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THE HONORAND OF THE TITULUS TIBURTINUS: C. SENTIUS  
SATURNINUS?

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## THE HONORAND OF THE TITULUS TIBURTINUS: C. SENTIUS SATURNINUS?\*

Hardly any other Roman inscription, and certainly no other *cursus honorum*, has spawned such intense debate as the notorious *titulus Tiburtinus* (CIL XIV 3613 = ILS 918). Discovered near Tivoli in 1764, this fragmentary text records the honours received by an Augustan consular whose name is not preserved. The most prominent scholars of their time, including the giants Mommsen, Ramsay, Groag and Syme, have passed judgement on the identity of the person concerned. Subjected to painstaking scrutiny, the Tiburtine *cursus* represents an extreme example of sharp division in scholarly opinion.

A 'diplomatic' transcript in capitals, followed by the restored part of the text, universally accepted, needs to be reproduced here. Not only the top of the inscription, as is often pointed out, but also the bottom of it is probably missing.<sup>1</sup> (Cf. p.36).

.....  
 .....  
 .. EGEM·QUA·REDACTA·INPOT.....  
 AVGVSTI·POPVLIQVE·ROMANI·SENATV.....  
 SVPPPLICATIONES·BINAS·OB·RES·PROSP.....  
 IPSI·ORNAMENTA·TRIVMPH.....  
 PRO·CONSVL·ASIAM·PROVINCIAM·OP.....  
 DIVI·AVGVSTI·ITERVM·SYRIAM·ET·PH.....  
 .....

.....  
 .....

[r]egem, qua redacta in pot[estatem imp. Caesaris]  
 Augusti populique Romani senatu[s dis immortalibus]  
 supplicationes binas ob res prosp[ere gestas, et]  
 ipsi ornamenta triumph[alia decrevit];  
 pro consul. Asiam provinciam op[tinuit; legatus pr. pr.]

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\* My thanks are due to Professor Fergus Millar, my ex-supervisor, for his meaningful corrections and his admirable sobriety when confronted with my criticisms of Sir Ronald Syme, his ex-supervisor (and predecessor at Oxford). For balanced comments, I must also thank Professor Stephen Mitchell (Swansea), and Professor John Wilkes (London). The latter once taught me how flexible our approach to Roman epigraphy should be. The editing of Professor Werner Eck has been thorough, and the questions he raised most challenging. I hope I will not regret it if I have not followed one or two of his suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> See the remarks of A.E.Gordon, *Album of Dated Latin Inscriptions*, vol. 1, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1958, 77-8, no.70 (pl.33b); cf. *I.Ital.* 4.1, 69-71, 210, no.130.

divi Augusti iterum Syriam et Ph[oenicen optinuit];  
 .....

My own English translation would be as follows:  
 .....

[k]ing, which (aforementioned tribe?) having been brought into the pow[er of Imperator  
 Caesar]

Augustus and the Roman People, the Senat[e decreed to the immortal gods]  
 two thanksgivings for success[ful achievements, and] triumph[al] ornaments to himself;  
 as proconsul he he[ld] the province of Asia; [as legatus propraetore]  
 of the Divine Augustus for another time [he held] Syria and Ph[oenicia];  
 .....

The epitaph as a whole, belonging to a large sepulchral monument, was inscribed after the death of Augustus, since he is referred to as *divus*. So the consular concerned must have passed away after AD 14. There is no reason at all why one should assume, as Taylor did, that the person might have died before Augustus, while his *cursus* was written some years later. Taylor sought a date before AD 14, because her candidate for the position of *ignotus* (i.e. M. Titius, *cos.* 31 BC), was too old to fit the circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the approximate date of death, three posts can be discerned:

A) Some unpreserved function (possibly Imperial Legate in a province), at a time of war, when a tribe (?) was subjugated, and while a king (*[r]egem*) was the object of some action (possibly submitted, pacified or restored). Two (*binas*) thanksgivings were decreed, and special military decorations were awarded to the victor. At this point he must have already been consul, for the *ornamenta triumphalia* under Augustus were confined to consulars in command of armies.<sup>3</sup> Also this type of decoration must date after 12 BC, when such an award was granted evidently for the first time.<sup>4</sup>

B) Proconsul of Asia (a public province governed by an ex-consul).

C) Imperial Legate for another time (*iterum*), now of Syria and Phoenicia (an imperial province governed by an ex-consul).

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<sup>2</sup> L.R.Taylor, "M. Titius and the Syrian Command", *JRS* 26,1936,167-8; for criticism of Taylor on that point, see K.M.T.Atkinson, "The Governors of the Province Asia in the Reign of Augustus", *Historia* 7,1958,316, n.73.

<sup>3</sup> V.A.Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army*, London 1981,106.

<sup>4</sup> R.Syme, "The Titulus Tiburtinus", in A.R.Birley (ed.), *Ronald Syme, Roman Papers III*, Oxford 1984, 870 (originally published in 1973); cf. A.Abaecherli Boyce, "The Origins of 'Ornamenta Triumphalia'", *CP* 37,1942,134-5; W.Eck, "Senatorial Self-Representation: Developments in the Augustan Period", in F.Millar & E.Segal (eds), *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects*, Oxford 1984,139, 142-3.

Numerous consuls serving under Augustus have been identified as the *ignotus* in question, notably M. Plautius Silvanus (*cos.* 2 BC) and M. Titius (*cos.* 31 BC),<sup>5</sup> but in vain. The earliest, and in many ways most unfortunate, identification of him with P. Sulpicius Quirinius (*cos.* 12 BC), famous from the Gospel of Luke, guaranteed the involvement of New Testament experts and theologians, complicating the issue unnecessarily.<sup>6</sup>

Since Syme last dealt with this problem comprehensively in 1973 (and briefly in 1986), arguing in favour of L. Calpurnius Piso (*cos.* 15 BC), general interest seems to have waned<sup>7</sup> - apparently because the case was deemed to have reached an impasse, rather than because Syme had actually offered a compelling solution. Syme had certainly achieved the rejection of most of the previously proposed candidates, especially the old favourite Quirinius. Among other serious difficulties, there was no "king" involved in the war, presumably that of the Homonadenses, in which Quirinius excelled. As Syme stressed, the long dead Amyntas cannot be brought into the award of victory honours more than twenty years later.<sup>8</sup> But Syme's own identification of the *ignotus* with Piso is fraught with uncertainties. In retrospect indeed only a scholar of Syme's reputation could have succeeded in defending such an unlikely candidate - more unlikely than Quirinius! It is to be noted that his opinion has been *readily* approved only by a few scholars.<sup>9</sup>

The objections against Syme's view, some of which are crucial, must be raised here in detail:

(1) Piso crushed the revolt of the Thracian Bessi (Dio 54, 34, 5-7; cf. Vell., 2,98; Flor., 2,27; Sen., Ep. 83,14), presumably the tribe mentioned in the inscription according to Syme.

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<sup>5</sup> For Silvanus, the latest serious advocate was E.Groag, "Prosopographische Beiträge: VII. M. Plautius Silvanus", JOEAI 21/2,1922/4, Beibl. 446ff.; cf. *idem*, in RE 4A.1, 1931,833; for Titius, see Taylor *op. cit.* (n.2); for a detailed list of candidates for the position of *ignotus*, which have been proposed through the years, see G.Firpo, Il Problema Cronologico della Nascita di Gesù, Brescia 1983,238-43.

<sup>6</sup> For Quirinius, the most important advocates have been T.Mommsen, Res Gestae Divi Augusti (2nd edn), Berlin 1883,161ff.; H.Dessau in ILS 918; cf. *idem*, "Zu den neuen Inschriften des Sulpicius Quirinius", Klio 17,1921,252ff.; W.M.Ramsay, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? (3rd edn), London 1905,227ff.; cf. *idem*, The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, London 1915,275ff.; *idem*, "Studies in the Roman Province of Galatia", JRS 7,1917,273-5; 14,1924,203; and A.G.Roos, "Die Quirinius-Inschrift", Mnemosyne (3rd ser.) 9,1941,306ff.

<sup>7</sup> Syme, *op.cit.* (n.4); *idem*, The Augustan Aristocracy, Oxford 1986,338-40; cf. his earlier discussions, "Galatia and Pamphylia under Augustus: the Governorships of Piso, Quirinius and Silvanus", Klio 27,1934,131-8; and The Roman Revolution, Oxford 1939,398, n.9. The only attempt at reinterpretation after Syme, has been a popular one, arguing for P. Quinctilius Varus (*cos.* 13 BC), by E.L.Martin, The Birth of Christ Recalculated, Pasadena, Cal., 1980,65-75,178-80.

<sup>8</sup> Syme, *op.cit.* (n.4), 878; the difficulties for Quirinius were underlined already by J.Thomas, Our Records of the Nativity and Modern Historical Research, London 1900,115-23; Groag, *op.cit.*(n.5); L.R.Taylor, "Quirinius and the Census of Judaea", AJP 54,1933,120ff.; Syme, *op.cit.* (n.7 - 1934); A.N.Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament, Oxford 1963,164, n.1; and B.Levick, Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor, Oxford 1967,209.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Levick, *op.cit.* (n.8); R.K.Sherk, "Roman Galatia: The Governors from 25 B.C. to A.D. 114", in ANRW 2.7.2,1980,965, n.42.

But how about the involvement of a king? Syme argues that the reference is to a 'dead king', Rhescuporis, who had previously been killed by the Bessi. Yet why should an already dead king, with no direct connection to Piso, be prominently commemorated in the latter's *elogium* over forty years later? Moreover, it is a real problem whether Rhescuporis had officially ever become a king - no literary or inscriptional source accords him the regal title.<sup>10</sup>

(2) If we are to accept what Orosius (6,21,220) says about Piso, at some point in his career (either before or immediately after he became consul in 15 BC), he was sent against the Vindelici beyond the Alps.<sup>11</sup> This would have meant another legateship for him, before that against the Bessi in 12-10 BC (Syme's date). In Syme's accepted ascending, order of appointments in the text, the word *iterum* (which Syme understands as meaning the *second* time), for Piso's hypothetical legateship in Syria in c. 4-1 BC, is a problem. The text should have read *tertium*.

(3) Why "two" *supplicationes* for Piso? Dio (54,34,7) does indeed refer to ἱερομηνίαι, but evidently to a single occasion. Thansgivings and triumphal decorations were extremely rarely awarded to the same person on two different occasions. As we shall see later, Dio precisely alludes to such a case, in reference to a 'double' military achievement by another consular commander.

(4) This Piso ('the Pontifex') is not known as a proconsul of Asia, and the only evidence adduced by Syme - a vague phrase in an epigram by Antipater of Thessalonica (Anth. 10,25: ...δὸς με δι' εὐπλότωιο πρὸς Ἀσίδα κύματος ἐλθεῖν Πείσωνος δολιχῆ νηὶ συνεσπόμενον) - was rightly ignored by Magie and firmly rejected by Atkinson.<sup>12</sup> The attempt of Syme to connect Piso the Pontifex with "L. Piso" referred to in texts from Pergamum and Stratonicea, and with the "proconsul L. Calpurnius Piso, husband of Statilia", honoured at Samos and Pergamum, is also unconvincing.<sup>13</sup> The normal identification of these individuals is with Piso the Augur - a known proconsul of Asia (ILS 8814). Further, the norm of five years from a man's consulship to the tenure of Asia or Africa, which is attested in the middle years of Augustus, cannot be kept in the case of Piso. Consul in 15 BC, he would have gone to Asia for 10/9 BC, but since this year is unavailable (Paullus Fabius Maximus), Syme chose to assign him to 9/8 BC, a vacant year but also in

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<sup>10</sup> R.D.Sullivan, "Thrace in the Eastern Dynastic Network", in ANRW 2.7.1, 1979,198; cf. G.W.Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford 1965,152-6.

<sup>11</sup> Naturally more recently doubted by Syme, *op.cit.* (n.7 - 1986), 335-6; cf. C.M.Wells, *The German Policy of Augustus*, Oxford 1972,66, n.4.

<sup>12</sup> D.Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ*, vol. 2, Princeton 1950,1581; Atkinson, *op.cit.* (n.2), 323-4.

<sup>13</sup> See P.Herrmann, "Die Inschriften römischer Zeit aus dem Heraion von Samos", MDAI (Ath. Abt.) 75,1960,130-4, no.30; Ch.Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asklepieion (Altertümer von Pergamon 8.3)*, Berlin 1969,39-41, no.19.

competition with two other candidates (P. Cornelius Scipio and Iullus Antonius).<sup>14</sup> So even Syme's choice for the date, although by no means impossible, is certainly forced.

(5) Piso is not attested as having been in charge of Syria - a major problem, as our knowledge of the administration of this province under Augustus, in comparison with other provinces, is very reasonable. Given the existence of Josephus' work and the evident importance of the consular in our *titulus*, it is much more likely for the *ignotus* to be a known, rather than an unknown, *legatus* of Syria. We may accept that Piso, who from c. 13 BC was the governor of Galatia-Pamphylia (Dio 54,34,6; cf. Anth. 6,241), a praetorian but occasionally consular province, had limited influence over Cilicia Pedias, as an inscription from Castabala names a L. Calpurnius Piso *legatus pro praetore*, who may be the same person.<sup>15</sup> Similarly Quirinius, who fought the Homonadenses on the borders of Cilicia in c. 5-3 BC, was at the time conceivably governor of Galatia-Pamphylia (Strabo 12,569; Tac., Ann. 3,48,1; cf. ILS 9502-3). But contrary to Syme, the question should not arise whether *legati* active in Cilicia could have been governing Syria instead, because Cilicia Pedias was not attached to Syria under Augustus, and was certainly an independent kingdom at least up to AD 17 (Strabo 12,540, 555; cf. 535: Dio 54,9,2; OGIS 357; Tac., Ann. 2,42,5).<sup>16</sup>

(6) Finally, should not Piso's epitaph, which would have been inscribed at his death in AD 32 (Tac., Ann. 6,10; cf. Vell., 2,98), have alluded to Tiberius so late in his reign? And why would it be set up anywhere near Tibur, if there is reason to assume that Piso's main residence may have been in Veleia?<sup>17</sup> By the same token, Quirinius' household may have been established at Lanuvium, from where his family originated (Tac., Ann. 3,48).

Since neither Quirinius nor Piso, the two most strongly argued candidates, satisfy the requirements of the Tiburtine inscription, we are free to rethink the candidacy of others. A better case, I believe, can be made for C. Sentius Saturninus (*cos.* 19 BC). To my knowledge the only previous attempt to connect this consular with our *titulus*, was that of Zumpt back in 1854!<sup>18</sup> But Zumpt failed to comprehend Saturninus' career, and a fuller

<sup>14</sup> See B.E.Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidium*, vol. 1, Gothenburg 1984,206-7, nos 8-10.

<sup>15</sup> J.Keil & A.Wilhelm, "Vorläufiger Bericht über eine Reise in Kilikien", *JOEAI* 18,1915, Beibl. 51; cf. B.Rémy, *Les carrières sénatoriales dans les provinces Romaines d'Anatolie au haut-empire* (31 av. J.-C. - 284 ap. J.-C.), vol. 2, Istanbul/Paris 1989,129-31; another relevant text, which is unpublished, is mentioned by S.Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, vol.1, Oxford 1993,78, n.81.

<sup>16</sup> *Contra* Syme, *op.cit.* (n.4), 881; cf. *idem.* "Observations on the Province of Cilicia", in E.Badian (ed.), *Ronald Syme: Roman Papers I*, Oxford 1979,142-4 (originally published in 1939); see the discussion of Magie, *op.cit.* (n.12), 1337-8, n.22; A.H.M.Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (2nd edn), Oxford 1971,203-5, 437-8; R.D.Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Cappadocia", in *ANRW* 2.7.2 (1980), 1154-6.

<sup>17</sup> See C.Saletti, *Il Ciclo Statuario della Basilica di Velleia*, Milan 1968,37-40, 63-4, pls. 17:1-2; 43:4; I may tentatively grant to Syme from evidence not used by him, that it is possible that the Calpurnii, apparently of the Menenia tribe (Jos., Ant. 14,220), could have originated from Pedum, between Praeneste and Tibur (cf. L.R.Taylor, *The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic*, Rome 1960,43-4,273).

<sup>18</sup> A.W.Zumpt, *Commentationum Epigraphicarum*, vol. 2, Berlin 1854,109ff.; cf. *idem*, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi*, Leipzig 1869,84ff.

understanding of our text itself had yet to be reached - for example, the meaning of the word *iterum*.

It must be remembered that although Syme was absolutely right in that *iterum* refers to [*legatus*] rather than to *Syriam*,<sup>19</sup> his strict insistence that this word must narrowly be translated "for the *second* time" (as against the more subtle "for another time"), and must determine the order of the *cursus honorum*, cannot be maintained.<sup>20</sup> Neither Groag, who was earlier in conceiving the real meaning of *iterum*, nor Magie or Gordon, who followed him, were of that opinion.<sup>21</sup> In fact in interpreting careers on stone, it could sometimes be a mistake to demand an order,<sup>22</sup> particularly in incomplete texts! As commonly known, senatorial careers are set out in ascending (e.g. ILS 989, 1005) or descending order (e.g. ILS 1077, 1142) - with the most important positions occasionally taken out of order and placed at the head of the list - or indeed with no order at all (e.g. ILS 932, 1139)! *Iterum* should indicate that the position of *legatus* was held twice (one time being in Syria), without necessarily implying direction or chronology. Also we must not lose sight of the fact that our text breaks off after Syria: we do not know what followed. The senatorial *cursus* of Q. Varius Geminus (ILS 932), abbreviates what may stand for *iterum* as II ("twice" - so we read *leg. divi Aug. II*). The *cursus* of Quintus Caerellius (ILS 943), in no particular order, abbreviates *tertium* as *ter* ("three times" or "for three years" - so we read *legatus pro pr. ter.*).

Thus in the present analysis the question of order will not become the main issue. Simply, and for the sake of argument, by discussing the three likeliest schemes which the scribe could have intended for this *cursus*, we shall provisionally decide on what appears to be the most logical. The three posts (A-C) of our *ignotus* may be translated as A=1, B=2, C=3 (wholly ascending order), or A=3, B=2, C=1 (wholly descending order), or as A=3, B=1, C=2 (important achievements at the head of the list, followed by an ascending order of appointments - cf. basically ILS 972).

The first scheme seems less probable, because it requires the major achievements of the consular (victories and *ornamenta triumphalia*) to have taken place at an earlier stage in his

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<sup>19</sup> As Syme (*op.cit.* (n.4), 873) stated: "In normal prose usage an adverb goes with its verb. If a second tenure of Syria were indicated, *iterum* would have had to follow *Syriam et Pho[enicen]*, not precede. That is to say, the word would not have figured on the fragment as extant." So to yield the sense 'twice governor of Syria', the text should have read [*legatus pr. pr.] divi Augusti Syriam et Pho[enicen iterum optinuit*]. The only Roman scholar in recent years to dissent from this exposition was Sherwin-White (*op.cit.* (n.8), 163-4, n.5). But against him is the fact that there is no evidence that Syria, or any other imperial province, had ever been governed twice by the same *legatus*.

<sup>20</sup> Syme, *op.cit.* (n.4), 870, 877; *idem*, *op.cit.* (n.7 - 1986), 338.

<sup>21</sup> Groag, *op.cit.* (n.5 - 1922/4), 473-4; Magie, *op.cit.* (n.12), 1581; A.E.Gordon, "Quintus Veranius Consul A.D. 49", University of California Publications in Classical Archaeology, 2,1952,314-5, no.19; for earlier than Groag, see Thomas, *op.cit.* (n.8), 120-1.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. the career of Titus Mucius Clemens, see N.Kokkinos, "A Fresh Look at the *gentilicium* of Felix Procurator of Judaea", *Latomus* 49,1990,126ff.



life, before even he became proconsul or legate of an important province. The second scheme is also less probable, because it requires the imperial legateship of Syria to have been attained before the proconsulship of Asia. From the evidence at our disposal, the trend was for an ex-consul who was destined for promotion, to go first to either Asia or Africa, and then to Syria. Up to the middle of the first century AD, we know the following cases (excluding the special one of M. Vipsanius Agrippa, and those of whom the careers have been based on the *titulus Tiburtinus*):<sup>23</sup>

*From Asia to Syria*

M. Tullius Cicero  
(*suff.* 30 BC)  
Potitus Valerius Messalla  
(*suff.* 29 BC)  
P. Petronius  
(*suff.* AD 19)  
C. Cassius Longinus  
(*suff.* AD 30)

*From Africa to Syria*

P. Quinctilius Varus  
(*cos.* 13 BC)  
L. Volusius Saturninus  
(*suff.* 12 BC)  
Cn. Calpurnius Piso  
(*cos.* 7 BC)  
L. Aelius Lamia  
(*cos.* AD 3)  
C. Vibius Marsus  
(*suff.* AD 17)

Although it will not have been impossible for a consul to have gone to Syria before either Asia or Africa, there does not seem to be evidence from the first century of the Empire to support it.<sup>24</sup> So, the third scheme outlined above will be followed here: A=3, B=1, C=2. The important achievements (*cos.*, victories, awards) will have been deservedly mentioned at the beginning of the *cursus*, followed by an ascending order of appointments - at least up to the end of the preserved part of the inscription! It will be wise to suspend any further judgement on structure. Ultimately, I hope, the identification of the *ignotus* will be decided on the content and substance of the individual posts, rather than on any preconceived order.

<sup>23</sup> See generally Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14).

<sup>24</sup> Only in the case of Varus it may remain uncertain whether he went to Syria before or after Africa. Thomasson ("Verschiedenes zu den 'Proconsulares Africae'", *Eranos* 67,1969,179; cf. *idem, op.cit.* (n.14), 372, no.8) has Varus holding Africa in 8/7 BC, before going to Syria. Syme (*op.cit.* (n.7 - 1986), 319-20) opted for either 7/6 BC (which is impossible on the basis of Varus' coins from Syria), or 8/7 BC, in agreement with Thomasson. But Grant (*From Imperium to Auctoritas*, Cambridge 1946,228), from his examination of the coins of Varus from Africa, believed that his African tenure should be dated to 4/3 BC, and thus be placed after his governorship of Syria. A fresh study may decide this issue (cf. N.Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse* (Unpubl. D.Phil.), Oxford 1993,364, n.84; 368-9, n.27), especially with the appearance now of A.Burnett *et. al.*, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, vol.1, London 1992.

*Caius Sentius Saturninus (cos. 19 BC)*

The family of the Sentii has been admirably investigated by Groag and by Syme, with improvements by Scheid.<sup>25</sup> As regards their ancestry we are not well informed, and some speculations in the accepted reconstruction are not convincing. The two early figures of Caius Sentius son of Caius (*pr.* 94 BC) and Lucius Sentius son of Caius (*pr.* c. 92 BC), were almost certainly brothers, and most probably members of the family of the consul of 19 BC. Caius may have been the consul's grandfather (rather than his great-grandfather as Syme suggested). Chronologically this is not impossible, since the consul could not have been born later than 52 BC, and his birth, according to the standard age of reaching the highest magistracy,<sup>26</sup> should probably be set closer to 60 BC. For argument's sake his father could have been born as early as c. 90, and his grandfather as early as c. 120 BC. The latter should then have been praetor at about thirty years old, i.e. in c. 90 BC, which is what we find. Further, Caius, as the name of the grandfather, is in agreement with the full name of the consul in the *Fasti Capitolini* (CIL I<sup>2</sup>, 29): *C. Sentius C. f. C. n. Saturninus*.

The father of the consul, another Caius, cannot be determined with certainty. It is assumed that he was one "Sentius Saturninus Vetulo" (Val. Max., 7,3,9), probably the Pompeian partisan who is recorded (as "Saturninus") to have continued the cause down to 35 BC (App., BC 5,52, 139) - if only we knew of his *praenomen*. But if not his father, this character may well have been the consul's uncle, since chronologically he fits well. Similarly, the consul seems to have had an aunt: Sentia the mother of Scribonia, who married Octavian in 40 BC (ILS 8892; Suet., Aug. 62,2). This would have made the consul a cousin-in-law of Augustus, which may help to explain the advancement in his career. Also Sentia's husband, L. Scribonius Libo, is mentioned by Appian (above) appropriately close to Vetulo.

For the father of the consul (and by extension brother of Vetulo and Sentia), we may instead propose another figure, also a Pompeian partisan: "Sentius Saturninus" (Vell., 2,77,3). This man was restored to favour and brought back to Rome in 39 BC, under the amnesty of Misenum. Syme thought that this is the earliest reference to the consul himself, but this is most unlikely.<sup>27</sup> In 39 BC the consul would have been from around thirteen to twenty-one years old, hardly the 'restored' *vir clarissimus*, as described by Velleius.

<sup>25</sup> E.Groag, in RE 2A.2, 1923, 1509ff.; R.Syme, "The Stemma of the Sentii Saturnini", in E.Badian (ed.), Ronald Syme: Roman Papers II, Oxford 1979,605ff. (originally published in 1964); J.Scheid, "Scribonia Caesaris et les Julio-Claudiens: Problèmes de vocabulaire de parenté", MEFRA 87,1975,349ff.; more generally cf. G.Wandel, "Der römische Statthalter C. Sentius Saturninus", Theologische Studien und Kritiken 1892,105ff.; R.S.Rogers, "Fulvia Paulina C. Sentii Saturnini", AJP 53,1932,252ff.; E.F.Leon, "Scribonia and her Daughters", TAPA 82,1951,168ff.; C.F.Evans, "Tertullian's References to Sentius Saturninus and the Lukan Census", JTS 24,1973,24ff.; O.Salomies, "CIL X 5076: Cn. Sentius Saturninus cos. ord. 41 n.Chr.?", Arctos 22,1988,124ff.

<sup>26</sup> See A.Birley, The Fasti of Roman Britain, Oxford 1981,24-5; R.J.A.Talbert, The Senate of Imperial Rome, Princeton 1984,20.

<sup>27</sup> Syme, *op.cit.* (n.25), 611-2, no.8.

Further, Syme was content to incorporate into the family some individuals of whom we lack their *gentilicium*, but who display the right *cognomen*, i.e. "Saturnini". This helped him to build up a theory, by which the origins of the Sentii were from the town of Atina, in the Volscian country, of the Teretina tribe! Syme's theory is weak on a vital point. The *cognomen* 'Saturninus' was used by many families in the Republic and early Empire, for example the Cassii (CIL I<sup>2</sup> 2085), the Appuleii (App., BC 1.28), the Annii (Cic., *Ad Att.* 5,1,2), the Iulii (Suet., Aug. 27,2), the Volusii (ILS 923), the Aelii (Dio 57,22,5), and others.<sup>28</sup> Syme, of course, was aware of this, but he was confident that it can be countered with the fact that an inscription of a common soldier names him *Cn. Sentius Cn. f. Ter. Saturninus Atine* (CIL VI 2722). While accepting that a family of Sentii existed at Atina, why should it be related to the senatorial one in any way other than patronage? There is evidence in towns elsewhere of several "Sentii Saturnini" of low rank (e.g. CIL VI 3629; AE 1934,128). Thus no clear connection can be postulated with Syme's half-named "Saturnini" from Atina (Cic., *Pro Planc.* 19, 27, 29).<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately for this theory, a person with the right qualifications for inclusion into the family of the Sentii, appears in Josephus. He was Γάϊος Σέντιος Γαίου Αἰμιλία χιλίαρχος, a military tribune (i.e. from twenty years old to much older in the Republican period) at Ephesus in 49 BC. He is too old to be identified with the consul of 19 BC, and hence shall be a contemporary relative. Admittedly, after the person's patronymic there is a lacuna in Ant. 14,229, and his full name (even if partly corrupted) is restored from Ant. 14,238, but Syme very wisely accepted the restoration.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Syme then decided to abandon this character altogether! His reason is not difficult to see. C. Sentius' tribe is given as "Aemilia", spoiling the theory of Saturnini from Atina, who belonged to the Teretina tribe. The location of the Aemilian tribe is of interest. Taylor has suggested the area between Tiber and the Alban Hills, but "with the greatest doubt", and with the real possibility that the tribe originated from Gabii, not far from Tibur.<sup>31</sup> In fact the evidence of L. Antistius Vetus, an imperial *consularis* of the Aemilian tribe, claiming origin from Gabii, seems clearer than Taylor allowed.<sup>32</sup>

Could the military tribune have been the older brother of the consul? That the latter had a "brother" is revealed to us by Josephus (Ant. 17,7) without giving his name. However, the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. I.Kajanto, (The Latin Cognomina, Helsinki 1965), who says that 'Saturninus' was the only Latin theophoric cognomen borne by the republican nobility (54; cf. 213), and that in the Imperial period it was used among a small number of names by "every fourth person" (30)!

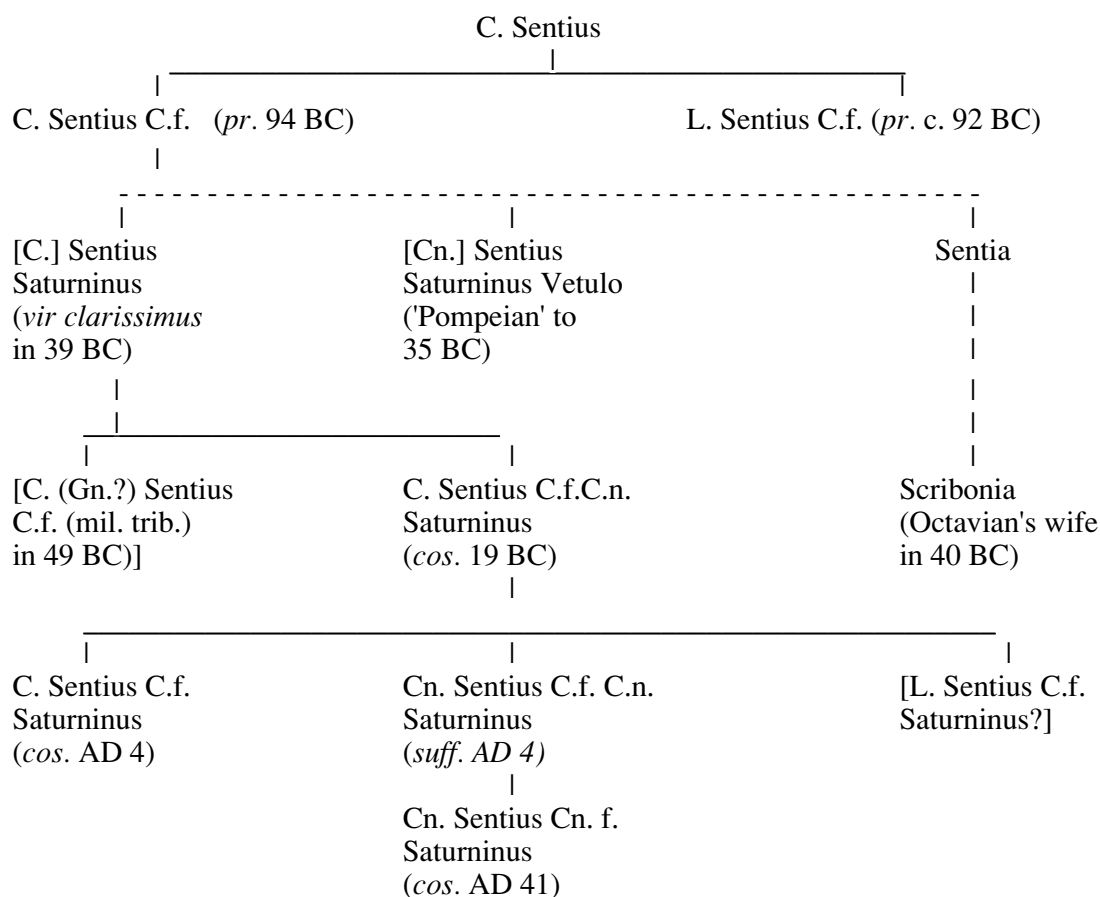
<sup>29</sup> Cf. E.Klebs in RE 2.1, 1895,260-9; *contra* Syme, *op.cit.* (n.25); *idem*, "Senators, Tribes and Towns", in Badian, *op.cit.* (n.25), 600-1 (originally published in 1964); cf. D.R.Shackleton Bailey, *Two Studies in Roman Nomenclature*, New York 1976,14-5.

<sup>30</sup> Syme, *op.cit.* (n.25), 611; *contra* Taylor, *op.cit.* (n.17), 253,259; cf. T.R.S.Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, vol. 3, Atlanta, Ga. 1986,191.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, *op.cit.* (n.17), 44-5; cf. review of Taylor's book by E.Badian in JRS 52,1962,202.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, *op.cit.* (n.17), 192.

*praenomen* of the tribune is a problem, in that it is the same as the consul's. We may perhaps hypothesise that Josephus wrote in Greek Γάϊος instead of Γναίος, wrongly expanding the Latin abbreviation of *Cn.* (i.e. of the original decree). This is mere speculation, but confusion between the abbreviated *praenomina* 'C.' and 'Cn.' can be demonstrated. Without our searching too far, the consul himself, always named C. Sentius, appears in Donatus (Vit. Virg. 35) as *Cn. Sentius*! Also one of Syme's Saturnini, 'Cn. Saturninus', appears in Cicero's *Pro Plancio* both as *Cn.* (19) and as *C.* (29). We may tentatively entertain the conjecture that the tribune, as Cnaius rather than Caius, might have been the brother of the consul. This *praenomen* definitely continues in the family: one of the consul's "three" sons (Jos., War 1,541; Ant. 16,369) was called "Cnaius" (e.g. ILS 9520), as was a grandson (e.g. CIL VI 20141). A family tree is required at this point, to summarise what so far has been said.



The consulship of Saturninus in 19 BC is interestingly well-attested beyond Rome and Italy, from Baetica (ILS 8007) to Asia,<sup>33</sup> and recently even to Masada in the Judaean

<sup>33</sup> Herrmann, *op.cit.* (n.13), 84-90, no.4.

desert.<sup>34</sup> Josephus (Ant. 16,368) calls him a man of "high reputation" (ἐπ' ἄξιωματος), while Velleius (2,92), who knew of his "old-fashioned severity" and "firmness", sums him up as *vir excellens*. In fact Velleius (2,104,2-3) devoted a relatively lengthy description to Saturninus' character, which is worth quoting here:

"a man many-sided in his virtues, a man of energy of action, and of foresight, alike able to endure the duties of a soldier as he was well trained in them, but who, likewise, when his labours left room for leisure, made a liberal and elegant use of it, but with this reservation, that one would call him sumptuous and jovial rather than extravagant or indolent. About the distinguished ability of this illustrious man and his famous consulship I have already spoken."

Saturninus was *quindecimvir* at Augustus' *Ludi Saeculares* in 17 BC (CIL VI 32323,107,151), and the current opinion has it that he held Africa for the year 14/13 BC; but this cannot be true.<sup>35</sup> Not a single historian, nor inscription, nor coin can be presented as evidence. The theory is based on a statement by Tertullian which has clearly been misinterpreted. Tertullian (*De pall.* 1,2), addressing the Carthaginians around AD 208, reminds them: *sollemnia Sentius Saturninus enarravit*. That Tertullian had our Saturninus in mind may be argued from the fact that he seems to refer to the same (and the right) person elsewhere (*Adv. Marc.* 4,19,10). But what does *enarravit* mean, and what was really the official position of Saturninus during this event?

In accepted translations the word is taken to be "the inauguration" of Carthage as a *colonia*, officially pronounced, as it were, by Saturninus.<sup>36</sup> Wishful thinking then assigns the occasion to him as Proconsul of Africa in 14/3 BC, after the statutory five years from the consulship. But a grave historical problem created by this arrangement, has seldom been confronted.<sup>37</sup> The foundation (or actually refoundation) of the colony of Carthage by Augustus, is explicitly dated by Dio (52,43; cf. 43,50; Virg., *Aen.* 1,418-38) to 29 BC, ten years before Saturninus' consulship. If our man was indeed responsible for the relevant consecration or festival, performing the religious rites, his position in 29 BC (at about thirty-one years old) would have been of a propraetorian nature; possibly a special *flamen* (cf. his later post as *quindecimvir* at the Secular Games), or simply in an *ad hoc* Octavian assignment. So, even accepting the given translation of *enarravit*, whatever Saturninus' position at Carthage in 29 BC might have been, he was certainly not Proconsul of Africa.

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<sup>34</sup> H.M.Cotton & J.Geiger, *Masdada II: The Latin and Greek Documents*, Jerusalem 1989,140-60, nos 804-17.

<sup>35</sup> Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14), 371, no.5; cf. T.R.S.Broughton, *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis*, Baltimore, Md. 1929,57; C. Van Nerom, "Colonia Iulia Concordia Karthago", in J.Bibauw (ed.), *Hommages à Marcel Renard*, vol.2, Bruxelles 1969,770.

<sup>36</sup> S.Thelwall, "Tertullian's On the Pallium", in A.Roberts & J.Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.4, Edinburgh 1885,5; cf. H.Audollent, *Carthage romaine*, Paris 1901,46.

<sup>37</sup> See T.D.Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (2nd edn), Oxford 1985,86, n.4; cf. Evans, *op.cit.* (n.25), 36-7.

As amply testified by Josephus, Saturninus became Augustus' legate in Syria from 12 to 8 BC.<sup>38</sup> Among a number of episodes, he was involved in the famous trial of Herod the Great's sons in Berytus, which ended in the fatal condemnation of the young men (War 1,538, 541; Ant. 16,368-9). Saturninus in this province was accompanied by his three sons, already mentioned, as his personal *legati*. Later on he became Augustus' legate in Germany - apparently in AD 3, because when Tiberius arrived there in AD 4, Saturninus had already been placed in this position by Augustus, as Velleius tells us (2,105,1): *qui iam (or tum) legatus patris eius in Germania fuerat*.<sup>39</sup> Dio (55,28,6) calls him generally ἄρχων of the province. Saturninus stayed in Germany until AD 6, and excelled as commander of the army, even though at an advanced age. Thanks to Velleius, who participated in the German wars at this time, we have an important account of what went on. Dio supplements our view in a crucial respect, but his brief narrative is compressed and chronologically misleading.

Tiberius' mission in Germany in AD 4-5 consisted of two major campaigns against a number of tribes. During the first, which took him to the Weser, the Canninefates, the Attuarii and the Bructeri were defeated, and the famous Cherusci were subjugated (Vell., 2,105). During the second, which took him to the Elbe, the Cauchi, the Langobardi and many others were attacked, so that the conquest of the entire land beyond the Rhine was complete (Vell., 2,106). In these campaigns it is said that Tiberius took himself the leading part, while entrusting to Saturninus the less dangerous battles. The XVII imperatorial salutation of Augustus, which equals Tiberius' III, is assigned correctly by Syme to the conclusion of these victories in the year AD 5 (cf. Dio 55,28,6).<sup>40</sup>

Of German tribes, after this Roman devastation, only the Marcomanni were still free. They had been promptly moved to Bohemia by their Roman-educated leader, King Maroboduus.<sup>41</sup> In AD 6 Tiberius realised that he had to attack Maroboduus' huge and well-trained army. His movement (in which it is said twelve legions took part!) consisted in a combination of two forces, one led by Saturninus from Moguntiacum, and the other by himself from Carnuntum on the Danube. Only five days before the final battle, and because

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<sup>38</sup> The dates of Saturninus' government of Syria are commonly given as 9-6 BC (e.g. Syme, *op.cit.* (n.4), 875), or c. 8-6 BC (Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14), 304, no.8), and more cautiously as "?10/9-?7/6 B.C." (E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol.1 (rev. edn by F.Millar & G.Vermes), Edinburgh 1973,257). The correct dates are 12-8 BC (see Kokkinos, *op.cit.* (n.24), 427-8); the argumentation is lengthy to be repeated here, particularly since the precise chronology of this appointment makes no difference to the overall argument.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Groag, *op.cit.* (n.25), 1521; Syme, *op.cit.* (n.7-1939), 435, n.4; *idem*, *op.cit.* (n.4), 874-5.

<sup>40</sup> R.Syme, "Some Imperial Salutations", in Birley (ed.), *op.cit.* (n.4), 1206 (originally published in 1979); cf. *idem*, *op.cit.* (n.7 - 1986), 325; *contra* T.D.Barnes, "The Victories of Augustus", *JRS* 64,1974,23.

<sup>41</sup> On this king, see the excellent article by J.Dobiáš, "King Maroboduus as a Politician", *Klio* 38,1960,155ff.; cf. E.A.Thompson, "Maroboduus", in L.Varcl & R.F.Willetts (eds), *Geras: Studies Presented to G.Thomson*, Prague 1963,203ff.; Wells, *op.cit.* (n.11), 160-1; L.F.Pitts, "Relations Between Rome and the German Kings on the Middle Danube in the First to Fourth Centuries A.D.", *JRS* 79,1989,46-7; M.Todd, *The Early Germans*, Oxford 1992,51.

of the disturbances in Dalmatia and Pannonia, Tiberius was compelled to abandon the mission (*necessaria gloriosis praeposita*), resorting to a peace treaty with Maroboduus (Vell., 110,3; Tac., Ann. 2,26; cf. 2,63, 65). Under the circumstances this truce was received as a great victory in Rome, for it guaranteed the neutrality of the dangerous Germans, at a time when the Romans had to quell one of the most serious revolts they ever had to face. Dio (55,28,6), under the year AD 6, informs us that Augustus and Tiberius received the title *imperator*, apparently again (i.e. after that of AD 5)<sup>42</sup> - and thus the XVIII and IV respectively - while Saturninus, for his distinguished service, received the ἐπινικίους τιμὰς (*ornamenta triumphalia*). Dio is clear on the 'double' nature of Tiberius' and Saturninus' German achievement: μὴ μόνον ἄπαξ ἀλλὰ καὶ δεύτερον.

Maroboduus was pacified for years to come. When in AD 9, Varus was ambushed by the Cherusci and his three legions were massacred, the King of the Marcomanni kept a clear distance. In fact, as proof of his loyalty, he sent Varus' head to Tiberius to be buried in the family tomb of Augustus (Vell., 2,119,5). Maroboduus may have refused later to help the Romans against the Cherusci (Tac., Ann. 2,46), but his position among the Germans was surely delicate, and such help could conceivably not have been specified by the treaty. Equally negative was the decision of Tiberius in AD 17 not to assist Maroboduus, when he came under attack by the Cherusci, although he did send his son Drusus to consolidate a peace between the two tribes (Tac., Ann. 2,44, 46). Within two years and under pressure, both internal and external, the Marcomannian king had finally to give up his kingdom. He was offered asylum by the Emperor, and spent the rest of his life in Ravenna, where he died at old age in AD 36. Tiberius asserted in the Senate that Philip of Macedonia had not been so dangerous to Athens, nor Pyrrhus of Epirus or Antiochus of Syria to Rome, as Maroboduus to Italy (Tac., Ann. 2,63).

We do not know how and where Saturninus met his end after his triumphal decoration in AD 6. It is unlikely that his age (mid-sixties by now) would have provided him with more than a decade to enjoy retirement. In fact, since he is not mentioned by Tacitus, who begins to record the deaths of illustrious consulars regularly from AD 20 (Ann. 3,30), he must have died before that year - perhaps soon after Augustus. Saturninus may have spent the last years of his life in his own villa not far from Tibur, if his family indeed originated from the area between Gabii and Tibur, as we have proposed. People who had adopted the *gentilicium* Sentius, are known anyway from Tibur (CIL XIV 3808 = I.Ital. 4.1, 142-3, no.400).

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<sup>42</sup> An inscription from Saepinum attributes to Tiberius "*imp. IV*" in AD 5/6 (see M.Gaggiotti, "Le Iscrizioni della Basilica di Saepinum e i Rectores della Provincia del Samnium", *Athenaeum* 56,1978,147, no.4), which I would take as dating to AD 6, after conclusion of peace with Maroboduus. If this is so, ILS 107.4 which refers to Tiberius' "*imp. ter.*", and which is thought to date to AD 7/8, has to be erroneous; it contains other inaccuracies. The next salutation (V) of Tiberius (= Augustus' XIX), would be that of AD 9, on the final suppression of the Pannonian revolt (Barnes, *op.cit.* (n.40), 23-4).

Thus to identify him with the *ignotus* of the Tiburtine text would make good sense on many counts. To follow the scheme of the *cursus* which we have found to be logical (A=3, B=1, C=2), the consul of 19 BC, a distinguished Augustan personality, was not only *legatus* in Germany in AD 3-6, but also fought many tribes and subjugated the fierce Cherusci. He also pacified a king, the famous Maroboduus of the Marcomanni. He almost certainly received thanksgivings on two different occasions, one in AD 5 and one in AD 6, as well as *ornamenta triumphalia* on his final victory. He had moreover been *legatus* in Syria between 12-8 BC, where he left his mark. And lastly it would not be unreasonable to suggest that at some stage in his career, like the subject of the epitaph, he also governed Asia. This would have happened, most appropriately, five years after consulship in 14/3 BC, when there is a long gap in our list of governors for this province.<sup>43</sup>

But there may be more. If Saturninus' appointment in Syria is allowed to precede his governorship of Asia (see above n.24), making the order A=3, B=2, C=1 possible, then evidence may exist even for this latter post. A fragmentary inscription from the Heraion on Samos (above n.33), which refers to Saturninus, has been restored to present him as consul [ὑπάτωι]. The date is deduced from the following: [Ἔτους I]B τῆς Αὐτ[οκράτορος Σεβαστ]οῦ νίκης. Clearly the Actian Era is followed here, beginning from Sept. 31/ Sept. 30 BC, and thus giving for [I]B the year 20/19 BC. Saturninus was indeed consul in 19 BC, which happened to be the time that Augustus was in the East, and thus the accepted restoration is probable. However, it is not certain. In theory the date could also have been [K]B, giving the year 10/9 BC, or [Λ]B for AD 1/2. The first would not be suitable, since Saturninus was in Syria at the time. The second may not be excluded, for he could have been present in Asia, perhaps as Proconsul (so [ἀνθυπάτωι] instead in the restoration) for AD 2/3. This year is definitely available.<sup>44</sup> That Saturninus governed Asia in AD 2/3, rather than 14/13 BC (depending on the order of the *titulus*), may remain as an alternative possibility.<sup>45</sup>

We are now ready to conclude our discussion by tabulating the important points of the *titulus*, in an attempt to compare them not only with the evidence we have gathered for Saturninus, but also against that of the two strongest rivals, Quirinius and Piso:

<sup>43</sup> See Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14), 206, nos 6-8; there is a hiatus between 20 and 11 BC in Asia, with only one candidate (Q. Aemilius Lepidus) to fill this gap.

<sup>44</sup> See Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14), 207-8; the following years are available in Asia with only three existing candidates (P. Cornelius Scipio; Iullus Antonius; C. Antistius Vetus): 9/8 BC, 8/7 BC, 7/6 BC, 5/4 BC, 4/3 BC, 3/2 BC, 1 BC/AD 1, AD 1/2, AD 2/3, AD 3/4 (cf. Syme, *op.cit.* (n.7 - 1986), 405).

<sup>45</sup> The interval between consulship and proconsulship would be extreme in this case, but not impossible. Cn. Cornelius Lentulus, the Augur (*cos.* 14 BC), was proconsul of Asia in 2/1 BC, while M. Aemilius Lepidus (*cos.* AD 6) governed Asia between AD 26-28 (Thomasson, *op.cit.* (n.14), 207, no.12; 210, no.33).



TITULUS	QUIRINIUS	PISO	SATURNINUS
[ <i>Consul</i> in ?]	<i>Consul</i> 12 BC	<i>Consul</i> 15 BC	<i>Consul</i> 19 BC
[ <i>Legatus</i> in a province];	<i>Legatus</i> in Galatia-Pamphylia in c. 5-3 BC;	<i>Legatus</i> in Galatia-Pamphylia from 11 BC;	<i>Legatus</i> in Germany in AD 3-6;
when [tribe/s?] subjugated;	against the Homonadenses;	against the Bessi;	against the Cherusci <i>et al.</i> ;
a <i>rex</i> was [pacified?];	with Amyntas as a 'dead' <i>rex (sic)</i> ;	with Rhescuporis as a 'dead' <i>rex (sic)</i> ;	Maroboduus as the pacified <i>rex</i> ;
twice thanks & triumphal decorations	twice ( <i>sic</i> ) thanks & triumphal decorations	twice ( <i>sic</i> ) thanks & triumphal decorations	twice thanks & triumphal decorations
<i>Proconsul</i> of Asia in ?	<i>Proconsul</i> of Asia in 1 BC/AD 1 ( <i>sic</i> )	<i>Proconsul</i> of Asia in c. 9/8 BC ( <i>sic</i> )	<i>Proconsul</i> of Asia in 14/13 BC ( <i>sic</i> )
<i>Legatus</i> in Syria in ?	<i>Legatus</i> in Syria from AD 6	<i>Legatus</i> in Syria in c. 4-1 B C ( <i>sic</i> )	<i>Legatus</i> in Syria in 12-8 BC

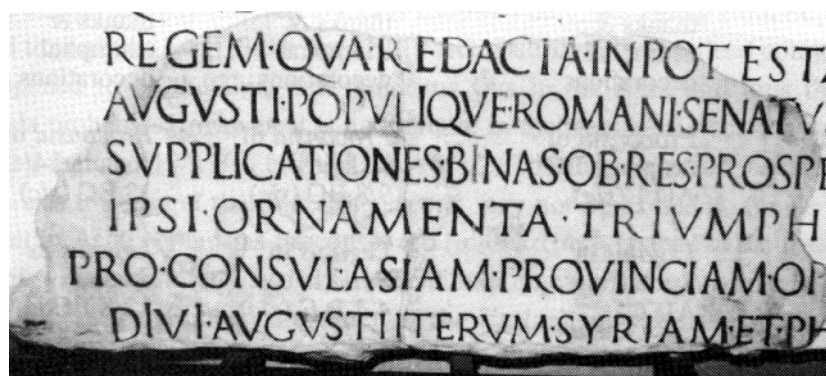
Even from a glance at this table the superiority of Saturninus is clear. Of his rivals, Piso remains either partially or totally unsupported in four out of seven points listed, and Quirinius in three out of seven. Saturninus' apparent uncertainty is confined to one point, and even there, if his proconsulate of Asia is to be dated to AD 2/3 instead, his position may satisfy every point!

Looking back to the arguments over the years concerning the *titulus Tiburtinus*, a few final remarks would be pertinent. Since *iterum* does not refer to Syria, it does not present us with something unique; and in any case there is no independent evidence that Syria had ever been governed by the same person on two different occasions -Luke (2:2) cannot be made to say that Quirinius held Syria twice, certainly not by one who is not ignorant of Greek! It is the word *binas* which seems to be the key to understanding this text. Here we do have something extraordinary to guide us, and indeed there is independent evidence in agreement, i.e. the 'double' (note δεύτερον) military achievement of Saturninus recorded in

Dio. Gordon in his indispensable list of Roman generals who had been awarded *ornamenta triumphalia*, had to admit: "of the more than thirty donations or investments credited to Augustus by Suetonius [Aug. 38,1], we can identify sixteen or seventeen... striking is the record of *supplicationes binae* [i.e. of our *titulus*]"<sup>46</sup> In sum, for over two centuries there has been a misplaced emphasis in regard to the *titulus Tiburtinus* : it is not the *iterum* that matters, but the *binas*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gordon, *op.cit.* (n.21), 309.

<sup>47</sup> Although it might be a relief to Roman historians if this text could at last become irrelevant to future generations of New Testament scholars and theologians, there seems to be one reason why it may continue to attract attention: i.e. the other reference to Saturninus in Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* 4,19,10), which apparently connects the Roman with Judaea at the time of the nativity. This has to be dealt with in a separate study, particularly since wider implications now about Saturninus support my chronology of Jesus' birth (see "Crucifixion in A.D. 36: The Keystone for Dating the Birth of Jesus", in J.Vardaman & E.M.Yamauchi (eds), *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, Winona Lake, Ind. 1989,133ff.).