

JAMES W. ERMATINGER

B.F.: BONUM FACTUM OR BONA FORTUNA

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 79 (1989) 161–162

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

B.F.: BONUM FACTUM OR BONA FORTUNA

Editors have expanded the letters B.F. that appear at the beginning of some Latin inscriptions¹ as either *Bonum Factum* or *Bona(e) Fortuna(e)* without offering any justification for doing so. The purpose of this note is to assemble and analyze the evidence for each possibility and to determine the true meaning of B.F.

Mommsen, in his commentary on CIL 3.347 and 3.383, suggested that B.F. could be either *Bonum Factum* or *Bona Fortuna* and connected the latter with Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ, which occurs at the beginning of some Greek inscriptions. He did not offer any evidence and did not commit himself to either case. Bormann for CIL 6.406 took B.F. to be *Bonum Factum*, also without discussion, though he mentioned the possibility of *Bona Fortuna*, again related to Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ. Hübner, commenting on CIL 2.754 and 2.4107, took B.F. as *Bonum Factum*. Most recently Crawford and Reynolds have likewise expanded B.F. to *Bonum Factum*, without comment.²

On the other hand, Domaszewski suggested that B.F. in CIL 3.6996 stands for *Bona Fortuna*, as did Mommsen in CIL 10.3075, where they stand at the end of the inscription. Hirschfeld, in a note on CIL 12.993 and Anderson, in dealing with a series of inscriptions from Asia Minor, both argued that B.F. stood for *Bonae Fortuna*.³ Finally, there are numerous cases in which editors have not commented on the letters B.F. at all.⁴

There is some literary evidence that helps with the problem. Isidorus in *Etymologiae* 1.23 clearly states that B.F. means *Bonum factum* in judicial notes: *De notis iuridicis. Quaedam autem litterae in libris iuris verborum suorum notae sunt, quo scriptio celeris breviorque fiat. Scribatur enim verbi gratia per B et F 'bonum factum'*. In addition, Suetonius in *Julius* 80.2 and *Vitellius* 14.4 has *Bonum factum* prefacing a *libellus*, which in both cases is a mock edict. Moreover, Tertullian gives the impression that *Bonum factum* is quite a normal addition in edicts (*Pud.* 1), while Probus, in his section on legal actions,

¹ The inscriptions with B.F. are: CIL 2.754; 2.4109; 3.249; 3.251; 3.316; 3.347; 3.383; 3.6058; 3.6996; 3.7195; 3.13704; 3.14184³⁷; 3.14184³⁸; 3.14184⁴⁸; 3.14184⁴⁹; 3.14184⁵²; 3.14184⁶²; 3.14187⁹; 3.14195²⁷; 3.14404; 6.406; 6.10139; 6.22857; 6.25681; 6.31614-5 = 1.838-9; 6.36431; 6.36431; 8.8417; 10.3075; 12.993; ILS 467, 653, 1373, 1396; K.Erim, J.Reynolds and M.Crawford "Diocletian's Currency Reform: A New Inscription" JRS 61 (1971) 172 = AE 1973 526.

² Erim, Reynolds, Crawford (above note 1).

³ J.G.C.Anderson "Explorations in Galatia cis Halym Part II" JHS 19 (1899) 52-119, especially numbers 8,87,93.

⁴ See, for example, CIL 3.249; 3.251; 3.316; 3.14195²⁷; 3.14404; 6.10139; 6.22857; 6.25681; 6.36549; 6.39431; 8.8417.

equates Q.B.F. with *quare bonum factum*.⁵ For legal documents, then, B.F. would seem to stand for *Bonum factum*.

There is also some evidence, however, to suggest that B.F. can stand for *Bona Fortuna*. First, a rescript from Gordianus dated to A.D. 238 has at its beginning *Bona Fortuna*. This is similar to a Latin rescript prefaced by the Greek Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ.⁶ And second, there are many inscriptions with B.F. which are not edicts, but are similar to the Greek inscriptions with Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ,⁷ where such an expansion might be postulated. On the basis of this evidence, it appears that B.F. is *Bona Fortuna* in non-legal contexts such as milestones, tombs and dedications.

B.F. can therefore stand for both *Bonum factum* and *Bona Fortuna*, depending on the situation. For edicts B.F. is an abbreviation for *Bonum factum*, which should probably be expanded to *Bonum factum (sit)*⁸ (let it be a good action). For non-edicts, B.F. should be taken as *Bona Fortuna*, which could be expanded to *Bona Fortuna (sit)* where the two words are nominative (let there be good fortune), or more likely to *Bona Fortuna*, an ablative of means analogous to the Greek Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ which is surely a dative of means (with/by good fortune).⁹

From the list of inscriptions in note 1 in which B.F. occurs, two sets may be established. In the two edicts (CIL 6.31614-5 and AE 1973 526) B.F. should stand for *Bonum factum (sit)*. Since the other inscriptions are non-legal, B.F. there should be expanded to *Bona Fortuna*.

Bloomington, Indiana

James W.Ermatinger

⁵ For Probus, see GLK 4, 274.

⁶ Bruns⁷ 90, pp. 263-4 = IGRR 1.674 = CIL 3.12336; originally published by Th.Mommsen "Gordians Decret von Skaptoparene" ZSt 12 (1892) 244-267. Bruns⁷ 93, p.215 is a Latin rescript prefaced by Ἀγαθῆ Τύχῃ.

⁷ E.g., IGRR 1.580.

⁸ Suetonius Aug. 58.2: *Quod bonum, inquit, faustumque sit*; and Calig. 15.3 *Quod bonum felixque sit C.Caesari sororibus eius*. But s.v. *factum* OLD 670, 1-d, where *bonum factum* seems to be taken as standing by themselves without any verb understood. Here it is described as a "formula of good omen prefaced to edicts, etc." In the case of Suetonius, because they are not genuine edicts, it seems even more likely that he is parodying a real formula.

⁹ The dative as used by O.Hirschfeld CIL 3.83 and 3.14184⁴⁸ the word are dedication to the goddess *Bona Fortuna* and have no bearing on the present investigation.

ZPE 81 (1990) 252

Corrigendum

S. 162:

Z. 1 von Fußnote 9 muß folgendermaßen lauten: "The dative as used by O. Hirschfeld CIL 12.993 and Anderson (above note 3) seems unlikely. In addition, in CIL 3.83 and 3.14184⁴⁸ the words are a dedication" ...