CHAPTER 7

Which One is the Historian? A Neglected Problem in the Study of Roman Historiography

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1 The Problem

Many of the Roman historians whose works survive only in fragments were well-known persons whose lives and careers are fully documented.1 They include such major public figures as Cato the Elder, the dictator Sulla, and the emperor Augustus,2 and famous men of letters such as Cicero, Varro, and Cornelius Nepos.3 For these men the writing of history or autobiography was merely one aspect of their many and multifarious activities. The same is true of other less prominent but nonetheless significant men who added the composition of historical works to their distinguished public achievements — men such as L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (cos. 133 BCE), P. Rutilius Rufus (cos. 105), and L. Cornelius Sisenna (pr. 78).4 At the other extreme are those who are known solely as historians, and are only quoted or referred to as such in our sources. Of their lives and careers we know little or nothing. The historians in this group include L. Cassius Hemina, Cn. Gellius, L. Coelius Antipater, and Q. Claudius Quadrigarius,5 as well as others for whom we do not even have a praenomen: Vennonius, Sempronius Asellio and Valerius Antias.6 As for Fenestella (FRHist 70), who lived in the time of Augustus, we know only his cognomen.

But between these two extremes there is a large group of historians whose identity is uncertain. The level of uncertainty differs in each case. At one end of the spectrum we find historians such as L. Cincius Alimentus (FRHist 2), who is almost certainly to be identified with the man of that name who held the praetorship in 210 BCE (Liv. 26.23.1) and appears several times in Livy’s narrative of

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1 As will become immediately evident, this paper is a by-product of my work as General Editor of *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, 3 vols, Oxford 2013 (FRHist).
2 Cato, Sulla, and Augustus appear (respectively) as nos. 5, 22 and 60 in FRHist.
3 FRHist 39, 52 and 45 respectively.
4 FRHist 9, 21 and 26 respectively.
5 FRHist 6, 14, 15 and 24 respectively.
6 FRHist 13, 20 and 25 respectively.
events down to 208. The identification is not certain, but circumstantial evidence makes it extremely probable.\(^7\) At the other end we can place obscure figures like C. Piso, a historian who is referred to just once, by Plutarch in his account of the death of Marius (\textit{Mar. 45.8–10 = FRHist 28 F1}). Who this C. Piso was is entirely a matter for conjecture; he may have belonged to the family of the Calpurnii Pisones,\(^8\) but equally he may not. Other historians in the same category (that is, writers cited just once or twice and impossible to identify precisely) include L. Scribonius (?) Libo (\textit{FRHist 36}) and C. Caecilius (?) Cornutus (\textit{FRHist 54}).

Most problematic of all, however, are those cases where the historian could theoretically be identified with a number of individuals bearing the same name. These circumstances prompt the question forming the title of this paper: which one is the historian? A notable case is that of C. Sempronius Tuditanus (\textit{FRHist 10}), whom scholars have always unhesitatingly identified with the consul of 129 BCE. Unfortunately, as Christopher Smith has pointed out in his introduction to the edition of the fragments of Tuditanus, this identification is based on no evidence whatsoever; the historian could equally have been another Sempronius Tuditanus, perhaps the father, a son, a more remote descendant, or a collateral relative of the consul of 129.\(^9\) Similar difficulties surround the identities of Aelius Tubero, C. Furnius, and L. Arruntius.\(^10\) But the most notorious case is that of C. Fannius (\textit{FRHist 12}), a historian of the Gracchan age. The problem here is that at least two persons named C. Fannius were active at this period; they were of roughly the same age (near-contemporaries of Ti. Gracchus) and probably first cousins. One of them, C. Fannius M.f., had a distinguished senatorial career, eventually becoming consul in 122; he

\(^7\) We know that Cincius the historian was a senator (Dion. Hal. 1.74.1 = \textit{FRHist 2 T3}) and that he was taken prisoner by Hannibal (Liv. 28.31.3 = \textit{FRHist 2 T1}). This information encourages the identification with the ex-praetor Cincius Alimentus, who was sent on an embassy in 208 (Liv. 27.29.4–5); but both he and the other members of the embassy then drop out of the record and are never heard of again. It is a reasonable conjecture that on their journey Cincius and his fellow envoys were ambushed and captured by the Carthaginians (thus Peter, \textit{HRR I\textsuperscript{2}, ccii}).

\(^8\) For example Cicero’s son-in-law, who died in 58 BCE, or the consul of 67 BCE (thus e.g. Peter, \textit{HRR I\textsuperscript{2}, cccxxx} and F. Münzer, \textit{RE III} [1897], 1377).

\(^9\) No Sempronius Tuditanus is known to have held public office after 129; but the senator C. Sempronius C.f. Fal. listed in the \textit{S. C. de agro Pergameno} and named by Josephus (\textit{ant. 13.260}) may have been a Tuditanus (and conceivably our historian). A later candidate would be the father of Sempronia \textit{Tuditani filia}, who gave evidence at the trial of Milo in 52 BCE (Ascon. 40 C).

\(^{10}\) \textit{FRHist} 38, 50 and 58 respectively. On Tubero see further below.