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THE FAMILY OF MINUCIANUS?

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The ancient commentators on Hermogenes *περὶ στάσεων* tell us that its polemical passages are directed against a rhetorician named Minucianus.¹ Some sources say that this Minucianus was the first to develop the system of thirteen *στάσεις* which became canonical in late antiquity; this claim is probably conjectural and incorrect.² Even so, he was clearly an important figure in the history of rhetorical theory in late antiquity. His *τέχνη ῥητορική* was the subject of commentaries by the philosopher Porphyry and the sophist Pancratius (perhaps the father of the sophist Prohaeresius, familiar from Eunapius); and he may have been the author of a work on the progymnasmata on which Menander of Laodicea wrote a commentary.³ Long after his work had been displaced as a standard teaching-text, Hermogenes' commentators continued to cite his views with respect, and in many cases to prefer them to those of Hermogenes himself.

Standard modern treatments assert that Minucianus was a generation older than Hermogenes,⁴ but all that can be said for certain is that his work on *στάσεις*-theory was in circulation before that of Hermogenes. If the ancient tradition that Hermogenes wrote the *περὶ στάσεων* when he was seventeen were trustworthy, we could indeed infer with confidence that Minucianus was older than Hermogenes; but Radermacher and Rabe have shown that the biographical tradition must be treated with the utmost caution, so we cannot be sure at what point in Hermogenes' long career (he died, according to Philostratus, *ἐν βαθει γήρῳ*) the *περὶ στάσεων* was written.⁵ He and Minucianus may have been contemporaries and rivals; it is even conceivable that Hermogenes' polemic was the response of a mature teacher to innovations by a younger man. The relative age of the two rhetoricians must therefore be regarded as wholly uncertain.

The almost total absence of evidence renders this chronological uncertainty inevitable. We know little about Hermogenes, and next to nothing about Minucianus. Philostratus, our most important source for second-century sophists and rhetoricians, does not mention Minucianus at all; from this we can at least infer that, however distinguished as a theoretician and *τεχνογράφος*, he was not a star performer in declamation.⁶ The sophist named Minucianus recorded in the Suda must be a different person, since he is given a *floruit* under Gallienus (253–68). We do, however, know a good deal about the family of this younger Minucianus, and it is natural to wonder whether there was a connection between the two. Letronne's conjecture that the older Minucianus was the great-grandfather of the younger homonym

¹ References can be found in my commentary: M. Heath *Hermogenes On Issues* (Oxford 1995). I hope to examine the testimonia to Minucianus' rhetorical writings in detail elsewhere; a brief (and not wholly reliable) overview is given by W. Stegemann, *RE* XV/ii (1932), 1975–87 s.v. Minucianus (1).

² For the grounds for doubting the claim (made by Sopater *RG* 5.8.21f. Walz; Syrianus 2.55.1–3 Rabe; anon. *PS* 60.14f. Rabe) see M. Heath 'Zeno the rhetor and the thirteen *staseis*', *Eranos* 92 (1994), 17–22; cf. Heath (n. 1) 78f., 92f.

³ Suda P2098 (Porphyry), P12 (Pancratius: and cf. P2375 for the name of Prohaeresius' father), M590 (Menander: the treatise on progymnasmata is ascribed to a later Minucianus by Suda M1087, but there are grounds for suspecting that two homonyms have, as often, been confused: see n. 9 below).

⁴ O. Schissel, *Die Familie des Minucianus*, *Klio* 21(1926/7), 361–373, followed by Stegemann (n. 1). But they place his birth in the reign of Trajan, rather a long generation before Hermogenes (born 160/1, on the assumption that the performance, at the age of fifteen, before Marcus Aurelius recorded by Philostratus is to be dated to the eastern tour of 175/6).

⁵ L. Radermacher *RE* VIII (1913), 866–869 s.v. Hermogenes (22), drawing on the fundamental analysis of the tradition by H. Rabe, *Aus Rhetoren-Handschriften: 1. Nachrichten über das Leben des Hermogenes*, *RM* 62 (1907), 247–262; Radermacher is more rigorously sceptical of the content of the tradition as it developed after Philostratus, as Rabe himself was later to become: *Prolegomenon Sylloge* (Leipzig 1931), xiv–xix.

⁶ Compare Zeno, a writer on theory (cf. Heath (n. 2)) whom Philostratus does not notice in his own right, but mentions in passing (*VS* 607) as having taught the sophist Antipater of Hierapolis *τὸ περὶ τὴν τέχνην ἀκριβέως*.

was elaborated in an influential study of the family of Minucianus by Schissel.⁷ In this paper I wish to urge caution, and to draw attention to a possible alternative identification of the older Minucianus.

The known members of the family of the younger Minucianus are:⁸

(1) Mnesaeus: rhetor; father of the sophist Nicagoras.

(2) Nicagoras: son of Mnesaeus; a sophist. The Suda (N373) gives a *floruit* under Philip (244–49), to whom he addressed a *πρεσβευτικός*. The other writings mentioned by the Suda are biographies (*βίοι ἐλλογίμων*) and a work of uncertain nature on Cleopatra, the daughter of Tros (*περὶ Κλεοπάτρας τῆς ἐν Τρωάδι*: cf. Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3.140). Another entry in the Suda (M46) makes him a contemporary of the sophists Maior and Apsines. These synchronisms are derived (i) from a fragment of Porphyry (408F Smith) preserved by Eusebius (*Praep. Evang.* 10.3.1), describing a dinner given by Longinus to celebrate Plato's birthday at which Nicagoras and Maior were guests; and (ii) from Philostratus, who acknowledges his friendship with Nicagoras and Apsines at the end of the *Lives of the Sophists* (628). Philostratus mentions that Nicagoras was sacred herald of the Eleusinian mysteries; this is confirmed by an inscription (*IG II² 3814 = Dittenberger Sylloge³ 845*), which also reveals him as holder of an official chair in Athens and indicates a family connection to Plutarch and his nephew, the Stoic philosopher Sextus of Chaeroneia.

(3) Minucianus: son of the sophist Nicagoras, and himself a sophist. The Suda (M1086) gives a *floruit* under Gallienus (253–68); another entry (G132) indicates that he was one of the teachers of the sophist Genethlius (nothing more is known of the other teacher mentioned, Agapetus). The Suda attributes to him a *τέχνη ῥητορική*, a work on the progymnasmata, and *λόγοι διάφοροι*; since the older Minucianus is known to have written a *τέχνη ῥητορική* there is a suspicion (but not a certainty) that some or all of these works have been misattributed.⁹ He may be the author of the rhetorical treatise preserved under the title Minucianus *περὶ ἐπιχειρημάτων*.¹⁰ He appears as Junius Minucianus, most probably in the role of ambassador,¹¹ in an inscription recording a letter of Gallienus to the Athenians dated December 265 (*SEG 26.129*); the purport of the letter is not clear, but it seems to have a bearing on Eleusis, where it was inscribed. As M. Junius Minucianus he also appears as epimelete of an inscription in honour of the proconsul Claudius Illyrius (*IG II² 3689-90*).

(4) Nicagoras: son of Minucianus; *δαδοῦχος* of the Eleusinian mysteries. He is known from two graffiti left at the Valley of the Kings, near Thebes in Egypt, where he went on behalf of Constantine in 326 (Dittenberger *OGI 720f. = SEG 37.1650*). He is presumably identical with the M. Junius, son of Minucianus, *δαδοῦχος* and priest of Asclepius Soter, who made dedications at Epidaurus in 304 (*IG IV² 428-31*).¹²

⁷ J. Letronne, *Visite des tombeaux des rois à Thebes par un dadouque, ou prêtre de l'Éleusis, sous le règne de Constantin*, *Journal des Savants* (1844), 43–53; Schissel (n. 4).

⁸ See: Schissel (n. 4); P. Graindor, Constantin et le dadouque Nicagoras, *Byzantion* 3 (1927/8), 209–14; A. Wilhelm, Inschriften von der Grotte des Pan und der Nymphen bei Phyle, *JÖAI* 25 (1929), 54–69; F. Millar, P. Herennius Dexippus: the Greek world and the third-century invasions, *JRS* 59 (1969), 12–29, esp. 16f.; K. Clinton, *The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Philadelphia 1974), 64–67, 80f.; S. Follet, *Athènes au II^e et au III^e Siècle* (Paris 1976), 38f., 142f., 288; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1986) 640f.; G. Fowden, Nicagoras of Athens and the Lateran obelisk, *JHS* 107 (1987), 51–57; S. Aleshire, *Asklepios at Athens: Epigraphic and Prosopographic Essays on Athenian Healing Cults* (Amsterdam 1991), 161.

⁹ S. Gloeckner, *Quaestiones Rhetoricae* (Breslauer Philologische Abhandlungen 8.2, 1901), 23f.; cf. n. 3 above.

¹⁰ L. Spengel & C. Hammer, *Rhetores Graeci* I.2 (Leipzig 1894), 340–351. The superscription in Par. 1741 reads Μινουκιανού περὶ ἐπιχειρημάτων. ἐν ἄλλῳ Νικαγόρου; the confusion may have arisen from the patronymic.

¹¹ The restoration ἐπρέσβευεν was proposed by Follet (n. 8) 142f.

¹² For the restorations see Clinton (n. 8) 66; K. Clinton, The Epidauria and the arrival of Asclepius in Athens, in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm 1994), 17–34, 30 n. 53 suggests that Nicagoras may have been priest of Asclepius at Epidaurus, not Athens.

(5) A further Nicagoras, who made a dedication at the grotto of Pan and the nymphs at Phyle (*IG* II² 4831 = *SEG* 37.140), describes himself as the son of a $\delta\alpha\delta\omicron\upsilon\chi\omicron\varsigma$; he may have been the son or grandson of the previous Nicagoras.¹³

Himerius apparently married into this family, since he describes his son Rufinus as the descendant of ‘a catalogue of sophists and philosophers’: he names Plutarch, Minucianus and Nicagoras (*Or.* 7.4 Colonna), and elsewhere Minucianus, Nicagoras, Plutarch, Musonius and Sextus (*Or.* 8.21). We have already seen that Nicagoras son of Mnesaeus claimed descent from Plutarch and Sextus. Musonius is less straightforward, since the prosopography of philosophers with this name is problematic;¹⁴ the most likely candidate is perhaps the Stoic philosopher who was teaching in Athens when Longinus was a student.¹⁵

Schissel’s confidence that the Minucianus attacked by Hermogenes was the father of Mnesaeus turns on the interpretation of Himerius’ references to Minucianus.¹⁶ Schissel contends that the older Minucianus must be meant, not the son of Nicagoras, since:

- (a) the orators and philosophers of *Or.* 8.21 are listed in chronological order within their class;
- (b) the Minucianus to whom Himerius refers was a political orator rather than a sophist, since (i) in *Or.* 8.21 he is described as $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, a term which applies to the style for which Demosthenes was the classical model (‘Somit war dieser Minukianos politischer Redner’), and (ii) *Or.* 7.4 speaks of those he successfully defended in court; and
- (c) the older Minucianus (unlike his younger homonym) was a practitioner of political rather than sophistic rhetoric, since (i) the *Suda* attributes to him (if it is assumed that his bibliography has been conflated with the biographical notice of the younger) $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\iota$ $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\iota$ but not sophistic $\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omicron\iota$, and (ii) he is not mentioned by Philostratus.

These arguments are not compelling:

- (a) It begs the question to assume that the orators are listed in chronological order, the identity of Minucianus being the very point at issue; and since Schissel does not discuss the identity of Musonius he has not shown that the philosophers Plutarch, Musonius and Sextus are named in chronological order either.
- (b) Sophists frequently acted as advocates. An Athenian inscription in honour of the sophist Lollianus of Ephesus pays tribute to his skill both as advocate and as declaimer ($\acute{\alpha}\mu\phi\acute{\omicron}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ $\rho\eta\tau\eta\rho\alpha$ $\delta\iota\kappa\omega\acute{\nu}$ $\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\tau\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu$ *IG* II² 4211); Philostratus tells us about the forensic activities of the sophists Nicetes (*VS* 511), Scopelian (516, 519), Polemo (524f.), Theodotus (567), Ptolemy of Naucratis (595), Apollonius of Athens (600) and Damianus (606). In the case of Scopelian, in particular, Philostratus speaks in the same breath of Scopelian’s $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\tau\eta\varsigma$ and of the vigour of his forensic oratory (*VS* 517); yet no one would deny that Scopelian was a sophist. It is, in any case, perverse to insist that the Minucianus named in Himerius’ ‘catalogue of sophists and philosophers’ must have been a political orator rather than a sophist. Therefore:

¹³ Clinton (n. 8) 65 n. 144 (son); Fowden (n. 8) 52 n. 10 (‘son or (more probably) grandson’).

¹⁴ In Philostratus (*VS* 556f.) the teaching of Musonius of Tyre is reported by a pupil named Lucius; one of the reports of the first-century philosopher C. Musonius Rufus in Stobaeus is attributed to a Lucius. The coincidence has evoked understandable scepticism. Some have removed the problem by emending Τυρίῳ in Philostratus to Τυρρηνηῶ : see C. A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam 1968), 13 n. 34. Those who are deterred from this solution by chronological considerations have been inclined to convict Philostratus of error: e.g. A. C. van Geytenbeek, *Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribe* (Assen 1963), 3–21. But the error is difficult to explain, and on Philostratus’ general reliability see S. Swain, *The reliability of Philostratus’ Lives of the Sophists*, *CA* 10 (1991), 148–163. It would perhaps be easier to believe that the attribution of the report of Musonius Rufus to Lucius is a guess prompted by the association of the names Musonius and Lucius in Philostratus.

¹⁵ Longinus *ap.* Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 20; cf. *RE* XVI/i (1933), 898 s.v. Musonios (17).

¹⁶ Schissel (n. 4) 364f. He also (361–363) identifies Mnesaeus with the Lucius of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (for whose connection with Plutarch and Sextus see 1.2, 2.2f.), and concludes that Mnesaeus’ father married a daughter of Sextus. This hypothesis (which does not seem to have won wide support among Apuleian scholars) is independent of the identification of Mnesaeus’ father with the older Minucianus, and need not be examined further here.

(c) If Schissel's characterisation of the older Minucianus is right, his argument would have to be reversed: Himerius must be referring to the younger Minucianus, who was a sophist. In fact, the opposition which Schissel constructs between the sophistic Hermogenes and the elder Minucianus, practitioner of a non-sophistic political kind of oratory, is thoroughly misconceived. The evidence does not point to a fundamental difference in orientation between Minucianus and Hermogenes, but to a series of disagreements on points of detail within a shared theoretical framework. This is only to be expected. It is true that not everyone whose rhetorical training equipped them to speak effectively in court had the added technical brilliance needed for success in declamatory and epideictic display; and that, conversely, not everyone who flourished in the competitive and theatrical environment of sophistic display was equally at ease in court. But the sophist's ideal was a mastery of the full range of styles, and the ability to perform in both contexts; hence, as we have seen, the inscription in honour of Lollianus acknowledges his talent in both forensic and declamatory oratory. Philostratus' silence shows, not that Minucianus practised a non-sophistic kind of rhetoric, but that his distinction as a theoretician was not matched by star-quality as a declaimer.¹⁷ But it still follows that the older Minucianus was less distinguished *as a sophist* than the younger; and since it is with reference to a sophist that Himerius invokes the name Minucianus, he is more likely to have been thinking of the younger one.

If Himerius was probably, or even possibly, referring to the younger Minucianus, then he does not provide evidence that the older Minucianus was a member of this family. So the proof of Letronne's conjecture which Schissel sought fails. The identification of the older Minucianus with the father of Mnesaeus remains purely conjectural, and we should be open to alternative possibilities.

A number of other bearers of this name are attested:

- (1) Minucianus: a doctor cited by Galen (13.930 Kühn); dated by Deichgräber around the birth of Christ.¹⁸
- (2) Minucianus son of Musonius: one of (probably) four sons of Musonius named in a second-century ephebe list (*IG II² 2175.5-8*).¹⁹ The linking of the names Musonius and Minucianus suggests a connection with the family we have just surveyed; it may be coincidence that the name Nicagoras also occurs two lines later.
- (3) Claudius Minucianus: named in a prytany list of the tribe Leontis, currently dated c. 200 (*Agora 15.399 = SEG 28.184*).²⁰
- (4) Aurelius Minucianus, son of Philocrates, of the deme Eupyridae: named in an ephebe list dated 212/3 'aut paullo post' (*IG II² 2208.54 = SEG 26.182*).
- (5) Minucianus: named in an ephebe list dated to c. 222 (*IG II² 2219.60 = SEG 26.186*).

Of these, Claudius Minucianus merits closer attention. An inscription at the temple of Zeus at Nemea honours Claudius Claudianus of the deme Eupyridae, son of Claudius Minucianus (*IG IV 449*): Κλ. [Κ]λαυδιανὸν Εὐ[πυ]ρίδην Κλ. Μινουκιανοῦ τ[ο]ῦ διδασκάλου υἱὸν Αὐρ. Μενέδημος Λυχνέδιος, τὸν φίλον.²¹ Eupyridae is a deme of the tribe Leontis, to which the prytanis Claudius Minucianus belonged; so he and the father of Claudius Claudianus may be the same person. The description of Claudius Minucianus as 'teacher' is of course not meant (irrelevantly) to record his profession, but to

¹⁷ Cf. n. 6 above, on Zeno (noting his reputation as *δικάζεσθαι μόνον εἰδῶς ῥήτωρ*, *PS* 34.10f. = 327.26f.: cf. Heath (n. 2) 19); in Hermogenes' case, too, Philostratus is interested only in his precocious talent as a declaimer and the witticisms provoked by his premature burn-out. As for Minucianus, the Suda's *λόγοι διάφοροι* (if they are indeed to be reassigned to the older Minucianus) prove nothing; we know from Photius (cod. 132, 97a Bekker) that the sophist Palladius composed *μελέται*, but his Suda entry (P35) only mentions *λόγοι διάφοροι*: these may include the declamations, or the bibliography may be incomplete.

¹⁸ *RE XV/ii* (1932), 1988 s.v. Minukianos (4).

¹⁹ The four names are (in this order) Dio, Antipater, Minucianus and Nectarius; Antipater's patronymic cannot be read, but Μουσωνίου can be restored with confidence in the other cases.

²⁰ For the date see E. Kapetanopoulos, *AD* 26 (1971), 277, 289; J. S. Traill, *Hesperia* 47 (1978), 314.

²¹ G. Cousin & F. Dürrbach, *Inscriptions de Némée*, *BCH* 9 (1885), 549–556, no.12.

indicate the dedicator's relationship to him; compare the inscription by Flavius Phoenix and Flavius Phylax in honour of the sophist T. Flavius Alexander τὸν πατέρα καὶ διδάσκαλον (*Fouilles de Delphes* III.4 474),²² or the inscription in memory of the daughter of Herodes Atticus φίλου καὶ διδασκάλου (*IG* II² 4073, cf. 4074). Such parallels suggest that Claudius Minucianus ὁ διδάσκαλος may have been a sophist, although it is also possible that he was a philosopher (like the Stoic F. Aurelius Heracleides honoured in a similar inscription, *IG* II² 3801).

Claudius Minucianus, prytanis c. 200, cannot have been born later than c. 170 and may have been somewhat older. He is perhaps unlikely to have been a full generation older than Hermogenes (born 160/1); but I argued at the beginning of this paper that the relative age of the two rhetoricians was uncertain. There is therefore no chronological obstacle to an identification of Claudius Minucianus with the Minucianus criticised by Hermogenes. Certainty is, of course, impossible in such a case. But since we know that he bore the right name, and there is some evidence that he may have been a sophist, Claudius Minucianus must surely be a stronger candidate for this identification than is the father of Mnesaeus and great-grandfather of M. Junius Minucianus, for whose name and profession we have no evidence at all.

If the identification of Hermogenes' Minucianus with Claudius Minucianus is correct this would not, of course, rule out the possibility of some relationship to the later Junius Minucianus less direct than that claimed by Schissel. But any attempt to trace such a connection would be extremely speculative.²³

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²² See C. P. Jones, Two Friends of Plutarch, *BCH* 96 (1972), 265–267.

²³ Since the family of the later Minucianus claimed a connection to Plutarch, one might think of the philosopher Sextus Claudius Autobulus, ἕκτον ἀπὸ Πλουτάρχου, recorded in an early third-century inscription from Chaeronea (*IG* VII 3425 = Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 844B); a connection between this Autobulus and the Athenian Platonist Claudius Nicostratus (*Fouilles de Delphes* III.4 94 = Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 868B: cf. K. Praechter, Nikostratos der Platoniker, *Hermes* 57 (1922) 481–517 = *Kleine Schriften* (Hildesheim 1973), 101–137) has already been suggested by Behr (n. 14) 13 n. 34 (but his identification of the philosopher with the sophist Nicostratus does not carry conviction).