

## THE SCHOLA MEDICORUM THAT NEVER EXISTED IN ROME

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*It has been argued that a schola medicorum (i.e. a headquarters of physicians) existed in ancient Rome. According to this, the evidence supporting the existence of the schola is the plinth of a statue engraved with the text translata de schola medicorum, the epitaph of a scriba medicorum, and a Greek inscription dedicated by a δεκαδάρχης ἰατρῶν, but these sources present some problems when they are subjected to a critical examination. Moreover, the silence of ancient authors about this place is striking, and subsequent doubts emerge when considering that the schola medicorum is first documented in a manuscript by Pirro Ligorio. The aim of this paper is to re-examine the documentary sources that allude to the schola medicorum, assessing also the use of this expression in scientific literature from the sixteenth century, and try to determine if the written sources support the existence of such a place in ancient Rome.*

*È stato sostenuto che nell'antica Roma esistesse una schola medicorum (cioè una scuola di primaria importanza di medici). Secondo questo, le prove a sostegno dell'esistenza della schola sono il basamento di una statua con inciso il testo translata de schola medicorum, l'epitaffio di uno scriba medicorum, e un'iscrizione greca dedicata da un δεκαδάρχης ἰατρῶν, ma queste fonti presentano alcuni problemi se sottoposte ad un esame critico. Inoltre, il silenzio degli autori antichi su questo luogo è notevole, e ulteriori dubbi emergono quando si considera che la schola medicorum è documentata per la prima volta in un manoscritto di Pirro Ligorio. Lo scopo di questo articolo è quello di riesaminare le fonti documentarie che alludono alla schola medicorum, valutando anche l'uso di questa espressione nella letteratura scientifica del XVI secolo, cercando di stabilire se le fonti scritte supportino l'esistenza di un tale luogo nell'antica Roma.*

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<sup>1</sup> This work originated in summer 2018, during a stay in the Center for Epigraphical and Palaeographical Studies at the Ohio State University (OSU), where I carried out a study on *collegia medicorum* documented in Latin epigraphy. The preliminary results were presented in a seminar on 10 September 2018 in the Department of Classics of the OSU. I later studied the references to the *schola medicorum* in sixteenth-century authors in greater depth and presented the progress made in the research in the communication 'La *schola medicorum* de Rome: construction et transmission d'une illusion' at the international conference 'Scripta Manent. Sources, traces, témoignages: la question de la transmission', held at the Université Paul Valéry — Montpellier 3 on 23 and 24 May 2019. The present paper is the result of an in-depth analysis of the documentation related to the Roman *schola medicorum* from the sixteenth century onwards. I would like to thank the reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions which have certainly enhanced this article, the contents and conclusions of which are entirely my responsibility. References to classical works and authors follow *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow (Oxford University Press, fourth edition, 2012, and online).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fourth volume of *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (LTUR) devotes an entry to the *schola medicorum* (Papi, 1999: 254),<sup>2</sup> according to which this was the headquarters of physicians and its existence is attested by two epigraphic texts: an inscription engraved on the plinth of a statue and the epitaph of a *scriba medicorum*.<sup>3</sup> Regarding its location, Papi mentions Coarelli's hypothesis, which relates it to the *apotheca Galeni* and the Horrea Piperataria, recently discovered beneath the Basilica of Maxentius.<sup>4</sup> The *apotheca Galeni* was a storeroom near the Via Sacra, which the famous physician from Pergamon rented as a place to keep his belongings, including instruments, and some of his books and remedies (Coarelli, 1993: 59).<sup>5</sup> The Horrea Piperataria were a centre for storing and distributing spices which were used mainly for pharmacological purposes, and where medicines, prepared compounds and surgical material could also be purchased (Piranomonte, 1996: 45–6).<sup>6</sup>

The *apotheca Galeni* and the Horrea Piperataria were in a part of the ancient city, between the Carinae, the Velian Hill and the Via Sacra, whose special 'vocazione medica' and intense urban development from the Republic and during the whole Imperial era has been stressed by Palombi (1997–8, 2007; 2014: 337). Palombi highlights the significance of the Temple of Peace in medical matters, as Galen states that physicians often met there to discuss and debate their science.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> There is no similar entry in Platner and Ashby (1929 and subsequent editions) or Richardson, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription on the base of a statue known as the Mattei Amazon and the epitaph of T. Aurelius Telesphorus, which will be discussed later in this paper (see below, nn. 68 and 77).

<sup>4</sup> The Horrea Piperataria have recently been discovered in the excavations carried out by the team from the Università La Sapienza of Rome, directed by Domenico Palombi, and supervised by the Parco Archeologico of the Colosseum, directed by Alfonsina Russo. The results of the excavations were made known in late 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Mentioned by Galen in his treatise *On Composition of Drugs According to Kind*, on the occasion of the fire that destroyed it (Gal. *De compositione medicamentorum per genera* 1, 1 = Kühn, 1821–33, XIII: 362). The 2005 discovery of the treatise *On the Avoidance of Grief*, which until then was only known by Galen's references to it in other works, provided more details about the storeroom, again in connection with the fire. Thus AD 192 has been fixed as the year of the disaster. It is now known that when the fire occurred Galen was in Campania and therefore had left in the storeroom instruments, remedies, books and other objects which he usually kept at home. The new treatise also reveals that the store was in an edifice (probably the Horrea Piperataria) which was not built with wood, and which was watched by a military guard, and for that reason the rent was more expensive. On the new treatise, Galen's storeroom and its connection with the Horrea Piperataria, cf. Tucci, 2008: 133–49.

<sup>6</sup> Galen says that thread from Gaul was sold in the Via Sacra, possibly in the *tabernae* open on the southern side of the *horrea*. It was famous for its use in surgical stitches (Gal., *De methodo medendi* XIII, 22 = Kühn, 1821–33, X: 942). Regarding this aspect, cf. Gourevitch, 2011: 108.

<sup>7</sup> Gal., *De Libris propriis* 2 = Kühn, 1821–33, XIX: 21–2, whose text is copied below (see Section 2). In Gal., *De differentiis pulsuum* 1 = Kühn, 1821–33, VIII: 495, Galen also says that debates about the different kinds of pulses took place between doctors and patients in the Temple of Peace.

Recent excavations have discovered new information about the spaces and structures in the Forum of Peace,<sup>8</sup> especially those in the southern sector. Consequently, bearing in mind Galen's citations and those of other sources, Palombi has identified the apsidal hall on the corner at the back of the forum which faced the Via Sacra as the *schola medicorum* or the 'sede ufficiale dei medici romani', i.e. the place for the meetings and discussions of physicians (Palombi, 1997–8: 132–3; 2007: 72–4; 2014: 340–1).<sup>9</sup> In turn, Tucci considers that the Bibliotheca Pacis, which was built in Domitian's time following the model of the library in the Temple of Apollo, was in fact located in that hall (Tucci 2013: 277–85; 2017: 174–93).<sup>10</sup> Tucci is also sceptical about the presumed relationship between the *schola medicorum* and the Temple of Peace, and he refutes all of Palombi's arguments (Tucci 2017: 195–215).<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, he is surprised by Galen's silence. It is striking that such a prolific author, who provides so many details about the exercise of his profession and his daily life, should mention the debates and meetings of doctors in the Temple of Peace, but does not explicitly refer to a *schola medicorum*. On the other hand, a critical examination of the sources shows that the expression *schola medicorum* is not documented in any text that can be dated with certainty to antiquity. Yet, even though he refers to it as a 'ghost *schola medicorum*', Tucci does not deny its existence. However, the difficulties and doubts raised by the sources lead us to wonder whether it is possible to accept that a *schola medicorum* existed in ancient Rome. Did the doctors really have a centre in the city where they could meet? Our doubts can only increase when we consider that the *schola medicorum* is first documented in an inscription transmitted in a manuscript by Pirro Ligorio.

The aim of the present paper is to re-examine the documentary sources that allude to the *schola medicorum*, and assess the use of this expression in scientific literature dedicated to Roman archaeology, history and medicine. The ultimate goal is to determine whether the written sources support the existence of such a place.

<sup>8</sup> These began in 1998 under the supervision of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali. Since 2000, the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma has joined the work, with the co-direction of the team from the Università Roma Tre, directed by Roberto Meneghini since 2011.

<sup>9</sup> According to Palombi, the evidence supporting the existence of the *schola* is that offered by Papi and a Greek inscription dedicated to the Emperor Commodus by a δεκαδάρχης ἰατρῶν, which will be studied below (see Section 4). Palombi was followed by Meneghini, who claimed that the books and texts of the *schola medicorum* were in the Bibliotheca Pacis (cf. Meneghini, 2009: 85, n. 21; 94). The term *schola* does indeed refer to a meeting place (see below, n. 25).

<sup>10</sup> Tucci, 2007: 473–4, noted the difficulty in the identification of the library at the back of the forum. The Bibliotheca Pacis mentioned by Aulus Gellius (Gell., NA 5.21.9, 16.8.2) and Trebellius Pollio (SHA, Tyr. Trig. 31.10) has traditionally been thought to have been in an annex, nearer the temple, because of several niches that have been interpreted as *armaria* to hold the *volumina*.

<sup>11</sup> The author equally questions and refutes the location of the anatomical demonstrations in the Temple of Peace.

## 2. LIGORIO, MERCURIALE AND THE *SCHOLA MEDICORUM*

The term *schola medicorum* does not appear in any classical author or epigraphic document that can definitively be attributed to antiquity. Since it refers to a place, one would expect to find it in the regional catalogues (the *Curiosum Urbis Romae Regionum XIV* and the *Notitia Urbis Romae*), inventories made in the fourth century AD that include a catalogue of the main buildings and monuments in Rome at that time.<sup>12</sup> However, this source does not record a *schola medicorum*.<sup>13</sup> The first mentions of such a place do not appear until the mid-sixteenth century.

The *schola medicorum* is first mentioned in book 39 of the *Antichità romane* by Pirro Ligorio,<sup>14</sup> which was written between 1550 and 1555 and is now kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli (*Cod. Neap. XIII B 8*).<sup>15</sup> In folio 328 of the manuscript (c. 225v in the modern page numbering), Ligorio copies the supposed epitaph, inscribed on a plaque in the form of a *tabula ansata*, of the *tabularius* of a *schola medicorum* (Fig. 1).<sup>16</sup>

m. Iliuo celso tabulario | schola medicor. | m. Iliuius eutyachus | archiatros oll. d. II | in fr. peded. IIII.

‘To M. Livius Celsus, archivist of the school of physicians. M. Livius Eutyachus, chief physician, gave two urns. In the front four feet.’

On the right of the drawing of the inscription, Ligorio wrote ‘schola pro scholae’ and below, at the foot of the page: ‘Archiatro significa principe, overo primo, di medici; tabulario era colui che teniva conto della schola di medici, la quale era in Roma. Si notti scritto schola per scholae.’

<sup>12</sup> On the *Curiosum Urbis Romae*, see Hülsen, 1901: 1838; Grig, 2018: 1301, with references.

<sup>13</sup> Despite Pazzini’s mistaken claim that the *Curiosum urbis* located a *schola medicorum* in the regio *Aesquilias* (1940: 13).

<sup>14</sup> On Ligorio, see Gaston, 1988; Schreurs, 2000; Coffin, 2004; Loffredo and Vagenheim, 2019. On the *Antichità romane* and other works of Ligorio, see the *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pirro Ligorio*, published since 2005 by the De Luca Editori d’Arte.

<sup>15</sup> The book, whose original title is *Libro XXXIX dell’Antichità di Pyrrho Ligori napolitano, nel quale sono raccolti alcuni epitaphii dell’antiche memorie de’ sepulchri*, has been edited by Silvia Orlandi (Orlandi, 2009). According to Ligorio himself, this book gathers ‘tutte le iscrizioni che, essendo semplici testi sepolcrali, non erano state inserite tra le dediche sacre, imperiali ed onorarie che costituiscono essenzialmente il contenuto degli altri libri di argomento epigrafico’ in *Cod. Neap. XIII B 7*, which includes books XXXIV to XXXVIII of the *Antichità romane* (Orlandi 2009: IX). The books of the *Antichità romane* were written between 1550 and 1567, when they were acquired for the library of Alessandro Farnese (see Bortolotti, 2005). According to Balistreri (2019: 54), book XXXIX was mainly composed in 1550–5 and completed with additions in two periods, 1556–60 and 1560–7.

<sup>16</sup> Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII B 8, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XXXIX dell’Antichità di Pyrrho Ligori napolitano, nel quale sono raccolti alcuni epitaphii dell’antiche memorie de’ sepulchri*, fol. 328; Orlandi, 2009: 302, XV.

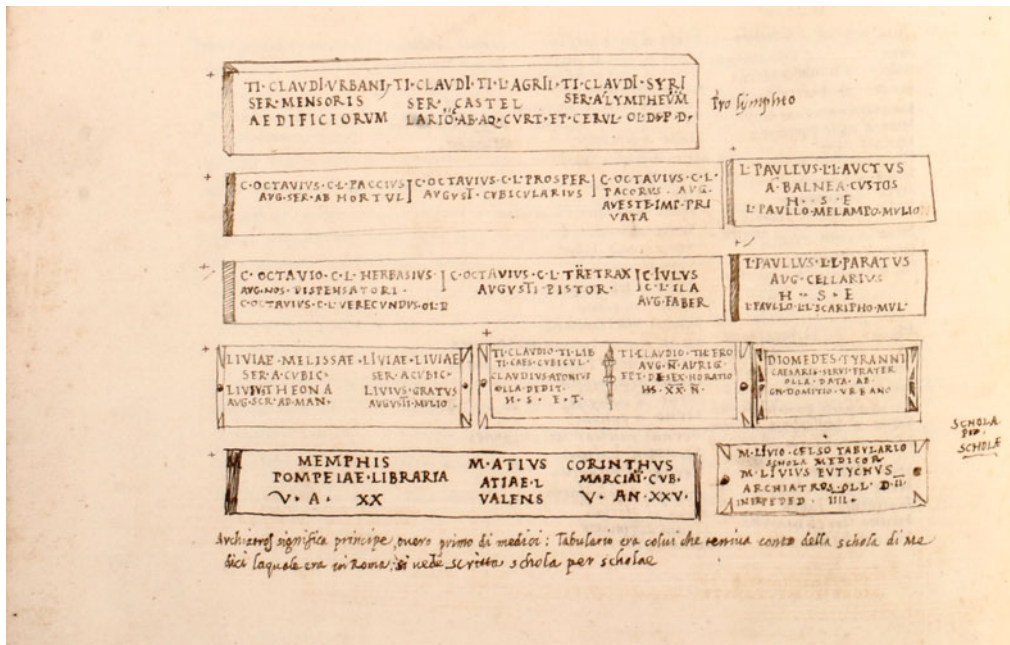


Fig. 1. Cod. Neap. XIII B 8, detail of fol. 328, with the inscription of the *tabularius scholae medicorum* at the bottom right. (By the kind permission of the Ministero della cultura © Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli.)

The illegitimacy of the epigraph is unquestionable,<sup>17</sup> as was established in 1885 when it was included among the *falsae Ligoriana*e in the fifth fascicle of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI (CIL VI 978\*). Indeed, some elements in the text display incoherencies that demonstrate the falsification. For example, it is an anachronism for the same text to contain the gentilicium *Livius*, characteristic of urban epigraphy in the late first century BC and first half of the first century AD, and the term *archiater*, which was not used in Rome before the second century AD.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the formulae *oll(as) d(edit)* and *in fr(onte) ped(es)* never appear together in inscriptions (see below in Section 3). In any case, rather than prove the falsity of the inscription, it is more interesting to consider the expression in the second line and the origin of that term, which in its time did not raise the suspicions of any scholar.

<sup>17</sup> Fol. 328 was written after a list of servants of Livia and Augustus, differentiated by the tasks they were assigned, and comes before the transcription of a group of inscriptions that Ligorio positioned on four walls of a single *columbarium* (the so-called *columbarium ligorianum*), among which some genuine inscriptions have been identified (Balistreri, 2017: 138–9). Most of the inscriptions in fol. 328 are false, as also may be the supposed location ‘In la casa di M. Achille Maffeo’, written at the top of the page. These inscriptions are CIL VI 963\*; 964\* = ILMN 1 635; CIL VI 965\*; 966\* = ILMN 1 636; CIL VI 967\*; 968\* = ILMN 1 637; CIL VI 969\*; 976\*; CIL VI 977\*c = 9298a = AE 2005 182 (genuine); CIL VI 978\*.

<sup>18</sup> Nutton, 1977: 224–5. Only an inscription from Puteoli (IG XIV 852) can be dated more precisely between AD 75 and 200, or as early as after AD 75 (Nutton, 1977: 202 and 225, no. 84).

Among the many artistic and intellectual activities carried out by Pirro Ligorio in Renaissance Rome, the creation of false inscriptions may be the one that has given him greatest notoriety. He has been called the ‘prince of forgers’, ‘sovrano creatore dei falsi epigrafici’ and ‘principe tra i falsificatori del ’500’,<sup>19</sup> and Vagenheim (2011: 219) has even affirmed that ‘parlare di falsificazione epigrafica nell’Italia della seconda metà del Cinquecento significa parlare di Ligorio e della sua famosa opera rimasta manoscritta, intitolata *Le Antichità romane*’. It is difficult to know how and why the text of the inscription and the idea of the *schola medicorum* originated, because ‘the motives that led Pirro Ligorio to create forgeries are complex and defy precise definition’ (Orlandi, Caldelli and Gregori, 2014: 50). Since it is a forgery on paper that probably was never inscribed on stone,<sup>20</sup> a purely erudite reason might be considered.<sup>21</sup> Ligorio is known to have created his forgeries based on true sources and he aimed to compose credible texts;<sup>22</sup> indeed, the inscription of the *schola medicorum* contains several plausible elements. For example, the names of both people are reminiscent of other physicians mentioned in inscriptions or literary sources: the nomen *gentilicium* is shared with some members of the domestic medical service of Livia Augusta (Alonso Alonso, 2018: 216, nos. 29–31); the cognomen Eutyclus is seen in other physicians;<sup>23</sup> Celsus suggests A. Cornelius Celsus, the author of the influential *De medicina* in the first century AD (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1335). Similarly, the term *archiater* is specific to health workers in antiquity and is widely documented in inscriptions,<sup>24</sup> whilst the term *schola* together with the plural genitive of the name of a profession is equally common;<sup>25</sup> and the

<sup>19</sup> The words of Abbott, 1908: 27, Guarducci, 1967: 492, and Solin, 2012: 145, respectively.

<sup>20</sup> In *CIL* VI pars V, p. 65\*, the inscription is included *ex titulis, quos in lapide incisos fuisse aliunde non constat*. In a Turin manuscript (see below, nn. 33–4), Ligorio included the text of the *schola medicorum* among a group of physicians’ epitaphs that ‘sono state raccolte nel museo del cardinale Carpanse’, that is to say, he placed it in the collection of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio di Carpi. However, it is suspicious that no other author saw the inscription in the cardinal’s collection or attested it elsewhere, as is the case for other inscriptions transmitted by Ligorio (e.g. *CIL* VI 3623\* in Solin, 2008; see also Solin, 2009, and Solin, 2021: 196–7, 202–5, who mentions *CIL* VI 978\* on page 203 as a ‘falso cartaceo’). This makes it more probable that the inscription of the *schola medicorum* existed only on paper and not on stone.

<sup>21</sup> On the different motivations and purposes that falsifications on stone and forgeries on paper could have, see Gallo and Sartori, 2018; Calvelli, 2019a.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Ligorio created fake but (at least in part) plausible epigraphic texts, reconstructed on the basis of information from literary sources, coin legends, or authentic inscriptions, and he presented them alongside authentic texts to corroborate various arguments’ (Orlandi, Caldelli and Gregori, 2014: 45).

<sup>23</sup> Alonso Alonso, 2018: 234, no. 104; 240, no. 129; 244–5, nos. 150–52; 256, no. 192.

<sup>24</sup> Nutton, 1977, and Massar, 2005: 118–21. Ligorio could have knowledge of this term by means of the epitaph of an *archiater* from Pula (*CIL* V 87 = *InscrIt* X-1 161), which he copied in one of the Turin manuscripts (see below, n. 34).

<sup>25</sup> Regarding *scholae* of professional and religious *collegia* see Bollmann, 1998. Generally speaking, the term *schola* refers, in both literary and epigraphic sources, to an architectural reality, and it describes a meeting or gathering place with more or less a religious character (see Goffaux, 2010: 10; 2011; Tran et al., 2016: 13–14). In connection with the phenomenon of

presence of a subaltern (in this case a *tabularius*) was frequent in the headquarters of a professional college (Diosono, 2007: 69). All of these details demonstrate notions of epigraphy and Roman medicine that Ligorio might have acquired not only by observing inscriptions in Rome but also through his colleagues in the *Accademia degli Sdegnati* (Vagenheim, 2006, 2008a, 2018). This was the circle of erudite scholars in which Ligorio, whose poor knowledge of Latin is well known,<sup>26</sup> received information and learnt about classical authors and epigraphic texts (Vagenheim, 2011: 223). In this regard, it is interesting to remember a passage in the *Antichità romane* in which Ligorio himself describes his methods in the reconstruction of Roman antiquities. He explains that, during a meeting of academics, he drew pictures of false inscriptions as a way to reconstruct the funerary stelae of soldiers mentioned in a text by Polybius that the attendees had read together.<sup>27</sup> This detail suggests that the inscription of the *tabularius* might have arisen as part of a *lusus epigraphicus* in the course of a meeting of that type. In the same way, the originality of the expression *schola medicorum* raises the suspicion that Ligorio (with the help of the erudite of the Farnese circle) might have been inspired by a book current at that time. The volume *Medicorum schola, Hoc est Claudii Galeni Isagoge, sive Medicus. Eiusdem definitionum medicinalium liber* had been in circulation since 1537; published in Basel by the doctor Sebastian Singkeler, it included the Greek text and Latin translation of two books by Pseudo Galen.<sup>28</sup> We do not know whether Ligorio saw this volume or knew of the title, but a connection is possible bearing in mind the coincidence in time.

Ligorio gave more details about the *schola medicorum* several years after composing the *Antichità romane*. In his *Enciclopedia del mondo antico*, a manuscript he wrote in Ferrara between 1569 and 1583,<sup>29</sup> he dedicated two

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*collegia* and associations, it is usual to find it in epigraphy together with the name of the professional collective that owned the place and met there. It is especially associated with the *tria collegia*, some military colleges and groups of public spectacles (see Subias Pascual, 1994: 94, 106–7, table 1, which includes the inscription on the base of the Mattei Amazon).

<sup>26</sup> The accusation made in this regard by Bishop Antonio Agustín is well known: ‘my friend the Neapolitan Pirro Ligorio, great antiquarian and painter, who without knowing the Latin language, has written more than forty books on medallions and buildings and other things’ (*Dialogues on Medals, Inscriptions and Other Antiquities*, 1587). Taken from Coffin, 2004: 20, who believes that Ligorio must have possessed a basic knowledge of Latin, which would have been insufficient in the eyes of Agustín, who knew Latin very well.

<sup>27</sup> On this testimony, see Vagenheim, 2008b: 129. It is appropriate to remember Winner’s words about Pirro Ligorio: ‘la sua vigile facoltà di sintesi e la sua fantasia artistica gli permisero spesso di completare monumenti antichi frammentari, di inventarli e di provvederli poi dell’iscrizione adatta’ (1994: 19).

<sup>28</sup> Galen, pseudo, *Introductio & definitiones medicae*, ed. Sebastian Singkeler, Basel, 1537. The Latin translations of both books were by Johann Winter von Andernach.

<sup>29</sup> Ligorio moved to Ferrara in 1569, after entering the service of Duke Alfonso II d’Este as an antiquarian, and died there in 1583 (Vagenheim, 1987; Bortolotti, 2005). The manuscripts he wrote at that time are kept in the Archivio di Stato di Torino: *Enciclopedia del mondo antico* (books I–XXI and XXIII), *Libro delle medaglie delle famiglie romane* (book XXVIII), *Libro*

entries to that place. The first is in vol. 10, book XI (letter L), immediately after a page devoted to the ‘Templum Minervae Medicae’ and which includes a *pianta dimostrativa* of it:<sup>30</sup>

/fol. 136v/ TEMPLUM MINERVAE MEDICAE. . . Diremo come Antonino Pio fu l'autore d'esso tempio, come si trova nella medaglia et nella sua vita e quivi fu accanto la Schola medicorum, dalla quale fu tolta la imagine di Aesculapio e posta nell'atrio Palatino da Marco Comodo imperatore . . .

/fol. 137r/ SCHOLA MEDICORUM. Come è sudetto fú davante al Tempio di Minerva Medica, anzi attorno al Tempio, perciò che esso havea piazza d'ogni lato, et d'intorno havea i deambulatorij, . . . come un Gymnasio, per che i medici molte cose gymnastiche insegnavano, per esercizio dell corpo, lo quale essercitandosi con l'[']hore debite, con destrezza et misura, si conserva: {Ligorio describes some gymnastic exercises} come scrive Galeno nell'Athleta. Hora è da pensare, che questa tale schola non era altro che per li essercizi, et per le disputationi della physica, per bene operare, et vi erano gli Horti de simplici. . . Così addunque la schola de medici non fu senza proposito ordinata, sendo in Roma per la grandezza, copiosa di medici d'ogni sorte di sperienza: et non era schola alcuna, che non avesse il suo medico. Et ogni cohorte de Soldati, ramo de Vigili come de soldati legionarij, et pretoriani, haveano i suoi deputati medici.

The second entry is in vol. 16 book XVIII, which covers the letter S:<sup>31</sup>

SCHOLA MEDICORUM, o come vogliamo dire scuola di Medici. Fú notabilissimo et insigne luogo di Roma nella parte Esquilina maraviglioso [sic], situato intra la Via Praenestina et la Tiburtina, edificio del grande Antonino Pio. Lo quale imperatore l'ornò di edificij attorno con uno Tempio nel mezzo di forma decacona [sic] grande et bello dedicato alla Minerva Medica. Et nelli fianchi d'esso tempio attorno a destra et à sinistra, erano duoi grandi hemicycli, molto ornati, ch'erano due cavee di theatri, come per duoi ricetti della Chirurgia, et della Phisica, per li chirurghi, et per li physici. Ma il corpo del Tempio d'erano di dentro quattro altri nicchioni, luoghi da poterve usare delle cose che si ricercano, nell'attione de Medici. Ove si leggeva, et si faceva i Colleggi, sopra del trattato della medicina de suoi predicamenti . . .

Ligorio also refers to the *schola medicorum* when describing the Temple of Minerva Medica in vol. 17 of the *Enciclopedia* (letter T), under the entry ‘Tempii’:<sup>32</sup>

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dell'antica città di Tivoli e di alcune famose ville (book XXII), *Libri delle medaglie da Cesare a Marco Aurelio Commodo* (books XXVII–XXX), *Libri delle medaglie da Pertinace ai trenta Tiranni* (books XXXI–XXXV), *Libri degli antichi eroi e uomini illustri* (books XLIII–XLVI), *Libri del significato del dragone, del gallo e del basilisco* (books XLVII–XLVIII), *Libro delle abbreviature di medaglie ed iscrizioni* (book L), *Libro dei magistrati romani* (book LI), *Libro delle medaglie dei popoli ellenici* (vol. XXVII), *Libro di diversi terremoti* (vol. XXVIII), *Trattato della nobiltà delle antiche arti* (vol. XIX) and *Intagli e monete, obelischi* (books XLIX–L).

<sup>30</sup> Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.III.12.16,10, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XI delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* (1569–80), fols 136v–137r.

<sup>31</sup> Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.3.16, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XVIII delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* (1569–80), fol. 81r.

<sup>32</sup> Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.4.17, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XVIII delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* (1569–80), fols 56v–57r.



Il Temp[io] et pantheon di Minerva Medica /fol. 57r/ fú d'ordine rotondo decagono, ad ogni faccia erano grandissimi nicchioni ò delubri delle statue, ornate di alcune colonne composito intorno alcuni nicchi piccioli di marmo mischio verde e bianco variate, ove erano le statue di Minerva, di Apollo, di Chirone, di Aesculapio, delle figliuole, di Epiona moglie di Aesculapio, con le sue gente chiamate Iaso, Hygia, Rome, Aceso Calonoli, Pluto, Panhygia, et vi erano in due luoghi fonti artificiosi et fu edificio d'Antonino Pio Augusto, et allato vi era la Schola de Medici.

None of these texts makes any mention of the inscription of the *tabularius*, but it is included in the *Enciclopedia's* vol. 15, book XVII (letter R), in the entry devoted to Rome. In a two-page section entitled 'Delli medici',<sup>33</sup> Ligorio transcribes a group of 33 physicians' epitaphs in which forgeries and genuine inscriptions are blended. Among these epitaphs we find the inscription of the *schola medicorum*:<sup>34</sup>

m. liuio celso tabulario | scholae medicorum | m. liuius eutyclus | archiatros oll. d. II | in fr. ped. IIII.

On this occasion, the text is slightly different from its first presentation: in the Naples manuscript Ligorio interpreted *schola medicor.* in l. 2 (it should be recalled that at that time Ligorio noted that the correct spelling would be *scholae* instead of *schola*) and *peded.* in l. 5. Likewise, between lines 3 and 4, above the *o* of *archiatros*, Ligorio remarked 'sic'.

The number of details that Ligorio provides about the *schola medicorum* in these manuscripts is surprising, bearing in mind that it was over ten years since he had composed the inscription and, in the meantime, no further information had been given about it. In the Turin *Enciclopedia*, Ligorio puts the *scuola di Medici* in the context of its time and place: according to the humanist, it was founded by Antoninus Pius, who built it next to a temple dedicated to Minerva Medica on the Esquiline. He also describes some of the activities that took place there (teaching gymnastic exercises, debates about medicine) and maintains that it was built in Rome because of its size and the large number of physicians in the city.

The Turin manuscripts associate the *schola medicorum* with a temple dedicated to Minerva Medica. One of Pirro Ligorio's great contributions was the identification of different buildings and ruins in Rome, as well as the design of three plans in which he drew imaginative reconstructions of the ancient city. In the first of these, published in 1552 and titled *Urbis Romae situs*,<sup>35</sup> Ligorio

<sup>33</sup> At the beginning of this section, Ligorio states: 'In diverse Vie di Roma, nella Appia, nella Latina, nella Lavicana et nella Flaminia sono trovate queste memorie d'alcuni medici, de quali non se ne ha altra cognitione, se non per li loro epithaphij, le quali sono state raccolte nel Museo del cardinale Carpanse, poscia, sono state per la cui sorte vendute all'incanto et sono in diverse parti trasportate, et in Roma et fuori di essa città.'

<sup>34</sup> Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.2, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XVII delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* (1569–80), fol. 93r.

<sup>35</sup> Frutaz, 1962, I: 170–1; II, no. CXI, pl. 222. The image is available at <https://geoportale.cittametropolitanaroma.it/cartografia-storica/20/36/roma-nel-1552-0> (viewed on 10 October

interpreted some ruins on the Esquiline as a temple of Minerva Medica which the regional catalogues located in that *regio*.<sup>36</sup> These ruins can still be seen: a structure near the railway lines at Termini Station, on the junction of Vie Giovanni Giolitti and Pietro Micca, which is now thought to be a late antique pavilion belonging to the *horti Liciniani* (Carlucci, 1996: 255–6).<sup>37</sup> The Turin texts do not explicitly define the position of the *schola* as regards the temple ('attorno', 'allato', 'accanto', 'davante, ... anzi attorno'). However, thanks to the *pianta dimostrativa* with which Ligorio illustrates them, it is clear that he is alluding to the two semicircles surrounding a central decagonal structure, which were connected with it by open niches (Fig. 2).<sup>38</sup> Therefore, these exedrae would have been the location of the *schola medicorum*. Ligorio cites two documents as proof of the foundation of the *schola* in the time of Antoninus Pius: a medal and the biography of the emperor. Both forms of evidence are only known through Ligorio himself, however, which means that they cannot be taken into account. In fact, the medal is only documented by his drawing, and Ligorio is known to have invented evidence to support his arguments.<sup>39</sup> Equally, the biography of Antoninus Pius that he cites formed part of a series of lives of famous people that he wrote in Ferrara and illustrated with images of coins and medals that he drew himself.<sup>40</sup>

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2020). Ligorio's other maps are *Antequae Urbis Imago accuratissime ex vetusteis monumenteis formata*, dated to 1561 (see Frutaz, 1962, I: 63; III, no. XVII a–b, pl. 671) and the *Urbis Romae, totius olim orbis domitricis situs ...*, drawn in about 1552–61. In all of them, the Esquiline ruins are identified as the Temple of Minerva Medica.

<sup>36</sup> 'Minervam medicam' in the *Curiosum Urbis Romae Regionum XIV* (Cur. Reg. V) and 'Minervam medicam' in the *Notitia Urbis Romae* (Not. Reg. V). In both cases the building is mentioned among the *campus Viminalis subager* and *Isis patricia*. Ligorio's identification is arbitrary. These ruins have been interpreted in different ways since the Middle Ages, and in the mid-sixteenth century the general opinion was that it was the basilica of Gaius and Lucius. However, for Ligorio the floor plan was not that of a basilica but of a temple, and therefore he identified the building as the Temple of Minerva Medica mentioned in the regional catalogues. This identification must have been influenced by the discovery of a group of statues in the area shortly before the publication of the city map: a Minerva with a serpent, an Asclepius, an Epione and their children, a Chiron, and one or more Muses, all these figures associated with medicine and knowledge. However, even Ligorio admitted that all the statues were found broken into multiple fragments and the identifications were doubtful, although he used them as a valid argument to corroborate his idea: Campbell, 2011: 310–21.

<sup>37</sup> The building has also been identified with the Sessorium, i.e. the residential complex that started to be built with Septimius Severus and finished with Heliogabalus (Guidobaldi, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> Drawings of the floor plan and elevation of the Temple of Minerva Medica are included in Ligorio's manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, MS Canon. Ital. 138, Pirro Ligorio, *Libri dell'antichità*, fols 10r–10v, 26r–26v. See Campbell, 2011, which reproduces them all.

<sup>39</sup> As Vagenheim (2011: 221) states, 'per Ligorio, inventare medaglie è operazione legittima se fondata sull'auctoritas delle fonti storiche.'

<sup>40</sup> This biography of Antoninus Pius is in book XXXIX of volume 21 of *Delle Antichità*, or Codex 21 in Turin (Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.8, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XXXIX delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* [1569–80], fols CCCLXXVII–DVIII), a book about numismatics in which Ligorio wrote a history from Julius Caesar to Marcus Aurelius based on coins and sources,

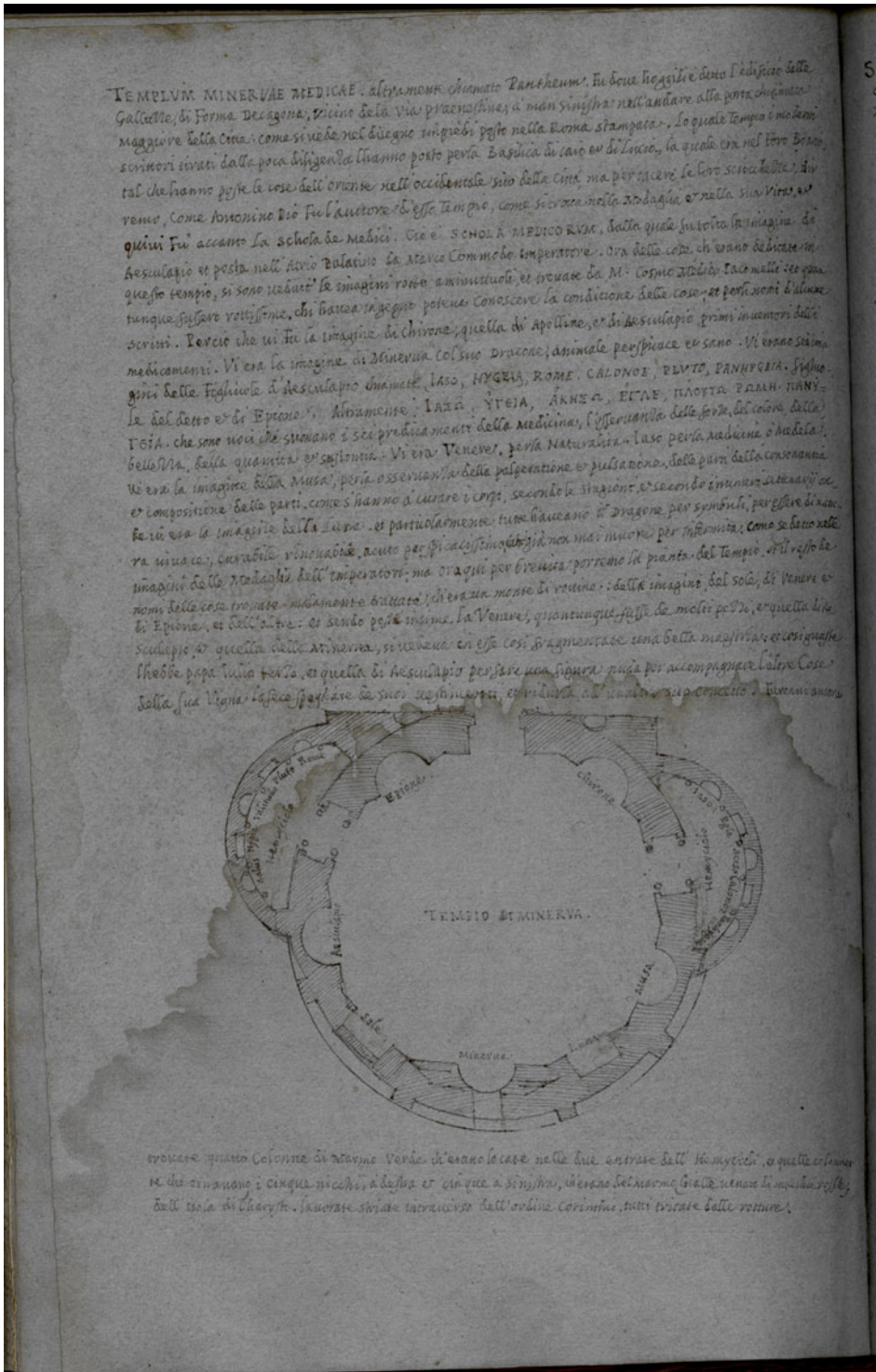


Fig. 2. Cod. J.a.III.12.16,10, fol. 136v, plan of the Temple of Minerva Medica. (By the kind permission of the Archivio di Stato di Torino. Reproduction prohibited.)

Thus, during his stay in Ferrara, Ligorio developed a more sophisticated discourse on a building that nobody had mentioned before him and set its construction in a particular place and time. The whole account is clearly the result of various imaginings that are plausible to a certain extent, but lack valid documentary foundations, as is usually the case with Ligorio. However, proving that this is fantasy should not cause us to underestimate the discourse, as certain intellectual strategies, derived from a particular cultural atmosphere, doubtless underlie it. It may consequently be asked: (a) why did Ligorio relate the construction of the *schola medicorum* to Antoninus Pius? and (b) why did he locate the *schola medicorum* next to that temple? To answer the first question, we must refer to Ligorio's biography of the emperor, but it provides no explanation. In one of his Naples manuscripts (Cod. Neap. XIII B 6 fol. 166v) there is a reproduction of the reverse of a coin with a representation of Minerva Medica, next to which Ligorio wrote that the temple of this goddess was on the Esquiline and may have been built by Antoninus Pius.<sup>41</sup> The reason why he associated this emperor with the construction of the *schola medicorum* is simply because he had previously attributed the building of the supposed temple of Minerva Medica to him.

Regarding the second question, Campbell (2011: 321, n. 74) has suggested that the shape of the structures next to the supposed temple may have influenced Ligorio, as in the entry 'Cyclei' of his *Enciclopedia* he associated round buildings with good health and claimed that physicians chose to meet there.<sup>42</sup> The medical character of the deity to which the temple was dedicated may also have contributed to this relation between the temple and the *schola*, as well as the fact (according to Ligorio) that a number of statues connected with medicine and wisdom had been found in the area (see above, n. 36). It may even be possible that he was influenced by the fact that the owner of the land where those statues were found, Cosimo Giacomelli, was a doctor.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, it should be recalled that Ligorio established a similar metonymical analogy between the medical profession and the surname of the Medici family when he was responsible for the decorative design and the complex iconography of the exterior stucco decoration of the *casino* of Pope Pius IV (Giovanni Angelo de' Medici, known as the Medichini, pope from 1559 to

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and recalling times and events in the lives of the emperors. Cf. Serafin Petrillo, 2013: XIV–XXIX, 231–370.

<sup>41</sup> Campbell, 2011: 321–3, with an image of the drawing of the coin.

<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the term *schola* is associated with semicircular spaces: Waltzing, 1895–1900, I: 222, n. 1).

<sup>43</sup> Pirro Ligorio mentions this person in the manuscripts J.a.II.3.16, fol. 81r (see above, n. 31) and J.a.II.4.17, fol. 57r (Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.4.17, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XVIII delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* [1569–80]), where he says, in connection with the place where the ruins of the supposed Temple of Minerva Medica are located: 'Et vi fu trovata la statua di Venere et quelle delle Muse, tutte rovinate et peste, facendovi cavare Cosimo Iacomelli medico e padrone del luogo ...'

1565), in the Vatican (Coffin, 2004: 41).<sup>44</sup> All of these points provide an explanation for placing the *schola medicorum* next to the temple and may have influenced Ligorio. However, another factor may have been more decisive in establishing the connection between the *schola medicorum* and the temple: Pirro Ligorio's friendship in Rome with Mercuriale, the most famous Renaissance physician.

Girolamo Mercuriale was a prestigious doctor and true humanist who laid the foundations for modern gymnastics. He came to Rome in 1562 on the occasion of an embassy to Pope Pius IV at the request of his home town, Forlì (Piernavieja del Pozo, 1973: XV). Once he was there, he obtained the protection of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the great patron and protector of artists and humanists at that time as well as an important collector of antiques, who persuaded him to stay in the city. His stay lasted seven years, until 1569,<sup>45</sup> which allowed Mercuriale to come into contact with the active circle of erudite scholars and antiquarians who surrounded the cardinal,<sup>46</sup> and also to access and compile information about ancient medicine in different libraries. In 1569 he published in Venice his magnum opus *De arte gymnastica*, which he dedicated to the cardinal. This is an essential book in the history of medicine, and also a perfect example of humanistic erudition in which the use of a large number of sources is combined with a critical view that questions the authority of established authors.<sup>47</sup> This book is the first systematic study of physical education as a way to prevent illness and conserve good health and is consequently valuable as a source for studying the conception of medicine and gymnastics in the Renaissance. For the present case, the information that Mercuriale gives in

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<sup>44</sup> The exterior stucco decoration, designed by Ligorio, displays complex iconography. According to the study of Fagiolo and Madonna (1972), much of the decoration of the *casino* aimed to suggest the arrival of a new Age of Gold with Pius IV, who as a Medici is identified with the *medici*, i.e. the physicians, Apollo and Christ. Therefore, Ligorio included in the decoration statues of Asclepius, his daughter Hygia, and Salus, among others, increasing the semiotic power of the iconography. On the *casino* and its decoration, see also Smith, 1974, 1977, 1988, who considers that the decoration aimed to praise Pius IV by developing two programmes, one that reflects the humanistic and intellectual aspirations of the pope and the other that indicates the nature of the building as a house of pastoral retirement. In turn, Cellauro, 1995, understands that the building was conceived by Ligorio as a classic *musaeum*.

<sup>45</sup> At that time, Mercuriale was the cardinal's private doctor, and also of Pope Gregory XIII. A biographic note on G. Mercuriale and a detailed bibliography can be found in Ongaro, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Onofrio Panvinio refers to him as a friend: 'my friend Girolamo Mercuriale of Forlì, physician to the eminent Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, [who] in six books described all the exercises of the ancients in an outstanding manner and with admirable erudition and diligence' (translation by Siraisi, 2003: 231).

<sup>47</sup> This is the first complete and illustrated book on medical gymnastics (Torrebadella-Flix, 2014: 25; Terrin et al., 2019: 2). Mercuriale uses three kinds of materials: old texts, material remains, and contributions by recent and contemporary antiquarians (Siraisi, 2003: 238). He names a total of 105 authors in antiquity whose works he had consulted, going beyond the traditional principle of authority (McIntosh, 1984: 74–5).

chapter 7 of book I, summarizing the history of gymnastics, is of particular interest:

*Tria enim fuisse Romae loca, in quibus litterariae excercitationes obirentur, ex variis Galeni libris cognoscitur, templum pacis antequam conflagraret, gymnasia publica et akousteria. Inter quae schola medicorum appellatam si quis recenseat, mea sententia a vero non errabit. Fuit autem ea in Esquilis aedificata, multisque imaginibus atque marmoribus ornatissima, ut ex ruinis illius partis a pluribus, et praesertim a Ligorio observatum fuit. Quid potissimum in hac schola fieret, nondum apud quemquam legi. At existimo praeter dispositiones, et alia medicinae studiosorum exercitia simile quid tractari solitum fuisse, atque nunc in collegiis vocatis sit, quando et scholam eiusmodi proprios tabularios habuisse, ostendit marmor cum hac inscriptione Romae ad D. Sebastiani repertum.*<sup>48</sup>

M. L I V I O . C E L S O . T A B V L A R I O .  
S C H O L A E . M E D I C O R V M  
M. L I V I V S . E V T Y C H V S .  
A R C H I A T R O S . O L L . D . I I .  
I N . F R . P E D . I I I I .

According to Mercuriale, one of the places where literary exercises were performed in ancient Rome was the *schola medicorum*, which was located on the Esquiline and whose ruins were still visible in his time. Mercuriale's methodology can be appreciated in the text, in the way he refers to ancient authors and the material remains that anyone could see.<sup>49</sup> In this way, the physician begins with a statement by Galen, according to which there were three places in Rome where literary exercises were carried out, and immediately afterwards he associates such places — somewhat arbitrarily — with the *schola medicorum* on the Esquiline, as he believes that this was one of those centres. The ruins were material proof of its existence, although Mercuriale admits that he had not read anything about what took place there or how the *schola* functioned. In any case, he considers (*existimo*) that explanations and exercises of medical studies were held there, and that it possessed its own archive, of which the evidence is an inscription, namely the epitaph of the *tabularius*. The text that Mercuriale presents is the same as the one copied by Ligorio in Ferrara (Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.II.2, fol. 93r). Regarding the place of

<sup>48</sup> Mercuriale, 1672: 26–7. ‘Literary exercises were held in three places in Rome, as Galen states, before the Temple of Peace burnt down, called public gymnasiums and in Greek *acousteria*; which some believe included the *schola medicorum*, correctly in my view, as it was built in the Esquiline Hill, adorned with many statues and marbles, as many observed in the ruins in that area, mainly Ligorio. I have not read in any author what they did mainly in this academy. I consider that the provisions and similar exercises of the physicians is what was discussed there, what is now called a college; the fact that it possessed its own archive is clearly seen and demonstrated by the marble stone found in Rome in the Temple of San Sebastian, which contains this inscription in Latin’ (English translation by Peter Smith).

<sup>49</sup> In Siraisi's words (2003: 240): ‘material remains — surviving ruins, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological finds, many of them in Rome itself — constitute an important category of evidence in Mercuriale's work. In a few instances, as in that just cited, he directed the reader's attention to ruins in Rome that were presumably available for anyone to see.’

provenance of the inscribed marble, Mercuriale says *ad D. Sebastiani repertum*, in a reference to the Porta di San Sebastiano, near where Ligorio locates the place of discovery in book 39 of the *Antichità romane*.<sup>50</sup>

Mercuriale's source of information is clearly Ligorio, whom he cites in the text and would have met in the cardinal's residence. The two must have become friends and maintained an intellectual connection which endured, as shown by the fact that Ligorio was responsible for the drawings that illustrated the second edition of *De arte gymnastica*, published when neither Ligorio nor Mercuriale was in Rome (Siraisi, 2003: 240; Vagenheim, 2010–12: 185–95). Mercuriale's influence is undoubtedly behind Ligorio's description of the gymnastic exercises that would have taken place in the *schola medicorum* and the citation of famous doctors in antiquity that Ligorio includes in the Turin *Enciclopedia*.<sup>51</sup> When both first met (c. 1562), Ligorio had already identified the Esquiline ruins with the Temple of Minerva Medica (c. 1552) and composed the epitaph that mentions the *schola medicorum* (c. 1550–5), but the relation between the temple and the *schola medicorum* does not appear until the Ferrara manuscripts (after c. 1569). In turn, Mercuriale does not explicitly associate the *schola* with the Temple of Minerva Medica, but those are definitely the Esquiline ruins that he alludes to, as he adds the inscription to his exposition. In short, it is legitimate to think that the relation between the temple and the *schola*, i.e. the identification of the hemicycles as the *schola medicorum*, was born out of the collaboration between the two authors. However, why was a temple associated with a place where physicians met? Mercuriale begins the text copied above by alluding to a passage in which Galen refers to the places in which literary exercises were performed in Rome. This passage is in the second chapter of Galen's book *De libris propriis* and states:

And so of course certain malicious individuals put about the city the slander that I was in the habit of describing things which were simply not visible in dissections, so as to gain a reputation as having made discoveries far beyond those of my predecessors; for, they said, such matters could not have failed to be noticed before. To those men my only response was that of contemptuous amusement; but they excited the anger of my friends, who

<sup>50</sup> Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII B 8, Pirro Ligorio, *Libro XXXIX dell'Antichità di Pyrrho Ligori napolitano, nel quale sono raccolti alcuni epitaphii dell'antiche memorie de' sepulchri*, fol. 326: 'per la Via Appia, vicino alle mura dalla parte di dentro, sono stati truovati, nello scassar di alcune vigne, certi belli sepolchri, pieni di molti epitafii di liberti, tra i quali vi si leggono quelli de la fameglia di Livia Drusilla, moglie di Augusto, della fameglia di Sexto Pompeo, et di quelli di Terentio Varrone et di altri cittadini romani' (text taken from Orlandi, 2009: 300). This is the open area along the Via Appia inside the Porta di San Sebastiano, which holds the Tomb of the Scipiones and the three *columbaria* of Vigna Codini, and where the work to prepare the land for grapevines in the mid-sixteenth century unearthed much of the ancient necropolis that extended on both sides of the Via Appia (Manacorda, 2018: 837).

<sup>51</sup> In book X of *Delle Antichità*, Ligorio mentions the names of 50 physicians, some of them famous doctors that Mercuriale quotes in his 'Elenchus Auctorum', such as Galen, Celsus, Oribasius or Pedanius Dioscorides (Turin, Archivio di Stato, MS J.a.III.12.10 Pirro Ligorio, *Libro X delle antichità di Pyrrho Ligorio* [1569–80], fol. 137r).

begged me to give a public demonstration in one of the great auditoria before a large audience, of the truth of my anatomical writings. When I refused (for my disposition even then was to care nothing for what men thought), those slanderers attributed my high-mindedness to fear of refutation rather than to contempt for their stupidity; and every day they would go to the *Templum Pacis* — which even before the fire was the general meeting-place for all those engaged in learned pursuits — and mock me continually.<sup>52</sup>

Galen says that the *Templum Pacis* was one of the places where those involved in intellectual activities, including physicians, met. Ligorio might have learnt of this passage through Mercuriale and then established a similar connection between the temple he had identified on the Esquiline, which was even dedicated to a deity with the epithet of Medica, and the *schola medicorum* that he had conceived in the inscription. As noted above, many of Ligorio's ideas arose in the meetings with scholars and humanists, and that would have occurred in the present case. He later added further details when composing a second version of his *Antichità romane* in Ferrara. This is another example of his procedure, associating different bits of information, ruins and evidence to fabricate a coherent and justified reconstruction of the past.

In sum, the expression *schola medicorum* is first documented in the mid-sixteenth century and therefore originated in a cultural context long after antiquity, characterized by an erudite and imaginative reconstruction of the past. It is no more than the result of a fabrication of a humanist who, in a 'reasoned' way, gave meaning to textual and archaeological evidence, and constructed a narrative that made those different pieces fit together. However, as stated at the beginning of this paper, recent research supports the existence of a *schola medicorum* in ancient Rome (but without using *CIL VI 978\** as a source) and has even located it in a particular part of the city (but not on the Esquiline). This shows the reputation that this place continues to have, which has been possible because the idea of a *schola medicorum* had been sustained after the sixteenth century and transmitted over time. This was enabled by finding new sources of study and documents that seemed to confirm its existence.

### 3. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE IDEA OF *THE SCHOLA MEDICORUM*

To assess the spread and reach of the *schola medicorum* in historiography, the influence of *De arte gymnastica* in Europe for over three centuries should be considered in the first place. This book made Mercuriale a point of reference for the most important medical authorities and one of the most cited Italian Renaissance authors (Torrebadella-Flix, 2014: 25–9).<sup>53</sup> Numerous editions of

<sup>52</sup> Gal., *De Libris propriis* 2 = Kühn, 1821–33, XIX: 21–2. Translation taken from Tucci, 2017: 195.

<sup>53</sup> According to Torrebadella-Flix, 2014: 39: '*De Arte Gymnastica* (1569) was for three hundred years the main point of reference for sporting gymnastic practice and physical education in the West.'



the book, some of which were reprinted several times, contributed to this (McIntosh, 1984: 73; Torrebaddella-Flix, 2014: 26). The first edition was followed by others in 1573 (the first one illustrated by drawings, most of which were by Pirro Ligorio), 1587, 1601 and 1644, all from the Venetian printers Giunti. The Paris and Amsterdam editions were published in 1577 and 1672, respectively, and the text was re-edited again in Venice in 1737. The first translations appeared in the nineteenth century: the Spanish translation in 1845 and the Italian one in 1856.<sup>54</sup> Mercuriale's reference to the *schola medicorum* and the inscription that mentions it, with the support of a highly prestigious doctor, was fundamental for the idea to become 'fixed' and for its recrudescence in other authors.

The impact of the epitaph of the *tabularius scholae medicorum* before it was said to be false must also be considered. First, the text was widely disseminated among the small circle of erudite scholars with which Ligorio was in contact in Rome,<sup>55</sup> especially those who surrounded Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. Thus, the inscription can be found in manuscripts by Onofrio Panvinio and Fulvio Orsini, the librarians in Palazzo Farnese who persuaded the cardinal to buy the ten tomes of the *Antichità romane* in 1567 (Vagenheim, 1987: 250; 2008b: 136–7). The first of these, a notorious plagiarist of Ligorio's works,<sup>56</sup> copied the inscription in a collection of inscriptions that is now kept in the Vatican Library.<sup>57</sup> The second copied it in his book *Imagines et elogia virorum illustrium et eruditorum*, published in Rome in 1570 (Orsini, 1570: 98). Aldo Manuzio the Younger, who was also close to Cardinal Farnese's circle,<sup>58</sup> also copied the inscription, and, although he was not directly linked to this sphere, Jean-Jacques Boissard included the inscription in his *Antiquitates Romanae*.<sup>59</sup> The inscription was published later in the large epigraphic corpora of Jan

<sup>54</sup> The Spanish edition, *Arte gimnástico-médico* (1845; De Paula Abril, 1973), was a translation by Francisco de Paula Abril of the 1672 Amsterdam edition and was published in Madrid by the printer Victoriano de Hernando. Eleven years later an edition in Italian was translated by Giovanni Rinaldi da Forlì, *Dell'arte Ginnastica Libri sei* (Faenza, Dalla stamperia di Pietro Conti). The English edition did not appear until 1864, with the title *The Muscles and their Story from the Earliest Times*, and is really a partial translation by John Blundell mixed with his own personal remarks (McIntosh, 1984: 73).

<sup>55</sup> As Vagenheim (1987: 250) states, the exchange of information within this group of scholars contributed greatly to the dissemination of the Ligorian inscriptions.

<sup>56</sup> Vagenheim, 1987: 199–200, 208–9 (with bibliography on Onofrio Panvinio in n. 1); 2003: 283; Orlandi, 2012: 184; Orlandi, Caldelli and Gregori, 2014: 46.

<sup>57</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 6035, Onofrio Panvinio, fol. 98. On this antiquary, see Ferrary, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 5241, Aldo Manuzio il Giovane, fol. 361. On this person, see Russo, 2007; on his epigraphical activity, see Calvano, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Latin 12509, Jean-Jacques Boissard, *Antiquarum inscriptionum quae in saxis et marmoribus Romanis videntur exacta descriptio*, 1571, fol. 660. Boissard copied several of Ligorio's false inscriptions in this book (Orlandi, Caldelli and Gregori, 2014: 47).

Gruter, Ludovico Muratori, and Johann Gaspar Orelli.<sup>60</sup> It was also reproduced in medical dictionaries and encyclopaedias, such as the *Dictionnaire historique de la médecine* by Nicolas Éloy, published in 1755,<sup>61</sup> and the *Encyclopédie méthodique. Médecine*, published in Paris between 1787 and 1830 ‘par une Société de Médecins’.<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, in the eighteenth century, the existence of a *schola medicorum* in ancient Rome was not in doubt, as it was supported by the authority of Mercuriale and transmitted in the main epigraphic catalogues. In consequence, new archaeological discoveries were associated with the place. A good example is found in the book by the famous archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti*, dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Albani and published in Rome in 1767. In chapter V of the *parte quarta (Riti, costumi ed arti)*, titled ‘Scuola de’ Filosofi’, he refers to a mosaic conserved in the Villa Albani:<sup>63</sup>

Il monumento al Num. 185 nella villa dell’Em.o Alessandro Albani è in musaico, scoperto già nel territorio dell’antica Sarsina, città dell’Umbria, in oggi della Romagna . . . Vedesi in quest’opera espressa una radunanza di sette filosofi, così come a Vienna nel celebre codice di Dioscoride della biblioteca Imperiale si osservan dipinti altrettanti medici, ciascheduno col nome notato alla sua figura. Potrebbe dirsi per avventura, che anche nel nostro musaico ne sia rappresentata un’ accademia di medici, ed in ispecie ciò che i Romani dicevano *schola medicorum*; la quale tenevasi in un edificio pubblico, ornato anche di statue, conforme dimostra l’iscrizione: TRANSLAT. DE. SCHOLA. MEDICOR. che sinora non è stata pubblicata, e mirasi scolpita sopra il piano superior dello zoccolo della mentovata statua d’un Amazzone nella villa Mattei.

It is striking that Winckelmann does not mention Ligorio, Mercuriale, the inscription of the *tabularius* or the ruins on the Esquiline, but refers to the *schola medicorum*, which he can only have known of by means of some of those references. It is therefore clear that Winckelmann, like scholars of the ancient city in general, had accepted the existence of the *schola medicorum*. However, he introduces two new elements in the story: a mosaic and an inscription.

The mosaic in the Villa Albani (now the Villa Torlonia) represents seven figures, or ‘sette filosofi’ in Winckelmann’s words (Fig. 3). The author relates it to a famous image in the Vienna Dioscurides, the illustrated manuscript of *De*

<sup>60</sup> Gruter, 1603: 632, no. 4 (ex Mercuriali); Muratori, 1739–42, II (1740): 924, no. 15, who dates it to the time of Augustus (‘nunc primum agnoscimus, ut reor, Medicorum Scholam Romae, imperante Augusto’); Orelli, 1828: 256, no. 4226.

<sup>61</sup> Éloy, 1778: 165. This historical dictionary was translated into Italian by B. Cessari, *Dizionario storico della medicina, che contiene . . . Composto in francese del Signor Eloy*, Tome I, Naples, 1761, which copies the text on page 165.

<sup>62</sup> Moreau, 1787–1830, III: 218–26, s.v. ‘Archiatre’; the text of the inscription is reproduced on page 222.

<sup>63</sup> Winckelmann, 1767, II: 242–3, with a drawing of the mosaic in vol. I without an identifying page or number.



Fig. 3. Mosaic of the Villa Torlonia representing seven sages (© Fondazione Torlonia).

*materia medica*, written in the early sixth century, which shows a group of seven famous physicians who are identified by their names (Fig. 4).<sup>64</sup> Because of the similarities between the two images (the same number of individuals dressed in the Greek style) and despite the cultural distance between them, Winckelmann claimed that the mosaic might also represent a group of doctors: to be exact, an academy of physicians or ‘ciò che i romani dicevano *schola medicorum*’. Thus,

<sup>64</sup> Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, *Codex medicus Graecus* 1, fol. 3v. In the picture, inside a richly decorated frame, one can see a group of seven figures whose names are outside the frame: in the centre, seated on a chair, is Galen of Pergamon, who is flanked by three pairs of physicians, identified as Crateuas, Dioscurides, Apollonius Mys, Nicander, Andreas, and Rufus of Ephesos.



Fig. 4. The Vienna Dioscurides. *Codex medicus Graecus* 1 fol. 3v, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Creative Commons CC0).

he considered that medicine is symbolized by the serpent that the figure on the left of the mosaic is holding (which he thinks is a portrait of the physician Nicander, who is represented holding a serpent in the image in the Vienna Dioscurides) and by the four containers represented above the portico, which would symbolize containers of spices used in medicine. He adds that the figure touching the sphere with a stick must be a geometician or astronomer, which he also relates

to medicine because astronomic knowledge allowed the influence of the heavens in the course of illnesses to be consulted.<sup>65</sup> However, for us, there is nothing in the mosaic that necessarily suggests that the figures are doctors. They all wear the distinctive Greek *pallium*, most of them without anything under it and with a bare chest. This clothing is compatible with the representations of physicians or any other man of wisdom. The interpretation that the figure on the left is holding a serpent is questionable; and the recipients might symbolize any other thing. Moreover, the similarities with a mosaic from Pompeii now kept in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, known as ‘Plato’s Academy’ (Fig. 5),<sup>66</sup> suggest the reproduction of a Late Hellenistic model which probably aimed to represent seven fields of knowledge or sciences,<sup>67</sup> one of which would undoubtedly have been medicine. The mosaic described by Winckelmann clearly represents a meeting of sages, but not necessarily physicians, and much less the supposed *schola medicorum*.

The second document that Winckelmann mentions as evidence is an inscription that was unknown until then, inscribed on the base of a statue that he claimed had decorated the building. The statue is known as the Mattei Amazon, a second-century AD copy of a Greek original now kept at the Vatican Museums.<sup>68</sup> The text *translata de schola medicorum* is engraved on its base, meaning ‘transferred from the school of physicians’ (Fig. 6). This would therefore be the first evidence in stone of the existence of the *schola*, an exceptional document that would also represent one of the sculptures that decorated its interior.<sup>69</sup> However, the doubts about its chronology invalidate it as a legitimate document. Even though the text was published in the *CIL* as genuine (*CIL* VI 29805 = *ILS* 5481 = EDR115591), and it has been interpreted by several authors in that way,<sup>70</sup> Spinola (1999: 48) considers that the inscription

<sup>65</sup> This is known as iatromathematics or astrological medicine, based on the belief in the influence of the stars on events, which emerged in Hellenistic Egypt: Gil, 1969: 403–57.

<sup>66</sup> Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN), inv. 124545. The resemblance between the two mosaics is evident. The one in the MANN possesses the same structure with four recipients and the column with the clock, and the figures, also seven in number, are arranged in the same way and dressed in the same fashion. Additionally, one of the figures points to a sphere opposite the group.

<sup>67</sup> It might also be seen as an allegory of the seven wise men of Greece, or the *Septem sapientes* to whom Hyginus dedicated *Fable* 221.

<sup>68</sup> Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Galleria delle Statue 59, inv. MV.748.0.0. This is a Roman copy of an original by Phidias or Polykleitos that was acquired by Clement XIV for the Vatican Museums in 1770. Until then, and from at least 1613, it was in the Villa Mattei (now the Villa Celimontana) (Helbig, 1891: 130; Corsaro, 2014: 321).

<sup>69</sup> As noted, this is one of the documents that are currently cited to justify the existence of the *schola medicorum* (see above, nn. 3 and 9).

<sup>70</sup> Briau, 1877: 99; Amelung, 1903: 454–5; Bozzoni, 1904: 180, n. 3; Gummerus, 1932: 38, no. 121; Below, 1953: 31, n. 123; Korpela, 1987: 103, n. 43; Papi, 1999: 254 (who says: ‘un’altra attestazione del collegio è tramandata da *CIL* VI 9566’, the epitaph of the *scriba medicorum* discussed below); Corsaro, 2014: 321. Di Stefano Manzella, 2007: 410, who cites the text incorrectly (*translata ex schola medicorum*), considers it to be ancient but admits that the custom



Fig. 5. Plato's Academy mosaic from Pompeii, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Napoli, inv. 124545 (Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal).

'potrebbe invece essere moderna': the text might refer to a place in the property that Cardinal Alessandro de Medici (Pope Leo XI for 26 days in 1605) owned between S. Maria Nova (now the Basilica of Santa Francesca Romana) and the Coliseum, in the Quartiere Alessandrino, so that the inscription would indicate that the Amazon was moved in more modern times, and *medicorum* would refer to the family surname and not to a group of physicians. Other sculptures from the collection of the same cardinal, which are now exhibited together with

of leaving an epigraphic trace in connection with a *translatio statuarum* continued to be followed until the modern age. Palombi (2007: 74; 2014: 340) dates the inscription between the late third and early fourth centuries AD.



Fig. 6. Inscription on the base of the Mattei Amazon (© Governatorato SCV — Direzione dei Musei).

the Amazon, entered the Mattei collection through the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo, a scholar and patron in the first half of the seventeenth century, who Spinola suspects was the author of the inscription.<sup>71</sup> It should be recalled that as ‘maestro di camera’ of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, Cassiano dal Pozzo was very interested in Ligorio’s manuscripts and had copies made of the Ligorian inscriptions in the library of the Palazzo Farnese (Vagenheim, 1987: 250).<sup>72</sup> This raises the possibility that Cassiano knew about the *schola medicorum* through those manuscripts, which might have inspired him when he engraved the text on the base of the Amazon. In addition, when assessing the validity of the inscription on the statue of the Amazon, another inscription on the base of a statue should be taken into account. This base, of which only a foot remains, is in the Villa Wolkonsky in Rome, and its inscription also says ‘transiata de schola medicorum’ (Fig. 7).<sup>73</sup> At first, Palombi (2007: 73) thought that this was further evidence of the *schola medicorum*, but he later concluded

<sup>71</sup> Spinola, 1999: 48, no. 59; 2004: 481–3, no. GS 59. See also Spinola, 2000: 287–8; Tucci, 2017: 212.

<sup>72</sup> According to Stumpo (1986), ‘è probabile che la formazione artistica e culturale del D. sia avvenuta nell’ambiente dei Medici e nei primi anni del suo soggiorno romano’, and that Dal Pozzo ‘era molto interessato ai celebri manoscritti di Pirro Ligorio, acquistati da Carlo Emanuele I e conservati gelosamente a Torino’. The encyclopaedic interest of Cassiano dal Pozzo (in antiquity and in other fields) is well known, and the best example is the ‘Museo Cartaceo’ he assembled in the early seventeenth century. For many years, the erudite vocation of Cassiano dal Pozzo has been the object of academic interest (as is the case for ‘The Catalogue Raisonné Project’ at the Warburg Institute, University of London), and a vast bibliography on various aspects of his collecting has been produced as a result. Regarding the epigraphic materials from Cassiano’s collection, see Stenhouse, 2002.

<sup>73</sup> It was first seen in Caprensi’s house by the German archaeologist H. Brunn (Jahn, 1852: 415) and later also by Henzen (CIL VI 29805). Cf. Matz and von Duhn, 1881: 458, no. 1598.



Fig. 7. Base of a lost statue in Villa Wolkonsky (Behrens, Neg. D-DAI-ROM WOL-2016.0161).

(2014: 340) that this inscription was modern, as did Spinola (2000: 287–8). It is reasonable to suppose that two inscriptions with similar text and palaeography, engraved on similar objects, also share the same age. In conclusion, the doubts about the chronology of the inscription on the base of the Amazon statue do not make it a legitimate source for the study of the *schola medicorum* or evidence of its existence.

The first doubts about the authenticity of the inscription of the *tabularius scholae medicorum* arose in the eighteenth century. It is not surprising that the first to be suspicious was Scipione Maffei, a pioneer in the development of an analytical method to detect false inscriptions (Calvelli, 2019b: 88–90). In his *Ars critica lapidaria*, he refers to the inscription copied by Ligorio and states, ‘Nomen Celsi, Schola Medicorum & Ollae cum stasis illis *In Fronte*, cum quibus coniungi non solent, in aliquam me dubitationem adducunt’ (Maffei, 1765, III: 356).<sup>74</sup> It should be stressed that Maffei suspected not only aspects related to epigraphic habit, such as the incoherence in the formulae connected with the position of the *olla* and the size of the tomb in the same text, but also of the expression *schola medicorum*. In 1873, Wilmanns copied Gruter’s text and wondered ‘num genuina?’, but without any further comment (Wilmanns, 1873: 166, no. 2494). Finally, as mentioned above, in 1885 the text was included in the fascicle of the *CIL VI* dedicated to the *inscriptiones falsae* in Rome, when it was definitively acknowledged to be a forgery, even though some authors continued to cite it as authentic until the early twentieth century.

<sup>74</sup> In fact, the name Celsus is not unusual in urban epigraphy (92,734 examples documented in the Epigraphic Database Rome).



#### 4. THE SCHOLA MEDICORUM IN SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the framework of French historical positivism, some publications aimed to construct a more scientific and detailed narrative about medicine and physicians in the Roman age. The analysis of ancient sources was fundamental in this. In this regard, the doctor and librarian in the Académie de Médecine, René Briau, published three books about medicine in ancient Rome between 1866 and 1877 (Briau, 1866, 1874, 1877). As he stated in the second of these (Briau, 1874: 121–3), his aim was not to add anything to the history of medicine as regards the knowledge of the different doctrines, which had been studied fully, but to explore the history of the medical profession and concentrate on such aspects as the position of physicians within Roman society, the role played by the profession, and the relationships that were established with both the administration and private individuals. The study of Roman medicine was thus linked with the social history of Rome.

Briau first briefly alludes to the *schola medicorum* in 1874,<sup>75</sup> but makes a more complete study of the place in *L'archiatrie romaine ou la médecine officielle dans l'Empire romain* (1877), with particular interest in the figure of the *archiater* and his role in what the author calls 'official medicine'. In chapter 5, devoted to the 'archiâtres scholaires', Briau discusses the teaching of medicine in Rome and the places where it was taught. He thought that the places where physicians met for their discussions and lectures were the same places where Greek and Latin letters were taught (the Temple of Peace, gymnasiums, the Palatine library, and porticos), but when these were insufficient because of the development of medicine, the physicians founded a college and built a centre for their meetings. In this way, he dated the foundation of the *schola medicorum* in Augustus' time or the beginnings of Tiberius' reign (without giving any reason) and interpreted it as a place used for scientific meetings and for courses and lectures that focused on the teaching of theoretical medicine. He also added that it was the home of a well-organized society, with a chairman or *archiater* and an archivist or secretary (Briau, 1877: 98–109). Moreover, he stated that the regional catalogues did not mention it, but that 'son existence ne peut en aucune manière être mise en doute', mainly because sixteenth-century writers had been definite about the existence of the place (Briau, 1877: 99).

According to Briau (1877: 105), 'it should first be recalled that Mercuriale, who was the first to publish this document, was a serious, honest and wise scholar, who was conversant in the study of Antiquity and of unimpeachable good faith. It is impossible to imagine that he wished to deceive

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<sup>75</sup> 'Elle était sur le mont Esquilin, et ses salles étaient ornées de tableaux et de marbres nombreux, dont on a pu voir et apprécier les restes dans les ruines de cette schola, qui se voyaient encore très belles au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il existe aussi actuellement à Rome dans la villa Albani, une mosaïque qui est désignée sous le titre de scuola dei medici' (Briau, 1874: 187, n. 4).

his readers.<sup>76</sup> This statement shows the enormous weight of the authority of past scholars, in this case Mercuriale, who were not to be questioned. The sources that Briau puts forward in his reasoning are Ligorio's false inscription, which he regards as authentic, the inscription on the statue of the Amazon, which he considers to be ancient and also associates with the mosaic in Villa Albani, and a third text that until then had not been connected with the *schola medicorum*. This is an inscription from Rome which is now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli and is dated between the reign of Antoninus Pius and the early third century AD. The interpretation of the text is clear and unmistakable: *D(is) T(itus) Aurelius M(anibus) / Telesphorus, scriba / medicorum* (Fig. 8).<sup>77</sup> According to Briau, it is evident that *medicorum* refers to a meeting, college or society of physicians, of which the deceased was the secretary or scribe, and the only society of physicians that was known was the *schola medicorum*. For this author, it also made sense that the *schola* would have hired employees responsible for writing, bearing in mind that an archivist of the *schola* was already attested (Briau, 1877: 109–10).

Telesphorus' epitaph undoubtedly refers to the scribe of a number of doctors, and figures like the scribe are known to have been common in Roman professional colleges. However, the brevity of the text does not allow the nature of this group of physicians to be understood. To interpret this text correctly, it must be put into context. One should consider not only the provenance of the monument and the exact information it provides (in this regard the onomastic of the man is of great interest) but also the different forms of managing and organizing medical activity in ancient Rome.

Since the time of the Republic, in the richest senatorial houses of Rome, it was usual for physicians and midwives to form part of the domestic service, and they sometimes formed authentic health teams with their own organization and hierarchy (Alonso Alonso, 2018: 182–91). The same system existed in the imperial palace, where from Augustus' time medical teams were organized in *decuriae* (Alonso Alonso, 2018: 139–53). For instance, a *supra medicos* and a *decuria medicorum* are known among the people buried in the *monumentum Liviae*.<sup>78</sup> Similar terminology is seen amongst the *cubicularii*, a group of domestic employees linked to the large senatorial families from the Republican

<sup>76</sup> English translation by Peter Smith.

<sup>77</sup> CIL VI 9566 see p. 3895 = ILS 7817 = ILMN 1 140 = *SupplIt Imagines* Roma 4 4330 = EDR113402. The same person is documented in a Greek inscription with a similar text (IGUR IV 1673; Samama, 2003: 528–9, no. 485). As Samama explains, the Greek text of *T. Aurelius Telesphorus* formed part of Dr Iaia's collection of inscriptions, most of which came from the area of Porta Capena, where the Latin inscription was found in 1732. This suggests that both inscriptions had been exhibited together (Samama, 2003: 529, n. 89). Papi and Palombi include it among the valid evidence of the *schola medicorum* (see Palombi, 1997–8: 132; 2007: 73; 2014: 340; Papi, 1999: 254).

<sup>78</sup> *Eleutheris / Liviae l(iberta). // M(arcus) Livius / Liviae l(ibertus) / Orestes, supra med(icos) (CIL VI 3982 = ILS 1844 = SupplIt Imagines Roma 1 1314 = EDR119457). M(arcus) Li[vius] / Boeth[us], / dec[ur(io)] / medico[rum] (CIL VI 3984 = EDR136492; cf. CIL VI 3983 = EDR136491).*



Fig. 8. Epitaph of the *scriba medicorum* T. Aurelius Telesphorus (© EDCS).

period, and later also to the imperial family, who were in charge of everything connected with the *cubiculum* (Rostovtzeff, 1901: 1734–7; De Ruggiero, 1910). Thus, inscriptions have identified the *supra cubicularius*,<sup>79</sup> the *decurio cubiculariorum*<sup>80</sup> and another professional figure who was at the service of those employees: the *scriba cubiculariorum*.<sup>81</sup> The *scriba cubiculariorum* is documented especially in the context of the imperial house, and in fact nearly all those that are known (four out of five) were imperial freedmen. Bearing this in mind, it might be suggested that T. Aurelius Telesphorus was the secretary of the physicians working in the imperial palace and not of a supposed *schola medicorum*. The onomastics support this. The combination of the *tria nomina* with a Greek cognomen is compatible with the status of freedman (Solin, 1971: 121–38; 2003: 363–6), which must have been Telesphorus' legal position when he died. In addition, the praenomen and nomen of the scribe are like those of the Emperor Antoninus Pius before he was adopted by Hadrian in AD 138, when his name was T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1513). This suggests that this scribe was a freedman of the emperor, and therefore part of the *familia Caesaris* and secretary of the physicians who worked in the imperial household, which are fully documented, as indicated above. Consequently, the real nature of the group of physicians mentioned in the concise text can be interpreted in that way, and not necessarily as the members of a *schola medicorum*.

Shortly after Briau's book appeared, the expert in French literature Maurice Albert published *Les médecins grecs à Rome*, in which he defined the *schola medicorum* as a 'jeune rivale de la grande école, toujours florissante,

<sup>79</sup> *CIL* VI 3954–5; 4439; 6645; 8766; 9287; 33842.

<sup>80</sup> *CIL* VI 3959; 5747; 8773; *AE* 2004, 209.

<sup>81</sup> *CIL* VI 8767 (Claudius Storaci *Actes lib.*); *CIL* VI 8768 (freedman of Domitian); *CIL* VI 8769 (Vitalis Aug. lib.); *CIL* VI 33770 (freedman of Hadrian); *AE* 1946, 99 (Ti. Claudius divi Claudii lib. Philius).

d'Alexandrie' (Albert, 1894: 136–8). According to Albert, the concession of citizenship to Greek physicians granted by Julius Caesar led those doctors to form an organization and work together,<sup>82</sup> which in turn led to the foundation of a centre with archives, offices and employees where the physicians met to discuss, explain, experiment and read their studies. Albert similarly based his narrative on the inscription of the *tabularius*, the epigraph of T. Aurelius Telesphorus, and the mosaic in Villa Albani, where he even recognizes the representation of Augustus' physician, Antonius Musa.<sup>83</sup> Although Albert does not cite Briau, several details show that his account was based on him, such as the reference to sixteenth-century travellers and the fact that he dated in 1874 (the year when R. Briau first mentions the *schola medicorum*) the time when 'on a retrouvé sur l'Esquilin un de ces Auditoria'.

Both scholars contextualize and include the *schola medicorum* in the social history of Rome. They also relate it to the phenomenon of associationism, which in the late nineteenth century began to be a specific field of study, first with T. Mommsen's dissertation *De collegiis et sodaliciis Romanorum, accedit inscriptio Lanuvina* (1843; Kiel), and especially after the publication of J.P. Waltzing's book, which studied the topic through epigraphic documentation. In it, the *schola medicorum* became the official association of the physicians in ancient Rome.<sup>84</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, the *schola medicorum* continued to appear in studies on medicine and doctors in the Roman age. In *I medici ed il diritto romano*, Bozzoni (1904: 180) claimed that the *schola medicorum* owned a building on the Esquiline where the physicians met, but was not used for medical instruction.<sup>85</sup> In the same year, in the entry 'Medicus' in the *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, Reinach associated the place with the education and training of doctors, while accepting that it might also have been simply a meeting place.<sup>86</sup> In 1907, Theodor Meyer-Steineg proposed that the *schola* was built in the reign of Trajan and that it was used for teaching although, since it had an archivist, it must also have possessed a large library.<sup>87</sup> In turn, Gummerus (1932: 30, no. 68; 38, no. 121) included the

<sup>82</sup> Albert refers to the measure promulgated by Julius Caesar in 46 BC that granted the concession of Roman citizenship to all those who practised medicine in the city and who, because of their origin, did not already possess it. See Suet., *Iul.* 42.

<sup>83</sup> On this physician, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 853. The same affirmation is found in Penso, 1984: 178, fig. 90: 'mosaïque connue depuis des siècles par le nom de *Schola medicorum*, École des médecins. Des archéologues prétendent que le premier personnage à droite serait le portrait d'Antonio Musa.'

<sup>84</sup> Waltzing 1895–1900, II: 132, n. 3; III: 324, no. 1378; IV: 486, no. 19. Waltzing cites the inscriptions of Ligorio, the Mattei Amazon and the *scriba medicorum* as the sources attesting to the place.

<sup>85</sup> This author cites as sources the inscriptions on the base of the Mattei Amazon and of the *scriba medicorum* and refutes the validity of the inscription of the *tabularius*.

<sup>86</sup> Reinach, 1904: 1674, n. 18, where he questions Ligorio's inscription and accepts as valid the inscriptions *CIL* VI 29805 and *CIL* VI 9566.

<sup>87</sup> Meyer-Steineg, 1907: 67, who regards the three inscriptions as genuine.

inscriptions on the Mattei Amazon and of the scribe in his corpus of inscriptions of physicians in the Roman Empire and, while he did not go into the topic in detail, he stated that a *collegium medicorum* and a meeting place for physicians existed in Rome.

Since the early twentieth century, hardly any of the authors who have discussed the *schola medicorum* have taken as authentic the inscription of the *tabularius* invented by Ligorio, which originated all the studies about such a place since the sixteenth century. In any case, the invalidation of that evidence was not a problem, because since the eighteenth century the topic had been enriched with new documentation that, a priori, supported the existence of the place. Moreover, since the late nineteenth century, research on associations in the Roman age provided a theoretical framework that gave meaning to the existence of a college and a meeting place for physicians. Nonetheless, within this context, one scholar examined the matter in more critical terms. Adalberto Pazzini, a doctor and lecturer in history of medicine at La Sapienza, questioned (1934: 467–72) whether the place really existed, and analysed the different documents that mentioned it in order to answer that question. Beginning with Ligorio's inscription, he affirmed that everything connected with the *schola medicorum* was the fruit of 'ragioni fittizie ed artefatte' that had been repeated from one author to another over time, using vague terms and through 'almost identical words that are repeated in each text'. He finally concluded that the *schola medicorum* never existed. However, in a book published in 1940, Pazzini no longer denied the existence of the place, but admitted that he did not know when it began to function and that it might have been a scholastic institution or either a community or association (1940: 13–14).<sup>88</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth century, the expression *schola medicorum* practically disappeared from specialized literature,<sup>89</sup> but the idea that physicians formed colleges and had meeting places remained. The discovery in 1934 of the edict that Vespasian addressed to the city of Ephesus in AD 74 undoubtedly helped to support this idea (Herzog, 1935: 967–1019; *FIRA*<sup>2</sup> I 73; Oliver, 1989: 119–23, no. 38). In this text, the emperor gave immunity and privileges to teachers and physicians, to whom he also granted permission to meet in sacred places, sanctuaries and temples.<sup>90</sup> Bearing in mind that this is a rescript

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<sup>88</sup> On this occasion, Pazzini proposes two testimonies as proof of the existence of the *schola medicorum* but he also acknowledges that the actual presence of the *schola* is only a supposition. The first one is the inscription on the plinth of the Mattei Amazon, which he considers indirect evidence. The second are the ruins of the real temple of Minerva Medica, found in 1825 near the Gardens of Maecenas, which the author considers a plausible headquarters of the *schola*. Otherwise, and surprisingly, in this publication Pazzini claims that the *Curiosum Urbis* situates the *schola medicorum* on the Esquiline, which is false.

<sup>89</sup> For example, Below (1953: 31, n. 123) refers to *collegia* of physicians and inscriptions that mention the establishment of *scholae*, where a registrar (the *tabularius*) and a secretary (the *scriba*) worked, but does not include the expression *schola medicorum*.

<sup>90</sup> 'And [it shall be] permissible to them [to hold gatherings] in precincts, sanctuaries and [temples] wherever they choose and be inviolate' (translation by Oliver, 1989: 120).

(Oliver, 1989: 121), it is likely that the measure was taken on the collective's request. According to Scarborough, thanks to this right acquired with Vespasian, 'physicians apparently attempted to regulate themselves by formation of medical clubs which had quarters of their own as well as secretaries to record proceedings of meetings.' Scarborough (1969: 131) also refers to the inscriptions of the Amazon and of the *scriba medicorum*, and to a text from Beneventum that cites a *collegium medicorum* in the times of Trajan.<sup>91</sup> Later, Jackson (1988: 58–9) affirmed that 'like other craftsmen, doctors had the right to form their own craft association or guild (*collegium*), and *collegia* of doctors are known at Turin and Beneventum in Italy,'<sup>92</sup> but he does not refer to an association of physicians in the capital city.

In his prosopography of physicians in ancient Rome, published in 1987, Korpela also considered that the colleges of physicians were created from the time of Vespasian's edict onwards, and he claimed that three documents confirmed the existence of meeting places and secretaries in the city. These documents are the inscriptions of the Mattei Amazon and of T. Aurelius Telesphorus, and a Greek inscription coming from Rome that includes a dedication to Emperor Commodus by a decurion of the physicians which mentions the restoration of a mosaic (Korpela, 1987: 103; 195, no. 224).

[ὑπὲρ νίκης] / [καὶ διαμονῆς] / [Αὐτοκράτορος] / [Μ(άρκου) Αὐρηλίου] / [Κομμόδου] / Ἀνω[veίνου] /  
 Εὐσεβ[οῦς] / Εὐτυ[χ]ο[ύς] / Ἐπα[φρό]δε[ιτος] / ἀπελε[ύ]θ[ερος] / δεκαδάρ[χης] / ἱατρ[ῶν τήν] /  
 ψηφο[θεσίαν] / ΤΡΗ[— —].<sup>93</sup>

'For the victory and enduring reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus Pius Felix. Epaphroditus, freedman, decurion of the physicians, was responsible for installing a mosaic.' (Samama, 2003: 523–4, no. 479)

According to Moretti, the first editor of the text, Epaphroditus was the decurion of a public corporation of physicians who had carried out the restoration of a mosaic that may have been in the *schola medicorum*.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Palombi thought that, as the decurion in the physicians' college, the dedicator would have been in charge of restoring the mosaic mentioned in the

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'Furthermore, let it be permitted for them ... to gather (?) ... for meetings (*synodoi*) in the sanctuaries (*temenes*), holy places (*hiera*), and ... temples (*naoi*) (?) ... — wherever they may choose — and be considered safe from violence' (translation by Philip A. Harland, AGRW ID# 24691, <http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/letters-of-vespasian-and-domitian-on-physicians-and-instructors-74-ce-93-94-ce/>).

<sup>91</sup> A year later, Nutton (1970a: 216–17) affirmed that 'inscriptions confirm the existence of a *schola medicorum* at Rome,' alluding to the same texts.

<sup>92</sup> On the corporations of physicians documented in epigraphs at Benevento and Turin, see below, nn. 101–2.

<sup>93</sup> *IGUR* I 30. The inscription is undoubtedly from Rome, but the exact findspot is not known.

<sup>94</sup> 'Epaphroditus, decurio medicorum, pavementum aedificii cuiusdam (fortasse schola medicorum) tessellis exornandum curavit in honorem imperatoris Commodi inter annos 185 et 192' (*IGUR* I 30).

text in the college building, i.e. in the *schola medicorum*. Moreover, the date of the inscription, determined to be between AD 185 and 192, led him to suggest that the reason for the restoration was the fire that affected the area around the Temple of Peace in AD 192, after which the zone was rebuilt. In sum, the chronological coincidence between the fire and the dedication in the inscription, which mentions restoration works, together with the fact that it was a *decurio medicorum* who had this work done, led Palombi to locate the *schola medicorum* in the area of the catastrophe: to be precise, in the Temple of Peace (Palombi, 1997–8: 132–3; 2007: 73; 2014: 340), which was frequented by doctors, as mentioned above. The precise location he proposes is the southern hall of the Temple of Peace, where the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian was later built and still exists (Palombi, 2014: 341). However, all these arguments are based on accepting some things as true when they may not be. First, the expression δεκαδάρχης ἰατρῶν does not necessarily refer to the decurion of a public college of physicians. In this case, considering the addressee of the dedication, it is more likely that it was the decurion of the physicians who worked in the house of the imperial family (Nutton, 1970b: 236). Second, the epitaph does not say which type of building the mosaic was in. It has been deduced that it was a meeting place for doctors solely because of the dedicator's profession, but it might be any other kind of building. Third, the coincidence between the times of the fire and the dedication is not so precise, as the former took place in spring and the latter must have been raised before December, the month when the emperor died (Tucci, 2017: 212). However, the restoration may have been due to other causes, as there is no archaeological connection between the inscription and the area affected by the fire in AD 192. In conclusion, while Palombi's hypothesis is attractive and plausible, it is not certain or provable, like all the other sources that are supposedly evidence of the existence of the *schola medicorum*.

After Korpela's research, apart from the aforesaid references to the *LTUR* and Palombi, as far as I know, no other mentions have been made of the *schola medicorum* in Rome in studies and books about Roman medicine.<sup>95</sup> Only a brief note appeared in a 1995 paper in which Nutton studied the collegiate actions of physicians in antiquity: 'At Rome, the *schola medicorum*, which had its own scribe, was housed in a building decorated with at least one large statue, of which, alas, the plinth alone remains today.'<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> There are no references to this place in, for example, Gourevitch, 1984; De Filippis Cappai, 1993; Cruse, 2004; Nutton, 2004; and André, 2006, to mention a few publications. It is worth citing M. Hirt Raj's remark (2006: 43–4) that in Rome the physicians seem to have met in two temples, the Templum Pacis and 'peut-être un temple de Minerve, sur l'Esquilin', but she gives no further explanations.

<sup>96</sup> Nutton, 1995: 7, n. 20, which cites *ILS* 5481, and the two epitaphs (Greek and Latin) referring to the *scriba medicorum*. In addition to the citations that have been mentioned, one of the last references known is in López García, 2015: 191, which includes the idea of Palombi, 1997–8, and Meneghini, 2009.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

So, what can be said about the *schola medicorum*? The terrain we have covered in the course of this investigation has shown that no ancient source includes that name. The only two inscriptions that document it, both on statue pedestals, were probably carved in the modern age. In turn, all the sources of the Roman age that have been associated with the *schola medicorum* do not really mention such a place: the epitaph of the *scriba medicorum* and the dedication of the δεκοδάρχης ιατρῶν document, respectively, the subaltern and the head of a group of physicians, but we do not know the nature of either group. Equally, the mosaic in the Villa Albani represents a group of Greek sages, not necessarily implicated in the medical profession. The only other source is the inscription conceived by Pirro Ligorio, which is the true origin of an ideal construct that has endured in time.

At this point, it is worth wondering whether a meeting place for physicians makes sense or would be necessary, bearing in mind the day-to-day practice of medicine in Rome. Acknowledging the idea of a structure of an association implies accepting that physicians worked together and had a collective behaviour that, in fact, is not apparent in the sources. Galen, the outstanding witness of the daily work of the medical profession in the second century AD, mentions informal meetings of doctors in the Temple of Peace, and the public anatomical demonstrations that brought together, among other people, physicians to observe, learn and debate, but he does not refer to collegiate groups. In his descriptions of clinical cases and visits to patients, he mentions a series of physicians who worked more or less individually, although several of them might meet around the bed of a patient to give their prognosis.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, he usually refers to the doctors with their own name rather than to teams that worked together. We should also recall the competition that existed between the followers of different medical sects. It is true that there were groups who gathered around a figure whose doctrine they followed, but in a scholastic rather than a professional way.<sup>98</sup> We can recall the image, albeit slightly exaggerated, that Pliny the Elder (*HN* 29.21) draws of physicians, whom he accuses of being avaricious and rapacious because they worked solely for money and lowered their rates to compete with each other (Boudon-Millet, 2016: 115–18). The sources seem to picture a situation of rivalry rather than of harmony and agreement.

The epigraphic sources are equally revealing. Apart from the examples that have been mentioned here, no examples of collective references to physicians that might be interpreted as associations are known in urban epigraphy.<sup>99</sup> The argument *ex silentio*

<sup>97</sup> See for instance Boudon-Millet, 2016: 111–53, in which the author narrates the first time that Galen spent in Rome, describing famous cases in which he acted, such as Eudemus' illness and the healing of Boethus' wife. On Galen's stay in Rome, see also Nutton, 2020: 31–51.

<sup>98</sup> The case of Thessalus of Tralles is well known, as he claimed to be able to train a physician in six months (Gal., *De methodo medendi* 1, 1, 2 = Kühn, 1821–33, X: 4–5).

<sup>99</sup> This does not include generic references to physicians in the epitaphs of private individuals, in which they are mentioned in order to accuse them of the death of the deceased person (*CIL* VI 68 =



is significant, bearing in mind the abundant epigraphic documentation related to the collective, which mainly records physicians in their epitaphs alone or together with some family member. Away from Rome, there are a few epigraphic allusions to corporations of doctors. In Alexandria, the physicians' association dedicated a statue to its leader (*archiatros*) in the year AD 7;<sup>100</sup> in Ephesos, several texts refer to the association (*synedrion*) of physicians of the Mouseion in the second and third centuries AD (*IEph* 719; 1161–7; 2304; 3239); in Benevento, a text dated in Trajan's time mentions a *collegium medicorum*;<sup>101</sup> in Turin, the *medici Taurini* dedicated a herm to the *divus Traianus*;<sup>102</sup> lastly, a limestone altar dedicated to the *Numina Augustorum*, the *genius coloniae* and Apollo that mentions in a generic way the *medici et professores* in *Aventicum* has suggested the existence of a college of physicians in that city.<sup>103</sup> Yet in Rome no documentation about confraternities of physicians is known outside the imperial house or the residences of the large senatorial families. A city like Rome, with so many potential clients, so many possibilities of profit, and with different medical sects and views about the *ars medica*, must have been more propitious for the disaggregation than the congregation of doctors in an association. The existence of a college of physicians in Rome cannot be considered until AD 368, when the emperors Valentinian I and Valens organized the public health service and established an *archiater* for each region in the city.<sup>104</sup> Symmachus (*Relat.* 27.2) refers to this group of *archiatri* in his *Relationes*, when he cites a *collegium omne medicorum*.

In conclusion, the existence of a *schola medicorum* in Rome has not been proven. In the light of the available evidence, we can only echo the words of Pazzini in 1934 and state that 'la *Schola medicorum* non è mai esistita.'

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*ILS* 3513; *CIL* VI 25580; *CIL* VI 30112; *CIL* VI 37337). We may equally recall the case of T. Flavius Paederos Aug. lib. Alcimianus, who was *superpositus medicorum ex ratione patrimonii*, i.e. the head of the physicians linked to the office that managed the imperial finances (*CIL* VI 8504 = *ILS* 1845 = *SupplIt Imagines* Roma 2 2873 = EDR029477).

<sup>100</sup> Römer, 1990: 81–8, with a photo; Kayser, 1994: 283–5, no. 97; Hirt Raj, 2006: 41–3.

<sup>101</sup> *CIL* IX 1618 = *ILS* 6507 = EDR102220. See also Alonso Alonso, 2018: 182; 264, no. 225.

<sup>102</sup> *CIL* V 6970 = *ILS* 3855a = EDR109118. The expression *cultoribus Asclepi et Hygiae* in the text leaves open the question of whether it was a professional *collegium* or a group of physicians in the city who used to worship the deities of health. Cf. Alonso Alonso, 2018: 287, no. 310.

<sup>103</sup> *CIL* XIII 5079 = *ILS* 7786. According to Rémy, 2010: 151–2, no. 51, the physicians in Avenches may have been members of a college. Contra Bielman and Mudry, 1995, who instead of a professional college proposed that there was a religious type of association devoted to the worship of Apollo.

<sup>104</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 13.3.8. This provision established that the remuneration of these physicians came from the taxes paid by the population.

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- AE *L'Année Épigraphique*. Paris, 1888–.
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, consilio et auctoritate Academiae litterarum regiae Borussicae editum*. 1863–.
- EDR *Epigraphic Database Rome*. [www.edr-edr.it](http://www.edr-edr.it)
- FIRA<sup>2</sup> Riccobono, S. et al. (1940–3) (eds) *Fontes iuris Romani anteiustiniani*. Ed. altera aucta et emendata. Florence, Barbèra.
- IEph *Die Inschriften von Ephesos (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien)*. Bonn, R. Habelt, 1979–84.
- IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*. 1903–.
- IGUR Moretti, L. (1968–90) *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae*. Rome, Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica.
- ILMN 1 Solin, H., Camodeca, G. and Kahlos, M. (2000) *Catalogo delle iscrizioni latine del Museo Nazionale di Napoli I: Roma e Latium*. Naples, Loffredo.
- ILS Dessau, H. (1892–1916). *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. Berlin, Weidmann.
- InscrIt *Inscriptiones Italiae*. 1931–.
- PIR<sup>2</sup> *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I. II. III. 2a ed.* 1933–.
- SupplIt *Supplementa Italica. Nuova Serie*. 1981–.

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