provided the

- 1 Gerd Theissen, 'Soziale Schichtung in der Korinthische Gemeinde: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des hellenistischen Urchristentums', *ZNW* 65 (1974) 232-72; *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 81-2; also picked up by Wayne Meeks, *First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983) 59; thereafter, see summaries of the consensus in Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul and Poverty* (Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998) 137; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 11; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 9; and L. L. Welborn, *End to Enmity: Paul and the 'Wrongdoer' of 2 Corinthians* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011) 267.
- 2 Against Friesen's hypothesis that Erastus was not a Christian ('The Wrong Erastus: Ideology, Archaeology, and Exegesis', *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* [ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters; Leiden: Brill, 2010] 249-55), I find the traditional argument, which has now been ably defended by John Goodrich ('Erastus of Corinth [Romans 16.23]: Responding to Recent Proposals on his Rank, Status, and Faith', *NTS* 57 [2011] 589-90), to be far more convincing.
- 3 A consensus position that, since the late 1970s and early '80s (Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*; Abraham Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983]; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*), has stood the test of time. Recent studies have continued to affirm earlier conclusions, if with some qualification—e.g., David Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996) 94-5; and James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 2.814-16. Justin Meggitt (*Paul and Poverty*) is among the few dissenters, maintaining that the socio-economic gap in the church was not wide enough to allow for significant stratification. Though, against Meggitt's point, see Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) esp. 61.
- 4 Addressing the date: Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 236-45; Welborn, *End to Enmity*, 230-82; addressing the term οἰκονόμος: Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 245-9; Welborn, *End to Enmity*, 261-6; Goodrich, 'Erastus of Corinth (Romans 16.23)', 583-93; *Paul as an Administrator of God in 1 Corinthians* (SNTSMS 152; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012) 27-102; Alexander Weiss, 'Keine Quästoren in Korinth: zu Goodrichs (und Theissens) These über das Amt des Erastos (Röm 16.23)', *NTS* 56 (2010) 576-81.
- 5 Andrew D. Clarke, 'Another Corinthian Erastus Inscription', *TynBul* 42 (1991) 148-50; Justin J. Meggitt, 'The Social Status of Erastus (Rom. 16:23)', *NovT* 38 (1996) 218-23; reprinted in *Paul and Poverty*, 135-41.

definitive treatment needed: neither provides a comprehensive catalog of the name in antiquity, and each comes to an opposite conclusion—Clarke that the name was rare, and Meggitt that it was common—⁶a contradiction, moreover, that is due not only to the fact that, of the two searches, Meggitt's was more complete. The disparity also owes itself to the inherently problematic nature of the assumption that labels such as 'frequent' and 'infrequent' can be applied to free-standing numerical figures, irrespective of any extrinsic point of reference—such as the frequency of *other* names in antiquity. Besides these issues, Meggitt's preliminary catalog, impressive as it is in length—including, purportedly, 23 epigraphical attestations of the Greek personal name (Ἐραστός) and 55 of the Latin cognomen (*Erastus*)—does not distinguish references by chronological period and geographical region (a point of no small importance), and includes several errors to boot, which, understandable as they are in working with a large pool of data, nonetheless need to be emended.⁷

A catalog of the name (Greek: Ἐραστός; Latin: *Erastus*) is therefore long overdue, one that is, for the first time, comprehensive; pays full attention to the regional, chronological, and institutional distribution of the witnesses; and measures *relative frequency* in the only way that is possible—by comparison with other ancient names. Such an undertaking has now been greatly facilitated by the advent of electronic databases. The analysis undertaken here is based on an exhaustive search through the available electronic databases of Greek and

6 Cf. Clarke ('Another Corinthian Erastus Inscription', 150), saying that the name was 'relatively uncommon', and Meggitt (*Paul and Poverty*, 140), saying that it was 'relatively common'. Likewise, compare; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 2: 9-16* (ICC; London: Continuum, 2000) 807: 'the name was common enough'; and Colin Hemer and Conrad H. Gempf, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Eisenbrauns, 1989) 235: the name was 'less common than is sometimes suggested'; Darrell Bock, *Acts* (ECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 606: '[t]he name is common'; and V. P. Furnish, 'Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?', *BAR* 15 (1988) 20: 'the name itself is not common'. See also Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 590; Bruce Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 191-2; and Richard Fellows, 'Erastus (Rom 16:23) was Erastus (Acts 19:22)', <http://paulandco-workers.blogspot.ca/2010/06/erastus-rom-1623-was-erastus-acts-1922.html>, posted on 25 June 2010.

7 One of Meggitt's 23 'epigraphical' attestations is actually a papyrus (P. Heid. Bi. 7 [IIa]). Some of his citations do not include Erastus: (1) *CIL* VI 1300 (no *Erastus*); (2) *CIL* VI 7513 (reads *Aerastus*); (3) *CIL* XIV 4562, 4 (reads *Aerastus*); (4) *CIG* 1249 (no *Erastus*); (5) *IG* IV 1488 (no *Erastus*); (6) *CIL* VI 24452 (reads *Eratus*); (7) P. Heid. Bi. 7 (IIa) (reads Ἐραστός). Two further references are doubtful: (1) *CIL* V 7232 (possibly *Eperastus*); (2) *AEph* (1984): 625 (reads *Ti[beri] Cl[audi] E[]*). Three references involve typos: (1) not *AM* 95 (1970): 220, nos. 149-50, but *AM* 85, etc.; (2) not *CIL* VI 1914, but *Not. Sc.* (1914): 379, no. 16; (3) not *CIL* VI 1934, but *Not. Sc.* (1934): 219, no. 28. In one case, a single inscription repeated in two separate corpora (*SEG* 25:194 = *IG* II² 2323,221) is, wrongly, counted twice. In several cases, multiple references identify the same individual (see below).

Latin literature, papyri, and epigraphy, as well as through the major print corpora not yet digitized.⁸ In what follows, I present the results thereof, followed by a discussion of the findings.

2. The Name 'Erastus' in Antiquity

The following table includes every reference to the name 'Erastus' found outside the NT up through the fifth century AD.⁹ Grouped by region, references

8 Greek literature: *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*; Latin literature: *Library of Latin texts* (Brepols), not to be confused with 'The Latin Library'; papyri: *Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri*, <http://papyri.info/search>; *Papyrus Archives in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, <http://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php>; Greek literature and epigraphy: *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, <http://clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk/>; John S. Traill, *Persons of Ancient Athens*. Vol. 7, *Eraginos to Eon* (Toronto: Athenians, 1998); M. J. Osborne and S. G. Byrne, *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*. Vol. 2, *Attica* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Greek epigraphy: Packhard Humanities Institute, <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/>; Latin epigraphy: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, <http://cil.bbaw.de/dateien/datenbank.php>; *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby*, http://oracle-vm.ku-eichstaett.de:8888/epigr/epigraphik_en; and *Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy (EAGLE)*, <http://www.eagle-eagle.it/>, including *Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg* (EDH), <http://www.uniheidelberg.de/institute/sonst/adw/edh/index.html.en>; and *Epigraphic Database Roma* (EDR), http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/res_complex_comune.php?lang=eng&ver=simp.

9 Apart from the brief greeting in Rom 16.23, an 'Erastus' is also mentioned in two others texts in the NT (Acts 19.22; 2 Tim 4.20), in which most, rightly, assume that we have the same person. Goodrich ('Erastus of Corinth [Romans 16.23]', 591 n. 38) lists a host of scholars who agree. For patristic commentary on this individual, see below. The abbreviations used follow the SBL Handbook of Style, supplemented by G. H. R. Horsley and J. A. L. Lee, 'A Preliminary Checklist of Abbreviations of Greek Epigraphic Volumes', *Epigraphica* 56 (1994) 129-69. For abbreviations not found in these places; AEph = *Archaiologike Ephemeris*; AM = *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*; Bean-Mitford = George Ewart Bean and Terence Bruce Mitford, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia 1964-1968* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften [DAW] 102; Ergänzungsbände zu den *Tituli Asiae Minoris* 3; Vienna: Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1970); *Bull. Comm. Arch. Rom.* = *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*; *Comm. Rom.* = *Commentarius in epistulam ad Romanos*; Ephesos = Donald F. McCabe, *Ephesos Inscriptions, Texts and List* (The Princeton Project on the Inscriptions of Anatolia, the Institute for Advanced Study; Princeton: Princeton University, 1991); Malay = Hasan Malay, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Manisa Museum* (Denkschriften; Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 237; Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994); *Not. Sc.* = *Notizie degli scavi di antichità*; PA = J. Kirchner, *Prosopographica Attica*, vols. 1 & 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1901, 1903); PAA = John S. Traill, *Persons of Ancient Athens*. Vol. 7, *ERAGINOS TO EON-* (Toronto: Athenians, 1998); Tralles = Donald F. McCabe, *Tralles Inscriptions: Texts and List* (The Princeton Project on the Inscriptions of Anatolia; The Institute for Advanced Study; Princeton, 1991).

are then sub-divided by city or province, and then (where dating is possible) roughly by chronology.¹⁰

Region	City/Province	Date	Reference
Asia Minor	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Philodemus <i>Acad. Hist.</i> 6.10
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Diogenes Laertius <i>Vit.</i> 3.46; 3.61
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Plato <i>Ep.</i> 6 (= Origen <i>Cels.</i> 6.12.24)
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Strabo <i>Geogr.</i> 13.1.54
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Xenocrates <i>Fr.</i> 1.7; 3.4; 18.2
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Clement of Alexandria <i>Strom.</i> 5.14.102
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Julius Pollux <i>Onom.</i> 10.150.8
	Skepsis	4th c. BC	Didymus <i>Dem.</i> 5.53
	?Anaia	?358 BC	<i>IDelph</i> II 6A,8

¹⁰ Dates correspond with the date of the 'Erastus' mentioned, not necessarily the date of the inscription itself. Less certain dates are signaled with a preceding question mark. Some references cannot be dated. In addition to the print corpora themselves and the sources named in n. 8, the following sources have assisted me in making judgments, in some cases leading to a revision of the traditional dating: *L'Année épigraphique, Année 1975* (1978) 38-112; M. Bang, 'Caesaris Servus', *Hermes* 54 (1919) 174-86, esp. 176 n. 2; Gérard Boulvert, *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le Haut-Empire romain: La condition de l'affranchi et de l'esclave du prince* (Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon; Franche-Comté: Presses University, 1974) 19; Richard Hitchman and Fabienne Marchand, 'Two Ephebic Inscriptions: *IG* II² 1973A and 1973B', *ZPE* 148 (2004) 165-76; François Kirbihler, 'P. Vedius Rufus, père de P. Vedius Pollio', *ZPE* 160 (2007) 261-71; Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World, 31 BC-AD 337* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977; London: Duckworth, 1992) 360; P. R. C. Weaver, 'The Status Nomenclature of the Imperial Slaves', *CQ* NS 14 (1964) 134-9, esp. 135; C. Daicovicu and D. Protase, 'Un Nouveau Diplôme Militaire de Dacia Porolissensis', *JRS* 51 (1961) 63-70, esp. 70; M. Roxan and W. Eck, 'A Military Diploma of AD 85 for the Rome Cohorts', *ZPE* 96 (1993) 67-74; A. Chanotis et al., eds., *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 2005) 15.1575; Werner Eck and Andreas Pangerl, 'Titus Flavius Norbanus, praefectus praetorio Domitians, als Statthalter Rätien in einem neuen Militärdiplom', *ZPE* 163 (2007) 239-51, esp. 243-6; Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 236-45.

	Ephesos	c. AD 92/93	<i>Ieph</i> 1008,8 (= Ephesos 454 = SEG 51:1575)
	Ephesos	AD 129	<i>Ieph</i> 1487,6 (= Ephesos 191 = SEG 44:929)
	Lydia	AD 96 or 150	Malay 521,21
	Thebes	AD 138–212	<i>IPrusiasHyp</i> 2 I,20
	Bithynia	second half of third c. AD	<i>IKalkhedon</i> 70,3 (= SEG 28:1010)
	Pamphylum	imperial period	<i>IPerge</i> 378
	Tralles	?	<i>Tralles</i> 93
	Olympos	?	TAM II 959
	Kolophon	?	JÖAI (1905): 163, no. 2:3
Greece and the Aegean Islands	Attica	third/second c. BC	<i>IG II²</i> 2323,221 (= SEG 25:194)
	Attica	250 BC	<i>AM</i> 85 (1970): 212, nos. 149–50
	Attica	second or first c. BC	SEG 11:994
	Attica	164/3 BC	SEG 24:194
	Attica	163/2 BC	<i>Agora</i> 16:295 (= <i>Hesp.</i> 3.27,20; 13.266,20 = PA 5030)
	Attica	AD 45/6	<i>IG II²</i> 1945
	Attica	AD 41–54, probably 45/ 46	<i>IG II²</i> 1968
	Attica	mid first c. AD	<i>IG II²</i> 1985
	Attica	AD 61/2	<i>IG II²</i> 1990
	Attica	AD 98–138	<i>CIG</i> 269
	Attica	second c. AD	

			<i>IG II² 1973B (= CIG 266)</i>
	Corinthos	mid-first c. to early second c. AD	<i>IKorinthKent 232 (Corinth VIII.3 232)</i>
	Corinthos	mid-second c. AD	SEG 29:301
	Attica	AD 100/1	<i>IG II² 2030</i>
	Attica	AD 144/5	<i>IG II² 2059</i>
	Sparta	c. AD 150-160	SEG 11:622
	Sparta	c. AD 150-160	CIG 1241
	Sparta	c. AD 150-160	<i>IG V 1,69 (= IG V 1,70)</i>
	Sparta	c. AD 150-160	<i>IG V 1,71</i>
	Attica	AD 154/5	<i>IG II² 2067</i>
	Attica	AD 165/6	<i>IG II² 2090</i>
	Attica	early third c. AD	<i>IG II² 3762</i>
	Amorgos/Arkesine	imperial period	<i>IG XII 7,209</i>
	Delos	AD 301	<i>IG XI 2,146</i>
Italy and the West	Roma	late first c. BC	<i>CIL VI 5858</i>
	Pompeii	first c. BC or first c. AD	<i>CIL IV 4614</i>
	Pompeii	first c. BC or first c. AD	<i>CIL IV 4641</i>
	Pompeii	first c. BC or first c. AD	<i>Not. Sc. (1906): 154, no. 8</i>
	Roma	AD 1-50	<i>CIL VI 33109</i>
	Roma	first c. AD	<i>CIL VI 24776</i>
	Roma	first c. AD	<i>Not. Sc. (1914): 379, no. 16 (= CIL VI 39537)</i>

	Roma	first c. AD	<i>Not. Sc.</i> (1934): 219, no. 28
	Roma	AD 14-96	<i>Bull. Com. Arch. Rom.</i> 90.2 (1985): 419
	Roma	first or second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> VI 15031
	Roma	first or second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> VI 15325
	Roma	first or second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> VI 15439
	Pompeii	AD 51-62	<i>CIL</i> IV 3340
	Pompeii	AD 70-79	<i>CIL</i> IV 179
	Formia	first or second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> X 6144 (= <i>AEph</i> [1978]: 91)
	Roma	AD 69-117	<i>CIL</i> VI 15492
	Roma	AD 98-117	<i>CIL</i> VI 8875
	Salernum	first or second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> X 527
	Florentia	AD 71-130	<i>CIL</i> XI 1620
	Aquae Statiellae	AD 71-130	<i>CIL</i> V 800
	Puteoli	?second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> X 2002
	Roma	AD 138-161	<i>CIL</i> VI 8518
	Roma	second or third c. AD	<i>CIL</i> VI 36364
	Puteoli	imperial period	<i>CIL</i> X 2519
	Roma	fifth or sixth c. AD	<i>CIL</i> VI 695
	on an amphora found outside the Vesuvian gate	?	<i>CIL</i> IV 5820
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 5232
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 9865

	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 9759
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 9915
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 11178
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 13501
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 14040
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 14457
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 15483
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 15728
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 17253
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 24739
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 27452
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 33614
	Roma	?	<i>CIG</i> 6378
	Roma	?	<i>CIL</i> VI 17254
	Peltuinum Vestinum	?	<i>CIL</i> IX 3418
	Ravenna	?	<i>CIL</i> XI 227
	Caere	?	<i>CIL</i> XI 3613
	Aretium	?	<i>CIL</i> XI 6700, 320a
	Aemilia	?	<i>CIL</i> XI 6712, 133
	Ostia	?	<i>CIL</i> XIV 1255
	Ficulea	?	<i>CIL</i> XIV 4032
	Umbria	?	<i>CIL</i> XI 5862
	Axima	?	<i>CIL</i> XII 128
	Eporediensis	?	<i>CIL</i> V 6821
Macedonia, Thrace, and the Lower Danube	Dacia	AD 86	<i>CIL</i> XVI 33
	Dacia	second half of second c. AD	AE (1944): 49

	Salona/Dalmatia	second half of first c. AD	<i>CIL</i> III 9052
	Burnum/Dalmatia	second c. AD	<i>CIL</i> III 2840 (= AE [1999]: 1239)
	Stoboi/Macedonia	second c. AD	<i>JÖAI</i> 6 (1903): IX, no. 12
	Thessalonica/Macedonia	second c. AD	<i>IG</i> X 2,386
	Serdica/Thrace	?second c. AD	<i>IGBulg</i> IV (1935): 2
	Serdica/Thrace	?second c. AD	<i>IGBulg</i> IV (1935): 3
Unknown origin	-	AD 127-75	p.leid.inst.35 (= HGV P.Lugd. Bat. 25.35 = Trismegistos 27727)
Doubtful references	Alpes Cottiae/Cisalpine Gaul	?	<i>CIL</i> V 7232
	Henhull/Britannia	?	<i>AEph</i> (1984): 625

In all, we find 105 witnesses to the name 'Erastus' up through the fifth century AD, most of these coming from inscriptions.

Two of the references are doubtful. *CIL* V 7232 possibly refers to *Eperastus* (see the editor's notes there). Only the letter 'E' survives of the cognomen in AE 1984 (625): thus, *Ti(beri) Cl(audi) E()*.

The papyri preserve only a single occurrence of the name before our terminus, dated to the middle of the second century AD (p. leid.inst.35).

All eight literary attestations refer to the same individual: Erastus of Skepsis, disciple of Socrates (fourth century BC).¹¹ Omitting quotations of the NT and the occasional references found in patristic writings to the Erastus thereof (e.g. Epiphanius *Disc.* 123.7; Cassiodorus *Comm. Rom.* 16.506.31), no other Erastus can be found in the extant literature, Greek or Latin.

As with the literary references, a few of our epigraphical attestations refer to identical individuals. (1) SEG 11:622; CIG 1241; *IG* V, 1 69 (= *IG* V, 1 70); and *IG* V, 1 71 all refer to 'Apollonius, son of Erastus' (Ἀπολλώνιος Ἐράστου) of Sparta (second century AD). (2) Publius Licinius Erastus of Rome (first century AD) is mentioned more than once (*Not. Sc.* [1934]: 219 n. 28 and *Not. Sc.* [1914]: 379 n. 16 [= *CIL* VI 3953]). (3) Also in Rome, one Erastus twice scrawled

¹¹ Though, Plato *Ep.* 6 is usually regarded as being spurious (LCL, 454-5).

his name upon the wall (*CIL* IV 4614 and *CIL* IV 4641), obviously proud that he could write his name at all.

Further examples of common identity are likely as well, though in these cases we lack secure onomastic proof. (4) Eight (or nine) of our epigraphical attestations bear the name ‘Tiberius Claudius Erastus’. The praenomen and nomen, added in accordance with Roman naming conventions, will be recognized as those of the emperor Claudius, who had been known for his prodigality in granting manumission. Upon manumission, the one liberated added the two names of his liberator to his own personal name, which was then retained as a sort of cognomen. Of course, owing to Claudius’s indulgence, the possibility that over the course of time he manumitted more than one slave named Erastus, resulting in a proliferation of individuals named Tiberius Claudius Erastus, is only too likely. Descendants of freedmen, moreover, continued to carry the *gentilica* bestowed upon their forbears at manumission, so that we can find references to such men as ‘Tiberius Claudius Clemens, son of Tiberius Claudius Erastus’ (*CIL* VI 15031). Once we account also for differences in provenance, differentiation of individuals seems probable for at least a few of these examples (*CIL* X 527; 6144 [= *AEph* (1978): 91]; *CIL* XVI 33). Yet, it is not without interest that three of our references to ‘Tiberius Claudius Erastus’ come from Rome (*CIL* VI 15031; 15325; 15439). It is well within the realm of possibility that two or more of these refer to the same person.

(5) Another interesting case of common identity involves the four first-century AD inscriptions from Athens: *IG* II² 1945, 1990, 1968, and 1985.¹² All four of these were commissioned in the middle years of that century for purposes connected with the gymnasium, an institution that provided physical and intellectual education for privileged Greeks, beginning with a year of training for select youths—or ‘ephebes’—of about eighteen years of age. *IG* II² 1968 and 1985 both date to the reign of Claudius (AD 41–54) and list an ‘Erastus’ among the ephebes for that year. Probably these refer to two different individuals; though it is not impossible that they were one and the same. Since the kosmetes was responsible for compiling ephebic lists on an annual basis, and training lasted only one year, we should not usually expect the same ephebe to have been included in more than one list. Yet, informal lists, sponsored by the ephebes themselves, are attested during this period as well. Such are *IG* II² 1968 and 1985. Since both of these lists are fragmentary, the two ephebic classes do not allow exhaustive comparison. We may only conclude that differentiation of the two lists is probable, though not certain.

¹² *IG* II² 1973 was once dated to the first century AD as well, but it has now been more accurately dated to the middle of the second. For the new dating, see Richard Hitchman and Fabienne Marchand, ‘Two Ephebic Inscriptions: *IG* II² 1973A and 1973B’, *ZPE* 148 (2004) 165–76.

Each of the other two inscriptions, *IG II*² 1945 and 1990, name an Erastus, not as a gymnasium student, but as a gymnasium officer or affiliate. *IG II*² 1945 names Ἐράστο[υ . . . 9 . . .]ου Ἀναφλυστίου as the ὑπηρέτης, or gymnasium 'attendant', for the year AD 45/6. *IG II*² 1990, dated to AD 61/2, names Ἐραστός Βη<σ>αι <ε>ύς as a παιδευτής, or literary instructor of the ephebes.¹³ In contrast to the two ephebes named above, these two men can be differentiated by their demotic, or deme of origin—Anaphlystos (Ἀναφλυστίου) for the first Erastus, and Besa (Βη<σ>αι <ε>ύς) for the second.

The fifth, and only remaining, attestation of an Erastus in Greece in the first century AD would be *IKorinthKent* 232, the controversial inscription mentioning a Corinthian aedile of that name. Recently, however, the question of this inscription's date has been opened anew. As Steven Friesen has shown,¹⁴ when the inscription block was found in 1929, it was no longer in its original location. Rather, the inscription must have been *moved* there around the mid-second century, late in the reign of Hadrian, for—Friesen reasons—it forms part of the pavement that covers an apsidal latrine that was itself in use up to the time of Hadrian (whose reign began in AD 117). With this, Friesen presents a plausible interpretation of the evidence, and one that should not be easily dismissed. Yet, questions remain. Specifically, one wonders why the date at which the pavement was laid over the latrine must be seen as the critical piece of the puzzle when, as Friesen acknowledges, the inscription had been *inserted* into its current position within the paving area *after* the pavement had been laid and therefore need not have belonged originally with that pavement at all. Why should we believe that the inscription came into existence *at the same time* as the pavement? Friesen answers that, according to Charles Williams's recent reassessment of the materials (conveyed to Friesen via personal communication), the Erastus block seems to have been made out of the same materials as the plaza pavement. But how could such a thing be known? Moreover, if, in Friesen's words, the block has 'a different size and shape than the surrounding pavement slabs',¹⁵ might that not actually militate *against* the possibility that the inscription came from the same materials? If the block did not come from the same materials, would there then be anything compelling us to prefer a second-century date over a first-century one? Perhaps a definitive answer cannot be given on the basis of the present evidence. What might be added from the present analysis up to this point, however, is this: men named Erastus in first-century Greece were apparently in seriously short supply. This greatly decreases the likelihood that there were two different men of the rank aedile/οἰκονόμος in Corinth within just 60 years of each other

13 He too was probably a man of high status, for his son (Δημοκράτης Ἐράστου Βησαεὺς) is named in the same inscription as an ephebe.

14 Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 236-45.

15 Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 239.

(c. AD 55–125); a single individual attested twice seems far easier to fathom. Moreover, if Friesen's new, second-century dating does fail to gain traction and the traditional first-century dating continues to prevail, the possibility cannot be dismissed—and it is only a possibility—that this man is the same as one of those found in the Athenian inscriptions: indeed, tenure in a high municipal office, especially in a nearby city such as Corinth, would not be an unusual place to find a gymnasium graduate.¹⁶

Looking at the five Greek inscriptions together, we may regard the possibility that all refer to distinct individuals as too 'accidental' to deserve serious consideration. One must ask how likely it is that not a single Erastus would come down to us throughout *all* of Greece from AD 1–40 and 60–100—a period of eighty years—and then to have as many as five attested within a period of twenty, four of them within the same city, and connected with the same institution. On the contrary, it would seem more natural to suppose that, at least among the four Athenian inscriptions, only two individuals are actually attested: these being first attested as gymnasium ephebes, and then later as gymnasium officers. Such a course was routine for ephebic graduates, as we have ample evidence to attest.¹⁷ The Corinthian inscription, if it is rightly dated to the first century, could then be either one of same individuals—assuming any of several possible scenarios—¹⁸ or a third entity. Accordingly, our Erasti may be distinguished as follows.

16 On the gymnasium as a school for the 'budding elite', with hereditary requirements, and so forth, see, e.g.: J. T. Townsend, 'Ancient Education in the Time of the Early Roman Empire', *The Catacombs and the Colosseum* (ed. S. Benko and J. J. O'Rourke; Valley Forge: Judson, 1971) 150; J. Whitehorne, 'The Ephebate and the Gymnasial Class in Roman Egypt', *Status Declarations in Roman Egypt*, vol. 19 (New Haven: The American Society, 1982) 28–30; A. Kerkeslager, 'Maintaining Jewish Identity in the Greek Gymnasium: A Jewish "Load" in CPJ 3.519', *JSJ* 28 (1997) 29; Raffaella Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2001) 35–6; for a lengthier overview, see the older work by Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: The New American Library, 1956) 103–14; and for a recent overview, Robert Dutch, *The Educated Elite in 1 Corinthians: Education and Community Conflict in Graeco-Roman Context* (JSNTSup 271; London: T&T Clark International, 2005) 118–28. Moreover, there would not have been enough posts at Athens to provide berth for every ephebate graduate. At approximately one hundred students per entering class (see the inscriptional evidence in Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* [New York: The New American Library, 1956] 384), even adjusting for mortality, the aggregate number of ephebes and alumni in the city would come to several thousand—obviously far more graduates than there were municipal offices.

17 See, for example, PAA 7:400525 (Ἐράτων advances from ephebe to bouleutes of Athens); 402085 (Ἐρμῶϊος Φρεάρριος advances from ephebe to bouletes of Athens); 401575 (Ἐρέννιος is attested as an ephebe, ephebic archon, gymnasiarch, systemmatarche, and agonothes of Asklepeia); see also 401480; 422940.

18 The prospect that one of these Erasti might have been the same man as the Corinthian aedile of *IKorinthKent* 232 would be made possible by any of the following scenarios: (1) the least

Erastus #1: Ἐραστός Ἀναφλυστίος. This Erastus was ὑπηρέτης in the Athenian gymnasium in AD 45/6 (IG II² 1945) and was, at an earlier date, quite likely one of the ephebes of IG II² 1968 and IG II² 1985. A first-century date for *IKorinthKent* 232 would leave open the possibility that the Erastus named there was the same man. Thus possible references to Ἐραστός Ἀναφλυστίος include the following:

IG II ² 1968:	Athenian ephebe, AD 41–54
IG II ² 1985:	Athenian ephebe, mid-first c. AD
IG II² 1945:	ὑπηρέτης in the Athenian gymnasium, AD 45/6
<i>IKorinthKent</i> 232:	Corinthian aedile, first or early second c. AD

Erastus #2: Ἐραστός Βησσαεύς. This Erastus was παιδευτής in the Athenian gymnasium in AD 61/2 (IG II² 1990) and was, before that time, quite likely also one of the ephebes of IG II² 1968 and IG II² 1985. He, if not Erastus #1 or a third individual, could also have been the man of *IKorinthKent* 232. Possible references to Ἐραστός Βησσαεύς therefore include the following:

IG II ² 1968:	Athenian ephebe, AD 41–54
IG II ² 1985:	Athenian ephebe, mid-first c. AD
IG II² 1990:	παιδευτής in the Athenian gymnasium, AD 61/2
<i>IKorinthKent</i> 232:	Corinthian aedile, first or early second c. AD

Erastus #3: Erastus the aedile? If the Corinthian aedile of *IKorinthKent* 232 was distinct from the other two men, he would then seem to represent the third of only three Erasti known in first-century Greece:

<i>IKorinthKent</i> 232:	Corinthian aedile, first or early second c. AD
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These lines of individuation, of course, cannot be proved. But it seems far easier to believe that at least two of these individuals were the same than to believe that four, or five, distinct individuals suddenly appeared at the same time and in the

likely, in the city of Corinth the οἰκονόμος was not a member of the city's *decurial* board, for membership on the decurial board usually required Roman citizenship, a status which, judging from their names, the men of IG II² 1945 and 1990 did not possess; (2) one of the Athenian men was granted Roman citizenship at a time subsequent to these inscriptions but prior to filling the office of aedile; or (3) one of the two ephebes was distinct from either of the officers of IG II² 1945 or 1990 and in fact possessed Roman citizenship (citizen status cannot be identified for either ephebe on the basis of the extant information), as many Athenian ephebes did (e.g. Publius Aelius Διονύσιος of tribe Aiantis, in Sean G. Byrne, *Roman Citizens of Athens* [Studia Hellenistica 40; Leuven: Peeters, 2003] 8; Claudius Ἀκυλῖνος of Besa and Claudius Λέων of Besa, in Byrne, *Roman Citizens of Athens*, 149; passim in Byrne; also PAA 7:401440; 401445; passim).

same place and in connection with the same institution, when men named Erastus were nowhere to be found, throughout all of Greece, in the long space of years that preceded or followed, and when movement from ephebe to gymnasium officer was the usual expected course for graduates.

Having accounted for cases of common identity, it is now evident that far fewer than one hundred Erasti have come down to us from antiquity. Less than twenty-five references, totaling less than twenty individuals, can be dated to the first century AD, and even less to the *middle* years of that century. In Asia Minor we have but one first-century attestation, and it dates late in the century (*IEph* 1008,8 [= Ephesos 454 = SEG 51:1575]). While Italy and the western provinces have left us as many as fifteen references from this period, and a fair number of inscriptions that, with further information, might be similarly dated, we must also remember that many of these date late in the century (*CIL* IV 179; *CIL* X 6144 [= AE (1978): 91]; *CIL* VI 15492; *CIL* XI 1620; *CIL* V 800), and some of these likely refer to identical individuals (as, e.g., *CIL* VI 15031; 15325; 15439). Macedonia, Thrace, and the Lower Danube offer us no more than two first-century references (*CIL* XVI 33; *CIL* III 9052). Finally, Greece—and this demands more attention than all the rest—affords us, throughout the entire century, only four (*IG* II² 1945, 1968, 1985, 1990) or at most five (if *IKorinthKent* 232 is not to be dated later) total attestations, which we have seen likely refer to a total of only two or three distinct individuals. If some relativity can be established for name frequency in antiquity, such a dearth of references throughout first-century Greece could prove to be significant indeed.

3. Relative (In)frequency of the Name

As stated at the outset, the question whether ‘Erastus’ was a frequent or an infrequent name cannot be settled on the basis of the subjective impression given by the total number of references found. In the past, Erastus’s name has been deemed both ‘relatively *uncommon*’ and ‘relatively *common*’,¹⁹ according as each interpreter has been stricken by the total number discovered at the end of his count. But we hit here on something that is intrinsic to the idea of *relativity* and, for that matter, problematic for any judgment of this kind: what is ‘relatively uncommon’ can, by definition, also be ‘relatively common’. Without multiple points of reference, we are only hedging our bets. What must be asked, rather, is how frequent the name ‘Erastus’ was *in comparison with other names of its day*. Only when such baselines have been established can the name rightly be labeled either ‘uncommon’ or ‘common’.

19 Clarke (‘Another Corinthian Erastus Inscription’, 150), calls it ‘relatively uncommon’, and Meggitt (*Paul and Poverty*, 140) ‘relatively common’. See also n. 6.

Once a tall order, such comparison is now easily undertaken with recourse to the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* electronic database.²⁰ To avoid undue selectivity, I have begun by comparing the Greek name Ἐραστός with the names found alongside 'Erastus, οἰκονόμος of the city' in Romans 16.²¹ Latin names have been omitted. Numbers reflect the total *distinct individuals* bearing that Greek name:

Ἡρωδίων:	0
Πατροβᾶς:	0
Ὀλυμπᾶς:	6
Φλέγων:	6
Ἀσύγκριτος:	9
Περσίς:	10
Τρυφῶσα:	11
Νηρεῦς:	18
Φιλόλογος:	23
Στάχυς:	25
Τρύφαινα:	26
Ἐραστός:	32
Νάρκισσος:	69
Ἀπελλῆς:	90
Ἐπαίνετος:	94
Σωσίπατρος:	155
Τιμόθεος:	285
Ἀριστόβουλος:	292
Ἀνδρόνικος:	299
Ἰάσων:	305
Ἐρμῆς/Ἐρμᾶς:	315

Following this list from the least frequent names to the most frequent, one notices that Ἐραστός appears near the middle, falling just this side of the more frequent end. This, however, does not yet give us an accurate picture of the relative frequency of the name. It must be asked not how many *names* were more or less frequent than Ἐραστός, but rather how many *times*, on a sliding scale, names more or less frequent than Erastus actually occurred. Here, eleven names occur less frequently than Erastus, and nine more frequently. Yet, at a count of 32 individuals in the *LGP*N, the total number of Ἐράστοι attested

²⁰ The data in the online-*LGP*N is provisional and is used here only for purposes of demonstration.

²¹ The name comes from the Greek adjective ἐραστός, meaning 'beloved'. The Latin 'Erastus' is a transliteration.

stands far closer to the total number of individuals bearing the *less* frequent names—26, 25, 23, and on down the line—than it does to the number of individuals bearing the more frequent ones—69 on up to 285, 292, 299, 305, and 315.

Relative frequency of the name begins to come into focus, then, only as we compare names within their various *ranges* of frequency. Moving outside Romans 16 to the broader Greek world, let us now compare the following names:

Names with 50-100 individuals attested:

Δῖος: 67
 Διομήδης: 89
 Ὀλυμπος: 89
 Ἀχιλλεῦς/-ής: 93

Names with 200-500 individuals attested:

Τιμόθεος: 285
 Στέφανος: 303
 Ἑρμῆς/Ἑρμᾶς: 315
 Πασσάνιας: 391

Names with 500-1000 individuals attested:

Ἀρτεμίδωρος: 642
 Διογένης: 670
 Ἡρακλείδης: 773
 Φίλιππος: 941

Names with 1000-3000 + individuals attested:

Ἀρίστων: 1063
 Ἀλεξάνδρος: 1443
 Ἀπολλώνιος: 1774
 Δημήτριος: 1838
 Διονύσιος: 3024

Our sampling throws ample light on the question of the relative frequency of the name Ἑραστος, of which as few as 32 individuals are found. When a single name could be possessed by known individuals in excess of several hundred or even several thousand, there can remain no question that a name occurring fewer than fifty times was a rare one. The further mystery of why so many individuals—perhaps more than half, if we can judge from the list in Romans 16—apparently had ‘relatively uncommon’ names is not a difficult one to unravel. We are already familiar with this sort of occurrence from word statistics in the NT,

where about 6% of the lexemes comprise about 80% of the total word count,²² but as many as 50% of the lexemes occur fewer than five times.²³ So it was also with names: while frequently occurring names were born by a large percentage of the *people* in the ancient world, still upwards of half of the *names* remained uncommon—and 'Erastus' was one of them.

4. A Class-Specific Name?

Because certain names in antiquity, including 'Erastus', are sometimes said to have been associated more closely with particular social classes,²⁴ before closing it may be appropriate to address the question of the social status of Paul's Erastus, once again, with reference to name frequency.

One of our inscriptions does in fact designate Erastus as a slave (*Bull. Com. Arch. Rom.* 90.2 [1985]: 419). Several inscriptions designate the subject as a freedman, using the epithet *libertus* (*CIL* VI 8518; 8875; 9865; 15728; 17254; 24776; *CIL* X 1878; 6144 [= AE (1978): 91]), in many cases followed by the name of the one who freed him in the genitive case. Several others attach a *gentilicum*, which could indicate, among other things, manumission from slavery (*CIL* VI 15031; 15325; 15439; *CIL* X 527; *CIL* XVI 33; AE [1984]: 625; *IEph* 1008,8 [= Ephesos 454 = SEG 51:1575]; *IEph* 1487,6 [= Ephesos 191 = SEG 44:929]). Judging from these inscriptions, a slave background could be indicated in as many as one-sixth of our inscriptions, and on this basis may be conjectured for a great number of others.

Yet things are not as they at first appear. Attending to the provenance of these inscriptions, we notice that an imposing number of them are from Rome, and even more from Italy at large. Bearers of Greek names in first-century Rome in fact *usually* had a slave background,²⁵ for most of Rome's Greek population had been deported there from the wars of the last several centuries, a situation that naturally spelled slavery for the deportees and their descendants. Second, inscriptions were commissioned by freed slaves far more often than by other people of the lower and middle classes, so inscriptional evidence is not necessarily

22 See William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 17.

23 See Warren C. Trenchard, *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, rev. ed. 1998) 126-36.

24 So says Bradley Hudson McLean (*An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great Down to the Reign of Constantine* [323 B.C.–A.D. 337] [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002] 128) of the name Ἐραστός; though the OCD (1023) counters that 'justification for believing in a category of distinctively "slave" names has been undermined by the epigraphical evidence of manumission documents'.

25 Peter Lampe, *Christians at Rome during the First Two Centuries* (London: Continuum, 2006) 171.

representative of all who bore the name.²⁶ Third, the attachment of a *gentilicum* to the name, as we see in many of the above examples, could indicate things other than a slave background, adoption into a Roman family—whether of a slave or a freeborn person—being one of them. In most of our instances, we have insufficient evidence to adjudicate the reasons.

Moreover, outside Italy, one notices in fact an equal number of examples where the subject is marked out, not as a slave or freedman, but as a man of considerable social distinction. Well attested is Ἐραστός the eponymous Athenian archon of the year 163/2 BC (Agora 16:295 [= *Hesp.* 3.27,20; 13.266,20 = PA 5030]). Six inscriptions list an Ἐραστός among the gymnasium epebes (SEG 24:194; *IG* II² 1945; 1968; 1973B; 1985; 2067). One inscription refers to an Ἐραστός who held the office of prytaneis (*I Eph* 1008,8 = Ephesos 454 = SEG 51:1575). The Erastus of p.leid.inst.35, called ‘Erastus the Great’ (Ἐραστός Μάγνος), is apparently designated as a ταμίαις, a Greek equivalent for the distinguished Latin office of quaestor.²⁷ An Erastus is attested in Aquae Statiellae (of Italy) as having completed the local *cursus honorum*—aedile, tribune, quaestor (*CIL* V 800).²⁸ Erastus the aedile of Corinth hardly needs mention (*IKorinthKent* 232). In view of such abundant evidence for distinguished men named Erastus, it becomes impossible to justify any notion that the name was distinctively a ‘slave name’. Rather, it must have been a Greek name that was, for one reason or another, sometimes born by slaves.

The question posed in recent studies has been whether Paul’s Erastus, ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως, was also a person of high station. The most recent, and only complete, study on the term οἰκονόμος in the Hellenistic and Roman periods to date, suggests that he probably was. As John Goodrich has shown, *municipal* οἰκονόμοι (in distinction to *private* οἰκονόμοι, who were usually freedman or slaves) ‘normally functioned as financial magistrates and possessed considerable socio-economic status within their respective communities’.²⁹ While the occasional slave could find himself filling this role (SEG 24.496; 38.710; 47.1662), Goodrich’s full treatment of the evidence reveals that these were the

26 Lampe, *Christians at Rome*, 171–2.

27 On the equivalency, see H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: A Lexicon and Analysis* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974) 91.

28 Though rare, colonial tribunes can also be found in other colonies of the imperial period, as in the nearby colonies of Volsinii in central Italy (*CIL* I² 2515) and Placentia in Cisalpine Gaul (see A. Calbi, “Decurio a populo”: Proposta per un’ iscrizione piacentina’, *Epigraphica* 43 [1981] 253); see also Edward Bispham, *From Asculum to Actium: The Municipalization of Italy from the Social War to Augustus* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007) 492, 494–5.

29 Goodrich, *Paul as an Administrator of God in 1 Corinthians*, 50 (emphasis added); p. 75 on private οἰκονόμοι. To Goodrich’s evidence we might add also Bean Mitford (1964–68), 105,91, in which the οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως is indicated as owning a house and slaves.

exceptions. On balance, this means that Rom 16.23 almost undoubtedly refers to a high-status individual, and to yet another example of a high-status 'Erastus'.

5. Conclusion

Much of the debate about Erastus, 'οἰκονόμος of the city', has turned on the issue of name frequency. After a deeper examination of the issue here, however, it is hoped that this question can now be laid to rest. A comprehensive search of the available electronic databases and major print corpora reveals a total number of attestations barely in excess of one hundred, of which many refer to the same individuals. Among the dateable witnesses, only some twenty-five date to the first century AD, only *four or five* of which come from Greece, among which, it has been argued, probably only *two or three* individuals are actually represented. Moreover, a comparison of the total number of individuals bearing the Greek personal name Ἐραστός with other ancient names in the *LGPN* has given us multiple points of reference for determining relative frequency, allowing us for the first time to make a definitive judgment in this regard: the name is indeed more rightly called 'infrequent' than it is 'frequent'.

This conclusion adds considerable weight to the long-debated issue of whether Paul's Erastus and the aedile of *IKorinthKent* 232 were one and the same. When only two, or perhaps three, individuals bearing this name are attested in all of Greece, in all of the first century AD, each of them exhibiting an 'elite' profile, with confirmation from Goodrich's recent study on the (usually) elite nature of municipal οἰκονόμοι, it may be asked whether identifying one of these men with the Corinthian churchman indeed places any strain on the imagination. Although debate has usually centered on the rarity of the name in first-century *Corinth*, it bears asking whether these other Greek inscriptions do not now deserve comparable attention. The two (?) individuals attested in Athens (IG II² 1945; 1968; 1985; 1990)—if these should in fact be differentiated from the man of *IKorinthKent* 232—both completed the gymnasium ephebate, a program that promised graduates a career in politics, and both of these men went on to fill higher posts there. Graduates, moreover, could expect to be mobile, as there would not have been enough vacancies in Athens to provide local positions for all of them.³⁰ When we then consider that these are the *only* Erasti that can be dated securely to first-century Greece, and their careers date precisely to the middle years of that century, and their social profiles place them squarely within the realm of politics, the possibility that one of these ephebes, having completed the ephebate in the early 40s, might have gone on to become οἰκονόμος in Corinth in AD 57 is, if only a tantalizing possibility, also a very real one.³¹

³⁰ See nn. 16-17.

³¹ See n. 18.

In closing, let it be said that, if we have now put paid to the question of the name's (in)frequency, we have likely not heard the last of the larger Erastus debate. Much will turn on how recent proposals on the meaning of οἰκονόμος and the dating of *IKorinthKent* 232 are received. While John Goodrich and others have confirmed the traditional consensus that Erastus, as ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως, was, more likely than not, a man of wealth and considerable social distinction, still others have continued to appeal to evidence that men of that office were sometimes slaves.³² Moreover, while most incline to the view that *IKorinthKent* 232 dates to the second half of the first century, Friesen puts forth a plausible argument that it could date to the first part of the second. In the wake of clashing proposals, the jury is perhaps still out on the identity of the man in *IKorinthKent* 232. But as a consensus emerges, we may now regard the infrequency of the name as a fixed piece of the puzzle.

32 Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', 245-9.