

The Title and Manuscript Tradition of the *De viris illustribus*

The *De Viris Illustribus* is a series of 77 short units covering Roman history from Proca to Pompey. The work is contained in *Sexti Aurelii Victoris Liber de Caesaribus*, edited by Francis Pichlmayr, published in 1911, corrected by Gruendel and reprinted in 1961¹). Manuscript studies conducted by J. B. Titchener at the Ohio State University show that Pichlmayr's 1911 edition of the text is greatly in error and thus the 1961 reprint is not reliable either. The figure below gives the stemma of the earlier and more important manuscripts of the *De Viris Illustribus*. Titchener cites numerous instances which prove the existence of a single archetype²). The strongest single example occurs at the opening of Chapter 26, where all the manuscripts omit the name of Publius Decius Mus. Another important instance is in Chapter 4, where all the manuscripts have the identical error *Iovi delicio* Titchener has also proved that manuscripts *o* and *p* are of doubtful value in establishing the archetype, since they are so highly edited. Since *o* and *p* are of doubtful value in recovering the archetype, they are obviously not good evidence for the original text. Pichlmayr, however, follows *o* and *p* very closely, even to the point of including nine extra lives (78-86) which were probably not in the archetype.

The first step in establishing the text of the *De Viris Illustribus* is to recover the text of the archetype. This project immediately reveals two surprising facts. The title of the archetype is not *De Viris Illustribus* and Gaius Plinius Secundus is the author according to the codices. It is unclear which Pliny is intended since the works of both Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger were circulated under the name of C. Plinius Secundus. All of the

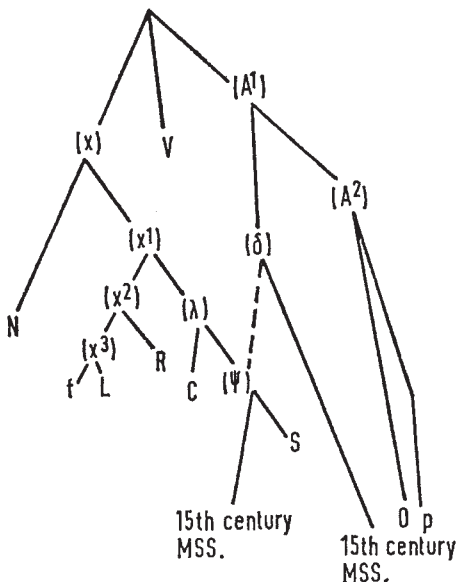
1) Leipzig: Teubner, 1961.

2) J. B. Titchener, "The A-Family in the Text Tradition of the Anonymous Liber de Viris Illustribus", *Classical Studies in Honor of William Abbott Oldfather*. Urbana- University of Illinois Press, 1943, pp. 184-89.

earlier and more important codices have the name *Gaius Plinius Secundus* except for *o*, which omits *Gaius*, and *p* which omits *Gaius* and *Secundus*.

The title of the archetype is not *De Viris Illustribus* but *De Illustrium*. *V* has the reading *De Illustrium*; (*X*) was either *De Illustrium* or *Illustrium*. Since *f* has *De Illustrium*, it appears likely that (*X*) had that reading and that *N*, *R* and *L* omitted *De*, since they recognized that the text was faulty. *C* and *S* have the title *De Viris Illustribus* which was the correction made by (λ). Pichlmayr follows *o* and *p* which also contain the reading *De Viris Illustribus*.

STEMMA Archetype (A^1) (x) *V* (A^2) (x^1) (δ) (x^2) *N* (λ)
 (x^3) *R* *f* *L* *C* (ψ) *S* 15th century MSS. *O* *P* 15th century
 MSS.



SIGLA

- V Vaticanus 1917 anno MCCCXXXVIII
 - o Oxoniensis 131 S. XV
 - p Bruxellensis (Pulmannianus) 9755 S. XV
 - N Barberinus IV C 34 S. XIV
 - f Reginensis Suec. 1494 S. XIV/XV
 - L Regina Lat. 1399 S. XIV
 - R Rossiano Lat. 395 S. XIV
 - C Oxoniensis 147 S. XIV/XV
 - S Hispalensis (in bibl. Columbina) AA 144. 50 S. XIV
- (The two groups of 15th century manuscripts derived from (ψ) and (δ) are of little significance in determining the archetype).

The original title cannot be recovered except by emendation. Possibly the *De* governed a noun (or nouns) in the ablative case which at some point was lost, along with a noun which *illustrium* modified (e.g. *De illustrium virorum factis*. Hyginus, writing about famous men, entitled his work *De vita rebusque illustrium virorum*). The title by which the work has been traditionally known is the grammatically correct *De Viris Illustribus*, the reading of later manuscripts.

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