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A S U B M E R G E D G E N S

J a a k k o S u o l a h t i

The strict class division of Roman society has affected the sources dealing with it. Literature was intended to be read by the higher social strata who were its main subject-matter. The longest inscriptions, moreover, give information on the highest ranks of society, while the epitaphs devoted to ordinary people are short, scanty and stereotyped. Of the poorest, who were buried with no written record, we know nothing whatever.¹

Within the upper class itself a deep cleft separated the senatorial and equestrian orders.² The former lived in the lime-light of publicity, so that we are fairly well acquainted with most of its office-holding gentes, and the higher they rose the better we know them. The equestrian class shunned publicity and either farmed extensive lands as local magnates or grew rich from business operations which by no means always could stand the light of day.³ It was many times more numerous than the senatorial class, but our knowledge of it is far inferior.⁴

To know the equestrian class is important, however, because it formed a broad base of reinforcement for the senatorial.⁵ The outlook, habits and beliefs of both are very similar, as they are

1 H. Thylander, *Étude sur l'épigraphie latine* 15f.

2 Kübler, *RE* XVIII 930-934.

3 Ch. Nicolet, *L'ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine* (Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 207) I, Paris 1974, 699ff.

4 *Oc.*, 285ff.

5 *Liv.* 42,61,51 (a171): *equites enim illis principes iuventutis, equites seminarium senatus; inde lectos in patres, consules, inde imperatores creant.*

united not only by wealth and education but also by numerous ties of consanguinity and friendship.⁶

The equestrian class had its own special features, however: on the one hand it bore the stamp of a local nobility, on the other it concentrated on the profitable business life and rational agriculture. Economic activity was also a source of influence. When knights remained below the rank of senator it was not always because their ability or their resources were inadequate, but because they had no wish to give up business life and submit to the restraints which an official career would have placed on it. An example of this is given by Cicero's friend T. Pomponius Atticus.⁷ Knights could have considerable influence, as had the friend of Augustus C. Cilnius Maecenas, and before him many knights were socially active in senatorial circles, the doors of which were opened by money and family connections.⁸

The intelligentsia included some who were not senators or knights, though they are difficult to distinguish from the latter owing to the lack of data. On the lower ranks of officialdom we have little information, and only a fraction of the equestrian class is known to us.⁹ Among freed domestic slaves such family retainers as Tiro may be reckoned literally as educated although their social prestige was not high.¹⁰ On the other hand Q. Horatius Flaccus, the son of a freedman, achieved social status and a position among the friends of Augustus thanks to his poetry.¹¹ C. Valerius Catullus may have sprung from free gens which had moved to north Italy or obtained rights of citizenship there, and which possibly rose to the equestrian order. In any case he frequented Roman senatorial

6 Nicolet 253-257.

7 E. Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, Oxford 1972, 129 and 154.

8 W. Kroll, *Die Kultur der Ciceronischen Zeit I-II*, Leipzig 1933, I 2,61.

9 Nicolet, *passim*.

10 Kroll II 89, 113.

11 S. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic*, Oxford 1969, 13, 218f., 261ff., 146, 260f.; 208, 222; R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, 460.

circles to which his wealth, education and poetry gave him entry.¹²

Some branches at least of many equestrian gentes rose to the senatorial class, where they either remained or made brief contact. In the same way there were undoubtedly many other wealthy families who became related to the equestrian class and rose into it in one or more generations. This is especially probable in rural districts, where great landowners associated with each other. Literature, however, gives only flashes of information on the rural acquaintances of well-known persons. In one sense the incidental character of these references gives some degree of assurance that the persons mentioned actually existed or at least had living counterparts. Further confirmation is provided by inscriptions.

A good example of a wealthy rural landowner is L. Fundilius, who is mentioned in the agricultural guide of Varro and who had invited to dinner the above-mentioned author M. Terentius Varro of Reate and some local landowners.¹³ Among these the father-in-law of Varro, C. Fundanius, belonged to a gens which had produced a consul and senators a hundred years earlier.¹⁴ According to Varro C. Agrius was a Roman knight,¹⁵ while P. Agrasius, *publicanus*, also clearly belonged to the wealthy upper class of the locality.¹⁶

Some of these names may of course be fabricated. This is presumed in the cases of C. Agrius and P. Agrasius,¹⁷ who were connected with agriculture. L. Agrius (RE 2), however, is mentioned as a knight and a court witness in 59 BC, and further members of the gens are known in the republican and imperial periods.¹⁸ No other Agrasii are known, but the name was not necessarily invented by Varro. He may have freely combined names he remembered which belonged to actual persons, and then chosen to accompany them some

12 Suolahti, *Arctos* 1 (1954) 160ff.

13 *Re rust.* 1,2,11.

14 Münzer, *RE* VII 292ff.; Broughton, *Magistrates* I, 216-217.

15 Klebs, *RE* I 902.

16 Klebs, *RE* I 890.

17 Klebs, *RE* I 890, 902.

18 *Cic. Flacc.* 31; Klebs, *RE* I 902; *Pr* I 79.

or all of those who were active in the Reate district, which he knew well. L. Fundilius at least was from Reate and presumably a historical person, not merely a fictitious name. Varro relates that he had invited guests, conversationalists to his home. It was the festival of sowing, and the host was *aeditumus* or watchman of the temple of Tellus.¹⁹ This was an administrative position of trust, because substantial sums of money and valuables were stored in temples. The prestige of an *aeditumus* varied in different temples. Gradually the proportion of freedmen among office-holders grew.²⁰ L. Fundilius evidently belonged to the local upper class, as his social circle indicates.

Varro placed his discussion in the turbulent period of the first(?) civil war for a shocked slave tells waiting guests that their host has been murdered by a mob while returning from the home of his superior, an aedile.²¹ If Fundilius is a historical

19 Varro, *re rust.* 1,2,1-2: *Sementivis feriis in aedem Telluris veneram rogatus ab aeditumo, ut dicere didicimus a patribus nostris, ut corrigimur a recentibus urbanis, ab aedituo. Offendi ibi C. Fundanium, socerum meum, et C. Agrium equitem R. Socraticum et P. Agrasium publicanum spectantes in pariete pictam Italiam. Quid vos hic? inquam, num feriae sementivae otiosos huc adduxerunt, ut patres et avos solebant nostros? Nos vero, inquit Agrius, ut abitror, eadem causa quae te, rogatio aeditumi. Itaque si ita est, ut annuis, morere oportet nobiscum, dum ille revertatur. Nam accersitus ab aedile, cuius procuratio huius templi est, nondum rediit et nos uti expectaremus se reliquit qui rogaret.*

20 K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Müller, Handbuch V:4), München 1960, 410; Kleine Pauly I 84-85.

21 Varro, *re rust.* 1,69,2: *Cum haec diceret, venit libertus aeditumi ad nos flens et rogat ut ignoscamus, quod simus retenti, et ut ei in funus postridie prodeamus. Omnes consurgimus ac simul exclamamus "Quid? in funus? quod funus? quid est factum?" Ille flens narrat ab nescio quo percussus cultello concidisse, quem qui esset animadvertere in turba non potuisse, sed tantum modo exaudisse vocem, perperam fecisse. Ipse cum patronum domum sustulisset et pueros dimisisset, ut medicum requirerent ac mature adducerent, quod potius illud administrasset, quam ad nos venisset, aecum esse sibi ignosci. Nec si eum servare non potuisset, quin non multo post animam efflaret, tamen putare se fecisse recte. Non moleste ferentes descendimus de aede et de casu humano magis querentes, quam admirantes id Romae factum, discedimus omnes.*

person it is unlikely that Varro invented the story of his murder. The latter may in turn explain why the gens did not rise at the end of the Republic.

The gens is known later in Reate, as a few inscriptions mention wealthy Fundilii in that city during the early Empire. The *Augustales* dedicated to T. Fundilius Geminus, *patronus* and *quinquevir perpetuus*, an honorary inscription which mentioned his having given 20,000 *sestertii* during his lifetime to the funds of the *Augustales*, so that those present on his birthday 28.1. might be feasted and that decurions, *seviri* and knightly youths be given gifts of money, also that a feast and oil be provided for the people on the day of the statue's dedication.²² His possible relation was T. Fundilius Quartio, who with Q. Octavius Commun(is) gave money to the site of the cult of Hercules.²³

The gens may therefore have sprung from Reate in the Sabine area, and the cognomen Fundulus of the Fundanii is not directly traceable from it.²⁴ Because Quirina was a tribus of Reate it is possible that C. Fundilius C.f.Q., who was in the war council of Pompeius Strabo and may have been a military tribune, also came from the vicinity of Reate.²⁵ As a military tribune and member of the council he was in any case a knight. There is no evidence that he rose to the Senate, though it is possible. The fact that Fundilius perhaps supported some of the Pompeii was unlikely to enhance the possibility of the Fundilii reaching the Senate, if indeed their aim was such.

D. Fundilius N.l., who appears in an inscription as a donor in nearby Interamna (Teramo),²⁶ may have been a freedman of a branch

22 CIL IX 4691; T. Fundilio Gemino, VI vir(o) Aug(ustali) mag(istro) Iuv(enum) Augustales.

23 CIL IX 4673.

24 Schulze, Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen (AGWG NF 5, 1933, 357) Arch. Glott. It. 10, 409.

25 Münzer, RE VII 294; K. Cichorius, Römische Studien, Darmstadt 1961, 153f.; N. Criniti, L'epigrafe di Asculum di Cn. Pompeo Strabone, Milano 1970, 120f.; Nicolet 274; L. Taylor, Roman Voting Districts 216.

26 CIL IX 5054.

from Reate. The Fundilii also had some connection with Rome, where most of them are known from inscriptions of the imperial period. Because many of them have the praenomen or the patronymic Gaius it is possible that they are freedmen or descendants of a military tribune, or descended from them. Examples are C. Fundilius C.l. Acutus, who appears with Manlia Chelidon in a monument of Marcella in Augustan time,²⁷ and C. Fundilius Crescens and C. Fundilius Faustus,²⁸ who are mentioned in an inscription of tribus Succusana for the peace of Vespasian in 70 AD. Both may have been freedmen or their descendants.²⁹

A monumental pillar of Nemus Dianae from the Augustan period bears the name of Fundilia C.f. Rufa, who was patroness of the erect- or (cognomen Doctus);³⁰ Rufa may have been among the relations of the military tribune or have descended from their freedmen. Other Fundilii mentioned in Roman inscriptions did not bear the praenomina of the main branch, Caius or Lucius, but may still have descended from freedmen of that branch, which certainly contained persons with other praenomina, though their names have not happened to survive.

The above-mentioned monument of Marcella bears a reference to its curator Fundilius, whose praenomen is unknown. Mentioned in connection with him is Apollus Albiae Cullionis (libertus).³¹

On the other hand several persons called Marcus are known by the praenomen. P. Sextilius Bathyllus, whose name perhaps points to an eastern or non-free origin, set up an epitaph to his wife Fundilia M.f. Sabina and his descendants in the early centuries of the Empire.³² Probably freed by Marcus Fundilius was Fundilia M.l. Celido, who is mentioned with several freedmen, most of them bearing cognomina of Greek origin.³³

27 CIL VI 4571.

28 CIL IV 49, V 40, VI 200.

29 Taylor 147.

30 CIL XIV 4199-4200; Not. Sc. 1885, 318.

31 CIL VI 4483a-lb.

32 CIL VI 18736.

33 CIL VI 21528 = 33289, VI 26720 = 33290.

The following, who lack a praenomen, may be from slightly later: Fundilia Crescentina, her parents Fundilius and Antia Victoria and her brother Iulius Elpideporus.³⁴ They too may have descended from freedmen or have been freed themselves. Fundilius Africanus, who raised a gravestone to his daughter Fundilia Maxima, was hardly from the main branch,³⁵ the cognomen suggesting that he may have been a soldier.

In Rome a few bricks carrying the name Fundilius may indicate that members of the gens were engaged in brick production or at least owned land.³⁶ One of the stamps mentions A. Fundilius Hellen, whose name suggests that he was a freedman or descended from one.³⁷

In northern Italy too the Fundilii were active in the brick industry, because a stamp of P. Fundilius Lupulus is known from there.³⁸ Because the Fundilii did not rise to senatorial or military office they are unknown in the provinces except for one Fundilius who may have been a soldier. At Mauretania Sitifensis Saldae the sarcophagus of Q. Fundilius Saturninus has been found.³⁹

The 25 known Fundilii therefore provide a glimpse of a wealthy gens of central Italy, perhaps from Reate. During the first civil war it probably produced a military tribune, but otherwise its members contented themselves with local municipal offices and the homage that their donations brought to them. They appear also in the brick industry both in northern Italy and Rome, where some other member of the gens, perhaps a military tribune, may also have moved, because several epitaphs of low-born persons, freedmen or their descendants, are known there. As the gens did not rise higher in the military career or give rights of citizenship only one Fundilius is known from the provinces, namely from Mauretania.

Besides the main branch praenomina Gaius and Lucius the names Titus from Reate and Marcus and Publius from Rome are known in the imperial period, also Quintus from Africa and Decimus from Interamna.

³⁴ CIL VI 18734.

³⁵ CIL VI 18735.

³⁶ CIL XV 1166.

³⁷ CIL XV suppl. 313.

³⁸ CIL V 8110,254.

³⁹ CIL VIII 8956.