

Roman Nobility and the Three Major Priesthoods, 218–167 B.C.

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The three major Roman priesthoods in the period from 218 to 167 B.C. were the pontifices, the augurs, and the decemviri sacris faciundis.* The pontifical and augural colleges each consisted of nine men, of which four were patricians and five plebeians. The decemviri comprised five patricians and five plebeians. Membership in all three colleges was for life, and until the Lex Domitia of 104 B.C. vacancies were filled by co-optation.¹

The chief purpose of this study is to determine the stage of career at which Roman nobles were normally co-opted into the priesthood. This will give some indication of the relative prestige of the three priesthoods at this time. Secondly, deviations from the normal practice, such as the co-optation of two elderly men in 216 B.C., will stand out and call for explanation. Finally, a determination of the normal age of co-optation will shed light on the position of the priesthoods in Roman public life and will thereby help explain why three of the most important men of the period, Scipio Africanus, Titus Flamininus, and P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica (cos. 191) failed to obtain a major priesthood. The chief emphasis will be on the pontificate and augurate, because the evidence is much fuller for these than for the decemvirate.

To determine the stage of career at which a man became priest, it is necessary to know the date of his co-optation as well as the dates of his aedileship, praetorship, and consulship. Since Livy

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¹ The history, organization, and activity of the priesthoods are discussed by J. Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*² (Leipzig 1885) 3.235–415; T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*³ (Leipzig 1887) 1.104–16, 2.18–73, 3.110–11; and G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*² (Munich 1912) 479–549. For more recent bibliography and summary see K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960) 195–212, 394–402.

records the co-optations of most of the pontifices and augurs and occasionally of decemviri, the composition of the pontifical and augural colleges is known with some certainty and about half the decemviri are known.² But since Livy's second decade is lost, the dates of co-optation of all the men who were priests at the beginning of our period are unknown. (See table below, page 85.) Therefore, for the period between 218 and 167 B.C. the names of thirty-two pontifices are known, but the dates of co-optation of only twenty-five can be determined with any certainty. Of the twenty-one known augurs, we can be fairly certain of the dates of co-optation of sixteen. Finally, twenty of the total number of decemviri can be ascertained, and of these the dates of co-optation of fourteen are known. Thus fifty-five of the seventy-three known priests can be classified according to the stage of career at which they received the priesthood.

Of the twenty-five pontifices whose classification is fairly certain, twenty became pontifex before holding the consulship. Fourteen became pontifex before holding any recorded office,³ and perhaps seven joined the college before holding the aedileship. Of the sixteen augurs who can be classified, all but one became augur before holding the consulship. Thirteen became augur before holding any recorded office and seven before holding the aedileship. Finally, of the fourteen decemviri who can be classified, eleven became decemviri before their consulship and seven before holding any recorded office. Not more than three became decemviri before holding the aedileship. Thus about four-fifths

² A list of priests with their dates of co-optation may be found in C. Bardt, *Die Priester der vier grossen Collegien aus römisch-republikanischer Zeit* (Berlin 1871) 8–30. The identifications and dates on which this study is based are those given by T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic and Suppl.* (New York 1951–60). Evidence for the dating of priesthoods and magistracies can be found under the appropriate entry in Broughton. See also Broughton's lists of pontifices and augurs under the years 210 and 179 B.C. Several additions to the list of known decemviri have been proposed by J. Gagé, *Apollon Romain* (Paris 1955) 266, 303, 370–71, but the dates of co-optation of the proposed decemviri are unknown, and so the additions, even if correct, are of no value to our study. Gagé's list of decemviri (698) is inaccurate and must be used with care.

³ There were ten men who received a priesthood before the praetorship, but for whom no aedileship is recorded. Since Livy records very few of the aediles for the second half of our period, it is likely that some of these men also held an aedileship. Their aedileships may have come before or after co-optation to a priesthood. Consequently, some of the priests classified *co-opted before holding any recorded office* would have to be classified *co-opted after aedileship, before consulship*, if more information were available.

of the augurs, nearly three-fifths of the pontifices, and one-half of the decemviri had, to our knowledge, not yet held any high political office at the time of their co-optation. If Roman nobles generally entered public office at the earliest customary age, the men who had not yet held a public office would presumably have been younger than those who had. Since the augural college co-opted a higher proportion of these younger men than the other colleges, the average age of co-optation was apparently lower for augurs than for pontifices or decemviri.

There is further evidence for this conclusion. Twenty-one augurs are known for the half-century under consideration. Perhaps five more are needed to fill the gaps in the reconstructed augural *fasti*, bringing the total number of augurs to about twenty-six. In contrast, there must have been thirty-three or more pontifices in the same period. The total number of decemviri is unknown, but the twenty who are attested are barely more than half the total number.⁴ Apparently the average term of office of augurs was longer than that of pontifices or decemviri. Moreover, the exact dates of co-optation and death are known for nine augurs and fifteen pontifices. The average term of office for these nine augurs was 29 years, but for the fifteen pontifices it was only 20 years.⁵ In other words, at co-optation the average pontifex seems to have been nine years older than the average augur. All these statistics indicate that augurs were co-opted at a younger age than either pontifices or decemviri.

Since it was all but unknown for a man to hold more than one priesthood,⁶ it follows that the priesthood whose members were youngest at co-optation must have been the first choice of prospective priests and the first one to which young men usually applied. The priesthood whose members were slightly older at

⁴ Since the decemviri comprised ten men, one more than the pontifices or augurs, the total must be reduced by ten percent in making comparisons.

⁵ Unfortunately the dates of co-optation and death are known for only four decemviri. Since this is only about one-tenth of the total number of decemviri, the average term of office (22 years) is not necessarily representative, and no conclusions may be drawn from it.

⁶ Bardt (above, note 2) 37-39; Wissowa (above, note 1) 493, note 2. The only examples before Julius Caesar were C. Marcius Rutilus (cos. 310), pontifex and augur; Q. Fabius Maximus (cos. 233), pontifex and augur; M. Pomponius Matho (cos. 231?), augur and decemvir; Ti. Sempronius Longus (cos. 194), augur and decemvir; and C. Servilius Geminus (cos. 203), pontifex and decemvir. Livy, 26.23.8 and 27.6.15, seems to make T. Otacilius Crassus both pontifex and augur, but see Broughton (above, note 2) *sub anno* 210 B.C., note 6.

co-optation was probably one which received men who had spent several years in unsuccessful attempts to obtain a more prestigious priesthood. The average age of co-optation, then, suggests that the augurate ranked highest in prestige among the Roman nobility, with the pontificate in second place, and the decemvirate in third place.⁷ This order, however, conflicts with the order usually found in Roman lists, viz. pontifices, augurs, decemviri.⁸ Apparently the pontifical college had originally been the most important and therefore the first in processions and lists,⁹ but during the history of the Republic the augurate seems to have become the most coveted priesthood, perhaps because it was found to be more effectual in politics than the others.¹⁰

We have seen that the augural and pontifical colleges seldom co-opted men who had already held the consulship, and they seemed to prefer men who had never held any high political office.¹¹ So, one infers that new priests were predominantly young men under the age of thirty-six.¹² Two augurs were not

⁷ This relative rank of the three priesthoods is consistent with the relative political success of the members of each college. The consulship was attained by four-fifths of the known augurs, nearly three-fourths of the known pontifices, and about one-half of the known decemviri.

⁸ E.g. Cic. *Har. Resp.* 18, *ND* 3.5; Dio Cass. 53.1.5; Tac. *Ann.* 3.64.3; Varro, *Antiq.* (apud August. *Civ. Dei* 6.3); *CIL*² 1.1 page 231 *sub die* Jan. 17. See M. Lewis, *The Official Priests of Rome under the Julio-Claudians* (Rome 1955) 102. The symbols of the priesthoods are depicted in the same order on coins of Julius Caesar, Augustus, and other emperors (Marquardt [above, note 1] 221–22). See H. A. Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (London 1910) 2.76, 88, 414, 415, 470, 576; and H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (London 1923–30) 1.20, 24, 40, 161, 176, 397; 2.8, 248. The priority of the pontifical college is also supported by several lists with the order: pontifices, decemviri, augurs (Cic. *Leg.* 2.20, 30–31; Lucan 1.595–601; *SHA Alex. Sev.* 22.5).

⁹ L. Mercklin, "Ueber die Anordnung und Eintheilung des römischen Priesterthums," *Bulletin de la classe historico-philologique de l'Academie de St. Petersbourg* 10 (1853) 275–83, believes the arrangement of priests in processions (e.g. Lucan 1.592–604) and Roman lists depends on a traditional order of precedence, whose foundations are lost in the mists of antiquity. On the official order see Wissowa (above, note 1) 483, 523–24. The primacy of the pontifical college may have developed from the position of the pontifices under the monarchy. See Marquardt (above, note 1) 220–21, 239–41; Mommsen (above, note 1) 2.18–24; Mercklin 287–88, 295.

¹⁰ The individual augur had greater political influence than the individual pontifex. See Cic. *Div.* 2.31; also L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley 1949) 76–97, for a general discussion and further evidence.

¹¹ See Bardt (above, note 2) 37.

¹² The *Lex Villia* of 180 B.C. fixed the minimum age for the aedileship at 36, for the praetorship at 39, and for the consulship at 42 (A. E. Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla* [Brussels 1958] 41). Men who had not yet held an office would presumably have been too young for the aedileship or praetorship.

much beyond the age of sixteen at the time of co-optation.¹³ In the light of the customary youthfulness of new priests the pontifical co-optations of 216 B.C. stand out as a striking anomaly. In this year Q. Fabius Maximus (cos. 233) and Q. Fulvius Flaccus (cos. 237) were chosen pontifices (Livy 23.21.7). No other pontifex or augur in this period was co-opted later than three years after his consulship. Yet Fabius became pontifex seventeen years after his first consulship, and Fulvius twenty-one years after his. Both of them may have been over 65 years of age when elected to the pontificate.¹⁴ This co-optation is rendered even more extraordinary by the fact that Fabius was already an augur, and it was extremely uncommon for one man to hold both the augurate and pontificate.¹⁵

A clue to this unusual choice may perhaps be found in the careers of the men who preceded Fabius and Fulvius. In 216 B.C. three pontifices died. Two were killed in the Battle of Cannae; the third died in some other way. This third pontifex was succeeded by Q. Caecilius Metellus, a typical young priest who was to reach the aedileship seven years later. But the two men who were killed at Cannae were, contrary to normal practice, succeeded by the pair of elder statesmen, Fabius and Fulvius. Of special significance is the fact that Fabius was chosen to replace L. Aemilius Paullus, the ill-fated general held by some to bear part of the responsibility for the disaster at Cannae.¹⁶ Fabius and his supporters seem to have opposed the aggressive military policy of the Aemilii and Cornelii. Now that Aemilius Paullus

¹³ They were L. Quinctius Flamininus (cos. 192) (see F. Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* [Stuttgart 1920] 119) and Ti. Sempronius Gracchus (cos. 177), who was only *admodum adulescens* when elected augur in 204 (Livy 29.38.7). Livy 42.28.13 says that Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. suff. 162) was *oppido adulescens sacerdos* when elected pontifex in 172. But since he became consul only ten years later, it seems unlikely that he was as young as Livy suggests.

¹⁴ Livy 29.38.7 notes that it was very unusual to co-opt a man who was *admodum adulescens*, and there is no recorded instance of the co-optation of a *puer* in the Republic. (Mommsen [above, note 1] 2.32 seems to think a *puer* could become pontifex or augur, but the evidence which he adduces [Livy 29.38.7; 42.28.13] does not support his contention.) Hence it is likely that Fabius was at least sixteen when he became augur in 265 B.C. In 216, then, he must have been at least 65. If Fulvius was 42 at his first consulship in 237, he must have been at least 63 in 216.

¹⁵ The only known precedent was C. Marcius Rutilius (cos. 310), and after Fabius there is no similar example until Julius Caesar. See above, note 6.

¹⁶ G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* (Turin 1917) 3.2.56, note 89; H. H. Scullard, *A History of the Roman World from 753 to 146 B.C.*³ (London 1961) 194; *Roman Politics: 220-150 B.C.* (Oxford 1951) 51-52.

was dead and his policy of aggression against Hannibal was irrevocably discredited, Fabius with his policy of passive resistance stood out as the only hope for the Roman state.¹⁷ In a sense, then, the co-optation of Fabius and Fulvius to fill the vacancies caused by the Battle of Cannae may have symbolized Rome's change of military policy and her fervent hope that Fabius and his supporter, Fulvius,¹⁸ would succeed where Aemilius Paullus had failed.

The precise forces which moved the pontifices to co-opt Fabius and Fulvius are not recorded, and any explanation for their election must be speculation. In the previous year Fabius had insisted that the Roman defeat at Lake Trasimene was due to the neglect of religious ceremonies by the consul Flaminius (Livy 22.9.7; Plut. *Fab.* 4.3). The subsequent vows intended to appease the gods had been ineffectual, as the Battle of Cannae had so vividly testified (Livy 22.9.8–10.10; Plut. *Fab.* 4.4–5). Since both the neglected ceremonies and the ineffectual vows had been under the supervision of the pontifical college,¹⁹ the two resulting disasters may possibly have caused the prestige of the college to decline, and the pontifices themselves may even have lost confidence in their ability to administer the sacred rites adequately. The pontifices, then, may have co-opted Fabius to bolster their prestige. Or they may possibly have felt that Fabius' wise counsel would be valuable in winning the favor of the gods and in preventing a repetition of the previous disasters. Whatever their reasons may have been, the pontifices bestowed on Fabius and

¹⁷ De Sanctis (above, note 16) 3.2.220–21; Scullard, *History of the Roman World* 195; *Roman Politics* 56. F. Cassola, *I gruppi politici romani nel III secolo a. C.* (Trieste 1962) 371–77, tries to show that Aemilius Paullus had no connection with the Corneliis nor any great responsibility for the attack on Hannibal at Cannae, and that he may even have been on friendly terms with Fabius at this time. His arguments, however, are not very convincing.

¹⁸ Fabius and Fulvius were assuredly not enemies as maintained by Scullard, *Roman Politics* 37–38. L. R. Taylor, *AJP* 73 (1952) 303–4, and Cassola (above, note 17) 330–32, have shown that these two men cooperated closely throughout their lives.

¹⁹ Among the ceremonies which C. Flaminius had neglected was the celebration of the Latin Festival (Livy 21.63.8–9; 22.1.6). The pontifical jurisdiction over the performance of the Latin Festival is implied by Livy 32.1.9; 40.45.2; 41.16.2. See Wissowa (above, note 1) 515, note 1. On the pontifical supervision of the vows of 217 see Livy 22.9.11–10.1, also Wissowa (above, note 1) 515; Marquardt (above, note 1) 264–66. Fabius himself was among those who took vows in this year (Livy 22.10.10; 23.30.13–14).

Fulvius a unique honor in admitting them to the pontifical college when they were long past the customary age.²⁰

The pontifical and augural *fasti* contain the names of nearly all the important Roman leaders, generals, and statesmen. There are, however, some striking absences in the period from 218 to 167 B.C., including P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the most prominent figure of the period, and T. Quinctius Flamininus, the liberator of Greece. One also misses the name of P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, who in 204 B.C. was named the *vir optimus* in the Roman state for the reception of the Magna Mater (Livy 29.14.8). Why did three of the most prominent men of the age fail to receive an honor which was bestowed upon many lesser men? Since pontifices and augurs were rarely co-opted after they had held the consulship, one must seek the explanation in their early careers.

Since Scipio Africanus was born about 235 B.C., he could not have expected a priesthood before 219 B.C., when he entered manhood.²¹ It is uncertain whether or not the rule prohibiting the co-optation of two augurs from the same *gens* was already in force at this time.²² If it was, Scipio Africanus would have been excluded from the augural college for his entire lifetime by the presence of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 201). Even if there was as yet no formal rule, Scipio may at least have been handicapped

²⁰ To appreciate the magnitude of this honor one must consider that although Fabius and Fulvius lacked seniority, they probably had great influence in the pontifical college immediately because of their age and political distinction. Accordingly, the other priests may have had to surrender some of the influence which was theirs by seniority. Evidence of Fulvius' prestige came in 212 B.C., when Fulvius, then the oldest consular in the college, made a strong bid for the office of pontifex maximus. Although there were four pontifices with greater seniority, Fulvius with a mere four years' experience seems to have had sufficient prestige to enter active competition. The fact that Livy 25.5.4 considered Fulvius' age and political distinction more important qualifications than Licinius' seniority also suggests that Fulvius might have had greater prestige and influence than the men who preceded him into the college.

²¹ See above, note 14.

²² Dio Cass. 39.17, referring to the year 57 B.C., states that the law expressly forbids two members of the same *gens* from holding the same priesthood. T. Mommsen, *Römische Forschungen* (Berlin 1864) 1.89, followed by Bardt (above, note 2) 34, showed that this law applied only to the augural college. Bardt (above, note 2) 35-36 attempted to explain the presence of two Sempronii in the augural college between 204 and 174 by suggesting that the term "*gens*" was applied only to patricians (see Livy 10.8.9), and that the Sempronii were therefore exempt from the law. (Compare Bardt's modification of his position in "Zu Dio 39.17," *Festgabe für Wilhelm Crecelius der fünfundzwanzigjährigen Lehrthätigkeit in Elberfeld* [Elberfeld 1881] 37-40.) Since the date of enactment is unknown, it is uncertain whether the law was in force in our period; but if it was, Bardt's explanation of the two Sempronii may be correct.

by a traditional tendency of the college to maintain a balance of families. But Scipio's failure may also have been due to the fact that in 216 and 213, when patrician vacancies occurred, the dominant senior member of the augural college was Q. Fabius Maximus.²³ According to Cicero it was not permissible to co-opt a man who was an *inimicus* of any member of the college.²⁴ If, as is possible, *inimicitia* had already developed between Fabius and the young Scipio Africanus, it would be easy to see why Scipio never obtained an augurate.²⁵ However, there is no actual evidence for *inimicitia* at this time, and it is also quite possible that *inimicitia* developed only after Scipio had risen to a position of command in the army and was beginning to challenge Fabius' leadership in the war. But even if there was no *inimicitia* in the Ciceronian sense between Fabius and Scipio as individuals, Scipio may nevertheless have incurred the disfavor of Fabius because he belonged to a rival *gens* and was associated with a divergent military policy. Fabius' opposition to the Cornelian *gens* and its military policy may have helped to keep Scipio out of the augural college as long as Fabius lived.

The first patrician vacancy in the pontifical college occurred in 216 B.C. with the death of Aemilius Paullus. Since Scipio had served as military tribune under the defeated Paullus and was associated with the discredited Aemilian-Cornelian policy of aggression, he stood no chance of winning a pontificate at this time. However, when two more patrician vacancies occurred in 213 B.C., Scipio's prospects for a priesthood were far better. L. Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 237), the pontifex maximus, had died, so there were no Corneli in the college. Since Scipio was currently aedile with M. Cornelius Cethegus (cos. 204), he must have been of the ideal age for co-optation. Nevertheless his fellow-aedile Cethegus, who was of the same age and *gens* as Scipio himself, won the vacant pontificate.

Scipio's defeat is not easily explained. The family of Scipio was far more prominent than the family of Cethegus at this time. The Spanish campaigns of Scipio's father and uncle were earning

²³ Q. Fabius Maximus had been augur since *ca.* 265 B.C. On his influence in the college see Münzer (above, note 13) 83; but see also Cassola (above, note 17) 338.

²⁴ *Fam.* 3.10.9: in quo [augural college] non modo amicitiam violari apud maiores nostros fas non erat, sed ne coptari quidem sacerdotem licebat, qui cuiquam ex collegio esset inimicus.

²⁵ Bardt (above, note 2) 37 attributes Scipio's failure entirely to *inimicitia*.

renown (Livy 24.41; 24.48.1; cf. 25.36.14–16), and Africanus himself had earned distinction by rallying the survivors at Cannae (Livy 22.53). In contrast, neither Cethegus nor his family had done anything worthy of mention by Livy. Furthermore, Scipio did not lack friends within the pontifical college. His uncle M'. Pomponius Matho (cos. 233) was one of the senior members of the college, and two other pontifices, P. Licinius Crassus (cos. 205) and Q. Caecilius Metellus (cos. 206), were later to prove ardent supporters of Scipio.²⁶ But Fabius Maximus, who had been co-opted in 216 B.C., was now also a member. Just as he may have kept Scipio out of the augurate, he may have been influential in blocking Scipio's bid for a pontificate. Perhaps it was the very prominence and military distinction of the Scipios which defeated Africanus. Fabius and his friends in the pontifical college may have preferred a less prominent member of the Cornelian *gens* to the very ambitious Scipio Africanus. After 213 there were no more patrician openings before Scipio's consulship in 205 B.C.²⁷

Titus Flamininus and P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica (cos. 191) were handicapped in their bids for priesthoods, because each had an older brother, who, according to custom, would have precedence in election to a priesthood.²⁸ Flamininus' older brother, Lucius, received an augurate in 213 B.C. But thereafter Titus may have been excluded from the augural college by his brother's presence.²⁹ Titus' failure to obtain a pontificate was undoubtedly

²⁶ On the friendship of Licinius Crassus see Münzer (above, note 13) 184, 190–91, and Cassola (above, note 17) 410. Note Livy 28.38.12 and Plut. *Fab.* 25.4–5. For the attitude of Caecilius Metellus toward Scipio see Livy 29.20.1–10; 30.23.3–4; 30.27.2–3. See also Cassola (above, note 17) 408.

²⁷ The possibility that Scipio was already a *salus* in 213, as he certainly was in 211 (Broughton [above, note 2] *sub anno* 211 B.C.), is irrelevant to his failure. Although it was not permissible to hold the *salus* together with a major priesthood, Scipio could readily have given up his *salus* for a higher position (Wissowa [above, note 1] 493–94; 494, note 1).

²⁸ The failure of T. Flamininus is discussed by Münzer (above, note 13) 118–20. In this period at least nine men are known to have received priesthoods before their younger brothers. However, there is only one example of a younger brother acceding to a priesthood before his older brothers, viz. C. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 177), who became augur in 195 B.C. (The family relationships referred to here and in note 35 are those established by Münzer [above, note 13] *passim*, and biographical articles in *RE*.)

²⁹ See above, note 22. There is no record of two patricians of the same *gens*, much less two brothers, holding concurrent augurates in the Republic. But there were two sets of brothers in our period, one of whom held a pontificate, and the other, an augurate (M. Servilius Pulex Geminus, augur 211, and C. Servilius Geminus, pontifex 210; M'. and M. Pomponius Matho, pontifex and augur respectively by the beginning of this period).

linked to the internal politics of the pontifical college. Since the members of the pontifical college at this time included no close friends of Flamininus, who was noted for his independence in politics (Plut. *Flam.* 1.2), it is not surprising that he was passed over. Scipio Nasica's older brother, Gnaeus, became pontifex in 199 B.C., but even so Nasica could have little hope for a priesthood, because his brother was now in the pontifical college, and another member of the Cornelian *gens*, in the augural college. Thus for the early years of their careers there are plausible explanations for the failure of these three men to obtain the priestly offices which we might have expected them to hold.

More basic, however, is the question why so few Romans, regardless of their prominence, received a priesthood later in life, after they had held the consulship. The fact that a large majority of the augurs and pontifices received their priesthoods early in life, before they had won any great distinction for themselves, indicates that a priesthood was not normally regarded as an honor or reward for outstanding public achievement. Rather, since new priests were usually young men about to embark on a career, we may infer that a priesthood was considered primarily a means of assistance for political advancement. A priesthood may well have been a form of political patronage, in which the new priest was bound to friendship with the men already in the college.³⁰ In exchange for his support of fellow-priests in the *comitia* and on the senate floor, a new priest could expect backing when his own turn came to run for office.³¹ With some of the most influential men of the Roman nobility behind him, he was virtually guaran-

³⁰ Cic. *Fam.* 3.10.9 states that it was not permissible to violate the political friendship (*amicitia*) which existed between priests (see above, note 24). The results of this friendship can be seen in the careers of many priests. For example, C. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 177), who became augur in 195, was made praetor suffectus in 180 when his fellow-augur, Ti. Sempronius Gracchus (cos. 177), was praetor. In 177 Claudius and Sempronius were consuls together and in 169, censors. Again, P. Licinius Crassus (cos. 205), who was a pontifex by 218, was appointed *magister equitum* in 210 by his fellow-pontifex, Q. Fulvius Flaccus (cos. 237). As consul in 205, Licinius appointed the pontifex, Q. Caecilius Metellus (cos. 206), dictator to hold elections. Finally, P. Aelius Paetus (cos. 201), who became augur in 208, was chosen *magister equitum* in 202 by the pontifex, C. Servilius Geminus, brother of Aelius' fellow-augur, M. Servilius Pulex Geminus. Aelius was subsequently elected consul for 201 together with a fellow-augur, Cn. Cornelius Lentulus. In 199 Aelius and his brother were chosen *triumviri coloniis deducendis* along with the same Cornelius Lentulus.

³¹ On the importance of friendships in elections see Cicero, *Comment. Pet.* 16-40; also Taylor (above, note 10) 7-8.

teed a successful political career.³² And in addition, he had at his disposal the religious machinery of the state, which could readily be exploited to advance his own ends.³³

A priesthood regarded as political patronage would be of little value to a man who had already achieved the highest office of the state, but any man would have rejoiced to see his son co-opted and thus assured of political advancement.³⁴ As one might have expected, the colleges usually co-opted sons or close relatives of their own members.³⁵ Of course, they sometimes chose young men who, to our knowledge, had no close relatives in a priesthood. A surprisingly large number of these young men, however, were the sons of exceptionally prominent fathers.³⁶ Apparently, either the fathers had sufficient influence to effect the co-optation of their sons, or the colleges wished to court the favor of prominent families by choosing priests from their midst. So one infers that priests were chosen primarily on the basis of their father's influence.³⁷ The three outstanding men, whose prominence, at first sight, seems to have been ignored by the priestly colleges, were in reality not slighted in the least. The priestly colleges acknowledged their prominence in the normal way, by awarding a priesthood to the eldest son of each man. Accordingly, the son of Africanus received an augurate in 180 B.C. and the son of Flamininus in 167. It is uncertain when Nasica's son became pontifex, but in 150 he was elected pontifex maximus.

In retrospect, one must beware of laying undue stress on the men

³² Eighty percent of the augurs and seventy percent of the pontifices who were co-opted before reaching the consulship went on to hold that office.

³³ See Scullard, *Roman Politics* 26-28; for the more extensive exploitation in the late Republic, see Taylor (above, note 10) 76-97.

³⁴ Compare Cicero's efforts to win a pontificate for his son in 43 B.C. (*ad Brut.* 1.5.3).

³⁵ Of the 36 pontifices and augurs elected between 218 and 167 B.C. eleven had a father or close relative in the same priesthood and an additional six had a relative in the other priesthood. As a result, during our period the two major priesthoods contained three generations of Claudii Marcelli and of Aelii Paeti, in addition to five pairs of fathers and sons, two pairs of brothers, three pairs of grandfathers and grandsons, two pairs of uncles and nephews, and two pairs of men whose exact relationship is unknown.

³⁶ Some prominent men, not priests, whose sons became priests were Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 212), Cn. Cornelius Scipio Calvus (cos. 222), Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 192), M. Livius Salinator (cos. 219, 207), L. Postumius Albinus (cos. 234, 229, elect for 215), P. Valerius Flaccus (cos. 227), and P. Sulpicius Galba Maximus (cos. 211, 200) (Galba's brother preceded his son to the pontificate by one year).

³⁷ See Bardt (above, note 13) 37.

absent from the priestly colleges. Since a priesthood was not regarded as a reward for merit, there is no reason to expect every outstanding man to have received one. Those who received priesthods were hastened along the road to political success. But younger brothers and other men whom chance deprived of a priesthood might attain equal or greater eminence by their own ability without the aid of a priesthood. Scipio Africanus, Titus Flamininus, and Scipio Nasica were three such men.

In summary, a study of the co-optation age of Roman priests between 218 and 167 B.C. indicates that the relative order of prestige of the three major priesthods at this time was (1) the augurate, (2) the pontificate, and (3) the decemvirate. It also shows that, in general, priests were co-opted early in life, usually before they had held the consulship. The co-optation of elderly men into a priesthood was an extraordinary event and a distinct honor. A priesthood was normally bestowed, not as a reward for meritorious service, but as a form of patronage to promising young men who were aspiring to political office. This concept of the priesthood goes far to explain why some of the most prominent men of the period never held a major priesthood.

CLASSIFICATION OF PRIESTS
ACCORDING TO THE STAGE OF THEIR CAREER AT CO-OPTION

	Pontifices	Augurs	Decemviri	All Priests
Co-opted before aedileship	7*	7	3*	17
Co-opted before praetorship (No recorded aedileship)	6*	3	1	10
No recorded career	1	3	3*	7
Total co-opted before holding any recorded office	14	13	7	34
Co-opted after aedileship, but before consulship	6	2	4	12
Total co-opted before holding consulship	20	15	11	46
Co-opted less than three years after consulship	3	1	0	4
Co-opted more than three years after consulship	2	0	3	5
Total number of priests who can be classified	25	16	14	55
Priests whose co-optation date is uncertain	7	5	6	18
Total attested priests	32	21	20	73
Minimum number of priests to fill gaps in <i>fasti</i>	1	5	?	?
Probable total number of priests in this period	33	26	?	?

NOTE: Some priests cannot be classified with certainty because the years in which they were co-opted or in which they held magistracies are not known with certainty. For the purpose of this study priests of doubtful classification are assumed to have received the priesthood at the latest stage of career permitted by the evidence.

* Starred numbers include one priest who is classified as having received the priesthood at an earlier stage than that demanded by the evidence, on the grounds that an earlier classification seems more probable.