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P. Fu(...) Pontianus, once again<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The article describes the development of researchers' views (over 115 years) concerning the recreation of the full nomenclature regarding P. Fu(...) Pontianus, legat of Moesia Inferior. The author demonstrates how the man in question was identified with: P. Furius Pontianus, Pontius Furius Pontianus, Pontius Fuscus Pontianus, C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus, supporting the identification of the said legate with the latter. The article concludes with two options concerning the reconstruction of the geneology of Pontianus.

**Keywords:** Prosopography; P. Fu– Pontianus; Moesia Inferior; Pontus et Bithynia; Genealogy.

Numerous coins from the province of Moesia Inferior attest Consular Pontianus as the legate in the years 217–218. From three such coins<sup>2</sup> the phrase “P. Fu(...)”<sup>3</sup> may be added to his *nomen*, resulting in its final form being that of “P. Fu(...) Pontianus”. It is worth noting that researchers initially treated P. as a typical abbreviation of *praenomen* thus trying only to determine the *gentilicium* hidden under the acronym Fu(...).

## 1. P. Furius Pontianus

In 1898 E. Babelon<sup>4</sup> and, later, A. Stein (PIR<sup>2</sup>, F 496), G. Barbieri,<sup>5</sup> and recently T. Franke,<sup>6</sup> assumed that the legate in question may have belonged to the family of the *Furii*; therefore, his *nomen* was read as P. Fu(rius) Pontianus. In 1973 L. Schumacher<sup>7</sup> proposed recreating his genealogy and indicating that he could be a son of Furia Caecilia and of an unidentified Furius. Accordingly, the legate was to be a brother of C. Furius Octavianus (Suffect Consul from around 223) whose lineage constituted a significant *gens senatoria* of the Severan period.

In 1983 M. Parović-Pešikan<sup>8</sup> presented a slightly different version of P. Fu(rius) Pontianus' genealogy (based upon new discoveries in Ulpiana in Moesia Superior) according to which Furia Caecilia had

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<sup>2</sup> Two of such coins are presented in AMNG I/1 no. 1680 and 1681, the other coin was described in the work of Babelon, *Inventaire sommaire* 442 no. 7193. For the coin register see: PIR<sup>2</sup>, F 496; Thomasson, *Laterculi* vol. I, col. 141.

<sup>3</sup> The legend is written in Greek; thus, on the coin it reads: Π ΦΟΥ.

<sup>4</sup> E. Babelon, *Inventaire sommaire*, index.

<sup>5</sup> Barbieri, *Albo senatorio* no. 248.

<sup>6</sup> DNP 4, 1998, s. v. Furius [II, 6].

<sup>7</sup> Schumacher, *Priesterkollegien* 241–242.

<sup>8</sup> Parović-Pešikan 1983, 47–60. The inscriptions of M. Pontius Sabinus Varanus and Furia Varanilla were discovered there. Renovated by Furia Caecilia, they became a basis for M. Parović-Pešikan's suggestion that families of those three people were related.

been married twice. Her first husband was supposed to be M. Pontius Sabinus Varanus, the father of P. Fu(rius) Pontianus (hence his *cognomen* Pontianus), whereas the second – an unknown Furius with whom she had C. Furius Octavianus, a half-brother of the legate of Moesia Inferior. Such a genealogy to some extent complemented both L. Schumacher's assumptions and the *Furii* family ties in which Furia Caecilia, a mother of, Pontianus and Octavianus, two consuls, played the dominant role.

Since both of these theories broadly correspond to the realities of the period, they were recognized by scholars (see e.g.: M.-Th. Raepsaet-Charlier).<sup>9</sup> Their extensively hypothetical character might have pushed, however, W. Eck to omit, in *Der neue Pauly* encyclopedia,<sup>10</sup> the issue of identity of P. Fu(...) Pontianus' mother, while recognizing the man's father as the vastly quoted in the sources P. Furius Saturninus, legate of Dacia Superior around 159–161 (therefore also recognizing Pontianus as a representative of the *Furii* lineage).

*Ergo*, irrespective of the various attempts to reconstruct the family ties, the legate of Moesia Inferior has been identified as P. Fu(rius) Pontianus.

The strength of the above hypotheses has been confirmed by the enumeration in the sources of the following men: Furia Caecilia, C. Furius Octavianus, P. Furius Saturninus, and M. Pontius Sabinus Varanus. Still, the weakness of such hypotheses has at the same time been demonstrated through the absence in the sources of the names of Furius (the hypothetical husband of Furia Caecilia) and P. Furius Pontianus. It needs to be emphasized that traces of P. Fu(rius) Pontianus have not been found to date despite the fact that E. Babelon put forward his above mentioned suggestion 115 years ago and the research conducted in the Danubian provinces was intense (especially after World War II).

## 2. Pontius Furius Pontianus

In 1996 D. Boteva<sup>11</sup> not only took for granted *lectio* P. Fu(rius) Pontianus; she also assumed the governor of Moesia Inferior to be identified as Pontius Pontianus, known from inscriptions as the *legatus Augusti pro praetore Pannoniae Inferioris*<sup>12</sup> of c.a. 218–222. According to her, this legate was supposed to be called Pontius Furius Pontianus (D. Boteva ignores the fact that the legate of Pannonia bore the *praenomen* “Tiberius”),<sup>13</sup> the alleged governor of Moesia Inferior (during Macrinus' rule) and Pannonia Inferior (during the reign of Elagabalus). The assumption seems surprising, not so much as regards the double *gentilicium* (Pontius and Furius), but rather with reference to Boteva's hypothesis that the letter “P.” on coins itself attests to the surname of Pontius since it typically marked the abbreviated *praenomen* – Publius. On the other hand, the *gentilicia* was usually abbreviated to a few letters for, with only one, the chances of guessing the whole name were remote. Still, the fact that we are dealing with numismatic examples allows us to assume that the limited space on a coin simply forced one-letter abbreviations. Hence, it is acceptable for us to affirm D. Boteva's hypothesis that the letter “P.” might stand for the *gentilicium* P(ontius).

Doubts appear, however, in the case both of the legate's possible *cursus honorum* and the promotions he received from two emperors struggling for power. This is because the nominees whom Macrinus

<sup>9</sup> Raepsaet-Charlier, FOS I 343 and FOS II no. XVI.

<sup>10</sup> DNP 4, 1998, s. v. Furius [II, 7].

<sup>11</sup> Boteva 1996, 248–252.

<sup>12</sup> CIL III 3481 (= ILS 4260); CIL III 3675 (= Nagy 1963, 36. Note no. 98); CIL III 3707; Fülep, Intercisa I no. 314; AE 1983, 778; AE 1996, 1247.

<sup>13</sup> The inscription CIL III 3481 (= ILS 4260) shows their abbreviated form – Tib.

appointed were usually marginalized, even sentenced to death by Elagabalus.<sup>14</sup> Such promotions as the one mentioned above were nevertheless possible, provided the man instantaneously sided with the new Emperor; consequently, in recognition of Pontianus' services he would be then rewarded with another office. This office was supposed to be held in the Danubian provinces which Pontianus knew well.<sup>15</sup> However, if this was the career path of this senator, his participation in the power struggle, it needs to be emphasized, was not sufficiently substantial to secure him the grant of yet another, ordinary, consulate. It must also be emphasised that even the source inscriptions which easily deal with consuls' full *nomina* always refer to the legate of Pannonia Inferior as Pontius Pontianus. Thus confirmation of his boasting of the second *gentilicium* (Furius) is lacking, which in turn undermines the strength of the hypothesis in question.

Consistent as it is, Boteva's concept has not yet been confirmed by the sources. On the other hand, inscriptions that have been found permit us to assume a completely different perspective on the mysterious legate of Moesia Inferior.

### 3. Pontius Fuscus Pontianus

In 1998 D. Nonnis published an article<sup>16</sup> showing the results of an analysis of archaeological finds in Pratica di Mare (Lavinium). Among other discoveries, the inscriptions were found there repeatedly mentioning the correspondence of Senator Pontius **Fuscus** Pontianus, *Eques* C. Servilius Diodorus and magistrates: Magius Iustus and Vibusius Severinus.<sup>17</sup> The said senator might have been the curator of the city, a job which required the involvement in the exchange of official letters. These letters are dated up to the year 227, that is, within the period of Alexander Severus' reign. They are therefore separated from the coins confirming P. Fu(...) Pontianus' Moesian venture by the time span of a mere ten years.

When addressing the issue in chronological terms, one can come to the same conclusion as D. Nonnis, namely, that P(ontius) Fu(scus) Pontianus may have been the legate of Moesia Inferior. His later appointment to the post of curator of Lavinium must therefore be interpreted as political retirement of sorts.

Accepting the *lectio* of P(ontius) Fu(scus) Pontianus, one needs to assume that on the coins the *gentilicium* was abbreviated to letter "P.", the *cognomen* – to two letters: "Fu(scus)", whereas the second *cognomen* was written in full form – "Pontianus". In the light of our knowledge regarding the legends on Roman coins which bore the signature of province legates, such a *lectio* would be a unique one.

The question of identifying Senator Pontius Fuscus Pontianus as Tib. Pontius Pontianus and as P. Fu(...) Pontianus also remains, in my opinion, problematic. This is because such a solution has not been confirmed by the sources; in no inscription is Pontius Pontianus, legate of Pannonia Inferior referred to with, relevantly interpretable, the "Fuscus" *cognomen*, or even the "Fu(...)" abbreviation.

The suggested recognition of Pontius Fuscus Pontianus as legate of Moesia Inferior however, has an advantage over the concept of his name being P. Fu(rius) Pontianus, for there exist sources confirming a *nomen* of this senator.

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. such as the following representatives: Aelius (Decius?) Triccius, legate of Pannonia; Fabius Agrippinus, praeses of Syria Coele; Marius Secundus, legate of Syria Phoenice; M. Munatius Sulla Cerialis, legate of Cappadocia; Pica Caerianus, legate of Arabia, (P. or Ti.) Claudius Attalus Paterculianus, proconsul of Cyprus.

<sup>15</sup> On such a personnel policy of the Severan dynasty see: Okoń, *Imperatores Severi*.

<sup>16</sup> Nonnis 1995/1996, 235–262.

<sup>17</sup> Nonnis 1995/1996. See also: AE 1998, 282.

#### 4. C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus

In 2007 R. Haensch and P. Weiss published in *Chiron* several inscriptions on the weights discovered in the Pontus-Bithynia province.<sup>18</sup> One of them attested Senator C. Pontius Pontianus **Fuficius**<sup>19</sup> Maximus as the provincial representative (between 224–225). The two authors mention several *Pontii Pontiani* active in this period (Tib. Pontius Pontianus – the legate of Pannonia Inferior, Pontius Fuscus Pontianus – the senator from Lavinium, Pontius Proculus Pontianus – the ordinary consul in the year 238, Marcus Cla[udius...] Pontius Po[ntianus?] Marcellus – the senator in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century), while at the same time they point to the fact of the legate of Pontus-Bithynia as probably being the same person as the legate of Moesia Inferior, P. Fu(...) Pontianus. Assuming this identification as true, the *nomen* appearing on the Moesia coins should be complemented by the name of P(ontius) Fu(ficius) Pontianus.

In my view, this is the best and most convincing attempt at reconstructing the *nomen* of P. Fu(...) Pontianus found in the legends on coins which, as such, should be considered a model form. Several reasons exist which support my hypothesis, one being the confirmation of senator's such *nomen* in the sources, the convincing expansion of the abbreviation Fu(...) in *gentilicium* Fuficius, as well as the fact of the senator's career being consistent with the realities of the period. One needs to remember that the theories regarding P. Furius Pontianus and Pontius Furius Pontianus were not found in the sources, and D. Nonnis' concept concerning Pontius Fuscus Pontianus explained neither the untypical abbreviation of *gentilicium* (P.), nor the reason for placing two *cognomina* instead of the family name on the coins.

If we assume that the legate of Moesia Inferior was C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus, the problem of explaining the abstruseness of his *cursus honorum* recedes, for the career of this legate becomes comprehensible within the context of the overall political situation. As a nominee of Macrinus (*legatus Augusti pro praetore Moesiae Inferioris*), the said legate came under disgrace under Elagabalus. It was only during the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus who decided to make use of an experienced officer and appointed him to a demanding office in the East (*legatus Augusti pro praetore Ponti-Bithyniae*) that Maximus' position of political significance was restored. The last of the Severi frequently employed the staff already tried by his predecessors, while definitely dissociating himself from his cousin's personnel policy, a fact which, in my opinion, might lend credence to the above mentioned course of events.

#### Possible genealogy

Determining the actual *nomen* of the legate of Moesia Inferior is what should allow us to deal with the issue of his family ties. In my view, two *gentilicia* – Pontius and Fuficius, and two *cognomina* – Pontianus and Maximus offer us the following basic possibilities: either the legate of the Moesia Inferior came from the house of the *Pontii* and inherited *nomina* Fuficius Maximus from his mother, or he originated in the house of the *Fuficii* and inherited *nomina* Pontius Pontianus from his mother.

In the first case, the senator could be the son of the unidentified: Fuficia Maxima and Pontius Pontianus. His mother must have been a descendant of a suffect consul in the year 147, Q. Fuficius Cornutus, a suggestion supported by their common – and rare – *gentilicium*. His father's status, while difficult to determine, can be specified owing to the information we have on the career of the son. The fact that after his consulate had ended C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus became legate of Moesia Inferior first and, later, also of Pontus-Bithynia clearly demonstrates his long experience as an officer in the public service and hence, his long preconsular *cursus honorum*. He could not, therefore, have been a son

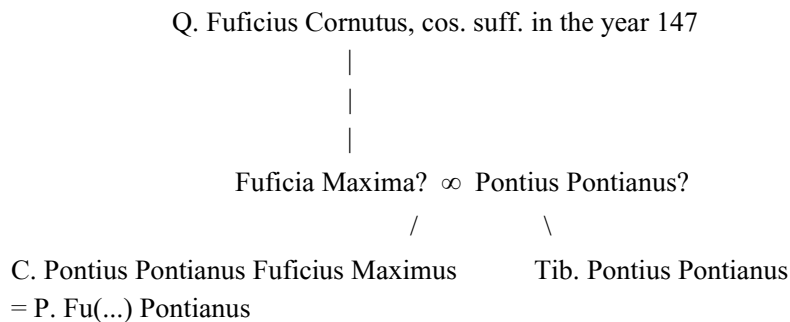
<sup>18</sup> Haensch – Weiß 2007, 185–218 (= AE 2007, 1335).

<sup>19</sup> The senator's *nomen* on the weight reads "Puficius" (Haensch – Weiß 2007, 196–198 no. 16); yet, the authors following H. Solin and O. Salomies concluded that it is an alternation of "Fuficius," – and I fully agree with this conclusion.

of a consul or of an experienced senator, for young *clarissimi* of such a descent became consuls soon after holding the minimal required number of offices. The terms of these having been completed, they usually ended their administrative careers as they were too inexperienced to be entrusted with provincial administration.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Pontius Pontianus (the father) was a *homo novus* who married a descendant of an old senatorial family – hence his son also adopted in nomenclature her *nomina*.<sup>20</sup>

Tib. Pontius Pontianus was the brother (the younger one?) of the legate of Moesia Inferior – this kinship is suggested by their common nomenclature. Family relationships with the consular house of *Fuficii* undoubtedly helped these men in the advancement of their careers; both were promoted to become consuls and held significant post-consular offices.



In the second case, the father of C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus was Fuficius Maximus, a descendant (a grandson or great-grandson) of Q. Fuficius Cornutus, cos. suff. of 147. Father's *gens* must have had little significance at the time in question – we know that between 147 and 224 no Fuficius held a high governmental office. Maximus' mother was Pontia Pontiana from whom he inherited *nomina*, a fact which implies her family to have been respectable (and probably wealthy) people.<sup>21</sup>

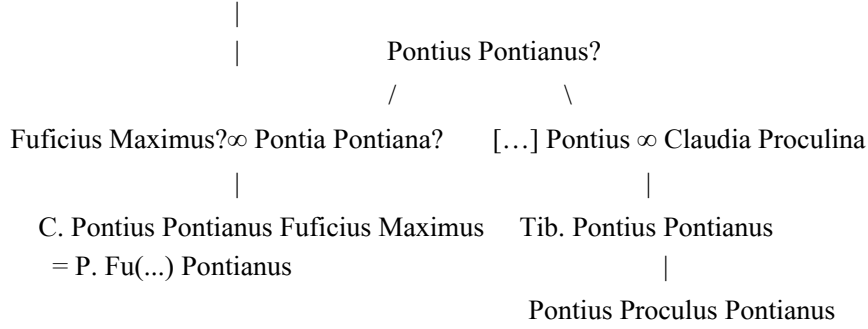
The nomenclature indicates that C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus was closely related to Tib. Pontius Pontianus. Since the former was the legate of Moesia Inferior in the years 217–218, and the latter – the legate of Pannonia Inferior between 218 and 222, they clearly belonged to the same generation. Therefore, they could be maternal cousins (but not brothers-germans as only one of them bore his father's *gentilicium*: Fuficius which should be common to them if they were siblings). The well-known [...] Pontius, legate of Numidia,<sup>22</sup> can be recognised as a brother of Pontia Pontiana (and hence the father of Tib. Pontius Pontianus). Hence, both cousins inherited the *nomina* of Pontius Pontianus after their common grandfather, probably an influential person at that time, for the nomenclature of his two grandsons referred directly to him.

<sup>20</sup> We know of other such cases to have occurred at the time in question, e.g.: two sons of consul Q. Anicius Faustus, *homo novus*, bore *nomina*: M. Cocceius Anicius Faustus Flavianus and Sex. Cocceius Anicius Faustus Paulinus, inheriting the first *gentilicium* from their mother; likewise the three sons of consul C. Fufidius Atticus, also *homo novus*, bore *nomina*: C. Neratius Fufidius Priscus, C. Neratius Fufidius Annianus, C. Neratius Fufidius Atticus; their first *gentilicium* was a direct reference to the *nomen* of their mother, Neratia Marullina, a representative of an old consular family.

<sup>21</sup> The known *Pontii* from the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century are (apart from Tib. Pontius Pontianus and Pontius Fuscus Pontianus who have already been mentioned several times): [...] Pontius, legate of Numidia, consul in the times of Septimius Severus; L. Pontius Bassus, patron of Canusium; L. Pontius Mauricus, patron of Canusium; C. Pontius Paulinus, consul during the reign of Septimius Severus; Pontius Proculus Pontianus, *cos. ord.* in the year 238; Pontius Surus Iu[nianus], L. Pontius Verus, *cos. suff.* before 223, patron of Canusium; C. Pontius [U?]pius Verus [...]nianus Victor, *c.p.*; [...] Pontius Rabellianus, *patronus ordinis sacerdotum domus Augustae*, [...] Pontius Verus, *patronus ordinis sacerdotum domus Augustae*.

<sup>22</sup> CIL VIII 2585 = 18091 + Bull. Arch. Alg. 2, 1966/1967, 165–169 = AE 1967, 571.

Q. Fuficius Cornutus, cos. suff. in the year 147



With the present absence of proof provided by the existing sources, both of these solutions are plausible; while future discoveries might answer this question.

#### Abbreviated Literature

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|-------------------------------|---|
| AMNG I/1                      | B. Pick, Die antiken Münzen Nord-Griechenlands, Bd. 1: Dacien und Moesien, 1. Halbband, Berlin 1898.  |
| Babelon, Coll. Wadd.          | E. Babelon, Inventaire sommaire de la collection Waddington, Paris 1898.  |
| Barbieri, Albo senatorio      | G. Barbieri, L'albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino (193–285), Rome 1952.   |
| Boteva 1996                   | D. Boteva, On the cursus honorum of P. Fu... Pontianus (PIR <sup>2</sup> F 496), Provincial Governor of Lower Moesia, ZPE 110, 1996, 248–252.                                       |
| Fülep, Intercisa I            | L. Barkóczy – F. Fülep – M. Radnoti-Alföldi et al. (ed.), Intercisa I (Dunapentele-Sztálinváros). Geschichte der Stadt in der Römerzeit, Budapest 1954 (Archaeologia Hungarica 33). |
| Haensch – Weiß 2007           | R. Haensch – P. Weiß, „Statthaltergewichte“ aus Pontus et Bithynia. Neue Exemplare und neue Erkenntnisse, Chiron 37, 2007, 183–218.   |
| Nagy 1963                     | T. Nagy, Beitrag zur Frage der Statthalter Unterpannoniens zur Zeit des Septimius Severus (ung. mit deutsch. Zus.), Budapest Regisegei 20, 1963, 23–45.                             |
| Nonnis 1995/1996              | D. Nonnis, Un patrono dei dendrofori di Lauinium. Onori e munificenza in un dossier epigrafico di età severiana, RPAA 68, 1995/1996, 235–262.                                       |
| Okoń, Imperatores Severi      | D. Okoń, Imperatores Severi et Senatores. The History of the Imperial Personnel Policy, Szczecin 2013.  |
| Parović-Pešikan 1983          | M. Parović-Pešikan, Novi epigrafski prilozi iz Ulpijane, Živa Antika 33, 1983, 47–60.   |
| Raepsaet-Charlier, FOS I/II   | M.-Th. Raepsaet-Charlier, Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre sénatorial (Ier–IIe siècles), vols. I–II, Leuven 1987.   |
| Schumacher, Priesterkollegien | L. Schumacher, Prosopographische Untersuchungen zur Besetzung der vier hohen römischen Priesterkollegien im Zeitalter der Antonine und der Severer (96–235 n. Chr.), Mainz 1973.    |
| Thomasson, Laterculi          | B. E. Thomasson, Laterculi praesidum, Lund–Arlöv 1972–1990.   |

#### Özet

##### P. Fu(...) Pontianus Bir Kez Daha

İ.S. 217–218 yılında Moesia Inferior eyaletinde darp edilmiş sikkelerde eyalet valisi P. Fu(...) Pontianus belirtilmiştir. Bu şahısın kim ve hangi soyun mensubu olduğu 115 yıldır tartışma konusu olmuştur. Söz konusu vali P. Furius Pontianus, Pontius Furius Pontianus, Pontius Fuscus Pontianus, C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus gibi kişilerle özleştirilmiştir. Okoń makalesinde Roma onomastik geleneklerini dikkate alarak Fu(...) kısaltmasının daha önce önerildiği gibi bir *cognomen* olamayacağına dikkat çekmektedir. Yazar bu kısaltmanın valinin soy ismine ait olması gerektiğinden yola çıkarak söz konusu

Moesia Inferior eyaleti valisinin C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus olması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Söz konusu senatör 224–225 yılında Pontus ve Bithynia eyaletlerinin valiliği yapmıştır. Valinin adı 2007 yılında yayımlanmış bir kurşun ağırlığın üzerinde yer almaktadır. Makalede bu valinin aile bağları hakkında bazı tahminler sunulmaktadır. C. Pontius Pontianus Fuficius Maximus'un ya anne ya da baba tarafından İ.S. 147 yılı consulu Q. Fuficius Cornutus'un torunu olabileceği önerilmektedir. 218 ile 222 yılları arasında Pannonia Inferior valiliğine getirilen Tib. Pontius Pontianus'un ise taşıdıkları ortak isimlerden dolayı Fuficius'un kardeşi veya yeğeni olabileceği düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Prosopografya; P. Fu– Pontianus; Moesia Inferior; Pontus et Bithynia; Soyağcı.