Short Biographies of Selected Jurists

Only selected jurists are included here. For many jurists, very little survives of their work, and we know little or nothing about their lives. These jurists have largely been excluded.

Jurists’ full names are given where these are known, which is by no means always the case. The part of the name by which the jurist is most commonly known is given in capitals. Some jurists are commonly known by anglicised forms of their names and, in those cases, the anglicised form is given first, and the original name follows in brackets. References to page numbers are to pages of the textbook.

QUINTUS MUCIUS SCAEVOLA (140–82 BC): Author of an eighteen-volume treatise on the civil law, he was also involved in public life. He was consul in 95 BC and pontifex maximus in 89 BC. He was murdered during unrest between Marius and Sulla (see p. 17n).

SERVIUS SULPICIUS Rufus: He began his career as an orator, studying rhetoric on Rhodes alongside Cicero. He later turned to legal studies, reportedly having been stung by criticism from Quintus Mucius Scaevola (see p. 31). He also followed a political career, becoming praetor in 65 BC and consul in 51 BC. He picked the losing side in the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (see p. 18), but was pardoned and became governor of Greece in 46 BC. He died in 43 BC.

Publius(?) ALFENUS VARUS: He was a pupil of Servius Sulpicius Rufus, and appears to have served as consul.

Gaius TREBATIUS Testa: He was a friend of the orator and politician Cicero, and the teacher of Labeo. He does not appear to have held any formal public office, but he acted as an advisor to Caesar and to Augustus.

Marcus Antistius LABEO (c. 50 BC–AD 10/11): He was a pupil of Trebatius, and was said to have rejected Augustus’ offer of the consulship out of republican convictions. He divided his time between teaching in Rome and writing in the countryside. He was seen as the founder of the Proculian school of jurists.
Gaius Ateius CAPITO: A supporter of Augustus’ regime, he was suffect consul (see Glossary under consul) in AD 5. He is credited as founder of the Sabinian school of jurists.

Marcus Massurius SABINUS: Unlike most of the leading jurists, he does not appear to have been from a wealthy or upper-class background, requiring the financial support of his pupils. He was granted the ius respondendi (see pp. 56–7) by Tiberius. He was the author of a treatise on the civil law in three books, which was the subject of commentaries by later jurists. The Sabinian school of jurists takes its name from him.

Sempronius(?) PROCULUS: He was born between 12 and 2 BC and lived until at least AD 66. The Proculian school of jurists is named after him.

JAVOLENUS (Lucius(?) Iavolenus Priscus): He lived in the second half of the first century AD. In addition to his activity as a jurist, he followed a military and political career. He served as suffect consul and as governor of Upper Germany, Syria and Africa, and was a member of the imperial councils of Nerva and Trajan. As a jurist, he was a Sabinian and was the teacher of the jurist Julian.

Lucius NERATIUS Priscus: A Proculian, he also held a number of public offices, including the suffect consulship in AD 97 and the governorships of Lower Germany and Pannonia. He was a member of Trajan’s and Hadrian’s imperial councils.

Publius Iuventus CELSUS (AD 67–130): As well as being a prominent jurist of the Proculian school, he held a number of political offices, including the consulship, and served as governor of Thrace and Asia Minor. He was a member of Hadrian’s imperial council.

JULIAN (Publius Salvius Iulianus): He was a Sabinian, a pupil of Javolenus and teacher of Africanus. He was a member of the imperial councils of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, and served as consul and as governor of Lower Germany, Spain and Africa (his home province). He was tasked by Hadrian to compile the final form of the praetor’s edict, the Edictum Perpetuum (see p. 52). He died in, probably, the 160s AD.

Sextus POMPONIUS: He lived during the reigns of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. He is not known to have published any collections of responsa (legal opinions) or to have held any public office, but he was a prolific writer on the law. Unusually among jurists, he had an interest in legal history, and his account of the history of Roman law from earliest times is extensively relied on in Justinian’s Digest (see D.1.2).
MAECIAN (Lucius Volusius Maecianus) (c. AD 110–75): He held a range of public offices, including the governorship of Egypt and the suffect consulship. He was a legal adviser to the emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and indeed tutored the latter in law before he became emperor.

Sextus Caecilius AFRICANUS: He was a pupil of Julian. His writings often discuss the views of his teacher, such that it is frequently difficult to disentangle them.

Quintus CERVIDIUS SCAEVOLA: His origins were in North Africa, and he was one of Antoninus Pius’ advisors. He has been credited as the teacher of Paul and Papinian.

Ulpius MARCELLUS: Originally from Asia Minor, he became an advisor to Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.

GAIUS: Of this jurist, we know virtually nothing, not even his full name. Although he wrote a number of works, he does not seem to have been well known in his own time. His writings gained a higher standing in later times, however, and he is one of the writers identified in the Law of Citations (see p. 63) as having special authority. Of particular lasting importance is his ‘institutional scheme’ for organising private law, taking its name from his Institutes, an introductory textbook (see pp. 59–60).

PAPINIAN (Aemilius Papinianus): He was possibly a pupil of Quintus Cervidius Scaevola. One of the leading jurists, not only was he one of the five writers identified in the Law of Citations (see p. 63) as having special authority, he was named as taking precedence if there was no majority view among those writers. He was appointed to the post of praetorian prefect in AD 203. He was executed on imperial orders in 212.

PAUL (Iulius Paulus): A contemporary of Ulpian, he is credited as having served as praetorian prefect and was a member of the imperial councils of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. He also served as an assessor under Papinian during the latter’s term as praetorian prefect. He was one of the five jurists named in the Law of Citations (see p. 63) and he is second only to Ulpian in the amount of his work that appears in Justinian’s Digest.

ULPIAN (Domitius Ulpianus): He came from Tyre, Phoenicia. He held various public offices, including praetorian prefect, but was ultimately assassinated. As a jurist, he was one of the five writers named in the Law of Citations (see p. 63) and his work appears in Justinian’s Digest more than that of any other jurist. He was a contemporary of Paul.
Herennius MODESTINUS: A pupil of Ulpian, he is one of the five writers named in the Law of Citations (see p. 63). He can be seen as the last of the classical jurists.

HERMOGENIAN (Aurelius Hermogenianus): Hermogenian held a number of posts under Diocletian and his successors. He produced an unofficial compilation of imperial rescripts, known as the Codex Hermogenianus (see p. 63).