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Publius Crassus – ‘*optimus adulescens*’ and his unfortunate career**

Abstract: In the light of the presented findings, it is clear how briefly Publius Licinius Crassus, the younger son of Marcus Crassus, could not only enjoy the offices granted to him, but also the status of being Kornella’s spouse. As for his career, in total it lasted less than six years when, upon coming of age, he began to exercise his first military command, and two years before his tragic death, he was nominated for civil offices – *vide triumph monetalis* (55 BC) and *augur* (between 55 and 53 BC). Contrary to certain hypotheses put forward, he was never allowed to hold the office of *quaestor*. Although the start of his career was undoubtedly influenced by the protection of Marcus Crassus, his father, contrary to appearances, was a well-educated and eloquent person. Participation in the expedition against the Parthians that ended in tragedy – as Marcus Cicero clearly suggested – prematurely ended the life and career of a gifted and promising young man, who was perhaps one of the most talented of his generation.

Keywords: Publius Licinius Crassus, gens Licinii Crassi, domus Crassorum, *optimus adulescens*, political and military career

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** This publication was written as a result of a research project funded by the resources of the National Science Center (Poland) granted on the basis of decision no. DEC-2017/25/B/HS 3/02078.

Publius Licinius Crassus, a son of Marcus Licinius Crassus, in less than thirty years of his life managed not only to gain an exceptionally strong position within the *Licinii Crassi gens* to which he belonged, but became a well-known person among the Roman nobles as well. Publius Crassus enjoyed the exceptional trust of not only his father. What is more, he was one of the close friends of Marcus Tullius Cicero; in addition, Caius Iulius Caesar himself praised his commanding abilities. That is why the sudden and tragic death of the son of Marcus Crassus was perceived in Rome as a loss of an exceptionally talented person, to whom high hopes were attached and whose memory should be preserved. The intention of the author of this paper is therefore not only to verify whether the son of Marcus Crassus was really someone as special as was recorded in the sources, but also to determine if the nominations he received resulted from his personal predispositions and not from the fact that his father was one of the ‘triumvirs’. The analysis of Publius Crassus’s career provides an opportunity to take a look at the ‘path of promotion’ itself which other young representatives of the Roman patrician aristocracy, dreaming of a political and military career, had to walk in the first century BC. It is worth mentioning that the *casus* of Publius Crassus – and this is no exaggeration – symbolically reflected not only his personal experiences, but, to a large extent, what challenges other young Roman patricians had to face; they were similar to him, were born in the 80s of the 1st century BC, and lived on the eve of the fall of the Roman republic.

Publius and his family

Publius Licinius Crassus, as aforementioned, was a representative of the patrician Crassi family, i.e. *domus Crassorum*, which was a branch of the originally plebeian family of (*Licinia gens plebeia*) one of the oldest houses among the Roman senatorial aristocracy. The ancestors of the Licinius family came from Etruria and held plebeian offices in Rome from the 5th century BC. It cannot be ruled out that they were assigned to the Roman *tribus Teretina*.¹ The genesis of the Crassus branch and its offshoots, or

¹ Cf. E. Forcellini, *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon*, vol. 1, Londini 1828, pp. 505, 1096; G. D. Chase, *The origin of Roman praenomina*, “Harvard Studies in Classical Philology”

more precisely the families into whose houses it was divided, is connected with Publius Licinius who, as the son of Publius Licinius, was the first to use the cognomen Crassus – *vide* Publius Licinius Crassus. Two of his sons, i.e. Publius (Publius Licinius Crassus Dives) and Caius (Caius Licinius Crassus), who lived in the 3rd century BC, gave rise to the offshoots in the lineage of *gens Licinii Crassi*. Importantly, the growing importance of the *Licinii Crassi* in the Roman state was a consequence of their involvement, among others, in the fight against Hannibal during the Second Carthaginian War (218–202 BC) as well as in Roman military operations which took place in both the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. A breakthrough event for the *Crassi familia*, to which the eponymous Publius Licinius Crassus belonged (a son of Marcus Crassus who was a participant in the first triumvirate), was his great-great-grandfather’s election as a praetor and a consul. Publius’s ancestor lived at the turn of the 2nd century BC, bore the same name as the eponymous Publius Licinius Crassus and was a son of Caius Licinius Crassus, the previously mentioned progenitor of this side of the Crassus line. As aforementioned, he was the first to be elected, from the *Crassi* belonging to this particular family, to the office of a praetor (in 176 BC) and a consul (171 BC) in Rome. Due to his promotion, Publius Licinius Crassus² not only became a member of the Roman Senate, but also owing to his position – thus setting an example to follow – he was able to encourage other representatives of his Crassus family to run for the highest offices

1897, vol. 8, pp. 109, 126: *Licinius, from Licinus*; W. Schulze, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*, Berlin 1933, pp. 107–108, 141–142; F. Münzer, *P. Licinius Crassus n. 61*, in: RE 13.1 (1926) cols. 291–294; T. R. S. Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic (509 B.C.–100 B.C.)*, vol. 1, New York 1951, p. 84, footnote 1: ‘Licinius was the first plebeian to hold the office (i.e. military tribune with consular power)’; J. Suolahti, *The Roman censors. A study on social structure*, Helsinki 1963, pp. 128, 316–317; R. E. A. Palmer, *The archaic community of the Romans*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 245, 298–299; E. Rawson, *Caesar, Etruria and the disciplina Etrusca*, “Journal of Roman Studies” 1978, vol. 68, footnote 40, pp. 136–137; M. Torelli, *Studies in the romanization of Italy*, Edmonton 1995, pp. 43–44; G. Forni, *Le tribù romane, I Tribules*, vol. 1 (A–B), Roma 1996, footnote 197, p. 40; L. R. Taylor, J. Linderski, *The voting districts of the Roman Republic. The thirty-five urban and rural tribes*, Ann Arbor 2013, pp. 224–225, 275, 286–287.

² Publius’s birth brothers were Caius Licinius Crassus and Marcus Licinius Crassus. Of these, Caius was also the head of the Crassi offshoot.

in the Roman state, i.e. for the praetorship, consulship and censorship. And so, in the next generation, his son Marcus Licinius Crassus Agelastus became a praetor in 127 or 126 BC. Another representative of the same house of *Crassi*, who managed to obtain both the rank of a praetor (around 100/99 BC), then a consul (in 97 BC) and a censor (in 89 BC) was a son of Mark Crassus Agelastus, also named Publius Licinius Crassus. In turn, in the next generation, the aforementioned Marcus Crassus, a triumvir and a father of the eponymous Publius Licinius Crassus, was elected to the office of praetor (probably in 73 or 72 BC) and two years later was appointed consul twice (once in 70 and the second time 55 BC), as well as censor (in 65 BC).³ Although the birth dates of the above-mentioned Crassi are not known, it is possible to provide hypothetical estimates owing to their positions as praetors and consuls. The careers of Publius Licinius Crassus's ancestors fell on the time when *lex Villia annalis* (from 180 BC) and *lex Cornelia de magistratibus* (from 81 BC) were in force in the Roman state. It was the content of these laws that defined the path of promotion as well as the age requirements which had to be met by candidates applying for the right to be elected for the above-mentioned highest offices (*vide cursus honorum*). And so, in the case of a praetor, a necessary criterion was originally at least 40 years of age. This threshold was lowered to 39 years during the Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla) dictatorship. However, despite this and other modifications from the 80s BC, the period of both the biennium between the praetorship and consulship was still maintained – and this was required by the provisions of *lex Villia annalis* which was in force

³ Cf. App. BC 1.118; M. Gelzer, *M. Licinius Crassus n. 68*, in: RE 13.1 (1926) cols. 295–331; F. Münzer, *M. Licinius Crassus Agelastus n. 57*, in: RE 13.1 (1926) cols. 269–270; idem, *P. Licinius Crassus n. 60*, in: RE 13.1 (1926) cols. 286–287; idem, *P. Licinius Crassus n. 61*, in: RE 13.1 (1926) cols. 287–290; T. R. S. Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic (99 B.C. –31 B.C.)*, vol. 2, New York 1952, pp. 6, 50; B. A. Marshall, *Crassus and the cognomen dives*, “Historia” 1973, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 459–467; B. A. Marshall, *Crassus. A political biography*, Amsterdam 1976, pp. 6–9, 26–29; A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and late Roman Republic*, Columbia 1977, p. 82; F. Münzer, *Roman aristocratic parties and families*, Baltimore–London 1999, pp. 168–170, 201–202; T. C. Brennan, *The praetorship in the Roman Republic*, vol. 1–2, Oxford 2000, pp. 148, 213–214, 218, 303, 374–375, 432–434; M. Piegdoń, *Krassus. Polityk niespełnionych ambicji*, Kraków 2014, pp. 27–28.

from the beginning of the 2nd century BC, as well as the requirement that candidates who applied to be elected consul should be at least 42/43 years of age. However, the situation was different with regard to censorship. Roman citizens who wanted to hold this office were probably not subject to the minimum age criterion. Attaining the rank of censor did not entail a promotion to another official position. It was rather a kind of culmination of previously held offices (vide *praetura* and consulate).⁴

Returning to the issue of the birth dates of the *Crassi* who belonged to the family of the eponymous Publius Licinius Crassus and who, as his ancestors, held the praetorship, consulate and censor's office, in the case of his great-great-grandfather Publius Licinius Crassus, it is very likely that he could have been born about 216/215 or 215/214 BC. In turn, his son Marcus Licinius Crassus Agelastus, who held the praetorship, could have been born in 163/162 BC approximately. Also, Publius Licinius Crassus, representing the next generation of the *Crassi* and at the same time the grandfather of the eponymous Publius, could have been born around 139/138 BC, which allowed him to hold both a *praetura* (at the age of 39/40), a consulate (at the age of 42), and a censor's office (aged 50) before 87 BC when he died in tragic circumstances. In turn, his son Marcus Crassus, i.e. a triumvir and father of the eponymous Publius Crassus, was 60 when he went eastwards to fight the Parthians in 54 BC. Therefore, it is likely that he was born in 115/114 BC. and that before his death in 53 BC, he held the office of a praetor (41/42), then twice a consulate (in 70 BC – at the age of 44 and in 55 BC – at the age of 59) and a censor (in 65 BC – at the age of 49). For comparison, the aforementioned Marcus Cicero, born in 106 BC, was elected a praetor when he reached the age of 40 (in 66 BC), and a consul when he was 43 (in 63 BC). In turn, Julius Caesar, born in 100 BC, held the office of a praetor at the age of 38 (in 62 BC) and after

⁴ Cf. Cic. Phil. 5.48; Val. Max. 7.5.3; J. Suolahti, *The Roman censors...*, pp. 16–17, 76–78, 469; A. E. Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla*, “*Latomus*” 1957, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 588–589, 593–597; A. E. Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla*, “*Latomus*” 1958, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 50–54, 59; G. V. Sumner, *The orators in Cicero's Brutus. Prosopography and chronology*, Toronto 1973, pp. 6–7; T. P. Wiseman, *New men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C.–A.D. 74*, Oxford 1971, pp. 2–15, 155–159; T. C. Brennan, *The praetorship in the Roman Republic*, vol. 2, p. 392.

two years of the required break in applying for a consulate, he was elected to this office in 59 BC, being 41 years old.⁵

The aforementioned ancestors of the eponymous Publius Licinius Crassus, due to holding the highest offices in Rome, attained the status of a privileged elite (*vide viri nobiles*) within the entire Roman senatorial aristocracy (*ordo senatorius*). It is worth mentioning, as Jaakko Suolahti emphasised, that during the republic the entire *Licinia Crassi gens* belonged to a group of fifty-seven families, whose members included 170 censors who held the censorship in the period between the 4th and 1st century BC.⁶ Therefore, from the perspective of probably not only the Crassi, it must have been natural not only to maintain the memory of the successes and achievements of the ‘ancestors of their house’, since the memory of the ancestors was of exceptional importance for the Romans, but also to consistently undertake actions to achieve honours and positions in the Roman state to prove being ‘worthy of one’s family’. Marcus Crassus, the father of the eponymous Publius, was undoubtedly proud of his family.⁷ However, the existence of his family was left hanging by a thread following the tragic death of his father, i.e. Publius Licinius Crassus, and his elder brother (... Licinius Crassus) whose *praenomen* has not been preserved. The death of the two Crassi, precisely in 87 BCE, was caused by Roman soldiers commanded by Caius Flavius Fimbria, who was a legate fighting on the side of Caius Marius and Cornelius Cinna during the First Civil War. And the pursuit of the father and brother of Marcus Crassus took place after the aforementioned supporters of Marius entered Rome, where in turn they began to chase the supporters of Lucius Cornelius Sulla. The father and brother of Marcus Crassus, fleeing from them, and their entire Crassus family, supported the ‘optimates’ faction. Importantly, this tragic event was preceded by another death, namely the passing of the eldest brother, Mar-

⁵ Cic. Phil. 5.48; Plut. *Crass.* 1.1–2; 17.2; J. Suolahti, *The Roman censors...*, pp. 16–17, 76–78, 447, 469, 471–472; G. V. Sumner, *The orators in Cicero’s Brutus...*, pp. 24, 123–124; B. A. Marshall, *Crassus...*, p. 5.

⁶ Cf. J. Suolahti, *The Roman censors...*, p. 128; F. Münzer, *Roman aristocratic parties and families*, Baltimore–London 1999, pp. 168–170.

⁷ Cf. Plb. 6.53.1–10; 54.1–6; 31.24.10–11; 31.25.1; Cass. Dio 37.56.4; F. W. Walbank, *A historical commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, Oxford 1957, pp. 737–739.

cus Crassus, who also took Publius as his first name (Publius Licinius Crassus). He probably died in 89 BC. Therefore, in 87 BC, in the wake of the death of his father and two older brothers, of the entire family to which Marcus Crassus belonged only Venuleia, his mother, remained alive, in addition to himself as the sole male member. Furthermore there was Tertulla, wife of Mark Crassus, who was the widow of Publius, the eldest of the aforementioned brothers of the future triumvir. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the name of this sister-in-law and also of her husband, Marcus Crassus's other brother, have not been preserved and are unknown. Moreover, Marcus Crassus and Tertulla lived in the family home with his entire family until 87 BC.⁸ His wedding could have taken place as early as 89 BC, which is very likely, when Publius, the first husband of the aforementioned Tertulla, died. Furthermore, while Venuleia, the mother of Marcus Crassus, is believed to have come from Etruria, from a little-known family (familia Venulei); in the case of his wife Tertulla, her origin is unfortunately not known. Perhaps, as Allen Ward suggested, Tertulla – just like Venuleia – could have come from a virtually unknown but wealthy municipal aristocracy. Anyway, Marcus Crassus's wife is believed to have given birth to a total of six children, of which only two of his sons are known. They were the eponymous Publius and Marcus. As for the other children, they may have died before reaching the age of majority. We owe the information about Marcus Crassus's marriage and the number of his children to Plutarch of Cheronaea. The Greek historian, while writing a biography of the future triumvir, used the unpreserved text of Fenestella's *Annales* in this part of his narrative. Friedrich Münzer, based on the text of the abovementioned Plutarch and using other preserved reference sources at his disposal, concluded that it was Marcus – of the two sons of the future triumvir – who must have been the elder. Thus, he may have been born before 87 BC. In turn, the eponymous Publius, being the younger brother, was probably

⁸ Cf. Liv. *Per.* 80, Plut. *Crass.* 1.1; 4.1; 6.3; App. BC 1.72; F. Münzer, *Licinius Crassus n. 50*, in: RE 13.1 (1926), cols. 250–251; idem, *P. Licinius Crassus n. 62*, in: RE 13.1 (1926), cols. 290–291; B. A. Marshall, *Crassus...*, pp. 8–9; T. R. S. Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic (99 B.C.–31 B.C.)*, vol. 2, p. 50; M. Piegdoń, *Krassus. Polityk niespełnionych ambicji*, p. 37; R. A. Kaster, *Cicero speech on behalf of Publius Sestius*, Oxford 2006, pp. 124, 230.

born around 86 BC. The opinion put forward by the German scientist was widely accepted, and Roland Syme is one of its supporters. On the other hand, Graham Vincent Sumner emphasised that if Publius had been born after 82 BC, he would not have been able to command a legion as *legatus legionis* in Gaul. Therefore, he hypothesised that Publius might have been born around 86 BC and that, as Marcus's older brother, he could have held the office of a *quaestor* a year before him in 55 BC. Hence, the thesis put forward by the Canadian historian became an opportunity to start a discussion about seniority among the sons of Marcus Crassus.⁹ And so, in the second half of the 1970s a thesis was put forward that Publius must have been Mark's older brother. Bruce Marshall and Allen Ward became supporters of this hypothesis. Furthermore, it was owing to the latter scholar that an attempt was made to justify such an interpretation. And so, as Allen Ward emphasised, among the arguments for the seniority of the eponymous Publius could be the very fact of his active participation in the conquest of Gaul alongside Caesar in the years 58–56 BC because Marcus, his brother, only arrived there when he was a *quaestor* in 54 BC. Furthermore, supporting Graham Vincent Sumner's suggestion about the hypothetical *questorship* of Publius himself, Allen Ward also considered it probable and indicated the year 58 BC as his time in office. Allen Ward's other suggestions may also seem reasonable, namely that if Publius had been the younger son, Marcus, his brother, should have accompanied their father, i.e. Marcus Crassus, on his expeditions to Syria in 53 BC. From our contemporary perspective, we might also justify Allen Ward's claim that Marcus Crassus, the future triumvir, could have opposed the Roman tradition of naming firstborn sons after their fathers, who were given their *praenomina*. The reason is that, like in this case (as Allen Ward highlighted), by naming his firstborn son Publius and not Marcus, he could have thus made a kind of gesture to commemorate the oldest of his brothers, who, as previously

⁹ Plut. *Crass.* 1.1; F. Münzer, *Marcus Licinius Crassus n. 56*, in: RE 13.1 (1926), cols. 268–269; idem, *P. Licinius Crassus n. 63*, in: RE 13.1 (1926), col. 291; R. Syme, *The Roman revolution*, Oxford 1939, p. 22, footnote 1; G. V. Sumner, *The orators in Cicero's Brutus...*, (R 221) 281, pp. 27, 149–150; A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and late Roman Republic*, Columbia–London 1977, p. 81, footnote 11, p. 292.

mentioned, was called Publius and was the first husband of Tertulla.¹⁰ Allen Ward's suggestions provoked a polemic from Roland Syme himself as this was actually the content of the article by the famous British historian which focused on both sons of Marcus Crassus. For Roland Syme, the arguments intended to justify the thesis about the seniority of Publius over Marcus proved unconvincing. The suggestions regarding his questorship in 58 BC were also unacceptable, as at that time he was already at Caesar's side in Gaul, or those about holding this office in the same year (i.e. 54 BC) as his brother Marcus. That is why Roland Syme, remaining faithful to Friedrich Münzer's thesis about Marcus's seniority and the status of Publius as his younger brother, pointed to both the lack of sources and the specific character of those which we now have at our disposal while reconstructing the circumstances of the birth of Marcus Crassus's both sons. In addition, Roland Syme himself proposed that the birth of Publius as the younger son of Marcus Crassus could have happened in 83 or 82 BC when Tertulla, as the British historian suggested, after leaving Italy could have joined the future triumvir in Africa in 84 BC. Hypothetically, Publius's conception could have taken place before Marcus Crassus's arrival in Italy where he landed in early 83 BC. Roland Syme, with his hypothesis, directly referred to the fact that Marcus Crassus left Italy in 85 BC and that he went to Spain (Hispania Ulterior) in order to hide from the supporters of Cynna and Marius for the next eight months (from November 85 to June 84 BC). This was possible thanks to the help of Vibius Pac(c)iaecus, who was a client of his late father Publius Crassus (P. Licinius Crassus), the governor of this province in the years 96–93 BC. Marcus Crassus, along with the accompanying servants, stayed in a cave on the property of the aforementioned Vibius Pac(c)iaecus. Importantly, Tertulla was not with him at the time. In 84 BC the future triumvir, as a private person (*privatus*), organised an army of 2,500 men in Spain with his own money, which he then led first to Africa, and from there, as it has already been mentioned, after joining Sulla, whom he had met previously in Greece in early 83 BC, they both landed in Italy.

¹⁰ B. A. Marshall, *Crassus...*, p. 10; A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and late Roman Republic*, pp. 55–56. Cf. L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman inscriptions*, Baltimore 1991, p. 19.

It was there that he took part in the civil war after conquering Rome.¹¹ By routing the supporters of Marius (the Marians), Marcus Crassus could have taken revenge on them for the death of his father and brother in 87 BC. It is worth mentioning that Elizabeth Rawson, accepting Roland Syme's interpretation, also opted for the opinion that Publius must have been the younger son of Marcus Crassus. As she emphasised, the same name 'Marcus', carried by his son, was an implication of the Roman custom of giving the forename to the firstborn and oldest son.¹² This seems to be an irrefutable argument due to the lack of other sources. Additionally, going further and referring to Roland Syme's suggestion that Marcus Crassus son's 'quaestorian year' was exactly 54 BC, so in order to be able to hold that office, he must have been at least 30 years old at that time. Therefore, referring once again to Friedrich Münzer's thesis that Marcus, as the oldest son of the future triumvir, could have been born around 88/87 BC, that is why in the year indicated as 54 BC he would have been about 35 years old. Furthermore, pointing to the year 86/85 BC as the hypothetical date of his birth, as suggested by Roland Syme, Marcus, the son of Marcus Crassus, could have been approximately 33 years old then. Either way, in 54 BC the firstborn son of the future triumvir was already at what the Romans called 'adulescentia', that is adolescence. And already, as 'adulescens', Marcus could have been a man at the so-called 'Quaestor age'.¹³ The same 'adulthood', in 54 BC, was also achieved by the eponymous Publius, the younger son of Marcus Crassus. In his case, however, and this is clearly visible in the light of the above-mentioned discussion, the matter of birth is much

¹¹ Cf. P. A. Brunt, *Italian manpower, 225 BC–AD 14*, Oxford 1971, p. 230; B. A. Marshall, *Crassus...*, p. 13.

¹² Plut. *Crass.* 4–6; R. Syme, *The sons of Crassus*, "Latomus" 1980, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 403, 405–407; E. Rawson, *Crassorum Funera*, "Latomus" 1982, vol. 41, no. 3, p. 545; S. L. Dyson, *The distribution of Roman republican family names in the Iberian Peninsula*, "Ancient Society" 1980/1981, vol. 11/12, p. 281; T. C. Brennan, *The praetorship in the Roman Republic*, vol. 2, p. 502, footnote 262, p. 851.

¹³ G. V. Sumner, *The orators in Cicero's Brutus...*, p. 7; T. C. Brennan, *The praetorship in the Roman Republic*, vol. 2, pp. 392, 798, footnote 177: (In the fragment Sallust should be using 'adulescens' as an equivalent for 'a man of quaestorian age', with the implication (as often) that such an individual was too young to be doing what he was.); F. Pina Polo, A. D. Fernández, *The quaestorship in the Roman Republic*, Berlin–Boston 2019, p. 200.

more complex. Thus, for Friedrich Münzer, Publius's hypothetical date of birth could have been 86 BC. In turn, according to Roland Syme, it could have been 83 or 82 BC. Therefore, in 53 BC, when Publius died a tragic death fighting the Parthians, he could have been 33/32 years old (according to the hypothesis of the German scientist) or possibly 30/29 years, as proposed by the British historian. However, in both suggested hypothetical dates of Publius's birth and his young age at the time of his tragic death, one can clearly see a reference to the allusion of Marcus Cicero, since the role models for the younger son of Marcus Crassus must have been Alexander the Great himself (356–323 BC) and Cyrus II, the ruler of the Persians (c. 575–529 BC). The victories achieved and the conquests made by both of the above-mentioned leaders were an inspiration for the eponymous Publius. What is more, it is worth mentioning that the famous Macedonian died at the age of just 32.¹⁴

However, it seems that the issue of Marcus Crassus's biological paternity, which was not entirely certain to him, could have had much more serious consequences for Publius. The previously mentioned alleged dates of his birth, suggested by the aforementioned authors Friedrich Münzer and Roland Syme, can in fact be interpreted as an attempt to rationally explain the circumstances in which Publius could have been conceived, as Marcus Crassus, leaving for Spain in 85 BC, did not take Tertulla with him. Plutarch of Cheronea while describing the life of Marcus Cicero mentioned a certain incident which seems to directly question the biological paternity of Marcus Crassus. The circumstance also casts a shadow over Tertulla's marital fidelity. And as the Greek historian described it, one of Crassus's two sons probably bore a striking resemblance to someone called Axius. The whole matter of the indicated similarity in terms of appearance must have gained considerable publicity in Rome among the representatives of the Roman patrician aristocracy, because its culmination, as it turned out, was a speech by the young Crassus at the Roman Senate curia. As Plutarch of Cheronea described it, when Marcus Cicero listened to this oration, and asked what he thought about it, he supposedly answered in Greek: 'Ἀξίος Κράσσου', which usually translates as 'worthy of Crassus'.

¹⁴ Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 281–282.

The statement of the famous Arpinata can, however, be understood at least ambiguously. The fact was also noted by Friedrich Münzer in his biography of Marcus, i.e. the oldest son of Marcus Crassus. On the other hand, Susan Treggiari, in her characterisation of Tertulla, treated this story as an anecdote which did not best testify to her extramarital reputation. Returning to the heart of the whole matter, which of Marcus Crassus's sons could have really been referred to here – regrettably, apart from common-sense assumptions, there are no source references. It cannot be ruled out, however, that 'this young Crassus', as Plutarch of Cheronea wrote about him in the biography of Marcus Cicero, could have been the eponymous Publius, i.e. the younger son of the future triumvir. The statement of the famous Arpinata was probably not just a typical comparison (vide 'he is worthy of Crassus'), but it could directly mean what Allen Ward suggested. Namely, it was 'Axius, son of Crassus', which would then mean a clear allusion that the biological father of Publius was none other than a certain Quintus Axius of Reate – a Roman senator who came from a wealthy, equestrian family of bankers. And, most importantly, he was well acquainted with Marcus Crassus himself and Tertulla, his wife. And perhaps, although this is only a supposition resulting from the lack of sources, it was under his care that the entire family of the future triumvir could have fallen when he left for Spain in 85 BC. It is worth mentioning that Julius Caesar himself was accused of having an affair with Tertulla, probably much later. And if it was the physical resemblance of Marcus Crassus's son to Quintus Axius – and we assume that the young Crassus, mentioned by Plutarch, could have been the eponymous Publius, then, and it cannot be excluded, this Roman senator and at the same time an acquaintance of Marcus Crassus could have been responsible for Tertulla's pregnancy. In this situation, recalling the suggestions of Roland Syme, it can be assumed that in fact Publius's conception could have happened in 83 BC, i.e. shortly before Marcus Crassus's return to Italy. The birth probably took place in 82 BC. And, anyway, the above mentioned Quintus Axius' probable 'perpetration' in Tertulla's pregnancy could have actually come to light only after a few years when Tertulla could have already given birth to Marcus Crassus's other four children. The eponymous Publius and his probably only legal father could have been linked by an exceptionally strong bond of mutual trust and mutual

family correlations. Over the years, Publius became Marcus Crassus's most trusted advisor and assistant. Therefore, as can be assumed, the truth about the circumstances of his conception did not ultimately destroy the mutual personal relations between them. From the point of view of Publius himself, the facts cited, and this interpretation cannot be rejected completely, could have exerted some kind of psychological pressure on him. In turn, the family history and their relations as well as the knowledge about the circumstances connected with his birth could also have been manifested as the need to prove his value as a person to others and demonstrating genuine devotion, or even loyalty, to Marcus Crassus as his father at almost every opportunity. Publius, by behaving in this way, did not want to leave even a shadow of doubt as to how he treated his status as the son of a future triumvir and what belonging to the Crassus family meant to him. The above-mentioned circumstances, which may have accompanied the birth of Publius, did not destroy his relationship with Marcus Crassus, nor with Marcus who was his elder brother. Importantly, the future triumvir decided not to divorce Tertulla either.¹⁵

The education of Publius and Marcus Crassus

Moving on to the upbringing and education of Publius, his father could have had an impact on his development himself. Marcus Crassus was a passionate historian and philosopher. He used that knowledge in a practical way acting as a defender in court trials to which he was appointed in Rome. It was not without reason that Plutarch of Cheronia emphasised that Marcus Crassus was extremely patient, hardworking and that he was not afraid of taking risks. His passion was collecting money and property, but he could also be generous. He must have appreciated the importance of education since he did not spare his time to personally train his slaves

¹⁵ Plut. Cic. 25.4; Suet. Iul. 50; F. Münzer, *Marcus Licinius Crassus n. 56*, in: RE 13.1 (1926), col. 268; T. P. Wiseman, *New men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C.–A.D. 74*, p. 33, no. 61, p. 216; A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and late Roman Republic*, footnote 11, p. 292; S. Treggiari, *Servilia and her family*, Oxford 2019, p. 106.

and freedmen. Therefore, one can easily deduce that undoubtedly the education of his sons was an issue of utmost importance. Wanting to better acquire Aristotle's views himself, he decided to employ a Greek peripatetic Alexander as a private tutor. Therefore, with a view to educating Publius and Marcus, he ordered that Apollonius, who was also a Greek slave and who knew Stoic philosophy very well, be brought to his home. Both boys, aged 7 to 15 at the first stage of education, were probably under the wing of their own tutor and home teacher (paedagogus). It is worth mentioning, however, that for his service to the house of Marcus Crassus, the aforementioned Apollonius was granted freedom. With the prior consent of his father, Publius himself, who was subject to the authority of Marcus Crassus's family superior (*alieni iuris*), freed him from legal bondage, thus granting him the status of a freedman and becoming his patron. Apollonius, after the tragic death of the two Crassi in 53 BC, as a person fully free under Roman law, is said to have met Marcus Cicero and Julius Caesar, among others. Returning to the education of Publius and Marcus, Marcus Crassus's sons, it is more than certain that they could learn both at home on the Palatine every time when they stayed in the capital of the Roman state. On the other hand, when they left Rome the process of their education continued in the numerous estates (*villas*) belonging to their father (including those in the Tuder area). It is worth mentioning that the value of the assets accumulated by Marcus Crassus comprised a total of 170 to 200 million sesterces. The future triumvir managed to multiply such huge amounts from less than 17 million sesterces received after the murder of his father.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cf. Cic. Att. 4.16.3; Fam. 13.16.4; Plut. *Crass.* 2; 3; 6; A. Krawczuk, *Sytuacja majątkowa nobilitas rzymskiej u schyłku republiki*, "Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny" 1962, nr 14, p. 6; P. A. Brunt, *Italian manpower, 225 BC–AD 14*, pp. 302–303; B. W. Frier, *Landlords and tenants in imperial Rome*, Princeton 1980, pp. 24, 32–34; S. F. Bonner, *Education in ancient Rome: From the elder Cato to the younger Pliny*, London 1977, p. 37; G. Bradley, *Ancient Umbria. State, culture, and identity in central Italy from the Iron Age to the Augustan Era*, Oxford 2000, footnote 139, pp. 231, 236; T. Aleksandrowicz, *Kultura intelektualna rzymskich konsulów w schyłkowym okresie Republiki*, Katowice 2002, pp. 45–46; K. Harper, *Landed wealth in the long term patterns, possibilities, evidence*, in: *Ownership and exploitation of land and natural resources in the Roman world*, eds. P. Erdkamp, K. Verboven, A. Zuiderhoek, Oxford 2015, p. 58.

Marcus and Publius of Crassi, began to participate in the classes which were referred to as ‘tirocinium fori’ and ‘tirocinium militiae’ at the turn of the 70s and 60s of the 1st century BC¹⁷. And so, when running on the ‘Forum Romanum’, they had an opportunity to observe, while standing, for example, at the entrance to the curia of the Roman Senate, what senators’ deliberations looked like. Then, without leaving the Forum, they could observe the course of court hearings, admiring the rhetoric and proficiency in Roman legal regulations of the patrician aristocrats taking part in them. Therefore, in both of the above-mentioned places, they had the opportunity to listen to the speeches of, inter alia, their father Marcus Crassus, Pompey (Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus), Julius Caesar and undoubtedly Marcus Cicero. And it is Cicero in particular who even became a ‘second father’ to Publius Crassus. In turn, after reaching the age of 16, when both sons of the future triumvir received the right to wear the ‘male toga’ (toga virilis) – and in the case of Marcus, being the older of the brothers, this could have happened in 70, while Publius was granted that right in 67 BC – they gradually had to rub shoulders with the social circles frequented by their father. Therefore, in addition to expanding the knowledge of law, broadly understood literature or history, both young Crassi improved their oratory skills and, which should not be forgotten, they learned social manners whenever they met Marcus Crassus’s friends.

For both young Crassi, when it comes to their psychophysical development, the exercises and training in which they participated in the ‘tirocinium militiae’ can be considered particularly important. And it was during such classes that both Publius and Marcus must have acquired practical knowledge about handling weapons. It was necessary for them to develop mental and physical prowess, they also had to learn to ride

¹⁷ Cf. E. Fantham, *The Roman world of Cicero’s ‘De Oratore’*, Oxford 2004, pp. 40–41, 78–79, 93–94, 100, 323; S. Culpepper Stroup, *Catullus, Cicero, and a society of patrons. The generation of the text*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 141–143, 145–147; I. Łuć, *Od ‘fortes milites’ do ‘muli Mariani’ – fenomen siły fizycznej żołnierzy wojsk rzymskich w okresie republiki rzymskiej*, “Res Historica” 2018, no. 46, pp. 42–44.

horses, not to mention mastering the art of swimming. An important element of the preparatory training for military service was also assimilating the principles of the Roman art of war and the rules of military discipline (*disciplina militaris*). And it was probably during these exercises and training, and also, more importantly, meetings with the people from their father's (Marcus Crassus') social circle, that Publius must have started to present himself more and more favourably, and perhaps distanced Marcus in this way, even though Marcus was his elder brother after all. Marcus Cicero himself quickly turned his attention to Publius. Especially in his dialogue entitled 'Brutus, or about famous speakers' (*Brutus, sive de claris oratoribus*), in which the history of Roman styles of the art of speech was presented, there was also an extremely interesting description of Publius's personality. And so, in 46 BC, i.e. about seven years after the tragic death of Marcus Crassus's son, Marcus Cicero characterised him in the following way. What he particularly noted was Publius's intelligence, followed by his impeccable upbringing and excellent comprehensive education. To this description he also added that Publius was able to express himself in an elegant manner; moreover, the vocabulary he used was exceptionally rich. Young Crassus was distinguished by his restraint, and his extraordinary abilities and charming personality seemed to be evidenced by the fact that he often used to meet and talk to the prominent Marcus Cicero. Therefore, as highlighted by the famous Arpinata, Publius belonged to his circle of friends. Marcus Cicero might have regretted that such a talented lover of rhetoric and learning (as was the opinion of Marcus Crassus's son) had a solitary serious weakness, which was his ardent desire for fame, openly demonstrated by Publius, and which, according to Marcus Cicero, was simply inappropriate for people at their young age. And as a clear offence, or even an accusation, which Marcus Cicero made against Publius, the criticism referred directly to his ambitions and modelling himself on the aforementioned Alexander the Great and Cyrus II, i.e. the famous leaders of the ancient epoch. Publius's dream could have been to exercise military command on his own, although he had no rights to do so, *inter alia* because of his age. This is probably how the words of Marcus Cicero should be interpreted that Publius 'serving as a soldier at the commander's side, he soon wanted

to become one himself, and yet our ancestors set a certain age for this position and an undefined drawing result’.¹⁸

The beginning and end of Publius Crassus’s career

There is no indication that Publius, although he was probably at least 22 years old by then, could have gone to Spain (Hispania Ulterior) with Julius Caesar who served as a governor there in the years 61–60 BC. For Caesar, the combat waged in this area (vide the pacification of the Lusitanian highlanders) became an excellent testing ground before taking the governorship in Gaul in 58 BC. This was the place Publius Crassus headed for in order to take part in military operations for the first time at the age of 24/25. It is worth mentioning that from 60 BC there was already a so-called the first triumvirate in the Roman state, i.e. the initial secret and informal agreements between Pompeius, Marcus Crassus and Julius Caesar were concluded. Therefore, due to this alliance, they gained an overwhelming influence on ruling the Roman state. From that time on, without their knowledge and consent, the people who did not receive their approval were not eligible for election to offices in the Roman state. Therefore, they had an impact on the staffing of positions in Rome, and the policy of the state in general. Returning, however, to the issue of Publius’s commencement of a military career, it is more than certain that Julius Caesar and Marcus Crassus could have made the decision to leave for Gaul. It is possible that to a large extent it was probably a form of debt repayment, not only of gratitude, but also for specific help that Julius Ceasar was allegedly given by Publius Crassus’s father (e.g. for loans in the amount of, for example, nearly 20 million sesterces). On the other hand, the departure from Rome could actually have been in line with the plan of Publius himself. Furthermore, events such what happened in 58 BC, when Marcus Cicero was sentenced to exile and forced to leave Rome for northern Greece, could have discouraged Publius from staying in the capital. It is also worth mentioning, and

¹⁸ Cic. *Brut.* 281–282: ‘qui quia navarat miles operam imperatori, imperatorem se statim esse cupiebat, cui muneri mos maiorum aetatem certam, sortem incertam reliquit’.

it was appreciated by the famous Arpinata after his return from exile (57 BC), that Publius Crassus, after the condemnation of Marcus Cicero, wore a mourning robe as a sign of protest and that he managed to persuade a total of as many as 20,000 young Romans to do the same. Furthermore, after the aforementioned return of Mark Cicero, he reconciled not only with Pompey or Caesar, but also with Marcus Crassus, in which the eponymous Publius played a direct part.¹⁹

Publius Crassus formally stayed in Gaul with Julius Caesar for three years (from 58 to 56 BCE). Initially, he held the title of ‘adulescens’ there, which actually meant that Publius, due to his age, belonged to a group of young Romans, ‘young men’, who had not yet reached the age of 30, and who were members of Julius Caesar’s military staff (consilium) – Caesar was a governor of the Roman Province at that time. They were allowed to perform the tasks which were assigned to them, in spite of the fact that some of them did not formally hold any specific office. It is unlikely that Publius had an opportunity to be elected to any office or to be nominated for any position in the Roman state before coming to Gaul. What is more, also after reaching Julius Caesar’s camp, initially the son of Mark Crassus could have been completely ignored and did not receive any nomination due to his lack of military experience. It is possible that Publius Crassus, after visiting Marcus Cicero in exile in Greece, managed to reach Gaul when Julius Caesar’s troops succeeded in stopping the migration of the Helvetians (March–July 58 BC). There, the meeting of Marcus Crassus’s son with Caesar probably took place in the Roman camp which was established in the town of Vesontio, the capital of the Sequan tribe. It is precisely from there that the campaign against the Germans of Ariovistus was launched, in which Publius Crassus took part for the very first time. It is during this operation (September 58 BC) that the battle was fought, during which Publius Crassus – described by Caesar as ‘a young man in charge of the cavalry’ – on his own initiative sent the Roman reinforcements, which were still waiting in reserve, to battle. The Romans, owing to the decision made by Marcus Crassus’s son, managed to defeat Ariovistus’ Germans. The term

¹⁹ Cf. Plut. *Crass.* 7; 13; 14; T. R. S. Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic (99 B.C.–31 B.C.)*, vol. 2, pp. 180, 184–185, 190, 199.

‘adulescens qui equitatu praerat’ referred to in the narrative of the ‘Gallic Wars’ meant that during the fighting, Publius was appointed a leader of the legionary cavalry, which, however, did not have to be identical to the rank of praefectus equitum. However, in the next year of 57 BCE, the son of Marcus Crassus took command of the VII legion and was sent with the mission of conquering the peoples who were known as the so-called Gallic seaside tribes (or the maritime tribes). This is how Publius Crassus, then 25/26 years old and still described as a ‘young man’ by Caesar, was given command of a whole VII legion which consisted of at least 3,000 soldiers. Moreover, Kathryn Welch suggested that the son of Marcus Crassus, while in Gaul, could have been describing his ‘adventures’ there. What is more certain, however, is the fact that throughout his stay in those lands, Publius Crassus was able to prepare reports which he sent to Julius Caesar on an ongoing basis, and the content of which was later incorporated into the official annual reports which the triumvir, as a governor of the Roman province, was obliged to send to the senate in Rome. It is on this basis that, thanks to Caesar, the course of the conquest of Aquitaine is known – it was led independently by Publius Crassus in 56 BC. Holding the command of the expeditionary corps, which consisted of a total of twelve cohorts of foot legionnaires who had been delegated from various legions of Caesar’s army, and having the right to command a large tactical cavalry unit, which probably included several troops, all this could only mean one thing. Namely, the young Publius Crassus, already in the third year of fighting in Gaul, i.e. in 56 BC, had already gained such a strong position among Julius Caesar’s officers that those in the rank of, inter alia, military tribunes, cavalry prefects, and, of course, centurions were obliged to report to him. Publius Crassus himself, on the authority of Caesar, was given the rank of a legate, which was mentioned by Cassius Dion. Despite his still young age – in 56 BC he was only 27/28 years old – he already enjoyed an exceptionally high credit of trust from the conqueror of the entire Gaul.²⁰ It is worth mentioning

²⁰ Cf. Caes. BG 1.38; 1.52: ‘Publius Crassus adulescens qui equitatu praerat’; 2.34; 2.35: ‘res ex litteris Caesaris’; 3.7: ‘Publius Crassus adulescens cum legione septima’; 3.8; 3.9; 3.11: ‘Publium Crassum cum cohortibus legionariis XII et magno numero equitatus in Aquitaniam proficisci iubet’; 3.20; 3.21; 3.22; 3.23; 3.24; 3.25; 3.26; 3.27; 4.38: ‘his

that Publius Crassus, while conducting military operations in Aquitaine, in quasi combat circumstances, was able to test his knowledge of Roman war tactics. Furthermore, he managed to join a number of daring military operations there, including a siege of fortified camps. The son of Marcus Crassus made plans for individual combat operations with the officers who were part of his 'consilium'. It was the participation in the battles in Gaul and the military experience gained there that turned into the foundations of Publius Crassus's war knowledge, before he set off on a great expedition against the Parthians in the East in 53 BC. However, before Publius set off for Syria, with the consent of Julius Caesar, two years earlier, in 55 BC, he had married Cornelia, the daughter of Quintus Metellus Scipio. In the same year, he was also admitted to the college of Augurs and joined the three-person commission of triumviri monetales responsible for producing money at the mint in Rome. It was also at this time that Publius Crassus became actively involved in the political life of the country, as he loyally assisted his father and other triumvirs in implementing the provisions of the Lucca congress, where the pact between the triumvirs was renewed. It was there that the decision about taking over the consulate was made in 55 BC by Pompey and Marcus Crassus. Therefore, in order to hold the elections according to the plan of the triumvirs, Publius Crassus brought to Rome veterans who had already completed their military service in Gaul. It was with their active help that both of the triumvirs were elected consuls. In addition, in 54 BC, after ending his consulate and with the power (empire) in Syria granted to him for a period of five years, equal to that of Caesar in Gaul and also to that granted to Pompey in Spain, Marcus Crassus headed east, planning to start a war with the Parthians and dreaming, as Plutarch of Cheronaea stressed, of an expedition to India following Alexander the Great's trail.²¹

rebus gestis ex litteris Caesaris'; 7.90; 8.46; Cass. Dio, 39.32.2; Censorinus, *De die natali*, 14.2; J. Suolahti, *The junior officers of the Roman army in the republican period*, Helsinki 1955, p. 48; K. Welch, *Caesar and his officers in the Gallic War commentaries*, in: *Julius Caesar as artful reporter: The war commentaries as political instruments*, eds. K. Welch, A. Powell, J. Barlow, London 1998, p. 86.

²¹ Plut. *Crass.* 15; 16.

Publius Crassus, probably taking part in the preparation of the plans, joined his father in 53 BC, when the latter launched acts of war a year earlier by making reconnaissance in Mesopotamia. The march against the Parthians was preceded by the visit of both Crassi in the temple of Aphrodite in Hieropolis in Syria which was famous for its treasures. On leaving the religious edifice, however, Publius himself stumbled first at the threshold of the temple and his father nearly fell over him. For Plutarch of Cheroinea it was a clear indication of what would happen at Carrhae in June 53 BC. However, both Marcus Crassus and Publius, his son, who had been appointed by his father as a legate in his army, could have been convinced that their amassed strength would be more than enough to defeat the Parthians. The Roman army that they led as they headed east totalled well over 30,000 men, consisting of seven legions, 4,000 lightly-armed soldiers, and 4,000 horsemen. It is worth mentioning that most of the legionary foot soldiers probably came from the Lucania area where those recruits were conscripted. However, the tactics used by the Parthians unfortunately appeared to be a complete surprise not only for Marcus Crassus himself, but also for Publius. On 9 June 53 BC, the Romans launched a battle which turned into the beginning of their defeat. And so, not recognising the real strength of the Parthian troops moving parallel to the marching units of the Roman army, Publius Crassus convinced his father to let him mount a bold attack on the Parthian troops marching towards them. On the Balissus stream, about 35 km south of the city of Carrhae, fighting erupted, in which the main role was played not by Roman legionaries, but by Parthian horse archers. Publius Crassus, leading a squad of 1,300 horsemen, 500 archers and just over 3,000 legionaries, launched an attack, which, however, was quickly neutralised first by Parthian heavy-armed cataphracts who charging at his subordinates, and then followed by heavy fire from Parthian horse archers. Crassus's corps was surrounded. Having no chance to break free from this trap – Marcus Crassus's son did not want to be captured by the Parthians – he made the decision to take his own life in those tragic circumstances. Then the Parthians stuck his severed head on a spear and brought it near the lines of the still fighting Romans to show it to them. Thus, they wanted to inform Marcus Crassus about the death of his son. It was also a forecast of what would eventually happen to the rest of the Romans who

were still engaged in the battle. Although at a later time Marcus Crassus and his commanders made desperate attempts to withdraw westwards, only about 5,000 soldiers led by Quaestor Cassius finally managed to reach Syria, out of the entire Roman expeditionary army which originally set off to conquer the Parthian state. About 10,000 soldiers of Marcus Crassus were taken prisoner by the Parthians who later rushed them to the Chinese border. They also killed Marcus Crassus himself and severed his head and arm in a similar manner.²²

Conclusion

In the light of the findings presented, one can see how briefly Publius Licinius Crassus was given the opportunity to enjoy the offices and honours conferred upon him, not to mention the opportunity to marry Cornelia. As far as his career is concerned, it was less than six years when, having reached the required age, he began to exercise military command and later was appointed to two civil offices two years before his tragic death. These were the previously mentioned triumvir monetalis (55 BC) and augur (between 55 and 53 BC). Moreover, holding the office of the aforementioned moneyer made it possible for him to apply for the quaestorship. Therefore, it is more than certain that Publius Crassus, unlike his brother Marcus Crassus and contrary to the suggestions put forward not so long ago by some scholars, regrettably did not hold this office at all. He was deprived of the opportunity to be selected for the position as he joined his father in an expedition to the East in 53 BC. Publius Crassus may have reached the required age of 30 in this very year.²³ Moreover, also in the case of the military positions which Publius was allowed to hold, he attained the rank of cavalry commander (legionary? 58 BC) and was a legion commander (legatus legionis – 57-56 BC; 54-53 BC). But, in the latter case, it was

²² Plut. *Crass.* 17–31.

²³ Cf. Ch. D. Hamilton, *The tresviri monetales and the republican cursus honorum*, p. 185; F. Pina Polo, A. D. Fernández, *The quaestorship in the Roman Republic*, Berlin–Boston 2019, p. 274.

a post usually offered to young Roman aristocrats starting military service by Roman officials exercising command (*magistrati cum imperio*) in the Roman provinces. He held the rank of a legate twice in total, until his death, receiving the appointment first from Caesar, and then from Marcus Crassus, his father.²⁴ Unfortunately, there is no certainty that Publius Crassus, contrary to the suggestions made, could have ever been appointed military tribune.

This lapidary listing of the offices held by Publius, not to mention the time when he happened to start his military-civil career, clearly suggests that it must have been influenced by his socio-political position, and more precisely by the status which Marcus Crassus, his father, managed to achieve in the Roman state at the turn of 59 BC. In the case of Publius, the decision to begin his career was apparently due to favouritism. It is worth emphasising that this was a typical phenomenon in Rome of that time, the representatives of the patrician senatorial aristocracy consciously made use of their legal and social position. On the other hand, completing military service, among other factors, determined the opportunity to further one's career. In the case of Publius Crassus, he could have indeed have continued his professional pursuits had it not been for his sudden, tragic death during the Battle of Carrhae. The younger son of Marcus Crassus was very successful as an 'adulescens' exercising command of the Roman soldiers.²⁵ On the other hand, despite the striking favouritism, Publius Crassus stood out as an extraordinary personality. Marcus Cicero wrote about his remarkable abilities and character traits without unnecessary courtesy, sincerely regretting his death. Publius's excessive ambition, not only in military terms, to become another Alexander the Great or Cyrus the Persian, from an objective point of view was even necessary to achieve success in the community of Roman aristocrats. Such a psychological motivation certainly went hand in hand with the efficient handling of the mission of military command, which Julius Caesar himself could also objectively assess from his own perspective. The younger son of Marcus Crassus must therefore

²⁴ Cf. P. Johnston, *Military consilium in republican Rome*, New Jersey 2008, p. 15.

²⁵ Cf. L. A. Thompson, *The appointment of quaestors extra sortem*, "Proceedings of the African Classical Associations" 1962, vol. 5, p. 20.

have been a genuinely outstanding person, clearly exceeding his peers, who belonged to the generation of young aristocrats who witnessed the decline of the Roman republic. Who knows what other career ranks he could have achieved if not for his overconfidence and underestimation of the opponent's strength, so typical for the representatives of his social class, which led to his defeat in battle against the Parthians.