

TWO SENATORS UNDER CONSTANTINE*

By T. D. BARNES

A handbook of astrology seems an improbable source of information about Constantine's dealings with the Roman Senate. Yet if the work were contemporary, and if both author and addressee were senators, then a few passages might betray a hint of transactions either not otherwise attested or not elsewhere documented in any detail. Such is in fact the case with the *Mathesis* of Julius Firmicus Maternus Junior v.c., of which one passage in particular can be made to disclose specific facts of some historical importance. Maternus discusses the horoscope of a man, whose father was exiled after twice being ordinary consul, and whose own career advanced from exile to the urban prefecture of Rome. Neither is named; they were familiar to both the author and the addressee of his work.¹

Maternus was writing in the last years, probably in the very last months, of the reign of Constantine. He refers to an eclipse of the sun during the consulate of Optatus and Paulinus, which occurred on 17 July 334 (*Math.* i, 4, 10).² On the other hand, news of the death of Constantine (22 May 337) had not yet reached Maternus. For the reigning emperor is styled 'dominus atque imperator noster Constantinus Augustus' (i, pr. 7), and 'divi Constantii filius' (where the manuscripts have 'Constantini', but the context imposes emendation),³ and Maternus beseeches the gods to protect and preserve 'Constantinum maximum principem et huius invictissimos liberos, dominos et Caesares nostros' (i, 10, 14).

Apart from his own references to activity in the law courts (iv, pr. 1 f.), no official career is known for Firmicus Maternus.⁴ For the addressee, however, inscriptions supplement what his friend or client discloses.⁵ Maternus first promised to compose a treatise on astrology, when Fl. Lollianus Mavortius was *consularis* of Campania (i, pr. 2): when Lollianus became *comes Orientis*, he continued to ask for what had been promised, and Maternus finally dedicated the work to him as 'proconsuli ... et ordinario consuli designato' (i, pr. 7/8). The proconsulate was that of Africa, and all these posts fall after 328, when Lollianus is attested as *curator* of the water supply and the Via Minucia.⁶ But the ordinary consulate was not in fact bestowed for many years. Lollianus was Prefect of the City in 342, but not consul for another thirteen years (355), after which he served Constantius as pretorian prefect in Illyricum. It is an easy hypothesis that Lollianus had received formal designation to an ordinary consulate (for 338) before the death of Constantine interrupted his career.⁷ Hence Maternus should be writing precisely in the spring of 337.⁸

I. THE HOROSCOPE

Quantum autem antisciorum vis valeat et quantum antisciorum ratio operetur, ex hac genitura discere poteris, quam subicere curabimus. Is, in cuius genitura Sol fuit in Piscibus, Luna in Cancro,

* The substance of the present paper was delivered in a colloquium at Harvard University on 21 February 1974, and I learnt much from the discussion on that occasion. The subsequent written version has been read and greatly improved by Professors G. W. Bowersock and C. P. Jones, Dr. F. G. B. Millar, Dr. J. F. Matthews and Mr. E. J. Champlin. I am also extremely grateful to Professor G. J. Toomer for his advice on astrological questions.

¹ *Math.* ii, 29, 20: 'cuius haec genitura sit, Lolliane decus nostrum, optime nosti'. The horoscope received no discussion in L. Thorndike, 'A Roman Astrologer as a Historical Source: Julius Firmicus Maternus', *CP* viii (1913), 415–35.

² F. Boll, *RE* vi (1909), 2362.

³ *Math.* i, 10, 13: 'dominus et Augustus noster ac totius orbis imperator pius felix providus princeps, Constantinus scilicet maximus divi Constantii filius augustae ac venerandae memoriae principis, qui ...

apud Naissum genitus a primo aetatis gradu imperii gubernacula retinens, quae prosperis nancius fuerat auspicis, Romanum orbem ad perennis felicitatis augmentum salubri gubernationis moderatione sustentat'. For the necessity of emendation, cf. F. Boll, *RE* vi, 2366. The fact that W. Kroll and F. Skutsch printed 'divi Constantini' occasionally misleads scholars (Teubner ed., i (1897), 37, cf. ii (1913), 547).

⁴ He was from Syracuse (*Math.* vi, 30, 26, as emended by Skutsch) and lived in Sicily (i, pr. 4).

⁵ *PLRE* i, 512–14. But *ILS* 3425 might belong to another Lollianus, cf. *Phoenix* xxvii (1973), 145.

⁶ *ILS* 8943.

⁷ But not that 'possibly Lollianus fell from imperial favour owing to the dedication to him of this work on astrology' (*PLRE* i, 513).

⁸ T. Friedrich, *In Iulii Firmici Materni de Errore profanarum religionum libellum quaestiones* (Diss. Giessen, 1903; pub. Bonn, 1905), 53.

Saturnus in Virgine, Iuppiter in Piscibus in eadem parte in qua Sol, Mars in Aquario, Venus in Tauro, Mercurius in Aquario isdem cum Marte partibus, horoscopus in Scorpione, eius genituae pater post geminum ordinarium consulatum in exilium datus est, sed et ipse ob adulterii crimen in exilium datus et de exilio raptus in administrationem Campaniae primum destinatus est, deinde Achaiae proconsulatum, post vero ad Asiae proconsulatum et praefecturam urbi Romae.

(*Math.* ii, 29, 10)

Firmicus Maternus devotes a lengthy chapter of his *Mathesis* to the doctrine of *antiscia*, first expounding how *antiscia* are computed (ii, 29, 1–9), then illustrating the application of the doctrine from a single horoscope, which he quotes (ii, 29, 10) and then expounds in great detail (ii, 29, 11–20). Once the true adept in astrology has calculated the *antiscia* of a particular horoscope, he can easily discover ‘omnia quae in fatis hominum quaeruntur’,⁹ and if he has carefully ascertained the *vis antisciorum*, then ‘numquam eum tractantem fata hominum coniecturae fallit intentio’ (20). The horoscope adduced is discussed for its relevance to the careers and vicissitudes of both its possessor (‘ipse’) and his father (‘eius genituae pater’), and the discussion discloses information which Maternus does not include in the initial presentation (10).

The father, who was exiled after twice holding an ordinary consulate (10), had suffered ‘adsiduae insidiae’ (11). The exile was the work of his enemies whom Jupiter, transmitting his influence from Pisces to Libra, made superior to him (12), and it was decreed by a vote of the Roman Senate (13). Further, Sol and Jupiter together, transmitting their influence to Libra and to the *cacodaemon*, show that the father’s extraction was ignoble (12).

The son was exiled for adultery, then snatched from exile to govern Campania, and advanced to the proconsulates of Achaea and Asia, and finally to the prefecture of the city of Rome (10). Before his exile, he had been oppressed by many illnesses (14; 16). His exile, like his father’s, was the work of enemies who overcame him (12), but he was tried and sentenced by the emperor (18). Nor was adultery (14; 17) the only charge: he was also accused of being ‘absconsarum litterarum scius’ (18), that is, presumably, of acquaintance with magic or the occult.¹⁰ Subsequently, however, he was liberated from exile (16) and advanced to the highest honours (19), while Saturn in Virgo and Mercury in Aquarius (in the original horoscope) decreed such learning and literary skill that his oratory and style were compared to those of ancient authors (20).

So far Maternus’ explicit testimony. The date of the horoscope which he describes and expounds can be calculated with some precision. In 1931, in an astrological journal, W. Koch determined the time at which the subject was born as approximately eleven p.m. on 14 March 303,¹¹ and in 1953, in one of the more prominent classical periodicals, O. Neugebauer calculated the hour of birth as 9 p.m. on the same day.¹² G. J. Toomer advises me that the year and the month are absolutely certain (no others fit the stated configuration), but that the day may be 15 March 303:¹³ all the other specifications will fit both days, but the full moon which occurred ‘tertio die’ (*Math.* ii, 29, 16) belongs to the night of 19–20 March,¹⁴ so that Maternus has made a mistake in his reckoning, either of two days (counting exclusively from 14 March) or of one (counting from 15 March).

II. IDENTIFICATION

The subject of the horoscope was born on 14 or 15 March 303 and became *praefectus urbi* before the death of Constantine, and his father was twice ordinary consul. Since the

⁹ On ‘antiscium’ as an astrological term, cf. A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L’astrologie grecque* (1899), 161 f. *TLL* registers no other occurrence of the word in Latin literature (ii, 184).

¹⁰ Compare *Math.* iii, 12, 6: ‘absconsarum litterarum facient peritos, magos philosophos et caelestia saepe tractantes’; iv, 12, 4: ‘absconsarum aut inlicitarum litterarum actibus inhaerescunt’.

¹¹ W. Koch, ‘Ceionius Rufius Albinus,’ *Astrologische Rundschau* xxiii (1931), 177–83. The article is not registered by K. Ziegler in the ‘Addenda Addendis’ to the reprinted second volume of the Teubner edition of the *Mathesis* (ii (1968), 559 f.).

I am grateful to Professor G. P. Goold for procuring me a photographic copy from the library of the Warburg Institute, London.

¹² O. Neugebauer, ‘The Horoscope of Ceionius Rufius Albinus’, *AJP* lxxiv (1953), 418–20, cf. O. Neugebauer and H. B. van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*. Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society xlvi (1959), 161, n. 5.

¹³ Private letter, 12 April 1974.

¹⁴ H. H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1650* (1973), 109; at the longitude of Babylon, the full moon occurred at precisely 0.35 a.m. on 20 March 303.

ordinary consuls of every year are known from several calendars and chronicles,¹⁵ and since there is extant a complete list of prefects of the city for the early fourth century,¹⁶ both men must be identical with attested persons, and their identification ought not to pose insoluble problems. Yet modern scholarship has often gone sadly astray.

Progress was long prevented by the lack of a critical edition of Firmicus Maternus' work. The *editio princeps*, published at Venice in 1497, was at once eclipsed by the Aldine edition (1499) and the two editions which Nicholas Pruckner based on it and published in Basle (1533 and 1551).¹⁷ No new edition was undertaken until the late nineteenth century, when the publishing house of Teubner decided to include the *Matheris* in their series of Latin texts. K. Sittl produced the first volume of his edition in 1894: it was denounced at once for gross incompetence,¹⁸ and no more ever appeared. Instead, Teubner transferred the commission to W. Kroll and F. Skutsch, whose edition was published in two volumes, the first in 1898 and the second in 1913 (after the death of Skutsch, and with the assistance of K. Ziegler).

Although only the last really deserves to be styled a critical edition, it was Sittl who took the decisive step which permitted identification of the horoscope. The Aldine and Pruckner's editions are based on badly interpolated manuscripts and print the horoscope under the heading 'Lolliani genitura',¹⁹ thus deceiving scholars for more than three centuries.²⁰ The *editio princeps* lacks the misleading gloss, and Sittl rightly ejected it from the text.²¹ T. Mommsen immediately produced an identification: if the argument proceeds from the iterated ordinary consulate, the father must be C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, consul in 311 and 314, the son Ceionius Rufius Albinus, Prefect of the City of Rome from 30 December 335 to 10 March 337.²²

The identification was long accepted as certain,²³ but in recent decades it has come to be discarded by practitioners of prosopography and students of the fourth century. E. Groag, who had formerly accepted the prevailing identification,²⁴ gave the lead. He adduced two grounds for rejection: first, that the *geniturae pater* was of low birth, whereas Volusianus was of a noble lineage; and second that it was inconceivable that the son's consulate (in 335) should be omitted.²⁵ But what other candidates are there? Groag rejected T. Fl. Postumius Titianus (*cos. II* 301)²⁶ and Sex. Anicius Paulinus (*cos. 325*)²⁷ since neither was twice *consul ordinarius* and neither was of low birth. Hence, since no more iterated consulates are attested in the early fourth century, except for emperors, Groag was compelled to postulate one: he conflated the two Vettii Rufini who were consuls in 316 and 323 to produce the father, and identified the son as C. Vettius Cossinius Rufinus (*praefectus urbi* from 20 August 315 to 4 August 316).²⁸ This bold hypothesis entails at least one other improbable corollary, which Groag explicitly drew: the father's exile was presumably related in some way to Constantine's execution of his son Crispus (326), whereas the son must have been exiled more than twenty years earlier, by Diocletian or one of his imperial colleagues.²⁹ Nevertheless, A. Alföldi and A. Chastagnol accepted the

¹⁵ See the conspectus (44 B.C.–A.D. 613) provided by T. Mommsen, *MGH*, Auct. Ant. xiii (1898), 499 f.

¹⁶ *MGH*, Auct. Ant. ix, 66 f. (certainly complete from 291 to 354).

¹⁷ For precise bibliographical details, see *Br. Mus. Cat. of Printed Books*, lxxiii (1961), 432.

¹⁸ W. Kroll and F. Skutsch, 'In Firmicum Sittelianum emendationum centuriae duae primae', *Hermes* xxix (1894), 517–29. T. Mommsen was brief in the extreme, but still more devastating (ib. 618–19).

¹⁹ Pruckner's edition (1533, 1551), p. 42.

²⁰ Including B. Borghesi, *Oeuvres complètes* iv (1865), 521, and, less excusably, R. MacMullen, *Ancient Society* ii (1971), 106.

²¹ It finds no mention in his edition, not even in the apparatus criticus (i (1894), 71 f.). Sittl, however, continued to adhere to the false identification, and printed the words 'Achaiae ... Romae' in italics as 'vestigia editionis alterius a. 354 conjectae' (ib. 72, cf. *Archiv für lat. Lexicographie* iv (1887), 610).

²² *Hermes* xxix (1894), 471 f. = *Ges. Schr.* vii (1909), 449 f.

²³ C. H. Moore, *Julius Firmicus Maternus, der Heide und der Christ* (Diss. Munich, 1897), 3 f.; Bouché-Leclercq, o.c. (n. 9), 164 f.; Friedrich, o.c. (n. 8), 53; F. Boll, *RE* vi (1909), 2366; Schanz-Hosius, *Gesch. d. röm. Litt.* iv, 1^o (1914), 131. There is no mention, however, in O. Seeck's treatment of the Ceionii, *RE* iii (1899), 1858 f.

²⁴ *Wiener Studien* xlv (1926–7), 108.

²⁵ *Die Reichsbeamten von Achaia in spätromischer Zeit*. Diss. Pann., Ser. i, 14 (1946), 16 f.

²⁶ Certified as a second consulate by contemporary evidence: *CIL* vi, 2143; *IGRR* iii, 1268; *P. Flor.* 3; *PSI* 1037.

²⁷ Registered as a second consulate by A. Degrassi, *Fasti Consolari* (1952), 79. But contemporary documents bearing the consular date of 325 record no iteration: *ICUR* i, 35; *P. Oxy.* 52; 1626; *P. Lond.* 977; *Tread.* 7; 35; *Sammelbuch* 8019; 8020.

²⁸ Groag, o.c. (n. 25), 18.

²⁹ *ibid.* 20.

identification,³⁰ and A. H. M. Jones, though he made no acknowledgement to Groag, took it for indubitable.³¹

A third identification has recently been propounded. The first volume of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* enters both father and son as persons whose name is not certainly known,³² but argues with some degree of confidence that the son is the poet Publius Optatianus Porfyrius (Prefect of the City in 329 and 333), the father C. Junius Tiberianus (*cos.* 281, 291).³³ The career of the horoscope (it is urged) corresponds closely to Optatianus' career, but not to that of any other contemporary. Hence, since no *bis consules* of the preceding generation have similar nomenclature, it must be supposed that Optatianus did not use his father's names. Once that has been granted, the way lies open to identify the father as Junius Tiberianus, and the identities are held to be confirmed by the fact that Tiberianus was probably born c. 240, Optatianus between 260 and 270.³⁴

Such speculations are ruined by the date which the horoscope bears. Its subject was born on 14 or 15 March 303: the calculation is technical and precise, and far outweighs vaguer arguments derived from history or prosopography. It will not do to dismiss the astrological date as 'specious mathematical reasoning'.³⁵ A date of birth as late as 303 decisively disproves two of the three proposed identifications.³⁶ C. Vettius Cossinius Rufinus was *corrector* of Campania under Maxentius (306–312), before which he had already held several official posts in Italy.³⁷ Publius Optatianus Porfyrius wrote poems from exile in 324 referring to his earlier enjoyment of imperial favour—which is also not at all plausible for a man born in 303.³⁸ Moreover, the other evidence for his career, though neither plentiful nor all easy to interpret, seems to indicate that he was in fact born c. 260/70.³⁹

Rufius Volusianus and Ceionius Rufius Albinus remain as the father and son to whom Firmicus Maternus alludes. No private citizen of the late third or early fourth centuries was twice *consul ordinarius* except Volusianus and C. Junius Tiberianus (*cos.* 281, 291). But for Volusianus alone can a son be produced who possesses the requisite qualifications. Ceionius Rufius Albinus was *praefectus urbi* from December 335 to March 337, he was honoured at Rome as both a philosopher and as Volusianus' son,⁴⁰ and his birth can coincide with the date indicated in the horoscope (14 or 15 March 303).

III. THE FAMILY OF VOLUSIANUS

Meministi dixisse nos, quod Pisces antiscium in Libram mittant et Libra rursus in Pisces. Sol itaque et Iuppiter in Piscibus pariter constituti, in Libram mittentes antiscium, in hoc signo, in quo humiliatur atque deicitur,⁴¹ et in XII loco geniturae id est in cacodaemone, paternum genus ostendit ignobile et ipsi <et> patri famosum decernit exilium;⁴² Iuppiter vero, cuius vim ac potestatem antisci radius ex signo Piscium ad Librae transtulit signum, in XII loco id est in cacodaemone per

³⁰ A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (1948), 74, n. 2; A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire. Études prosopographiques* ii (1962), 65–8.

³¹ *The Later Roman Empire* iii (1964), 17, n. 64. B. Malcus, *Opuscula Atheniensia* vii (1967), 98 f., rejected Groag's identification, but offered a list of proconsuls of Asia under Constantine which fails to register anyone else who can be the proconsul of the horoscope (ib. 141).

³² *PLRE* i, 1004, Anonymus 1; 1006–1008, Anonymus 12. The entry for Ceionius Rufius Albinus makes no reference at all to the horoscope (i, 37).

³³ *PLRE* i, 1008: 'Optatianus is the most probable subject of the horoscope'.

³⁴ *PLRE* i, 1004: 'Paternus [i.e. Nonius Paternus, *cos.* II 269] and Tiberianus are thus left by elimination; dates make Tiberianus more likely; a consul of 281 without patrician ancestry should have been born about 240; a *Praefectus Urbi* of 329 . . . would have been born between 260 and 270.'

³⁵ As does Chastagnol, o.c. (n. 30), 95: 'Nous

avons vu que Groag pense plutôt—avec raison, nous semble-t-il—à Vettius Rufinus, préfet en 315–16, et à son père homonyme. Dès lors tombe entièrement le raisonnement mathématique spéculier de O. Neugebauer.'

³⁶ *Phoenix* xxvii (1973), 307.

³⁷ *ILS* 1217.

³⁸ Porfyrius, *Carm.* i, 1 f.

³⁹ On the chronology of Porfyrius' political and literary career, see now *AJP* (forthcoming).

⁴⁰ *ILS* 1222. For writers named Albinus, who might be identical with Ceionius Rufius Albinus, see W. S. Teuffel, *Gesch. d. röm. Litt.* iii⁶ (1913), 231, § 407. 5; *PLRE* i, 33 f.

⁴¹ Kroll and Skutsch note: 'sc. Sol de quo etiam sequentia solo dicuntur' (edn. i (1897), 82).

⁴² The addition of 'et' is due to E. Badian (verbally, on 21 February 1974). Elsewhere in his discussion, Maternus consistently uses 'ipse' to distinguish the son from the father: 'eius geniturae pater . . . , sed et ipse' (10), 'patrem . . . de ipso' (11), 'et ipsi et patri eius excitavit inimicos' (12), 'ipsum vero' (14).

antiscium [fuisset] constitutus plurimos et ipsi et patri eius excitavit inimicos et eos superiores esse perfecit.

(*Math.* ii, 29, 12)

Investigation of the family connections of C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus has been hampered by the preconception that he was of noble birth,⁴³ which also provided the main motive for denying his identity with the *bis consul* to whom Firmicus Maternus alludes.⁴⁴ Although no father is attested by explicit evidence, a putative ancestor has been discovered in the Nummius Ceionius Albinus whom works of reference register as *praefectus urbi* in 256 and 261–63 and consul for the second time in 263;⁴⁵ and Volusianus is sometimes supposed to descend from the consular Nummii Albini of the Severan age, or even perhaps from earlier Ceionii and Republican patrician families.⁴⁶

This reconstruction of his pedigree, however, relies excessively on dubious evidence. It is the *Historia Augusta* alone which indicates an alliance between Ceionii and Nummii Albini before the later third century. According to this source, the pretender Clodius Albinus descended from the Roman families of the Postumii and Albini and Ceionii: his father was one ‘Ceionius Postumus’ and his career was aided by his relative ‘Ceionius Postumianus’.⁴⁷ Further, after Septimius Severus defeated Albinus, he executed ‘Ceionius Albinus’ together with many other nobles.⁴⁸ At a later stage, the *Historia Augusta* produces another ‘Ceionius Albinus’ as *praefectus urbi*, to whom the emperor Aurelian writes a bogus letter.⁴⁹ Since all these allegations are either fraudulent or (at the very least) suspect of being invented, the *Historia Augusta* provides no warrant either for accepting the existence of these persons or even for turning Nummius Albinus (*cos. II* 263) into ‘Nummius Ceionius Albinus’.⁵⁰ Since a Nummius Albinus is not a plausible father for C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, better evidence is required to establish the latter’s alleged noble birth.

Nor need Rufius Volusianus descend from the noble Ceionii of the early empire. This family rose to prominence with L. Ceionius Commodus (*cos. ord. 78*), who subsequently governed Syria.⁵¹ His son was consul a generation later (*cos. ord. 106*), and likewise his son in turn (*cos. ord. 136*).⁵² The latter, better known to posterity as Aelius Caesar, did not long survive his adoption as Hadrian’s imperial heir. But he fathered three known children: his son became emperor as Lucius Verus and married a daughter of Marcus Aurelius, but had no discoverable male issue, while two daughters married respectable senators.⁵³ Thus, although descendants of L. Ceionius Commodus (*cos. ord. 78*) still existed in the Severan age,⁵⁴ the line bearing his name had disappeared, unless it was represented by unattested descendants of M. Ceionius Silvanus (*cos. ord. 156*), who was presumably a relative.⁵⁵

During the early third century, only a single Ceionius of any note is on authentic record: L. Ceionius[ius] . . . Alienus, an imperial procurator and governor of Sardinia under either Caracalla (211–17) or Elagabalus (218–22).⁵⁶ Towards the close of the century, there appear two Ceionii of some prominence, whom it may be possible to link to Volusianus and to each other: Ceionius Varus, attested only as *praefectus urbi* on 1 January 284 and

⁴³ Hence the mistaken attempt to force the sense of ‘paternum genus ostendit ignobile’ in *Phoenix* xxvii (1973), 306 f.

⁴⁴ E. Groag, *Reichsbeamten* (1946), 17; A. Chastagnol, *Fastes* (1962), 66; *PLRE* i, 1004.

⁴⁵ E. Groag, *RE* xvii (1937), 1409–11; G. Barbieri, *L’Albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino* (193–285) (1952), 298, no. 1674; *PLRE* i, 35, Albinus 9. H. Dessau was more cautious (*PIR*¹ N 180; 185).

⁴⁶ J. Morris, *Bonner Jahrbücher* clv (1965), 91 f.; *PLRE* i, 978; M. T. W. Arnhem, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire* (1972), 130 f. Morris prints a stemma (o.c., Beilage) which makes Rufius Volusianus the grandson of the *cos. II ord. 263* and the latter a direct descendant of L. Ceionius Commodus, *cos. ord. 106*.

⁴⁷ *HA*, *Clod. Alb.* 4, 1 f.; 6, 1. For a probable Ceionius Postumianus in the late fourth century, see *PLRE* i, 718–9, Postumianus 3.

⁴⁸ *HA*, *Sev.* 13, 3.

⁴⁹ *HA*, *Aurel.* 9, 2.

⁵⁰ R. Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (1968), 154 f.

⁵¹ *PIR*² C 603.

⁵² *PIR*² C 604; 605.

⁵³ *PIR*² C 606; 612; 614. Ceonia Fabia married Plautius Quintillus (*cos. ord. 159*), Ceonia Plautia Q. Servilius Pudens (*cos. ord. 166*).

⁵⁴ A daughter of Lucius and Lucilla was at least betrothed to Claudius Pompeianus Quintianus (Dio lxxiii (lxxii), 4, 4 p. 285 Boissevain). L. Ti. Claudius Aurelius Quintianus, *cos. ord. 235*, appears to be a descendant of the pair (*PIR*² C 992, cf. 975).

⁵⁵ *PIR*² C 610. The consul of 157 (*PIR*² C 602) is now known to have borne the names M. Vettulenus Civica Barbarus (*AE* 1957, 18).

⁵⁶ *PIR*² C 601, known only from *AE* 1910, 33 (Caralis).

285, and [Ce]ionius Proculus, consul suffect on 1 March 289.⁵⁷ If Volusianus' full name were taken to indicate that his mother was a Ceonia, then Ceionius Varus could be his maternal uncle, and Ceionius Proculus a cousin or brother.

As for Volusianus' father, two arguments can be combined and exploited. If his mother was a Ceonia, then his father was surely a C. Rufius, who may or may not have possessed the *cognomen* Volusianus. The horoscope in Firmicus Maternus reveals that its subject's paternal pedigree was ignoble (*Math.* ii, 29, 12): therefore, the father of Volusianus came from a family which had not yet attained consular rank.⁵⁸ Taken together, the two inferences permit a precise conjecture. Volusianus is surely one of the Rufii of Etruscan Volsinii, a family whose fortunes can be plotted in some detail, from the Severan age to the fifth century.⁵⁹ Their rise begins with C. Rufius Festus, a *primipilaris* of the late second or early third century, who became procurator of Dalmatia and Histria.⁶⁰ His children possessed senatorial rank (C. Rufius Festus Laelius Firmus v.c. and Rufia Procula c.f.), and two grandsons are attested as *clarissimi viri*, viz. Rufius Marcellinus and Rufius Proculus.⁶¹ Rufius Volusianus was presumably born in the fifth decade of the third century (240–50),⁶² and could, on the evidence available, be the son of the attested Rufius Proculus.

IV. CONJECTURAL STEMMA

The hypotheses adumbrated in the preceding discussion can be exhibited most clearly in a stemma.⁶³ But it must be emphasized that most of the relationships depicted result from combinations of varying degrees of uncertainty.

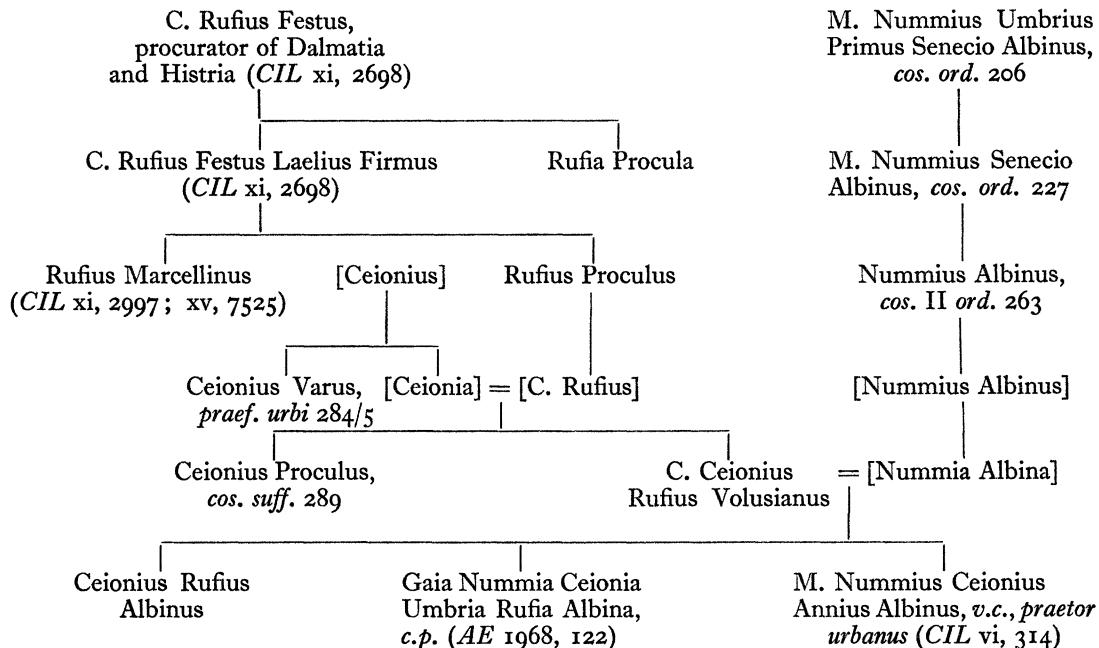


FIG. I. CONJECTURAL STEMMA OF THE FAMILY OF C. CEIONIUS RUFIUS VOLUSIANUS

⁵⁷ *PIR*² C 611 (only the Chronographer of the year 354); 609 (from the Fasti Caleni, *CIL* x, 4631 = *Inscr. It.* xiii. 1, p. 269).

⁵⁸ On the meaning of 'nobilis' in the imperial period, see *Phoenix* xxviii (1974), 444 f.

⁵⁹ On whom, see J. F. Matthews, 'Continuity in a Roman Family: the Rufii Festi of Volsinii', *Historia* xvi (1967), 484–509.

⁶⁰ *CIL* xi, 2698, cf. H. G. Pflaum *Carrières*

procuratoriennes i (1960), no. 215.

⁶¹ *CIL* xi, 2698; 2997; xv, 7525, cf. *Albo*, nos. 840–2; 2094.

⁶² He ought to have held a consulate before becoming *corrector Italiae* c. 282 (p. 46).

⁶³ Which differs considerably from those offered or assumed by O. Seeck, *RE* iii (1899), 1861 f.; E. Groag, *RE* xvii (1937), 1410; Morris, o.c. (n. 46), Beilage; Arnheim, o.c. (n. 46), 248; *PLRE* i, 1138.

If this reconstruction is well founded, several additional facts enhance its attractiveness. First, Ceionius Varus was appointed *praefectus urbi* during the course of 283, either by Carus or in the joint reign of his sons, Carinus and Numerianus:⁶⁴ Volusianus, presented here as his nephew, was almost certainly appointed *corrector Italiae* under the same régime. Second, a fragmentary list of priests and philosophers begins with the names of Rufius Volusianus and Rufius Festus, both *viri clarissimi* and both *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*: the conjunction is all the more appropriate if the pair were cousins.⁶⁵ Third, as *praetor urbanus*, M. Nummius Ceionius Annus Albinus made a dedication to Hercules in Rome, and Gaia Nummia Ceonia Umbria Rufia Albina is attested as a *sacerdos publica* at Beneventum.⁶⁶ The latter activity would be eminently suitable for the child of a prominent supporter of Maxentius.

V. THE CAREER OF VOLUSIANUS

C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus was not a noble who inherited a lofty position in Roman imperial society. He came rather from a family whose fortunes were rising, but which had not yet acquired a title to nobility. He rose high through his own exertions and political astuteness, made a good marriage into an established family (presumably not his first),⁶⁷ and founded a noble lineage which continued to hold high office in every generation for two centuries.⁶⁸

The earliest attested post for Volusianus is as *corrector Italiae* for eight years.⁶⁹ Since the second year of this tenure probably fell in the reign of Carinus and Numerianus (i.e. between July 283 and autumn 284), he was *corrector* from c. 282 to c. 290.⁷⁰ Volusianus' continuous tenure encourages speculation about what role he may have played in the civil war in which Diocletian defeated Carinus (spring or summer 285). When the two armies met at the river Margus, the outcome was decided by an assassination. Carinus was killed by a military tribune, who, whatever his private motives, need not have been acting alone.⁷¹ T. Cl. Aurelius Aristobulus was Carinus' consular colleague in 285 and his pretorian prefect: Diocletian maintained him in both offices.⁷² It is an easy surmise that both Aristobulus and Volusianus had performed useful services in the transference of the imperial power.

Volusianus continued to prosper, both during the reign of Diocletian and for a decade after Diocletian abdicated the imperial power (1 May 305). He was probably proconsul of Africa, in 305/6.⁷³ Maxentius entrusted him with the delicate task of suppressing a usurper, whose seizure of Africa was threatening the corn-supply of Rome and thereby the stability of his régime.⁷⁴ As a reward for success, Volusianus became *praefectus urbi* (28 October 310 to 28 October 311) and *consul ordinarius* in September 311, when he and Aradius Rufinus were proclaimed consuls for the year in the domains of Maxentius.⁷⁵ Nor did the death of Maxentius impair Volusianus' position. He soon became a *comes* of Constantine, who preserved his former rank and standing by appointing him *praefectus urbi* (from 8 December 313) and *consul ordinarius* (314).⁷⁶

⁶⁴ From 254 to 287, the Chronographer of 354 records the *praefectus urbi* in office on each 1 January, cf. G. Barbieri, *Akte des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für griechische und lateinische Epigraphik* (1964), 48.

⁶⁵ CIL vi, 2153 (Rome, St. John Lateran), cf. Matthews, o.c. (n. 59), 492 f.

⁶⁶ CIL vi, 314; AE 1968, 122. Both inscriptions must be dated from nomenclature, rather than the reverse, cf. G. Barbieri, *Albo* (1952), no. 1675; P. Caviuoto, *Epigraphica* xxx (1968), 133 f.

⁶⁷ Volusianus was born c. 245, while the postulated marriage to Nummia Albina should be dated c. 295.

⁶⁸ For possible descendants in the late fifth century, see A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain sous le règne d'Odoacre* (1966), 79 f.

⁶⁹ ILS 1213. Volusianus' jurisdiction appears to have embraced most of peninsular Italy, but to have excluded the Po valley, cf. A. Chastagnol, *Historia* xii (1963), 349 f.

⁷⁰ CIL x, 1655 (Puteoli), cf. A. Chastagnol, *Fastes* (1962), 53; PLRE i, 977.

⁷¹ Victor, *Caes.* 39, 11; Eutropius, *Brev.* ix, 20, 2; *Epit. de Caes.* 38, 8; Zosimus i, 73, 3 = John of Antioch, frag. 163. On the role of the high command in the deaths of earlier emperors, cf. R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (1971), 210 (Gallienus); 242 f. (Aurelian).

⁷² For his full career, PIR² C 806; Chastagnol, o.c. (n. 30), 21 f.

⁷³ ILS 1213. Possibly also *Inscr. lat. d'Afrique* 365 (Carthage); AE 1949, 59 (Mactar). On the date, cf. L. Poinsot, *Mém. soc. nat. ant. France* lxxvi (1924), 333 f.

⁷⁴ Victor, *Caes.* 40, 18; Zosimus ii, 14, 2 f. The suppression is assigned to 311 by C. H. V. Sutherland RIC vi (1967), 33; 419; 432. In favour of an earlier date, Chastagnol, o.c. (n. 30), 54 f.

⁷⁵ Mon. Germ. Hist., Auc. Ant. ix, 67; 76; 231.

⁷⁶ ILS 1213, etc.

Volusianus remained Prefect of the City until 20 August 315.⁷⁷ But his political position was becoming less tenable. Firmicus Maternus discloses pertinent details. His enemies began to attack him, and they eventually overcame him (*Math.* ii, 29, 11/12); he was tried in the Senate and exiled by senatorial decree (13).⁷⁸ The occasion is perhaps not beyond the reach of conjecture.⁷⁹ Constantine visited Rome during 315 to celebrate his *decennalia*, arriving on 18 or 21 July and departing on 27 September.⁸⁰ In the course of this visit, it seems, the Roman Senate dedicated an arch to Constantine to commemorate his liberation of the city three years earlier, and praised him for rescuing the state at one time from both the tyrant and all his faction.⁸¹ When Volusianus departed from office on 20 August 315, his disgrace and exile may have been immediate.

The fallen prefect died in exile, or at least without redeeming his disgrace and returning to office and imperial favour. That seems a legitimate, or rather a necessary, deduction from Maternus' discussion of the horoscope, which must otherwise have proceeded in a different fashion. Had Volusianus been restored to high office, then Maternus would surely have included his restoration among the facts which the true expert in astrology could predict from the stars. For, since he seeks to demonstrate how knowledge of the *antiscia* reveals all the vicissitudes of a man's life (*Math.* ii, 29, 9), he could not silently omit a second reversal of Volusianus' fortune without damage to the argument.

A law dated 'Crispo et Constantino CC. Conss.' is addressed 'ad Volusianum', with no title appended.⁸² The date intended is either 321 or 324, and the content of the law (the privileges of doctors and teachers) is more appropriate to a pretorian or urban prefect than to any other magistrate.⁸³ Hence, so it has sometimes been deduced, Ceionius Rufius Volusianus was pretorian prefect for a second time.⁸⁴ That is not possible. Alternatively, the date of the law has been emended to 354, and its recipient identified as a later Volusianus holding the pretorian prefecture of Illyricum in that year.⁸⁵ It might be better to let the transmitted date stand.⁸⁶ A Volusianus receiving a law in 321 could be a son of the fallen Volusianus (by a presumed earlier marriage)—and father of C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus (*praefectus urbi* in 365).⁸⁷

VI. THE CAREER OF ALBINUS

The details which Firmicus Maternus has vouchsafed can be combined with more explicit evidence to reveal a highly abnormal career for Ceionius Rufius Albinus. Both tribulation and supreme office came to him in his youth. He was born on 14 or 15 March 303, and became ordinary consul on 1 January and *praefectus urbi* on 30 December 335. In the intervening years, however, he had undergone the vicissitudes to which Maternus alludes. Albinus succumbed to the attack of his enemies and was exiled (*Math.* ii, 29, 12; 14); he was condemned by the emperor in person (18) on a charge of adultery (14; 17) and magic (18), and he might have met an untimely and violent death in exile, had the stars not ordained otherwise (16). Subsequently, Albinus was released from exile (16) and entrusted with administrative office, first in Campania, then as proconsul of Achaea and Asia (10).

⁷⁷ *Mon. Germ. Hist.*, Auct. Ant. ix, 67.

⁷⁸ This passage alone suffices to invalidate recent assumptions that the Roman Senate of the fourth century never acted as a court or witnessed the activities of mutually hostile factions (A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* i (1964), 332; 506 f.; Arnheim, o.c. (n. 46), 17).

⁷⁹ *Phoenix* xxxvii (1973), 308.

⁸⁰ O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (1919), 163 f.; T. D. Barnes, *JRS* lxiii (1973), 38.

⁸¹ *ILS* 694.

⁸² *CTh* xiii, 3, 1.

⁸³ T. Mommsen considered redating the law to Volusianus' urban prefecture, i.e. 313-15 (*Codex Theodosianus* i, 1 (1904), ccxvi).

⁸⁴ O. Seeck, *RE* iii (1899), 1859; A. Alföldi, o.c.

(n. 30), 73; Chastagnol, o.c. (n. 30), 57. Observe that *CTh* iv, 35, 21 'ad Volusianum pp.' lacks a date; although Seeck adduced it to support Volusianus' second pretorian prefecture in 321 (*Regesten* (1919), 61; 124; 171), an error for 'ad Volusianum pu.' is equally probable, cf. *CTh* xii, 1, 2.

⁸⁵ *PLRE* i, 979. A separate entry would have been advisable.

⁸⁶ So Arnheim, o.c. (n. 46), 196, without, however, perceiving the relevance of the horoscope, to which he alludes only when discussing Vettii (ib. 61).

⁸⁷ Who is normally presumed the son of Ceionius Rufius Albinus, cf. recently Chastagnol, o.c. (n. 30), 293: *PLRE* i, 1138; Arnheim, o.c. (n. 46), 248. If the arguments presented here are valid, the progeny of Volusianus' two marriages can perhaps be distinguished for several generations.

From Maternus' presentation, it is not necessary to deduce that Albinus came to grief at the same time as his father. On the contrary, the father was banished by senatorial decree, while the son was accused and tried before the emperor. Given the complete absence of evidence, speculation about the occasion and circumstances appears hazardous. Nevertheless, a hypothesis may be ventured, which, if true, would cast some light on a notoriously obscure episode. Albinus' exile should fall in the third decade of the fourth century: he could not have been plausibly accused of adultery many years before 320, and his recall must fall early enough to allow time for three governorships before his consulate and prefecture (335).⁸⁸ It might, therefore, stand in some relationship to the execution of Crispus (326).⁸⁹ The Caesar was presumably not murdered out of hand, but executed either after a formal trial and condemnation or at least after some sort of formal enquiry.⁹⁰ As for the charge or reason alleged, the penalty ought to indicate some form of treason. Albinus, who was convicted of adultery and magic, may have been implicated in some way. If that could be granted, the same hypothesis will serve to explain his subsequent sudden restoration (*Math.* ii, 29, 10: 'de exilio raptus'). Crispus (it is clear) died as the result of a dynastic intrigue which benefited the sons of his step-mother Fausta.⁹¹ But the empress herself was put to death not long after, apparently on a charge of adultery, which was always treasonable for the wife of an emperor.⁹² If Albinus had been exiled on the earlier occasion, he would without doubt have been recalled on the later.

Albinus became ordinary consul at the age of thirty-one, and *praefectus urbi* at the age of thirty-two. Both were remarkable distinctions for one so young: at this period an ordinary consulate or the urban prefecture was normally the culmination of a man's career and held by men many years his senior.⁹³ But the possibility of such an early elevation certainly existed:

In parte XIII Scorpionis quicumque habuerint horoscopum, Luna in aliquo cardine constituta,
erunt iudices famosa reportantes insignia dignitatis, de aliorum iudicium sententiis iudicantes,
habentes vitae necisque maximam potestatem. sed haec illis potestas decernitur ab anno XXX
vel XXXV. (*Math.* viii, 26, 4/5)

Maternus is not alluding to Albinus' own horoscope.⁹⁴ But the magistrates envisaged are clearly the urban prefect and the pretorian prefects: both types of prefect received appeals from the verdicts of other magistrates,⁹⁵ and both types of prefecture conferred nobility on their holders.⁹⁶

The age of Albinus has a modest relevance to a problematical inscription of Rome, known only by manuscript report, which commemorated the erection of a statue:

Ceinonium rufium albinum uc. cons. filo
sophum. rufi volusiani bis ordinarii cons
finium. senatus ex consulto suo quod eius liberis
post caesariana tempora id est post annos.
CCCLXXX. et ·I· auctoritatem decreverit
Fl. magnus ienuarius. uc. cur statuarum

(*Sylloge Einsidlensis* 40 (*CIL* vi, p. xii)).⁹⁷

It seems obvious that at least one reading is erroneous ('finium' for 'filium' in line 3), that the division between lines is faulty, and that the copy represents only part (the left

⁸⁸ None of the three is on independent attestation.

⁸⁹ Probably late spring 326, cf. *MGH*, Auct. Ant. ix, 232. The circumstances remain obscure. A recent writer asserts that 'the significant fact is that Crispus was illegitimate' (P. Guthrie, *Phoenix* xx (1966), 325). But the earliest allusion to his mother (in 307) uses the word 'matrimonium' (*Pan. Lat.* vii (vi), 4, 1).

⁹⁰ He was put to death near Pola (Ammianus xiv, 11, 20): therefore while Constantine was travelling to Rome from the East.

⁹¹ Guthrie, o.c. (n. 89), 327 f.

⁹² Philostorgius, *HE* ii, 4.

⁹³ A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (1960), 405 f., assuming that Albinus became prefect at the age of forty-eight (ib. 413).

⁹⁴ Professor G. J. Toomer kindly investigated the possibility of an allusion to Albinus, and pronounces against it (letter of 12 April 1974).

⁹⁵ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* i (1964), 481.

⁹⁶ *Phoenix* xxviii (1974), 445 f.

⁹⁷ Also *Sylloge Poggiana* 28 (*CIL* vi, p. xxxii), from a manuscript closely related to the extant *Codex Einsidlensis*, cf. ib., pp. ix; xxviii.

side) of the original inscription.⁹⁸ Whatever the purport of the last three lines (the precise figure points to a reckoning from 46 or 45 B.C.), the children of Albinus must have been too young for public life in 336: as was urged long ago on different grounds, 'liberis' (line 3) should probably be emended to 'litteris'.⁹⁹

VII. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The reconstruction of the families and careers of individuals is a necessary preliminary to any worthwhile social or political history, especially in a period as badly documented as the Constantinian age. The present prosopographical study is intended primarily to reconstruct the careers and family ties of two prominent individuals. But it ought to conclude with an indication, however brief, of the historical background against which the vicissitudes of Rufius Volusianus and his son must be set.

On 28 October 312, Constantine defeated Maxentius before the walls of Rome. The next day he entered the city in triumph, and soon he addressed the Senate in the Curia in a conciliatory fashion, steadfastly refusing to allow any revenge whatever for crimes committed under the 'tyranny' of Maxentius.¹⁰⁰ Both emperor and Senate (it will be supposed) had assessed the political consequences of Maxentius' death and saw the necessity of cooperation for mutual advantage. Constantine received validation of his claim to be the senior ruling emperor,¹⁰¹ while the first three *praefecti urbi* of Constantine had earlier been prefects of Maxentius—Annius Anullinus, Aradius Rufinus, and C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus.¹⁰²

As for the career of Ceionius Rufius Albinus, the influence of dynastic intrigues appears to be preponderant. His exile and restoration (it has been argued above) can be correlated with the executions of Crispus (326) and Fausta, and his consular colleague was Julius Constantius, the half-brother of Constantine and another former exile.¹⁰³ Constantius lost his life in 337, together with other actual and potential rivals to the sons of Constantine.¹⁰⁴ Albinus disappears from the historical record on vacating the urban prefecture (10 March 337), and the patron of Firmicus Maternus was denied the ordinary consulate to which he had been designated (*Math.* i, pr. 8). The three things may have a connection: at least one of the consuls who displaced Lollrianus may be conjectured to be a general who played some part in disturbing Constantine's plans for the imperial succession.¹⁰⁵

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⁹⁸ O. Seeck, *Hermes* xix (1884), 186 f., criticizing the text of W. Henzen (*CIL* vi, 1708). Seeck's bold restoration (producing an allusion to the reintroduction of senatorial elections) was accepted and printed in *CIL* vi, 31906 (C. Hülsen), but not by H. Dessau, *ILS* 1222.

⁹⁹ Seeck, o.c. 196.

¹⁰⁰ *Pan. Lat.* xii (ix), esp. 20, 4, addressing Rome: 'gladios ne in eorum quidem sanguinem distringi passus est quos ad supplicia poscebas', cf. 4, 4:

'conservati usque homicidarum sanguinis gratulatio.'

¹⁰¹ Lactantius, *Mort. Pers.* 44, 11.

¹⁰² A. Chastagnol, *Fastes* (1962), 63. On the identity of Anullinus, cf. *Phoenix* xxvii (1973), 139.

¹⁰³ *PLRE* i, 226.

¹⁰⁴ Julian, *Ep. ad. Ath.* 270 c, etc.

¹⁰⁵ viz. Fl. Ursus, cf. *Phoenix* xxviii (1974), 226 f. About his colleague, Fl. Polemius, nothing whatever appears to stand on record before 338 (*PLRE* i, 710).