

ἐδόκει γὰρ αὐτοῖς δραστηρίου τε ἀνδρὸς εἰς τὰ πράγματα δεῖν καὶ πολλὴν τῶν πολεμικῶν ἀγῶνων ἐμπειρίαν ἔχοντος, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις φρονίμου τε καὶ σώφρονος καὶ μηδὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ μεγέθους τῆς ἐξουσίας ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνόητον παραχθισομένου· ὑπὲρ ἅπαντα δὲ ταῦτα καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα δεῖ προσεῖναι στρατηλάταις ἀγαθοῖς ἄρχειν ἐγκρατῶς εἰδότος καὶ μηθὲν μαλακὸν ἐνδῶσοντος τοῖς ἀπειθοῦσιν, οὗ μάλιστα ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἐδέοντο.

For to them it seemed there was need of a man both energetic in deed and possessing wide experience in the contests of war, a man moreover not only prudent and self-controlled, but who would not be led into folly by the greatness of his power; above all these and other qualities essential in good generals, a man who knew how to govern with a firm hand and would not succumb to leniency toward the disobedient, a quality of which they were at present in particularly great need.

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Choice

The genius of the dictatorship was that it afforded the opportunity to choose as Rome's champion the man with the expertise and temperament to meet and quickly resolve that specific need. The consuls understood this burden and approached it as seriously as the dictator did his own responsibilities.

As there were two effects of appointing a dictator—turning the resources of the state toward the solution of an urgent problem, and reassuring and uniting the Roman populace through the appointment of a dictator to resolve the problem—the consul's responsibility was to weigh experience and abilities together with reputation and *auctoritas*, while ignoring political, family, and any other tempting but irrelevant considerations. By looking in turn at the clan, career, and character of the men appointed to the dictatorship in the archaic period, we can get a sense of the qualities consuls considered in choosing a dictator.

Clan

It would be reasonable to expect Rome's most powerful magistracy, the apex of power in Rome, to be kept in the hands of the few, perhaps even more so than the consulship. In fact, the reverse appears to have been the case. Across the archaic period, the records we have indicate that dictatorship was in some ways less exclusive than the two consular magistracies, the consulship and the consular tribunate.¹

For a broad distribution across the many *nomina* in Rome's vast community, you would want a larger number of *nomina* attested for a given number of offices, and therefore a low ratio of office berths or positions to *nomina*; a ratio of 1.0 would indicate the berths were fully distributed across the same number of clans.

The consular offices demonstrate much higher ratios than the dictatorial offices (dictator and *magister equitum*), indicating a poorer distribution. The number of consular magistracies during the fifth, fourth, and third centuries was over eight times the number of the *gentes* that supplied them, and the number of men who served as consul or consular tribune was over five times the number of *gentes*. The number of dictatorial magistracies, by contrast, was about three and a half times of the number of *gentes* that provided them, and the number of men who were dictators two and a half times the count of clans they represented. Comparing the two groups, then, the distribution of dictatorial magistracies across clans was two and a half times as broad as for the consular magistracies. For dictators alone, the distribution across clans was three times as broad as the consular magistracies.

Two appointees in five were the first from their clan to hold a dictatorial magistracy, but only one officeholder in five was the first man in his *gens* to achieve consular rank during this period, with four in five perpetuating their clans' persistence on the consular lists. Most tellingly, the top decile of clans holding consular magistracies accounted for half of the berths, and four-ninths of the men who held these offices. The consular magistracies in this period, in other words, went to the same nine *gentes* half the time. Only a quarter of the

1. Again, the caution must be sounded that extant records, including various *fasti* and the annual notices in such sources as Livy and Dionysius, are much later than our period of the fifth through the third centuries and have known issues, lacunae, and conflicts: ch. 2. What can be determined, therefore, is the exclusivity of the dictatorship as it descended to the Romans of the first century BCE as compared with their understanding of the consulship over the same period.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Nomina across Consular and Dictatorial Magistracies, 500–201

Category	Nomina	Berths			Men		
		Count	Ratio	Top 10%	Count	Ratio	Top 10%
consular magistracies	93	760	8.2	49%	492	5.3	44%
dictatorial magistracies	47	160	3.4	35%	119	2.5	35%
dictators	30	84	2.8	25%	67	2.2	26%
magistri equitum	37	76	2.1	33%	69	1.9	30%
censors	35	83	2.4	28%			

Note: Magistracies in which the name of the occupant is unknown are excluded in all categories. Top 10 percent refers to the number of berths or men accounted for by the top 10 percent of the nomina in that category. “Consular magistracies” includes consuls and consular tribunes, but not the decemviri of 450–448. “Dictatorial magistracies” includes dictators and magistri equitum. Full list of dictatorships, associated magistri equitum: appendix A. Dictatorial magistracy holders: appendix B.—Number of clans: though Varro characterized the nomina gentilitia as *innumera* (*ap. Val. Max. Epit.*, s.v. “*De Praenomine*”—Hase 1822, 212), the total number of attested Roman nomina appears to be on the order of four hundred. For magistracies, the count of nomina appearing in the first volume of the *MRR*, which covers all known officeholders in the Republic up through 100 BCE, is 233. Roman clans and clan names: Ashley and Hanifin 1978; Salway 1994; Smith 2006; Cheesman 2008. Validity of early clan names in Fasti and related sources, discrepancies with annalistic sources: Forsythe 2005, 157–66.—Number of dictator berths: There are eighty-five attested dictatorships during this period, but the occupant of the dictatorship in 348 is unknown.—Number of magister equitum berths: the magistri equitum for seven dictatorships are unknown; two magistri equitum were replaced with a suffect officeholder; three dictators on my list did not have a magister equitum.—Number of censorship berths: the censorship was customarily not held more than once, excepting C. Marcius Rutilus Censorinus, *cens.* 294, 265, who is said to have sponsored a law to prevent its happening again (*Val. Max.* 4.1.3; *Plut. Cor.* 1.1).

dictators, in contrast, came from the top decile of gentes that attained the dictatorship.

Not only that, but while the ratio of gentes to holders of consular office stayed roughly constant over the three centuries, among the dictatorial magistracies the distribution became broader over time. In the fourth century, 29 gentes furnished 64 men who were either dictators or magistri equitum; in the third, the 36 men holding these offices came from 27 gentes, widening the gentes-to-men ratio from 4:9 to 3:4.

The clustering for the consular magistracies concentrated at the center of Roman society. Twenty core gentes furnished over two-thirds of the men and nearly three quarters of the consular berths. The distribution of these core families across the consular magistracies is in some cases interestingly different from that across the dictatorial magistracies. The Cornelii and Fabii are at the top of both lists for this period, unsurprisingly given those clans’ size, number of branches, and general preeminence; but of the top twenty consular gentes, two, the Verginii (12 consular magistrates) and the Genucii (8), were never

tapped for dictatorial magistrates.² A review of all *gentes* appearing in the first volume of the *MRR*, approximating a list of all officeholding *nomina* from the first three centuries of the Republic, gives the top twenty most recurring *nomina* for all offices a slightly different list from the consular one (it does not include the *Genucii* and *Verginii*, for example);³ still, there are again two core *gentes* in the top twenty for all offices that supplied no dictators.⁴

Conversely, the dictators and *magistri equitum*, despite constituting a dramatically smaller group of men, extended to three *gentes* that do not appear on the lists of consuls and consular tribunes in the same period. Three *gentes*, in other words, were tapped for dictators and *magistri equitum* that never fielded a consul or consular tribune during the time of the dictatorship. Only one was a dictator, but he was among the most famous: Q. Hortensius (#60,287?), proponent of the *lex Hortensia* binding all Romans to the laws of the plebeian council. The remaining clans are the *Laetorii* (M. Laetorius Plancianus, *mag. eq.* 257, #66) and the *Tarquitii* (L. Tarquitius Flaccus, *mag. eq.* 458, #4).

With unusual clan names we must ask whether the names are reliable. The *Hortensius* nomen is well attested in references to his dictatorship and to the groundbreaking legislation that bore his name; the name is also attested for other individuals, notably Cicero's contemporary Hortensius the Orator.⁵ Livy is not extant for Laetorius in 257, but the *FC* entry preserves the name intact and is unlikely to be an error for another clan as the nomen is firmly attested elsewhere.⁶ For Tarquitius, the name is again preserved entire in the *FC*. The vari-

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2. The top twenty *gentes* supplying consulships or consular tribuneships in the fifth, fourth, and third centuries: Cornelius, Fabius, Valerius, Furius, Aemilius, Servilius, Sulpicius, Quinctius, Manlius, Papirius, Claudius, Postumius, Sempronius, Iulius, Atilius, Veturius, Verginius, Fulvius, Genucius, Sergius. The top twenty *gentes* supplying dictatorial magistracies: Cornelius, Fabius, Servilius, Aemilius, Quinctius, Valerius, Claudius, Furius, Manlius, Papirius, Fulvius, Iunius, Caecilius, Postumius, Minucius, Sulpicius, Aebutius, Aelius, Folius, Iulius.
 3. The top twenty *nomina* appearing in *MRR* vol. 1: Cornelius, Valerius, Fabius, Claudius, Aemilius, Sempronius, Servilius, Manlius, Postumius, Fulvius, Quinctius, Furius, Sulpicius, Caecilius, Licinius, Iunius, Papirius, Marcius, Minucius, Atilius.
 4. The *Sempronii* and *Licinii* supplied no dictators. Both clans were prominent in the period of the dictators and supplied numerous magistrates, including at the consular level.
 5. For *lex Hortensia* and citations see appendix C. Other individuals: Q. Hortensius Hortalus (Hortensius the Orator), *cos.* 69, *pr.* 72: Cic. *Brut.* 304, *Verr.* 1.13.38, *Orat.* 37.129, 38.132, *Rab. Perd.* 6.18, *Phil.* 2.2.4, 2.5.12; Vell. *Pat.* 2.16.3; Varro *Rust.* 3.6.6, 3.13.2, 3.17.5; Plut. *Luc.* 1.5, *Sull.* 35.4, *Cic.* 7.8; Gell. *NA* 1.5.2, 7.17.13, 19.9.7. Son of same: App. *BCiv.* 2.99. Also: L. Hortensius, *tr. pl.* 422: Livy 4.42.3; Val. *Max.* 6.5.2. L. Hortensius, *pr.* 170: Livy 43.4.8–13; Polyb. 33.1.2. L./Q. Hortensius, *pr.* 111: *MRR* 1.524, 1.540, 1.548. Hortensius, Sulla's lieutenant in Greece: Plut. *Sull.* 15.3–4, 17.7, 19.1–2; App. *Mith.* 43.166; Gran. *Lic.* 35.27. Q. Hortensius, Cato's admirer: Plut. *Cat. Min.* 25.2–5, 52.4. Q. Hortensius, *pr.* 45: Cic. *Phil.* 10.11.26; Livy *Per.* 124.4; Plut. *Caes.* 32.3, *Brut.* 25.3, 28.1; App. *BCiv.* 2.41; Cass. Dio 47.21.4–6.
 6. C. Laetorius, *tr. pl.* 471: Livy 2.56.6; Dion. Hal. 9.46.1. C. Laetorius Mergus, *tr. mil.* during the Sam-

ous manuscripts of Livy and Dionysius give “Tarquinius,” which, because the more common or better-known name would more expected, is likely to be a scribal correction.⁷ The name Tarquinius is well attested for several later individuals.⁸

Other dictatorial gentes are represented in the consular lists only because the person holding the office of dictator or magister equitum in question was also a consul—the gens, in other words, was unique on both lists, indicating distinctive individuals. The only Maenius to appear in the consular Fasti as they have come down to us was the dictator C. Maenius, *cos.* 338, *cens.* 318, *dict.* 314 (#53); otherwise the highest the Maenii ever got was praetor.⁹ Likewise, six others from among the dictatorial magistracies were unique representatives of their clans on the consular lists during this period, including two men representing gentes that, apart from the individual in question, otherwise held no known magistracies during the entirety of the Republic.¹⁰

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- nite Wars: Dion. Hal. 16.4.1–3; Val. Max. 6.1.11. C. Laetorius, *cur. aed.* 216, *pr.* 211, *propr.* 209; Livy 23.30.16, 26.23.1, 27.7.11, 27.8.4, 29.12.5. L. Laetorius, *pl. aed.* 202; Livy 30.39.8. Laetorius, ally of C. Gracchus: Val. Max. 4.7.2. M. Laetorius, ally of Marius: App. *BCiv.* 1.60. C. Laetorius, triumvir of Croton: Livy 34.45.5. Cn. Laetorius Cn.f., a village overseer at Herculaneum: *CIL* 01.00682. C. Laetorius, a young patrician: Suet. *Aug.* 5.—As magister equitum: Degrassi 1947, 42, 116, 434. If it is an error the only possibility is Plaetorius, which is unattested until after the first three centuries of the Republic (and would therefore also constitute a nomen not shared with the consular offices for that period): C. Plaetorius, a legate in 172, Livy 42.26.6–7; L. Plaetorius Cestianus, *quaest.* 74, Cic. *Clu.* 60.165, *MRR* 2.102; M. Plaetorius Cestianus, *pr.* 64, Cic. *Font.* 1.2, *Clu.* 45.126, 53.147, *MRR* 2.160.
7. Livy 3.27.1; Dion. Hal. 10.24.3 (Ταρκύνιον). See Degrassi 1947, 24, 92, 362.
 8. Notably: C. Tarquitiu P.f. Priscus, *quaest.* 81 under Sulla (attested with this filiation on coinage): *MRR* 2.76, Grueber *CRRBM* 2.356; Santangelo 2006, 16. C. Tarquitiu L.f., legate of Sertorius and one of the dinner guests on the night of his murder (attested with this filiation on an inscription at Asculum and therefore a different individual, contra Mommsen, Grueber, Santangelo, and others; Konrad 1987, 523 and nn. 3–4; *MRR* 2.76 n. 4); Sall. *Hist.* 3.81M, 3.83M; Diod. Sic. 37.22a; Frontin. *Str.* 2.5.31; *RE* 4A.2 (1932) 2394; *MRR* 2.94, 2.120; Konrad 1987, 522–24. Tarquitiu Priscus, a friend of Varro and author of *Ostentarium Tuscum*: Plin. *HN* 1.2, 1.11; Verg. *Catal.* 5 (on which see Wilkinson 1969, 21–22); Macrobi. *Sat.* 3.7.2, 3.20.3. Also: Q. Tarquitiu Catulus, legate of Augustus: *CIL* 13.08170. Tarquitiu Priscus, agent of Agrippina the Younger: Tac. *Ann.* 12.59, 14.46.1. Tarquitiu Crescens, a centurion: Tac. *Ann.* 15.11. See also Festus, s.v. *ratitus quadrans*, 340L.
 9. T. Maenius in 186, C. Maenius in 180, Q. Maenius in 170: *MRR* 1.371, 1.387, 1.420.
 10. Unique representatives of their clans on the consular and dictatorial lists during this period: Q. Ogulnius Gallus (#66,257), *cos.* 269; Sp. Cassius Viscellinus, mag. eq. 498 (#1), *cos.* 502, 493, 486; C. Aurelius Cotta, mag. eq. 231 (#70), *cos.* 252, 248, *cens.* 241; and the ill-fated C. Flaminius, mag. eq. 221?, *cos.* 223, 217, *cens.* 220. The Cassii became important from the second century, starting with C. Cassius Longinus, *cos.* 171. The next consular Aurelius came in 200, just after the period of the dictators. Flaminius as magister equitum: *MRR* 1.235n3; Develin 1979, 270–71.—Gentes that otherwise held no known magistracies during the entirety of the Republic: Q. Aulius Cerretanus, *cos.* 323, 319, who died in battle as magister equitum in 315, and Ti. Coruncanus (#69), *cos.* 280, *dict.* 246, and the first plebeian pontifex maximus (ca. 254). Aulius, name variously presented: *MRR* 1.149, 1.154. M. Aulius was *praefectus socium* in 208, the only other notice of the gens in *MRR*. Ti. Coruncanus, first plebeian pontifex maximus: Livy *Per.* 18.4; *MRR* 1.210. Though not known for producing magistrates, the nomen is not completely obscure: the murder of the envoys C. and L. Coruncanus in 230

From this we can infer that consideration for the dictatorial magistracies appears to have been less likely than the consular magistracies to have been connected with clan affiliation. On finding that a dictator was needed, the thinking was not that one ought naturally look to, say, the Fabii or the Furiii for the greatest chance of success. Nor was there a sense that one ought first seek out the sons of dictators. Dictators who were demonstrably the sons of dictators are the rare exception in this cohort, and none were described in the narrative as being chosen primarily for this reason; the most obvious example, T. Manlius Imperiosus Torquatus (#27,353; #31,349; #50,320), was most appreciated for his own formidability and for the ways in which he diverged from his despised father.¹¹

In choosing candidates for consular office, the families who shared Rome's rule could indulge their vested interest in keeping joint control of the executive; the definition of nobility was having consular ancestors, and all the young nobles were alike trained toward a general competence for ordinary magistracy in the field and via the *cursus honorum*. When it came to the emergency conditions of the dictatorship, however, relationships among the great *gentes* were subordinated to the plight of Rome and the consul's responsibility to choose a man suited to the task at hand.

Career

When appointing dictators, consuls generally looked for men of conspicuous stature in both résumé and character. We can get a feel for the former in a general way by reviewing the career achievements associated with archaic dictators. Unlike the other offices, there were no legal or customary requirements or

provoked the Illyrian War, per Polyb. 2.8.3, 13.—C. Duilius (#70,231), *cos.* 260, *cens.* 258, technically counts, as no other consular magistrates had that exact nomen; but there was a C. Duillius Longus, *tr.m.c.p.* 399, and a K. Duillius, *cos.* 336. Both spellings are found in other offices, but rarely and none after the third century. This nomen-cluster: Pariente 1970.

11. Manlii: ch. 7. Livy did note that L. Quinctius Cincinnatus, mag. eq. 437 and son of the storied dictator of the same name, was *dignum parente iuvenem* ("a young man worthy of his father," 4.17.9), but this said more about the son's character measuring up to a superlative father's than about superiority owing to lineage. T. Quinctius T.f. L.n. Cincinnatus Capitolinus (#17,380) was a grandson of the famous Cincinnatus. L. Furius Camillus (#30,350, to hold elections; #33,345, against the Aurunci) was the son of the famous M. Furius Camillus; as he temporarily restored patrician hold over the consulship in 350, per Livy 7.24.11, and the elder Camillus was a known patriciophile (though he helped broker the compromise of 367), it is possible L. Furius was made dictator because his views resembled his father's.

prerequisites to being a dictator.¹² Dictators were not drawn exclusively from ex-consuls; no law requiring such survived the early instantiations of the office, and no tradition developed that the consulship was a necessary qualification. Most of the 67 men who served as dictators were also consuls or consular tribunes, but 6 held consular office after their dictatorships, and 15 of them never did so at all, as far as we know from extant records and histories.¹³ The high proportion of consulars speaks to the value of acumen, experience, and proven leadership abilities in dealing with dictator-level issues and crises; the relevance of past consulships was the extent to which they demonstrated a capacity to deal with the specific problem at hand.

Of those dictators who had held consular office, 13 had held such office twice before their dictatorships, and 6 had already triumphed. On average the first dictatorship followed the first consular office by about 12 years (and ranging upward to around 30 years in several cases),¹⁴ allowing for an interim of senate service as a consular before selection as dictator. A typical example might be A. Atilius Calatinus (#68), whose successful campaigns against the Carthaginians by land and sea as consul, in 258 and again in 254, made him a strong candidate to serve as dictator against them in 249.

What is more notable than the bare consular record is how many of these holders of dictatorial magistracy were not merely consuls and dictators once, but were called on again and again. Two in 5 dictators were consuls or consular tribunes more than once. Eleven men were dictator more than once, and 17 men were both dictator and *magister equitum*. More than half of the dictators triumphed at some point in their careers, 12 more than once. The highest and rarest civil and military distinctions are found among those who attained the dictatorship: of the 67 dictators in the first three centuries of the Republic, at least 5 were apparently *princeps senatus*, a distinction that only came about in

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12. Mommsen (*RS* 2.129) speculated that the requirements for the dictatorship were similar to those of the consulship as they stood then, citing the appearance of a first plebeian dictator, the popular C. Marcus Rutilus (#26,356), directly in the wake of the *leges Liciniae Sextiae* of 367, without any sign of a provision specifically opening the dictatorship up to plebeians: Livy 7.17.6–7, cf. 10.8.8. Arguably the change in the dictatorship was part of the general seismic shift in the Roman constitution during this period and was enacted at the discretion of the consuls, just as the first plebeian *magister equitum* was an arbitrary choice made at the discretion of a dictator: ch. 4.
 13. Dictators who were apparently never consul or consular tribune were not necessarily nonentities: e.g., the precedent-establishing M. Valerius Maximus (#3,494) and the *princeps senatus* L. Manlius Capitolinus Imperiosus (#21,363). Early *leges creando*: ch. 3.
 14. Nine dictators had held their first consular office upwards of twenty-five years before their first dictatorship; the record goes to Cn. Fulvius Maximus Centumalus, *cos.* 298, *dict.* 263 (#65): *MRR* 1.204; Degraffi 1947, 40–41, 115, 432–33.

the middle Republic; 2 held the highest priestly title, *pontifex maximus*, a job held by very few and often for decades at a time, and 2 more *pontifices maximi* were *magistri equitum*—both, interestingly, in that order. Almost a third of the dictators were also censors, the most august elected office in the Republic; viewed from the other direction, more than a third of the attested censors were also dictators or *magistri equitum*.¹⁵ Usually the censorship came later, but sometimes the reverse was true, as with M. Fabius Buteo (#78,216). Pliny listed 9 men who attained the ultimate military distinction, the grass crown, for saving an army; 1, out of only 3 from the first three centuries of the Republic, was a dictator, Q. Fabius Maximus (#74,217).¹⁶

The impression fostered from the narrative is consistent: the men chosen to be dictator were the preeminent men of Rome not on account of family or connections but as a result of acumen and standing gained from outstanding prior achievements in the service and protection of Rome. This is necessary not only because wisdom accrued from long experience solves problems more easily, but also because the *auctoritas* of a dictator brought Rome together, redoubling the city's strength through unity.

Character

In the context of the choice, the mystery of the dictator's dangerous unanswerability takes an interesting turn. The dictators' immunity was balanced by an accountability to the collectively held ideals of Roman *virtus*. This accountability, however, was concentrated in a single moment, the moment of the choice, and in that moment it was the consul who held Rome in the balance, not the dictator. For Romans under a dictator, in a quite practical and literal sense, character was indeed fate: his character determined their fate. But the dictator's character and the Romans' ensuing fate depended on the consul correctly determining the best choice to wield the necessary power.

In the narrative histories there are numerous examples of dictators remembered foremost as being virtuous men, and whose virtue was demonstrated in

15. The dictators and *magistri equitum* who were also *principes senatus*, *pontifices maximi*, or censors, as far as we can tell given that the first two of these offices are less well-recorded than the main elective magistracies, are listed in appendix B.

16. Plin. *HN* 22.5.9–10; this was, Pliny tells us, the only grass crown *a tota Italia data* ("given by the whole of Italy"). L. Cornelius Sulla, *dict.* 82, earned one during the Social War before his dictatorship.

the conduct of their dictatorships. Conversely, there are few, if any, indications of scandals involving moral shortcomings among those being considered for the dictatorship. In a handful of cases they crop up after their time in office, and without reference to their tenure as dictator. An overzealous censor, for example, expelled P. Cornelius Rufinus (#63,285?, *cos.* 290, 277) from the senate ten years after his dictatorship for the extravagant possession of ten pounds of silver, even though he had supposedly acquitted himself honorably in office as dictator and consul; Valerius Maximus filed the anecdote under examples of censorial excess.¹⁷ Hardly any dictators can be found who were remembered for lack of virtue; the rogue L. Manlius Capitolinus Imperiosus (#21,363) is the best example, and his sin as dictator still involved at least acting in the direction of Rome's immediate military interest. M. Minucius Rufus, the co-dictator in 217, may have been ambitious and insubordinate, but in that moment Rome itself, plebs and senate both, was rebelling against the Delayer's long game, and Minucius was a symptom of a larger problem. Minucius also repented, and his noble contrition was well-remembered.¹⁸

Case Study: The Man Called from the Plow (L. Quinctius Cincinnatus I, #4, 458)

According to a legend related by several ancient authors,¹⁹ the ex-consul L. Quinctius Cincinnatus was engaged in rustic labor on his farm one day in the year 458 when a delegation arrived from Rome.

Aranti quattuor sua iugera in Vaticano, quae prata Quintia appellantur, Cincinnato viator attulit dictaturam et quidem, ut traditur, nudo, plenoque nuntius

17. Dion. Hal. 20.13.1; Val. Max. 2.9.4; Gell. *NA* 4.8.5–7, 17.21.39. The censure in Valerius Maximus may be influenced by paltriness of the supposed decadence, seeing as in his day possessing only ten pounds of silver was a sign of “great poverty.” Gellius had it that the censor, C. Fabricius Luscinus Monocularis, had long considered Rufinus a masterful warrior but privately avaricious and, being an austere man himself, hated him for it. Dionysius noted revealingly that Rufinus was the “first” to attempt such extravagance, suggesting it was more the ex-dictator's brazenness among the increasingly wealthy elites of the third century that brought about the censor's action, and that it was done to make an example.

18. Manlius: ch. 7. Minucius: ch. 10.

19. Cic. *Sen.* 16.56, *Fin.* 2.4.12; Livy 3.26.9–11; Plin. *HN* 18.4.20; Flor. 1.11.11–15; Cass. Dio 5.23.2=Zon. 7.17; Eutr. 1.17; Veg. *Mil.* 1.3; August. *De civ. D.* 5.18. Dionysius had the story both for his consulship of 460 (10.17.3–5) and then again for his dictatorship of 458 (10.24.1–2), Cincinnatus grumbling on both occasions that his field would now go unsown, risking his family's food supply.

morarum: Vela corpus, inquit, ut perferam senatus populique Romani mandata.

As he was plowing his four-iugera property on the Vatican, the land now called the Quintian Meadows, and indeed (so it is said) stripped nude, a summoner brought Cincinnatus his commission as dictator; and after considerable hesitation the messenger said, “Clothe yourself, so that I may deliver the mandates of the senate and people of Rome.” (Plin. *HN* 18.4.20)

Hastily donning appropriate attire, he was informed that he had been named dictator by popular demand to deal with a sudden setback in the ongoing war with the Aequi. The camp of one of the consuls of the year, L. Minucius, was hemmed in, taking Minucius out of action; the alarmed populace demanded a dictator to take up the campaign as well as to rescue the unlucky consul.²⁰ Their hope lay in a man like Cincinnatus: stalwart, austere, and indomitable. Grumbling about his fields being left unattended, he departed in the boat provided, levied a new army, defeated the Aequi and put them under the yoke, triumphed, and resigned at the earliest opportunity, returning to his fields within sixteen days.²¹

Among Romans of later centuries, the scene of “Cincinnatus called from his plow” was vividly remembered. Distilled in him, to his lasting fame, was the Roman ideal, the *mos maiorum* made manifest. His story told of an archetypal Roman citizen-farmer who coveted neither power nor the wealth that might come with it, acting instead according to his own truth, that a man should be most content with poverty and a simple three-acre farm; his contemporaries were likewise lionized for choosing this kind of man as a repository of all power. His call from the plow was told as a parable, with Dionysius, Livy, Cicero, and others calling attention to its moral content, often in subtextual or explicit contrast to the Romans of their own day.²²

ταῦτα δὲ οὐχ ἑτέρου τινὸς χάριν εἰπεῖν προήχθη, ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερὸν γένηται πᾶσιν, οἷοι τότε ἦσαν οἱ τῆς Ῥωμαίων πόλεως προεστηκότες, ὡς αὐτουργοὶ καὶ

20. Livy 3.26.2–6; Dion. Hal. 10.23.5.

21. Livy 3.26.6–29.7; Dion. Hal. 10.23.4–25.3; Val. Max. 2.7.7; Flor. 1.11.12–15. His cognomen derived from his unfashionably grown-out curly hair (< *cincinnus* “curled hair”): Cass. Dio 5.23.2.

22. *itaque ut maiores nostri ab aratro adduxerunt Cincinnatum illum, ut dictator esset*, Cicero scolded his Epicurean contemporaries in a treatise on good and evil, *sic vos de pagis omnibus colligitis bonos illos quidem viros, sed certe non pereruditos*: Cic. *Fin.* 2.4.12. A fragmentary section of *De Re Publica* in which Cicero painted the *rector rei publicae*, his idealized citizen-statesman, in relation to ordinary men looking after a farm, was laid on this foundation: Nelsestuen 2014.

σώφρονες καὶ πενίαν δικαίαν οὐ βαρυνόμενοι καὶ βασιλικὰς οὐ διώκοντες ἔξουσίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ διδομένας ἀναινόμενοι: φανήσονται γὰρ οὐδὲ κατὰ μικρὸν ἐοικότες ἐκείνοις οἱ νῦν, ἀλλὰ τάναντία πάντα ἐπιτηδεύοντες, πλὴν πάνυ ὀλίγων, δι' οὓς ἔστηκεν ἔτι τὸ τῆς πόλεως ἀξίωμα καὶ τὸ σώζειν τὴν πρὸς ἐκείνους τοὺς ἄνδρας ὁμοιότητα. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἄλις.

I relate these particulars solely to emphasize what kind of men Rome's leaders were in those days. They capably worked their own lands; they led frugal lives; they endured honorable poverty with contentment. Far from aiming at royal power, it was refused when offered. The Romans of today do not bear the slightest resemblance to them, but do everything the opposite way—excepting a very few, by whom the dignity of the state is still maintained, and a resemblance to those men preserved. (Dion. Hal. 10.17.6)

Conspicuous and even preeminent “virility” in the Roman sense—such ideas as prudence, sagacity, constraint, and resolve—was a necessary but insufficient qualification for the dictatorship. It was the Cincinnatan admixture of experience, background, talent, and character that made him, in that moment, *spes unica imperii populi Romani*, the Romans' only hope.²³

The dictator's character also came into play after he had defeated the Aequi. Three years earlier an ex-tribune named M. Volscius had made a public accusation against one of the most prominent of the patricians, Caeso Quinctius,²⁴ a young man famous for his impressive stature and ferocious spirit. Volscius accused Caeso of killing his elder brother during a brawl in the Subura the year before, shortly after a pestilence. Caeso, facing public outrage, went into voluntary exile and the trial was abandoned. Two years passed. Then Volscius himself was summoned to trial for perjury, as in the interim it had become widely known, and attested by many witnesses, not only that Volscius' brother had been confined to his sickbed as a result of the pestilence and had died of the disease, not from the application of Caeso's mighty fist, but also that Caeso had been not in Rome at the time but at the front.

23. Livy 3.26.7.

24. Son of the dictator (Dion. Hal. 10.5.1, 10.17.3). Confusingly, Livy did not name him in full, stating instead *Caeso erat Quinctius* (3.11.6), i.e., that Caeso belonged to the Quinctian gens. An older scholastic tradition of referring to him as “Quinctius Caeso” (e.g., Latte 1936, 26) seems to have been supplanted by a reading of “Caeso Quinctius” (e.g., Vasaly 1999, 513), which is better in accordance with the text. Cf. the attestation of a *Caeso Quinctius L.f. Cn.n. Claudus [sic] [?Flamininus]* in the *FC* (cos. 271), for whom see Badian 1971. Forsythe argued that the story of Caeso's violent antics and trial were a later embroidery contrasting his father's stoicism: Forsythe 2005, 204.

Nonetheless, the tribunes successfully blocked the trial all through 459 and again in 458. The implication is that matters would have continued thus indefinitely, the tribunes being determined to prevent the prosecution of Volscius despite his widely believed guilt. So when Cincinnatus had taken care of the foreign threat and was preparing to resign, he was asked to remain in office for the perjury trial, despite his conflict of interest. The tribunes were too in awe of the dictator or his office to interfere, and Volscius was quickly condemned and exiled. Cincinnatus then resigned, having held office for just over two weeks, trial included.²⁵

Viewed objectively, Caeso's father should not have been involved in trying Volscius. Cincinnatus, however, was a hero who had just saved Rome after the consuls had spectacularly failed to do so, the awe that stilled the tribunes being not merely for the office but for the man; the implication of his reputation as passed down to us is that he was also so purely Roman that he was trusted to be just even in a case involving his son. The tone of the stories told about his integrity and humility leads us to understand that he ensured justice and resolved a persistent crisis as forthrightly as he had defeated the enemy of the Romans, then stood down from this second, unasked-for mandate and returned to his plow.

Case Study: The Wrong Man (M. Claudius Glicia, #67, 249)

P. Claudius Pulcher was consul and in command of Rome's fleet during the First Punic War, but was recalled to Rome after catastrophically losing a crucial naval engagement, the Battle of Drepana, to the Carthaginians. The loss horrified the Romans not only because of the potentially irrecoverable setback against that great maritime power, but especially because Claudius compounded the ignoring of an omen with a religious outrage.

The Romans were reluctant sea-warriors and had tried to carry over trappings and capabilities of their military practices on land over to their earliest efforts at naval warfare. The augural mechanisms included a contingent of chickens sacred to Iuno whose willingness to feed when consulted before a battle had long been used in land war to ascertain divine approval. In this case, the chickens, unused to the pitching decks of a Roman trireme, were not eating;

25. Caeso's stature and character (*ferox iuuenis*): Livy 3.11.6–7; Dion. Hal. 10.5.1. Volscius accusation: Livy 3.13.2–3; Dion. Hal. 10.7.1–6. Caeso's exile: Livy 3.13.9; Dion. Hal. 10.8.4. Perjury charge: Livy 3.24.3–5. Tribunes' obstruction: 3.24.7, 3.25.2. Dictator kept from resigning; tribunes awed: 3.29.6. Resigned after: 3.29.7.

Claudius, far from heeding the omen, famously had them thrown overboard, in some versions roaring, “If they will not eat, let them drink!”

He then sailed into battle against negative auspices, a misdeed that would have been held against any consul even without the psychological effect such a prodigy would have had on superstitious Roman soldiers already ill at ease fighting so far from land. Drepana was an unmitigated disaster: Claudius lost almost his entire fleet.²⁶

Charged with treason and summoned home, Claudius was first called upon by the senate to appoint a dictator to take up the naval war. Apparently out of spite, the consul named the most inappropriate man he could think of: a scribe of his own household, M. Claudius Glicia (#67,249).²⁷ The putative dictator was immediately forced to resign as unfit, though precisely how this was achieved is not known.²⁸

Unfortunately we have only slivers of evidence about this man and his unsuitability. Livy’s epitomator remarked that Glicia was *sortis ultimae hominem* (“a man of the lowest order”).²⁹ This turn of phrase might mean either that he was of low economic standing, *sors* being read as “rank,” and so a member of the head count or a freedman—probably the consul’s own freedman, going by the clan name; or that he was of the lowest moral caliber, *sors* being read as “kind.” That Livy might have been suggesting the latter might be inferred from his observation that subsequently Glicia shamelessly wore a purple stripe to games like any other ex-dictator.³⁰

Glicia’s nomination and induced resignation were recorded in the *FC*.

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26. Polyb. 1.51.1–12; Cic. *Nat.D.* 2.3.7, *Div.* 1.16.29; Livy *Per.* 19.2; Val. Max. 1.4.3; Suet. *Tib.* 2.2; Gell. *NA* 10.6.2–4; Flor. 2.2.29. Polybius did not mention the chickens, which casts that part of the story into at least some doubt; but he also did not mention the resulting dictator. The treason charges Pulcher faced were, per the other sources, the result of his actions in relation to the sacred chickens, and the Polybian version, that Rome was outraged that he had acted rashly and “done all a single man could” to bring disaster on Rome, carries a flavor of something beyond simple defeat (Polyb. 1.52.2–3). The consul’s arrogant incompetence as an extreme example of a universal *nobilis ethos*: Bleckmann 2002, 186–91. Taking of the auspices *ex tripudiis*, latterly involving chickens as a rule (but cf. the sacred geese famously disturbed in 390, Horsfall 1981, Ziolkowski 1993): Cic. *Div.* 2.34.71–2.35.73, *Fam.* 6.4; Livy 10.40.2–14; Ov. *Fast.* 1.446–48; Val. Max. 1.4.3; Festus, s.vv. *puls*, *tripudium*, *oscinum tripudium*, 284L, 498L, 214L; Linderski 1986, 2156, 2175–76, 2191, 2246n402, 2286.
27. On the scanty documentation regarding *scribae* in Rome see Badian 1989. Few scribes are known by either name or office in the record, Glicia and Cn. Flavius (*cur. aed.* 304) being among the handful of exceptions. Cn. Flavius was explicitly the son a freedman (Livy 9.46.1).
28. Livy *Per.* 19.2; *FC*. He may not have formally taken office; he was very likely imposed upon to forswear the dictatorship immediately, before rogating his *lex curiata* and definitely without having chosen a *magister equitum*. Note, however, the wearing of the ex-dictator’s stripe mentioned below.
29. Livy *Per.* 19.2.
30. Livy *Per.* 19.2. Again we only have the epitome, so Livy’s actual point in discussing of Glicia’s brazenness is unknown.

M CLAUDIUS C F GLICIA QUI SCRIBA FUERAT DICTATOR COACT ABDIC

M. Claudius C.f. Glicia, who had been a scribe,³¹ [named] dictator; forced to resign

The Fasti did not offer tangential commentary frequently; the intent seems here to have been to call attention to Glicia's low social standing as explanation for his having been forced from office. This notation might also indicate that Glicia's lowly status was by then a well-remembered detail about a scandalous event from ancient times, the man's standing being so notorious it intruded even into the official inscription of Republican officeholders commissioned for Augustus.

The odium was not, however, Glicia's. The consul's misdeed merited mention in a Suetonian rundown of the Claudian dual tendency to both signal service and acts of delinquency.

superatusque, cum dictatorem dicere a senatu iuberetur, velut iterum inludens discrimini publico Glycian viatorem suum dixit.

After his defeat, when he was ordered by the senate to name a dictator, making a sort of jest of the public disaster he named Glycias, his summoner. (Suet. *Tib.* 2.2)

The rendering "Glycias" here suggests a freedman of Greek, or Italo-Greek, origin, γλυκός being the Greek for "sweet" and, with reference to people, "kind" or "dear."³² If not a freedman, he might have been a freedman's son, if the

31. The pluperfect *fuera*t might indicate that he was a former scribe at the time of his nomination, but more likely signified that he was a scribe before he became dictator. Cf. *viatorem suum* in the Suetonian quote below (also open to interpretation).

32. E.g., Soph. *OC* 106, *Trach.* 1040; Pind. *Pyth.* 6.52. Ironic: Pl. *Hp. mai.* 288b. Vocative superlative: Ar. *Ach.* 462, *Eccl.* 124; Men. *Epit.* 887. If the appellation was a derisive nickname and not a birth name, as seems possible, the audacity of Claudius appointing as dictator a servant named "Sweetie" is further compounded; the consul's own agnomen, the first so to be applied in his clan, is a wry coincidence. Glicia's filiation in the *FC* indicates a father named Gaius, who might have been a freedman or a citizen; in any event *filius* rather than *libertus* reinforces the supposition that Glicia was not a freedman himself. Perhaps significantly, there is no grandfather attested in the filiation, which is extremely unusual in the *FC*. The name Glicias/Glycias does not seem to occur elsewhere in either Greek or Roman records. Montesquieu, in his 1734 assessment of the Roman character, noticed the senate engineering the humiliation of a "Claudius Glycias" before the Corsicans (Montesquieu 1896, 71), and later commentators decided this was the same person Claudius had made dictator (e.g., Robiquet 1835, 100); but this was a mistake for the legate to Corsica in 236, M. Claudius Clineas:

assumption is made that a vindictive and enraged Claudius might nonetheless still have appointed a freeborn citizen.³³

Whether it was low status or low character that made him unfit was immaterial; Claudius would have viewed a man of the lower classes as being unsuitable, and therefore appropriate for the joke, precisely because such a man would be lacking in the essential qualities of a Roman man (*virtus*). Claudius had subjected Rome to a devastating defeat, but his exile and the termination of his political career came about through his abuse of the solemn duties of the consulship. This offense he exhibited twice: sailing into war *contra auspicia*, and deliberately naming the wrong man to the dictatorship.

Zon. 8.18, *MRR* 1.223. Cognomen missing: Cass. Dio 12.45 (fr.); Val. Max. 6.3.3; Amm. Marc. 14.11.32. See *RE*, s.v. Claudius 115 col. 2696; Brennan 2000, 1.90 and 1.283n91. Clineas is also a Greek name; the father of Alcibiades, e.g., was named Cleinias (Κλεινίας, Plut. *Alc.* 1.1, 11.2, 22.3), which perhaps explains Brennan suggesting the legate might have been the dictator's son.

33. P. Claudius Pulcher's father, Ap. Claudius Crassus Caecus (*cos.* 307, 296, *dict.* #62, ca. 285) was known (among other things) for opening the senate to the sons of freedmen and for refusing to resign the censorship before the end of the lustrum (Livy 9.29.7, 9.33.3, 9.46.10; Diod. Sic. 20.36.1–6), both in flagrant contempt of tradition. The accession of Cn. Flavius to the curule aedileship was also associated with Claudius Caecus. His son's own freedman-related outrage might thus have been of a piece with his father's actions, or an act of ironic defiance.