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Genesis and Collapse of a Network: The Rise and Fall of Lucius Aelius Seianus

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Abstract

For Roman emperors, loyal advisors in their immediate vicinity were an absolute necessity to ensure good governance. This was the role played by L. Aelius Seianus for emperor Tiberius. Seianus' exemplary career and climb on the social ladder hit its peak in A.D. 31, when he held the consulship together with Tiberius. A few short months later, he was executed following allegations of plotting against the emperor's life. With his fall, the networks he had created also disintegrated. This concerned notable figures such as C. Annius Pollio, C. Appius, Iunius Silanus, Mam. Aemilius Scaurus, C. Calvisius Sabinus and L. Annius Vinicianus. This chapter examines Seianus' networks of support and power, highlighting their dynamics and adaptability.

1 Introduction*

Our sources, as well as current research, present L. Aelius Seianus as one of the most glamorous and power-hungry figures of the early Roman Empire. As prefect of the praetorian guard and ultimately Tiberius' fellow consul, Seianus achieved an almost meteoric rise to power. This was an incredible performance, which he apparently achieved on his own. However, after his execution in the autumn of 31 AD, his extensive social network became known as several of his supporters were charged in *maiestas*-trials, which aroused the interest of historiographers like Tacitus.

Both the rise and fall of L. Aelius Seianus have, somewhat surprisingly for a mere praetorian prefect, been analysed within numerous studies. It is the dazzling and power-hungry aspects of his career, as well as his apparently exceptional closeness to Tiberius, that make him such a fascinating subject for research. Seianus' career, especially his joint consulate with Tiberius, has been much investigated. In a 1998 paper, YAVETZ focused on the political significance of the *comitia* held on the Aventine in connection with Seianus' election as consul, which was also the subject of Ronald Syme's *Seianus on the Aventine*.¹ As the title of his paper has already revealed, KÖSTERMANN's *Der Sturz des Sejan* deals with the end of the praetorian prefect's life, whereby he attributes his death to a crisis of trust between Tiberius and Seianus.² In spite of a careful analysis of the known source material, speculations abound. Bauman makes a valuable addition to the *maiestas* proceedings of the imperial era as an instrument of power,³ listing the persons who were involved in these trials following Seianus' death, with a legal evaluation very much at the forefront.

Beginning with CICHORIUS, Seianus' biography and family origins have also been on the mind of scholars, with CICHORIUS focusing his early studies on the inscription CIL XI, 7285 = ILS 8996.⁴ In *Seianus Augustus*, CHAMPLIN concentrates

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1 YAVETZ (1998), p. 187–191; SYME (1956) 257–266. For further remarks on Seianus and the praetorian guard, see e.g. KEPPIE (1996), 101–124; BINGHAM (1997).

2 KÖSTERMANN (1955), p. 350–373. For further remarks concerning Seianus' fall, see BODDINGTON (1963), p. 1–17; SHOTTER (1974), p. 42–46; TORELLI (2011), p. 137–160.

3 BAUMAN (1974), p. 113–130. For further remarks on *maiestas*, see BARGHOP (1994); RUTLEDGE (2001).

4 CICHORIUS (1904), p. 461–471. His conclusions must be considered outdated today.

on the aristocratic origin as well as the public persona of Seianus, whose ascent he attributes to the less stable conditions of the early imperial period.⁵ LINDSAY's *Adoption amongst the Seii and Aelii* attempts to get to the bottom of the confusing relationships between the two families.⁶ LINDSAY visualised these relationships in terms of traditional stemmata, thus limiting himself to family ties. In addition to the numerous journal publications, a monograph also dealt with Seianus, namely *L. Aelius Seianus. Untersuchungen zur Regierung des Tiberius*, in which HENNIG first attempts to reconstruct the origin and family connections of Seianus and then to separate the possible from the impossible.⁷ However, his reconstruction of Seianus' political ambitions is ultimately unsatisfactory, and his conclusion that the Machiavellian ambitions and plans of the former praetorian prefect led to his overthrow were unduly strained. In his paper *L. Aelius Seianus and his political significance*, BIRD deals with the friends and enemies of Seianus, who as a rule were among the narrower circle of the powerful in Rome.⁸ SUMNER focuses on the connection between Seianus and the work of Velleius Paterculus, whose sketch of the prefect is ambiguous and not wholly favourable.⁹ Seianus' relationship to emperor Tiberius also belongs in this context, which has attracted special attention among researchers. According to BIRLEY, it was Tiberius' intention for Seianus to succeed him; however, the emperor later turned against him, either when the prefect of the praetorian guard tried to dispense with the later emperor Caligula or because of Thrasyllus' prediction.¹⁰

In this chapter, I intend to show how social network analysis can be adopted to reveal the connections relevant to Seianus' network of relationships that go beyond purely family ties, as interpersonal relationships based on *amicitia* or *clientela* were also of paramount importance to Seianus.

A further emphasis of this chapter is closely tied to this approach: the principle of reciprocity. At first glance, it may seem that the figure of Seianus has already been well researched. So, why another study on this praetorian prefect? Why is social network analysis useful here? This volume, as well as this

5 CHAMPLIN (2012), p. 361–388.

6 LINDSAY (2003), p. 271–281. For further studies concerning different aspects of Seianus' family origin and ties, see e.g. ADAMS (1955), p. 70–76; CORBIER (1983), p. 719–756; BELLMORE (1995), p. 255–266.

7 HENNIG (1975).

8 BIRD (1969), p. 61–98.

9 SUMNER (1970), p. 257–297. For further studies concerning Seianus' *amici* and *clientes*, see STEWART (1953), p. 70–85; SEALY (1961), p. 97–114; PISTELLATO (2007), p. 487–512.

10 BIRLEY (2007), p. 121–150. On quarrels and intrigues in the imperial house, see e.g. NICOLS (1975), p. 48–58; PANI (1977), p. 135–146; SIDARI (1985), p. 191–205; PIGÓN (1993), p. 183–190; PIGÓN (2001), p. 147–151; DELINE (2015), p. 766–772; CENERINI (2016), p. 119–142.

chapter, aims to show that the concept of social networks (as well as their analysis) can be used in many ways. I use an approach derived from historical network research: the *ego-alter*-dyad enables a systematic analysis of interpersonal interactions which can be regarded as the basis of Roman society. I assume that in the abstract, *amicitia*, *cliens-patronus*-ties or *familia* relationships were based on two entities, the *ego* and the *alter*, who together formed a dyad that was primarily based on reciprocity and mutual services. In turn, a dyad is linked to other individuals or dyads. In this way, more complex structures were built. Using social network analysis means a systematic approach, one that focuses on the relationships between the different actors. Relationships can thus be described in a more abstract fashion, enabling a more general comparability. Additionally – and this is the primary aim of this chapter – visualisations make it easier to identify the accumulation of certain types of relationships or attributes of actors within the subgroups of a network. The effect observed is thus far easier to reconstruct than by simply describing a complex social network. Of course, social network analysis does not replace a traditional critique of our sources, but it offers a suitable supplementary approach.

The reciprocity of *officia* and *fides* appears to have been the central element of control in Roman society, and thus constituted an indispensable principle for the social connections in the early Roman Empire, all of which becomes evident when viewing the exceptional career of Seianus. At the same time, his fall demonstrates how fragile these social relationships were. Social networks function not only as the base for a critical analysis of sources and for prosopographical investigation, but are also exceptionally useful for revealing the relations and connections among the followers of Seianus and their families. This study will thus focus on the interactions of individuals and the compositions of networks, but will place their structure in the foreground. Dyadic reciprocity will also be taken into consideration. This will allow for a new, unbiased view of Seianus and his career as a prefect of the praetorian guard. The concept of reciprocity, within the context of social networks, also offers the opportunity to examine the imminently Janus-faced nature of dyadic interactions, including the people who were involved.

2 The Career Path of L. Aelius Seianus: Selected Stages

Seianus' success, and his rise to the position of consul alongside Tiberius, was initially based on family relations. His father, Seius Strabo, was *praefectus praetorio* and an *amicus* of Augustus.¹¹ When Tiberius became *princeps* in 14, father and son may have shared the position of prefect of the praetorian guard.

11 Seianus (*PIR*² A 255) was probably born around 20 BC in *Volsinii* and was a member of the equestrian order (*TAC. ann.* 4.1; *MACR. Sat.* 2.4.18; CHAMPLIN (2012), p. 366–374).

Shortly thereafter, Seianus became the sole occupant of this position. It is only from this point onwards that he appears in the sources.¹² A short overview of Seianus' career path and his path to success until 31 will be given here. Seianus is said to have made the proposal to place the praetorian guard in a single camp on the Viminal hill in the year 20 or 23, which was then realised by Tiberius.¹³ Another report of Seianus' rise to become the emperor's closest confidant requires the reader to believe that he was a courageous hero who offered his help during a fire in the Theatre of Pompey in the year 22. For his courage, he was later honoured by Tiberius and the senate.¹⁴ Time and time again, Seianus is supposed to have proven that he would give his own life for the emperor, as well as the *res publica*. Evidence of this can be found, for example, in the heroic rescue operation in the cavern of Speralonga.¹⁵ This unconditional and devoted loyalty of the *homo novus* coming from the rural areas surrounding the capital city stands in strong opposition to the accusations of *maiestas* eventually raised against him, however. This could be seen as a purposeful literary stylisation, that of creating a contrast between a hero and monster. Aside from Seianus' commitment to the emperor and to Rome, he was also an advocate for *amici* and *clients*, helping them to receive public honour and offices.¹⁶ Seianus also seems to have been an essential supporting pillar for the emperor; Tiberius apparently called him his *adiutor imperii* (around 23) and his *socius laborum* (around 30).¹⁷ Furthermore, Tiberius saw in him "a part of his own body and his soul".¹⁸ Because of these statements, it can be assumed that the demonstrations of gratitude by Seianus and Tiberius were mutual.

12 TAC. *ann.* 1.7.5. Shortly after Tiberius' accession to power in 14, Seianus became *rector* of the younger Drusus, too. Thus, he witnessed the revolt of the legions in *Illyria* (TAC. *ann.* 1.24.2). As BINGHAM (1997), p. 127 has stated, Seianus accompanied Drusus in his role as prefect of the praetorian guard. According to TACITUS (*ann.* 1.24.2), both Seianus and Tiberius served in the army in the later Germanic provinces, as well as in *Pannonia* and *Illyria* (see also BIRD [1969], p. 63).

13 TAC. *ann.* 4.2.1; D.C. 57.19.6; 58.4.2; KEPPIE (1996), p. 101–124; PANI (2003), p. 44–46. In 20 Seianus also received the *ornamenta triumphalia* (D.C. 57.19.6).

14 TAC. *ann.* 3.72.3.

15 TAC. *ann.* 4.59.1–2.

16 TAC. *ann.* 4.2.3.

17 D.C. 58.4.3; WOODMAN (1989), p. 199. At first, Germanicus and Drusus were appointed as *adiutores imperii*. After both died in 19 or 23, Tiberius needed a new *adiutor imperii* and he chose Seianus (TAC. *ann.* 4.2.3; 7.1; VELL. 2.127.3; 2.128.4; D.C. 57.19.7; 58.4.3; CHAMPLIN (2012), p. 372).

18 D.C. 58.4.9.

The scale of Seianus' popularity and influence can be seen by looking at the public festivities on the occasion of his birthday, by the numerous statues that were set up in his honour, as well as the *vota* taken by people in his honour:

Ὁ δὲ δὴ Σεϊανὸς ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἤρετο, καὶ ἐψηφίσθη ὅπως τὰ γενέθλια αὐτοῦ δημοσίᾳ ἐορτάζεται. Τὸ γάρ τοι πλῆθος τῶν ἀνδριάντων ὧν ἢ τε βουλὴ καὶ ἡ ἱππὰς αἵ τε φυλαὶ καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ πρῶτοι ἔστησαν αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ ἐξηρίθμησεν ἄν τις· πρέσβεις τε ἰδίᾳ μὲν ἢ γερουσία ἰδίᾳ δὲ οἱ ἱππῆς τό τε πλῆθος ἕκ τε τῶν δημάρχων καὶ ἕκ τῶν ἀγορανόμων τῶν σφετέρων πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους αὐτοὺς ἔπεμπον, καὶ εὐχοντο ὑπὲρ ἀμφοῖν ὁμοίως καὶ ἔθουν, τήν τε τύχην αὐτῶν ὤμνυσαν.

"Seianus was rising to still greater heights. It was voted that his birthday should be publicly observed, and the multitude of statues that the senate and the equestrian order, the tribes and the foremost citizens set up, would have passed anyone's power to count. Separate envoys were sent to him and to Tiberius by the senate, by the knights, and also by the people who selected theirs from the tribunes and from the plebeian aediles. For both of them alike they offered prayers and sacrifices and they took oaths by their Fortunes."¹⁹

Both Tacitus and Velleius Paterculus portray Seianus as a man of power, competence, and capability, who took advantage of social mobility within the early empire – *per aspera ad astra*. These skills enabled him to eventually rise to the centre of power.²⁰ On 31st January of the year 31, Seianus had reached his goal: he had become fellow consul of Tiberius, and the power of *imperium proconsulare* as well as priestly honours were given to him.²¹ As a consequence of his admission to the senate – which was a necessity, if one wanted to be consul

19 D.C. 58.2.7–8 (DIO CASSIUS (2006), *Roman History*, Books 56–60 (The Loeb Classical Library), ed. by J. HENDERSON / transl. by E. CARY, Cambridge / London). See also D.C. 58.6.2; 58.8.4; 58.16.2; TAC. *ann.* 4.2.2; CHAMPLIN 2012, 372–373.

20 TAC. *ann.* 3.72.3; VELL. 2.127.3–4.

21 D.C. 58.7.4; CIL VI, 10213 = ILS 6044. SYME (1956), p. 257 and PISTELLATO (2007), p. 487–512 express their doubts concerning this inscription. However, another inscription from *Lusitania* (Juromenha / Portugal) also mentions the concurrent consulship of Tiberius and Seianus (AE 1953, 88). For the research discussion concerning Seianus' consulship, see BIRD (1969), p. 85; BIRLEY (2007), p. 140; HENNIG (1975), p. 139–142; PANI (1977), p. 135–146; SYME (1956), p. 257–266; TORELLI (2011), p. 137–160; YAVETZ (1998), p. 187–191. Perhaps in late summer 31, the secret wedding of Seianus and Livilla (the daughter of the elder Drusus) took place (TAC. *ann.* 5.6.2; 6.8.3; D.C. 58.3.9; SUET. *Tib.* 65.1; BIRLEY (2007), p. 135; 143; BELLEMORE (1995), p. 266). In a text fragment written by John of Antioch, it is said that Tiberius nominated Seianus as his successor (FHG 4.79, *Exc. de Virt.* p. 801.8). As a result, Seianus would likely have become the stepfather of Tiberius Gemellus, the son of the younger Drusus and of Livilla, and maybe an interim *princeps*.

– he could no longer be prefect of the praetorian guard, as this office had been linked to the social status of the *ordo equester* since Augustus. At first glance, the offices and honours that Seianus now held seem to imply an equal status to that of emperor Tiberius; if one were to follow the interpretation of JEPPESEN, then the Great Cameo of France impressively illustrates the position of the former *eques* Seianus within the imperial family, particularly his relation to Tiberius. He is at the centre of power, together with the emperor; both are linked together through the personification of friendship, the goddess Amicitia.²²

Our sources reveal a change in behaviour by Tiberius towards his fellow consul in the spring of 31. The emperor resigned from the shared office as consul.²³ Allegedly, the cause for this action was a conspiracy planned by Seianus, which was meant to result in the emperor's death.²⁴ However, one may suspect that his stepping down was part of a new strategy by Tiberius, who now wanted to eliminate Seianus. Since he had to give up his position as prefect of the praetorian guard, and had subsequently lost his office as consul, he was left entirely without defence. He could not rely on the support of Rome's elite anymore, because the fear of being overthrown was overpowering for Seianus' *amici* and *clientes*.²⁵ Seianus was lured to a session of the senate on 18th October 31 by announcing that he would be given the *tribunicia potestas*. Upon arrival, he was arrested and executed on the same day. A *damnatio memoriae* was imposed and the corpse was displayed on the *scalae Gemoniae*.²⁶ With this, the reciprocal

22 JEPPESEN (1993), p. 153; 143; 174; CHAMPLIN (2012), p. 371; 373. KUNST (2015), p. 84–85 does not see Seianus on the Great Cameo of France, but rather Nero Caesar, the son of Germanicus. An altar of Amicitia was dedicated by the senate to Tiberius and Seianus (TAC. *ann.* 4.74; for further details see GIARD (1998), p. 33–41; GUILANI (2010), p. 19–22).

23 BIRLEY (2007), p. 135 does not see anything unusual in Tiberius' early withdrawal from the consulship.

24 CIL XI, 4170 = ILS 157. Some of our sources indicate that Seianus planned to murder Drusus and the children of Germanicus, because they could prevent his ambitions of becoming emperor (TAC. *ann.* 4.2.2; 4.3.1–3; 4.8; 4.10–11; 4.12.2; 4.18–20; 4.52; 4.68–70; 4.60.2; 6.8; D.C. 57.19.7; 57.22.1–2; 57.22.4b; 59.19.3; SUET. *Tib.* 61–62; VELL. 2.127.3; IOSEPH. *ant.* 18.181–182; BELLEMORE (1995), p. 265–266; BIRD (1969), p. 66–68; 86–88; BODDINGTON (1963), p. 1–17; HENNIG (1975), p. 148; KÖSTERMANN (1955), p. 350–373; PIGÓN (1993), p. 183–190; PIGÓN (2001a), p. 147–151; PIGÓN (2001b), p. 631–636; SHOTTER (1974), p. 42–46; SIDARI (1985), p. 191–205; TAKÁCS (2002/2003), p. 119; PANI (2003), p. 19–22; 44–46; DELINE (2015), p. 766–772).

25 D.C. 58.11.1–3; TAC. *ann.* 6.8.2.

26 CIL XIV, 244; D.C. 58.9; IOSEPH. *Ant.* 18.6.6; SUET. *Tib.* 65; ILS 157; HENNIG (1975), p. 146–147. Seianus' children were also executed (TAC. *ann.* 6.19.2–3; SUET. *Tib.* 51.4). Seianus' wife committed suicide on 26 October 31. For further details concerning the identity of his wife, see BELLEMORE (1995), p. 255–266 who states that Seianus' wife was not Apicata, but Livilla, who perhaps got married to Seianus in secret. For further information concerning the

interactions were lost, since expectations of gratitude could no longer be fulfilled. This shows just how fragile a network can be. In the aftermath of Seianus' execution, his followers, supporters and protégés were charged with *maiestas* and their *amicitia* towards Seianus. In the *Annales* of Tacitus, this is the first time that we hear about Seianus' associates in any detail.²⁷

3 Social Networks and Reciprocity as a Mechanism of Control

The fact that Seianus must have had a network of helpers at his disposal is not uncommon for Roman society. Every individual is part of a social hierarchy and thus bound to a certain kind of behaviour in the society in which he or she lives. On the one hand, social advancement was desired and welcomed in Roman society because it showed ambition and commitment on the part of the individual seeking advancement. On the other hand, such a commitment could also be frowned upon because, in order for it to work, distinctive behaviour must be disregarded. In the society of the Roman Republic and the Early Imperial Period, such social advancement was achievable through *amicitia* and *cliens-patronus*-relationships. This advancement led to the optimisation of an individual's social capital and to an impressive gain of *dignitas*.²⁸ Seianus' social advancement was initially tied to family connections and relations. Beyond that, though, friendship relationships (*amicitiae*) based on *officia* and *fides* gained greater importance, and he also took advantage of *gratia* in return for favours already rendered.²⁹ The term *amicitia* implies long-term interpersonal relationships between people, which are not based on kinship. Nevertheless, the parties involved are not interchangeable, and a symmetrical balance (which implies a certain equality between the people involved) is necessary.³⁰ This is also how the term friendship was understood. It implied a strong personal relationship, for example between two nobles, one based on mutual trust and support and which resisted any sort of ongoing imbalance.³¹ However, friendship could also be understood as an opportunistic relation that the parties involved strove for, independent of personal relationships, in order to gain advantages.³² As has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the ego-alter-dyad known from the concept of the social network helps to

damnatio memoriae of Seianus see RPC 1.398; FRANKE (1986), p. 474–482; VON SALLET (1876), p. 261.

27 TAC. *ann.* 1.69.5; 4.1.2; TAKÁCS (2002/2003), p. 121.

28 BOURDIEU (1983), p. 190–191; KÖSTNER (2015), p. 43–57.

29 TAC. *ann.* 4.2.3; D.C. 58.4.1.

30 WINTERLING (2008), p. 299; CIC. *amic.* 39; *off.* 3.43; TAKÁCS (2002/2003), p. 109.

31 WINTERLING (2008), p. 300.

32 WINTERLING (2008), p. 300.

describe and visualise the different social relationships like *amicitia*, *cliens-patronus* and family ties, as well as elucidating social phenomena and changes. This explanation shows the picture of an ideal *amicitia*. However, in Roman reality, it may be assumed that an *amicitia*-relationship was based on both trust and opportunism. Nevertheless, a certain asymmetry can be also found in *amicitia*, albeit purposefully masked here. Aside from relationships based on *amicitia*, *cliens-patronus*-relations play a significant role in Roman society. They are characterised by hierarchy and inequality of the parties involved, and are thus determined by asymmetrical balance.³³ In both these forms of relationships, mutual support is of primary importance. This support incorporates, among other things, commonly set rites and ritualised actions such as *salutationes* and banquets.

Within this system, as a member and commander of the praetorian guard, Seianus had certain roles: he was a close confidant of Tiberius, and an agent between senators, who were friends with him or dependent on him, or *equites*, and the emperor himself. Seianus' network consisted of those who supported him and those whom he supported in return, but this does not become evident at first glance of the relevant sources. Passages that speak of his advancement mostly present him as an individual acting independently, who needed no help whatsoever. This could possibly be because after his fall, no-one – neither senators nor equestrians – wanted to be associated with him, as this could have meant the end of their career or life.

Our most important source for the *maiestas* lawsuits that ensued after Seianus' execution are the *Annales* of Tacitus. The fourth book contains the most information about Seianus' position, while books five and six are particularly important for this paper.³⁴ Unfortunately, book five survives only in fragments, which means that Tacitus' account of Seianus' execution and the beginning of the lawsuit against his followers is lost. Nevertheless, it becomes evident that Seianus could rely on an extensive network of supporters, a network which dates back in part to his childhood, and which he strengthened and enlarged during his time as prefect of the praetorian guard.

33 WINTERLING (2008), p. 299.

34 TAC. *ann.* 3.35.1–2; 3.72.4; 3.66.3; 3.72.2–3; 4.2.2–3; 4.68.2; 4.74.2–4; 4.8; BAAR (1990), p. 135–139.

4 Advancement and Career in a Social Network: Almost Reaching the Highest Stratosphere of the Roman Principate Through the Use of *amicitia* and Dropping back to *scalae Gemoniae*

4.1 Family relations as a starting point for Seianus' social network

Seianus was the son of L. Seius Strabo, and possibly of Iunia.³⁵ He was brought up in *Volsinii*, not in Rome. As a *homo novus*, he demonstrated that he had improved his social capital (according to BOURDIEU) and was the first from his family to become consul.³⁶ As stated earlier, Seianus followed his father as *praefectus praetorio* when the latter became *praefectus Aegypti* in 15.³⁷ According to Macrobius, L. Seius Strabo was a friend of Augustus, something that may have helped him to reach the position of prefect of the praetorian guard.³⁸ Since there are no traditional selection criteria known to us, one cannot rule out that Seianus' appointment to this position could have been based on a personal recommendation from his father.³⁹

The family relations of Seianus' parents are difficult to reconstruct, as there are too many divergent or incomplete depictions within literary sources. According to SYME, his mother Iunia had first been married to Q. Aelius Tubero. After his death, she married Seianus' father, L. Seius Strabo.⁴⁰ The children from her first marriage may conceivably have been adopted: L. Seius Tubero (cos. suff. 18) by L. Seius Strabo and Sex. Aelius Catus (cos. 4) by C. Ateius Capito (cos. suff. 5).⁴¹ This resourceful and sustainable strategy to tie families together through adoption was also put into practice by Seianus, who was adopted by L. Aelius Gallus, who had been *praefectus Aegypti* from 25 to 24 BC.⁴² The already prestigious position of *praefectus praetorio*, which his biological father held, would have been further enhanced by adopting someone who held the position

35 TAC. *ann.* 4.1.2. For further information concerning the descent of the Seius family see BIRD (2012), p. 368–370; CORBIER (1983), p. 719–756; LINDSAY (2003), p. 272; 275–278.

36 VELL. 2.127.3; KÖSTNER (2015), p. 43–57; BOURDIEU (1983), p. 190–191.

37 One may assume that Seius Strabo was *praefectus Aegypti* for two years (D.C. 57.19.6).

38 MACR. *Sat.* 2.4.18.

39 BINGHAM (1997), p. 35.

40 SYME (1986), p. 301–310; CICHORIUS (1904), p. 461–471; *PIR*¹ S 246.

41 BIRLEY (2007), p. 125–126 states that Cosconia Gallitta was married to the *prefectus Aegypti* L. Seius Strabo; this couple may be interpreted as being Seianus' adoptive parents. For further reconstructions of these family ties, see ADAMS (1955), p. 76; LINDSAY (2003), p. 276; VELL. 2.127.3; STRAB. 7.303. For further information about Seianus' stepbrothers see ADAMS (1955), p. 70–76; TAC. *ann.* 4.1; VELL. 2.127.3; *PIR*¹ S 0248; *PIR*² A 157.

42 STRAB. 2.118; 16.780–785; LINDSAY (2003), p. 278–280; *PIR*² A 179.

as *praefectus Aegypti*. There were charges brought against Aelius Gallus by Considius Proconsul because of *maiestas* against Tiberius and his *amicitia* towards Seianus.⁴³ Pomponius Secundus, as we shall see later, was likewise impeached. This shows an interface between the family and the supporters-network of Seianus. The same can be said of the following connection: through his mother Iunia, Seianus was related to Q. Iunius Blaesus (cos. suff. 10), who was allegedly appointed *proconsul* in *Africa* (21–23) only because he was supported by Seianus.⁴⁴ After Seianus' fall, Blaesus' career also came to a sudden halt. He probably died just shortly after 31 AD. We can only speculate about a possible connection to Seianus' execution.

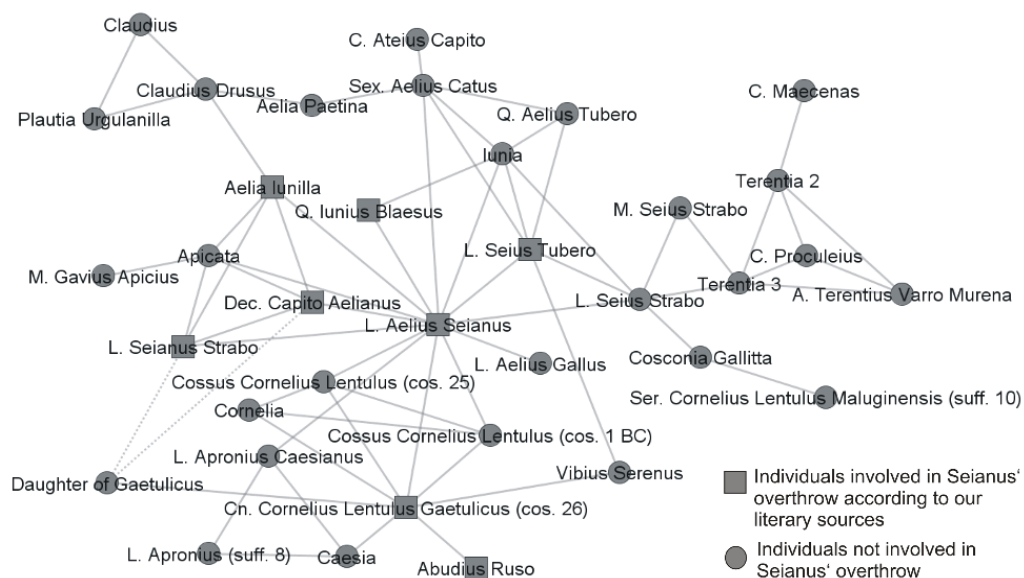


Fig. 1: Seianus' family network

We learn more of the relations between the Seii and other *familiae* through an inscription found in a bath in *Volsinii*. According to SYME, this can be ascribed to L. Seius Strabo:

] / *praefectus Aegypt[i et]* / *Terentia A(uli) f(ilia) mater eiu[s et]* / *Cosconia Lentuli(i) Malug[inensis] f(ilia)]* / *Gallitta uxor eius ael[dificiis]* / *emptis et ad solum deliectis]* / *balneum cum om[ni] ornatu]* / [*Volsiniens]ibus ded[erunt]* / [*ob publ]ica co[m]moda].*

"[...] *praefectus Aegypti* and his mother *Terentia*, a daughter of *Aulus*, and his wife *Cosconia Gallitta*, a daughter of *Lentulus Maluginensis*, bought a building,

43 TAC. *ann.* 5.8.

44 TAC. *ann.* 3.35; 3.72; 3.58; 5.7.2; *PIR*² J 738; NICOLS (1975), p. 49; SYME (1986), p. 310.

tore it down and dedicated this bathhouse with all its decoration to the people of Volsinii for public use.”⁴⁵

Paternally, L. Seius Strabo hailed from the equestrian family of M. Seius Strabo, maternally from the family of Terentia. This Terentia may have been the sister of the wife of C. Maecenas, also named Terentia, as well as the sister of A. Terentius Varro Murena and of C. Proculeius.⁴⁶ All three men maintained close and ongoing relationships with Augustus and the imperial family, which had in part already been established during the time of the civil wars. This shows that a close, though not direct, relation to the imperial family already existed during Seianus’ childhood via his grandparents on his paternal side.

The inscription from *Volsinii* also informs the reader about family relations to the Cornelii Lentuli. Cosconia Gallitta became L. Seius Strabo’s second wife. She was the daughter of Ser. Cornelius Lentulus Maluginensis (cos. suff. 10), one of Seianus’ earliest supporters, who died early in 23.⁴⁷ Furthermore, there existed an additional connection to another family branch of the Cornelii Lentuli: one of Seianus’ sons – L. Seianus Strabo or Dec. Capito Aelianus – was engaged to the daughter of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus (cos. 26). This relation was denounced by the *delator* Abudius Ruso in 34, and legal proceedings were initiated against Gaetulicus.⁴⁸ During this time, Lentulus Gaetulicus was commander of the forces in Upper Germania (30 to 39).⁴⁹

Another member of the influential family of Cornelii Lentuli is also said to have supported Seianus: Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 1 BC), father of Lentulus Gaetulicus, who was *praefectus urbi* from 33 to 36 and a close confidant of Tiberius.⁵⁰ One may assume that Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 25), the second son of Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 1 BC), can also be regarded as a supporter of Seianus. This Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 25) was presumably commander in chief of the Upper Germanic forces from 25 to 30. Cn. Cornelius

45 CIL XI, 7285 = ILS 8996 (translation by author); SYME (1986), p. 301. *Volsinii* established an inscription in honour of L. Seius Strabo (CIL 11.2707). Presumably, Seius Strabo was *praefectus Aegypti* for two years (D.C. 57.19.6).

46 TAC. ann. 4.40.6; PIR² P 985; LINDSAY (2003), p. 273–274; SUMNER (1965), p. 134; SYME (1986), p. 301; STROTHMANN (2012), p. 141–142. Terentia (2) was likely married to Maecenas before 23 B.C. (SUET. Aug. 66.3; D.C. 54.19; 55.7.5; 54.3.5).

47 SUMNER (1965), p. 134–135; PIR² C 1528.

48 TAC. ann. 6.30.2; PIR² C 1390; PIR² A 0017. In 24 there were charges brought against L. Seius Tubero and Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus by Vibius Serenus, due to instigating and disturbing the peace. Ultimately, Tiberius discharged both (TAC. ann. 4.29.1; BAUMAN (1974), p. 114–115).

49 TAC. ann. 6.30.2–3; BAUMAN (1974), p. 115–120.

50 SEN. epist. 83.15; PIR² C 1384; SEALEY (1961), p. 104.

Lentulus Gaetulicus succeeded his brother in this position.⁵¹ The connection between Cossus Cornelius Lentulus and Seianus is reinforced by the knowledge that Seianus accused C. Silius, commanding officer of the Upper Germanic region, of having purposefully delayed the fight against the uprising of Sacrovir and Florus in the year 21, an accusation made in 24.⁵² During these proceedings, Silius was removed from office and Cossus Cornelius Lentulus was able to occupy this position. Seianus made it possible for Lentulus to attain this job, and thus Lentulus owed him *gratia*.

Yet another connection to a commanding officer in the district of Lower Germania can be revealed: Lentulus Gaetulicus, who commanded the forces in Lower Germania from 28–34, married Caesia, the second daughter of L. Apronius (cos. suff. 8). This means that in the year that Seianus died, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 25) was commanding officer in Upper Germania, and his father in law L. Apronius was commanding officer in Lower Germania.⁵³ Both of these men had only been able to reach their individual offices with the help of Seianus, and were thus both deeply indebted to him. There was yet another relation between the Apronii and Seianus: the son of L. Apronius, L. Apronius Caesianus, was a friend of Seianus. This friendship must not have done him any harm in the aftermath of the year 31, however, because in 32 he became praetor.⁵⁴ Seianus also made use of his personal connections in *Moesia*, where Poppaeus Sabinus had been in charge since 11. From 15 onwards, he was also in charge of *Achaea* and *Macedonia*. Poppaeus Sabinus' daughter, Poppaea Sabina maior, was married to one of the closest friends of Seianus, T. Ollius.⁵⁵ An interpersonal dyad can be regarded as the basis of the contact with the Corneli Lentuli, the Apronii, and to Poppaeus Sabinus, which opened up a power base for Seianus in the later Germanic provinces and in certain regions along the Danube. He might also have been able to make use of these connections as a means of exerting pressure in Rome.

Seianus' family network was in part founded on the relations of his parents and grandparents, but it was also enlarged by his own actions, as is made evident by the engagements of his children. Until the year 23 AD, L. Aelius Seianus was married to Apicata, with whom he had three children: L. Seianus

51 *PIR*² C 1381.

52 *TAC. ann.* 3.21; 40–47; CENERINI (2016), p. 119–142.

53 *VELL.* 2.116.3; *TAC. ann.* 1.56; 72; 3.9.1; 3.21.4; 4.73.1; 6.30; D.C. 59.22.5; *PIR*² A 970.

54 D.C. 58.19.1–2; *TAC. ann.* 6.30; 5.8–9; *PIR*² A 971. In 29 Seianus was fellow consul along with Caligula (D.C. 59.13.2).

55 BIRD (1970), p. 1047; *PIR*² O 96.

Strabo, Dec. Capito Aelianus and Aelia Iunilla.⁵⁶ Apicata's father was possibly M. Gavius Apicius.⁵⁷ Through him, a relationship to a family in close relation to the imperial family was established.⁵⁸ Besides his wife's family ties, Seianus also made use of his own family circle in order to strengthen personal relations: his daughter, Aelia Iunilla, was supposed to marry Claudius Drusus, a son of the later emperor Claudius and Plautia Urgulanilla. Unfortunately, Claudius Drusus died shortly after their engagement in the year 20.⁵⁹ According to Christiane KUNST, adoption was the more sustainable strategy when compared to marriage, as the danger of divorce did not exist with adoption. This is why KUNST calls it a corrective factor, one that was used to improve and establish personal relations.⁶⁰ During the process of *manus*-marriage, as well as when being adopted, one person had to change the family unit. There was, however, an unspoken, unofficial, and non-legal understanding that the ties to the original family would remain. Through this, the relationships between the two families were strengthened and enlarged.⁶¹ This is why the engagement of his daughter was of such great importance to Seianus. The marriage of Aelia Iunilla and Claudius Drusus was intended to improve the relationship to the imperial family on a personal level.

4.2 The supporter-network of Seianus in 31–35

His family network enabled Seianus to enter emperor Tiberius' closest circle, and thus cannot be underestimated in its importance to his early career. He never stopped enhancing this network, but he also began to build his secondary network, which was added on to the already existing one as soon as he became prefect of the praetorian guard. Seianus did need connections to secure his position, but his closeness to the emperor also made him a desirable contact. Even though Seianus was a member of the *ordo equester*, he would soon become an ideal contact for the *nobiles*. Aside from his ties to the imperial family he could also boast of direct contact to Tiberius, especially since he resided in Capri. By the year 25, Tacitus reports that Seianus' clients and friends had already reached a considerable number.⁶² But it was not until after his death that the high treason

56 According to Tacitus (*ann.* 4.3.5), Seianus separated from Apicata in 23. In 31 she is said to have informed Tiberius about Seianus' conspiracy against the emperor (TAC. *ann.* 4.11.2; D.C. 58.11.6; *CIL* XIV, 244).

57 For further details concerning M. Gavius Apicius, see *RE* 7b; *PIR*² G 91.

58 TAC. *ann.* 4.3.5; CENERINI (2016), p. 119–142.

59 TAC. *ann.* 3.29.5; 4.22; Suet. *Claud.* 26.2; 27.1; *PIR*² C 856; SYME (1986), p. 307; NICOLS (1975), p. 48–49. The later emperor Claudius was married to Aelia Paetina, the daughter of Seianus' stepbrother Sex. Aelius Catus (cos. 4).

60 KUNST (2005), p. 63–80.

61 KUNST (2005), p. 63–80.

62 TAC. *ann.* 4.41–42; *CIL* 14.244.

proceedings allowed an insight into his complex network of supporters. At the same time, it is important to know the intentions and efficacy of the *maiestas* proceedings.

Nevertheless, *maiestas*-trials offered the emperor and Seianus, as well as members of the nobility, the possibility to eliminate unpleasant opponents via the help of *delatores*, or through charges against them. Sometimes they were eliminated for shorter periods of time, sometimes permanently. "Such behaviour could range from the lone individual prosecuted for desertion of public office or for consulting astrologers, to those factions within the senate which, through a nexus of familial ties, potentially provocative behaviour, personal enmity, political ideologies, or any combination of these, posed a threat to the stability and security of the regime."⁶³ Seianus did function as an advocate for Tiberius' interests, and while this still holds true, he did not act as a *delator* in the proceedings, but rather made use of his *clientes* and *amici*. However, this course of action enabled him to follow his own interests and take action against unpleasant opponents. The *maiestas* proceedings thus visualise the power struggle and competition within society. *Maiestas* proceedings required a charge – *nominis delatio* – by a *delator*, which then functioned as an accusation.⁶⁴ The *delator* acquired the rights and duties of a litigant and it was his responsibility to convict the opponent during the legal proceedings.⁶⁵ Both the defendant and the prosecutor were allowed to reject a certain number of jurors (senators), because the composition of the jury was significant for the result of the legal proceedings. The Caesarian *lex Iulia de maiestate* punished those who hurt or killed magistrates that held an *imperium*. Augustus added insults and offences as a reason to be prosecuted by this law.⁶⁶ During the Principate, adultery, *repetundae*, and *secessio* were added to this catalogue of offences.⁶⁷ In this process, general actions and opinions against the emperor, his officials, his family, and friends became punishable by law. However, those with greater political influence and/or wealth could now also be put in their place with these proceedings. Seianus also availed himself of this instrument, albeit not directly, as he initiated several *maiestas* proceedings by instructing his *clientes* and *amici*. After his death, these juridical processes offered Tiberius the opportunity to discredit his opponents, or even to eliminate them.

63 RUTLEDGE (2001), p. 85; BARGHOP (1994), p. 183–185; 202–204.

64 KUNKEL / SCHERMAIER (2005), p. 85.

65 The *delator* would receive a reward if he were successful in court. If he failed, he would be punished with *calumnia*, which carried with it the penalty of *infamia*, meaning that this person could never become *delator* again (KUNKEL / SCHERMAIER [2005], p. 85).

66 TAC. *ann.* 1.72.3–4; 4.32.4.

67 For further details to *lex maiestatis* see RUTLEDGE (2001), p. 87–88; KUNKEL / SCHERMAIER (2005), p. 81–94.

This group of people can be further subdivided into different groups from the secondary network of Seianus: a group of *amici* of Seianus was tried for high treason between 32–35 due to their friendship with him. Unfortunately, we have no information about the fate of Iulius Marinus, nor of a Pompeius, who cannot be identified further.⁶⁸ We do, however, know the fate of the two *equites* Vescularius Flaccus and C. Geminus. For these, the proceedings ended with execution.⁶⁹ The senator Iunius Gallio can be counted among Seianus' supporters. He was sent to exile on Lesbos by order of Tiberius, though his return to Rome was granted later.⁷⁰ Rubicus Fabatus was at first placed under arrest in the course of the *maiestas* proceedings. Ultimately, according to Tacitus, he was not executed because he was allegedly forgotten about.⁷¹ In 32, the senator Lucanius Latinius Latiaris was also charged and executed.⁷² In order to advance his career, Latinius Latiaris had acted as a *delator* for Seianus: in the year 27, Latinius Latiaris, M. Opsius, Porcius Cato and Petellius Rufus raised charges against the *equitus* Titius based on *maiestas*.⁷³ The *praefectus aearii militaris* Publius Vitellius and the senator L. Fulcinus Trio (cos. suff. 31) were also charged with *maiestas*. Together, they had been involved in a plot against Calpurnius Piso, possibly on Seianus' behalf.⁷⁴ Both committed suicide.⁷⁵ Special attention was paid to the *maiestas* process of M. Terentius.⁷⁶ He was accused of *maiestas* against Tiberius and of his friendship towards Seianus. Tacitus mentions him:

Nam ea tempestate qua Seiani amicitiam ceteri falso exuerant ausus est eques Romanus M. Terentius, ob id reus, amplecti, ad hunc modum apud senatum ordiendo: 'fortunae quidem meae fortasse minus expediat adgnosceret crimen quam abnuere: sed utcumque casura res est, fatebor et fuisse me Seiano amicum et ut essem expetisse et postquam adeptus eram laetatum. [...] quid ergo? indistincta haec defensio et promisca dabitur? immo iustis terminis dividatur. insidiae in rem publicam, consilia caedis adversum imperatorem puniantur: de amicitia et officiis idem finis et te, Caesar, et nos absolverit.'

"A Roman knight, Marcus Terentius, at the crisis when all others had hypocritically repudiated the friendship of Seianus, dared, when impeached on that ground, to cling to it by the following avowal to the Senate: 'In my position

68 TAC. *ann.* 6.8.1; 6.10.2; 6.14.1; D.C. 58.19.1–5.

69 TAC. *ann.* 6.10.2; 6.14.1; PIR¹ V 294; PIR² G 143.

70 TAC. *ann.* 6.3.1; PIR² I 756.

71 TAC. *ann.* 6.14.1; PIR² R 126.

72 TAC. *ann.* 6.4.1; 5.68.2; CIL 15.1245; PIR² L 346; MORGAN (1998), p. 585–587.

73 PIR² O 126; PIR² P 856.

74 TAC. *ann.* 3.17.4; PIR¹ V 502; PIR² F 517; PIR² C 287. The prosecutors who charged Calpurnius Piso because of *maiestas* also benefitted financially. (TAC. *ann.* 2. 27–32; 3.13.1; 3.19; CIL I, 402; 577; BAUMAN (1974), p. 121).

75 TAC. *ann.* 5.11.1; 6.47.2; 6.38.1–4; D.C. 58.19.3–5; 58.25.2–5; AE 1953, 88; CIL XIV, 244.

76 PIR¹ T 48.

it is perhaps less to my advantage to acknowledge than to deny the charge. Still, whatever is to be the issue of the matter, I shall admit that I was the friend of Seianus, that I anxiously sought to be such, and was delighted when I was successful. [...] What then is my meaning? Is this apology meant to be offered for all without difference and discrimination? No; it is to be restricted within proper limits. Let plots against the State, murderous designs against the emperor be punished. As for friendship and its obligations, the same principle must acquit both you, Caesar, and us."⁷⁷

During the arguments, M. Terentius did not deny his *amicitia* to Seianus. This seems rather unusual, since all the other defendants that we know of renounced their friendship to their former patron (*renuntiatio amicitiae*).⁷⁸ BAUMAN interprets the excerpt presented above as follows: "The case is important because of the admonition that Tacitus has the accused address to the senate, reminding it that there is a difference between fulfilling the demands of *amicitia* and plotting against the emperor or the state."⁷⁹ At first glance, this behaviour embodies loyalty and steadfastness. Tacitus nonetheless used the plea of M. Terentius as a means of criticising the emperor and the nobility in general: not only could Terentius and other *equites* have profited from Seianus' *officia* and his networking, but the emperor and the senators may have also done so. All of these would have known how to appreciate *amicitia*, along with the *officia* and *munera* connected to it. Reciprocity was the universal social principal that governed Roman society.

During the high treason trials that followed Seianus' death, more subgroups of his secondary network became evident. This means that these men were not only connected through their *amicitia* to Seianus and the purge following his fall, but also that their social ties show further common ground. Such a subgroup consisted of those who were accused by C. Cestius Gallus (cos. 35) in the year 32, i.e. the senators Q. Servaeus and Iulius Africanus, as well as Minucius Thermus and Seius Quadratus.⁸⁰ The connecting element in this case is the common *delator*, who allegedly brought charges against these men in court, at Tiberius' behest. That Cestius Gallus kept the consulate for the year 35

77 TAC. *ann.* 6.8.1–6 (TACITUS [1970], The Annals, Books IV–VI, XI–XII (Loeb Classical Library 312), transl. by J. JACKSON, Cambridge / London); see also D.C. 58.19.3–5.

78 To mask an asymmetrical balance between *patronus* and *cliens*, terms known from *amicitia*-relationships were used.

79 BAUMAN (1974), p. 125.

80 TAC. *ann.* 6.7.2; 6.7.4; PIR C 690; PIR¹ S 398; PIR² I 0119; PIR² M 630; PIR¹ S 244. We have no further information about Minucius Thermus and Seius Quadratus. Iulius Africanus was a member of the Gallic Santones; he was condemned. We do not know how these men were punished after the *maiestas* lawsuits.

demonstrates the emperor's *gratia*.⁸¹ Once again, reciprocal ties based on *officia* and *gratia* are obvious.

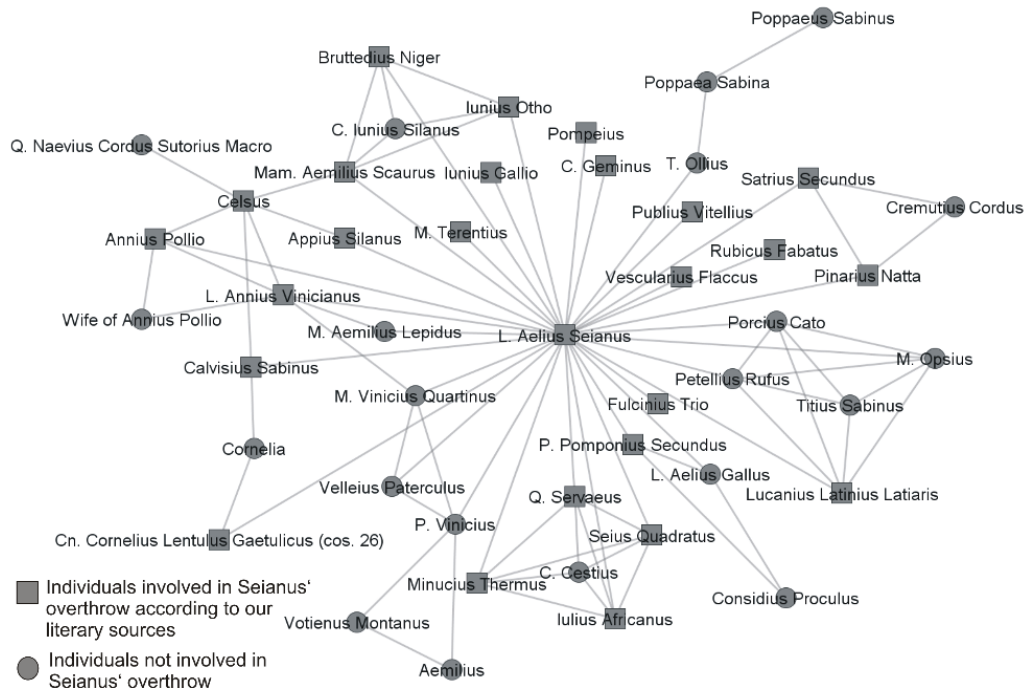


Fig. 2: Seianus' network of supporters (secondary network)

Another subgroup can be identified among those prosecuted in the year 32. The *delator* Celsus accused five senators of having been involved in a conspiracy against Tiberius, simply because they were friends with Seianus. Celsus was tribune of a praetorian cohort, and was likely asked this favour by the new prefect of the praetorian guard, Q. Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro. This may have been disguised as an *officium* for his superior authority, or as an order by Tiberius.⁸² The grouping of these men (C. Appius Iunius Silanus, Mam. Aemilius Scaurus, C. Calvisius Sabinus, C. Annius Pollio and his son L. Annius Vinicianus) came about from the composition that Tacitus mentioned in his *Annales*, but it also resulted from a mutual *delator*. Also, all the senators embodied different offices and were present in Roman politics in various positions. Additionally, family relations existed between these men, which

81 TAC. *ann.* 6.31; CIL VI, 33950.

82 TAC. *ann.* 6.9.3–4; 6.14.1; PIR² N 12; SEALEY (1961), p. 97–114; STEWART (1953), p. 70–85.

made the multi-layered networking structure of the inner-city Roman elite more evident:

acervatim ex eo Annius Pollio, Appius Silanus Scauro Mammerco simul ac Sabino Calvisio maiestatis postulatur, et Vinicianus Pollioni patri adiciebatur, clari genus et quidam summis honoribus. contremuerantque patres (nam quotus quisque adfinitatis aut amicitiae tot inlustrium virorum expers erat?), ni Celsus urbanae cohortis tribunus, tum inter indices, Appium et Calvisium discrimini exemisset. Caesar Pollionis ac Viniciani Scaurique causam ut ipse cum senatu nosceret distulit, datis quibusdam in Scaurum tristibus notis.

“After him a host of persons were charged with treason, Annius Pollio, Appius Silanus, Scaurus Mamercus, Sabinus Calvisius, Vinicianus too, coupled with Pollio, his father, men all of illustrious descent, some too of the highest political distinction. The senators were panic-stricken, for how few of their number were not connected by alliance or by friendship with this multitude of men of rank! Celsus however, tribune of a city cohort, and now one of the prosecutors, saved Appius and Calvisius from the peril. The emperor postponed the cases of Pollio, Vinicianus, and Scaurus, intending to try them himself with the Senate, not however without affixing some ominous marks to the name of Scaurus.”⁸³

Celsus exonerated C. Appius Iunius Silanus (cos. 28) and C. Calvisius Sabinus during the proceedings. Likewise, the litigation against Mam. Aemilius Scaurus (cos. suff. 21) came to an end very soon after.⁸⁴ We do not know, however, who gave the order to release him and on what grounds. It may be suspected that the emperor himself gave the order, which was delivered to Celsus by an intermediary (perhaps Macro, the prefect of the praetorian guard). This gives us a rough idea of the future of the other senators from this subgroup, who we will look into more closely later.

At this point, a close link between Seianus’ family network and his network of supporters becomes evident. This also shows the tight interconnectedness of the *gentes*: the wife of Calvisius Sabinus was Cornelia, who was apparently the sister of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus. Both men were *consules* in the year 26.⁸⁵ The wife of Annius Pollio – and thus the mother of Annius Vinicianus –

83 TAC. *ann.* 6.9.3–4 (TACITUS (1970), *The Annals*, Books IV–VI, XI–XII (Loeb Classical Library 312), transl. by J. JACKSON, Cambridge / London); TUPLIN (1987), p. 781–805.

84 After the *maiestas* proceedings, C. Calvisius Sabinus first became *legatus* in *Pannonia*. In 39, he was charged along with his wife. After they had returned to Rome, both committed suicide (D.C. 59.18.4). See PIR² J 822; PIR² C 354; PIR² A 404.

85 D.C. 59.18.4.

was the sister of M. Vinicius Quartinus.⁸⁶ A connection between the Annii and the Aemilii Lepidi existed via the friendship of Annius Vinicianus and M. Aemilius Lepidus. M. Aemilius Lepidus was directly connected to the imperial family: Lepidus already socialised with Tiberius during the reign of Augustus', and was married to Drusilla. During this time period, his sister Aemilia Lepida was married to Caligula's brother Drusus.⁸⁷

More of Seianus' friends and supporters can be identified through the contacts of Annius Vinicianus: the senator M. Vinicius Quartinus (cos. 30 and 45) and P. Pomponius Secundus, who were denounced by Considius Proculus. Considius Proculus also accused Seianus' adoptive father.⁸⁸ Velleius Paterculus, who may be regarded as an *amicus* of Seianus, dedicated his *Historia Romana* to the son of P. Vinicius (cos. 2).⁸⁹ P. Vinicius may also be added to the list of Seianus' favourites: He may have functioned as *delator* and accuser during the *maiestas* proceedings against Votienus Montanus in the year 25.⁹⁰ There must also have been an ongoing conflict between the two men, and now that an opportunity had opened up for Vinicius, it gave him the chance to be rid of his opponent. This may even have been in the interest of Seianus, and occurred with the consent of Tiberius.

Among the group of Seianus' *amici*, there was also Iunius Otho and Bruttidius Niger.⁹¹ Iunius Otho may have become a member of the senate due to Seianus' help, which is why he displayed *fides* and *gratia* towards Seianus. Bruttidius Niger apparently distanced himself from Seianus after his overthrow: he is said to have kicked Seianus' corpse.⁹² Besides his friendship to Seianus, there was another link between these two men: both functioned as

86 TAC. *ann.* 6.15.1; D.C. 53.26.4; 60.27.4; VELL. 1.8.1; 1.13.5; 2.96.2; PIR² A 677; PIR² A 700.

87 STEWART (1953), p. 74; TAC. *ann.* 6.40; D.C. 58.3.8; 59.22.7–8; SUET. *Cal.* 24.3; 36.1. M. Aemilius Lepidus accompanied the later emperor Tiberius to *Pannonia*. Because of his achievements in the campaigns, he received the *ornamenta triumphalia* (VELL. 2.115.3).

88 TAC. *ann.* 6.15.1–2; PIR² C 1278; PIR² P 254; STEWART (1953), p. 74; CHAMPLIN (2012), p. 375–378. M. Vinicius Quartinus could escape the aftermath of Seianus' execution, as his family maintained close contacts to Tiberius. Additionally, the emperor arranged his marriage to Julia Livilla, the daughter of Germanicus. Nevertheless, Pompeius Secundus was not condemned, though he remained under arrest until the reign of Caligula (D.C. 59. 6; TAC. *ann.* 5.8.1–2; 6.18.1–2). Conversely, Pompeius' brother Quintus effected the condemnation and execution of Considius Proculus in 33 (TAC. *ann.* 6.18.1–2).

89 Velleius Paterculus was *tribunus militum* under the *legatus pro praetore* P. Vinicius in *Thracia Macedoniae* (VELL. 2.101.3). However, Paterculus died shortly after 30, so his friendship to Seianus played no role in the *maiestas* proceedings.

90 TAC. *ann.* 4.42; PIR¹ V 674; RUTLEDGE (2001), p. 97.

91 PIR² I 788; PIR² B 158.

92 TAC. *ann.* 6.47.1–2; JUV. 10. 83–88.

prosecutors against C. Iunius Silanus, who during his time as proconsul of the province *Asia* (20–21) was supposedly guilty of blackmail and *maiestas*.⁹³ Satrius Secundus can also be linked to Seianus through their friendship. In spite of this, he acted as a *delator* and prosecutor against Seianus, and was thus able to escape a *maiestas* conviction himself.⁹⁴ In contrast, Pinarius Natta is said to have been a *municipalis* and *cliens* of Seianus, and thus dependent on him. Both men were connected via their function as *delator* against A. Cremutius Cordus, a function which may have been initiated on Seianus' behalf.⁹⁵

Seianus used his favourites in order to eliminate political opponents and achieve his goals. At the same time, he acted as a puppet to enforce the interests of the emperor and other members of the nobility. By these means, he ensured that the members of the nobility were indebted to him. Their gratitude was expressed through reciprocal *officia*. Furthermore, these personal circles exemplify the close links of the Roman nobility based on reciprocity: both senators and *equites* hoped to advance their own careers, since Seianus was very close to the emperor. This explains the rather heterogenic composition of *delatores*, which became even more evident during the proceedings against Seianus' followers. The *maiestas* trials following Seianus' execution show that the former prefect of the praetorian guard had received the support of multiple venerable Roman families, and that he advocated their interests. Seianus was not in this alone, by any means, but rather was able to fall back on various contacts. These, however, lost their effectiveness after his overthrow.

5 Conclusion: Seianus' *amicitia* as a *damnatio mortis*?

In the end, the high treason proceedings against his followers that were launched following Seianus' death, which are mostly known to us from the *Annales* of Tacitus, came to a different ending for almost everyone involved. Nevertheless, it seems that there existed a correlation between the social status of the defendant and the judgement of the jury. It also becomes evident that,

93 TAC. *ann.* 3.66.1–4.

94 TAC. *ann.* 6.47.2; 6.8.5; PIR¹ S 151.

95 TAC. *ann.* 4.34–35; PIR² P 410; PIR² C 1565. Concerning the interdependency between Natta and Seianus: the historian A. Cremutius Cordus was charged with *maiestas* by Pinarius Natta in 25. There are different accounts as regards the motivation behind the charge. A. Cremutius Cordus was accused of having written too positively about the murderer of C. Iulius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius; however (and this seems to be more likely), A. Cremutius Cordus also criticised Seianus in his texts, which led to Seianus instructing Pinarius Natta to denounce A. Cremutius Cordus (SEN. *consolatio ad Marciam* 1.2–4; 22.4–7; *dial.* 6.22.4–5; SUET. *Tib.* 61.3; D.C. 57.24.2–5; RUTLEDGE (2001), p. 95; BAUMAN (1974), p. 119–120).

compared with his family network, the *amici* of Seianus had more disadvantages through their connection to him.

With regard to the *equites*, we can assert that almost as many were executed as were acquitted. It is apparent at the same time that even though senators were denounced, they were seldom convicted. In these cases, the connection to the emperor or his family was of great importance, as was the position of the defendant and the authorities linked to said offices. Furthermore, the importance of an individual within the Roman nobility was not unimportant. A large number of those who were sentenced to death harmed the emperor's reputation. This is why the quality of the connection to the emperor was paramount, and not the friendship to Seianus, since it was the contact to the emperor that most influenced the decision of life or death.

This analysis of Seianus' networks has revealed certain fundamental aspects of social mechanisms during the Roman imperial period. Reciprocity as a universal social principal (and as a condition of being human) can be seen as a base for interpersonal relations and a base for trust.⁹⁶ Certain expectations are linked to this, namely that a compensation for services is appropriate. Seianus' network can be divided into two main structures, the first based on family relations, while the second – which is an extension of the first – is based on family relations as well as *cliens-patronus* and *amicitia* relations. Both of these can be further subdivided into smaller entities. These subgroups and their members have certain common characteristics that distinguish them from other groups. Even more, it becomes clear that the two major structures, the family network and that of Seianus' supporters, are interconnected. It can additionally be surmised that the base for a functioning network lay within the contacts between the *familiae*. Seianus himself thus advanced from *homo novus* to a prominent figure, one who was much in demand. As *praefectus praetorio*, advisor to Tiberius, and finally as a fellow consul, he was of interest to others. The Great Cameo of France impressively illustrates Seianus' connection to Tiberius, shielded by the goddess Amicitia. During his career, he managed to actively enlarge his network as well as increase his social assets. Similar to the position of the emperor, the position of prefect of the praetorian guard was integrated into the new structures of the Principate, but was simultaneously a prominent position among the circle of peers. This shows the fragility of aristocratic society; however, this society maintained its stability through reciprocity, as well as multiple other social relations. The entire system falls apart only when reciprocity and gratitude expectations are no longer fulfilled.

96 MAUSS (1990); BECKER (1956), p. 94: "Man becomes human in reciprocity."

The sources – especially Tacitus' *Annals* – tell of the numerous *maiestas* trials following Seianus' death. Thus, the praetorian prefect of Tiberius was not a lone fighter but had numerous contacts to equestrians and senators. The network graphs provide a visualisation that leaves the possibilities of a traditional stemma behind, and represents not only family connections, but also those based on *amicitia* and *clientela*. Network analysis enables the discovery of different clusters and subgroups, providing a systematic framework for the study of symmetries and asymmetries in social connections. In general, the graphical representation increases our understanding of such interpersonal connections, when compared to the written text alone. Furthermore, through the accompanying analysis, the graphs also show the high degree of importance that reciprocity must have been given within Roman society – here using the example of the elite. Favours and gifts, as well as their return, could lead to offices and posts. In this way, people were connected with each other. Social network analysis thus offers a supplementary theoretical approach which seems to be highly useful in the field of prosopographical studies.

In addition, network analysis allows us to make temporal changes within the network visible. In Seianus' case, however, the *maiestas* proceedings following his death thrust his supporters into the limelight, and into the focus of historiography. While Seianus' network – which ensured his and others' advancement up the social ladder – fell apart after his death, other dyads formed after 31. This time, however, they formed without Seianus.

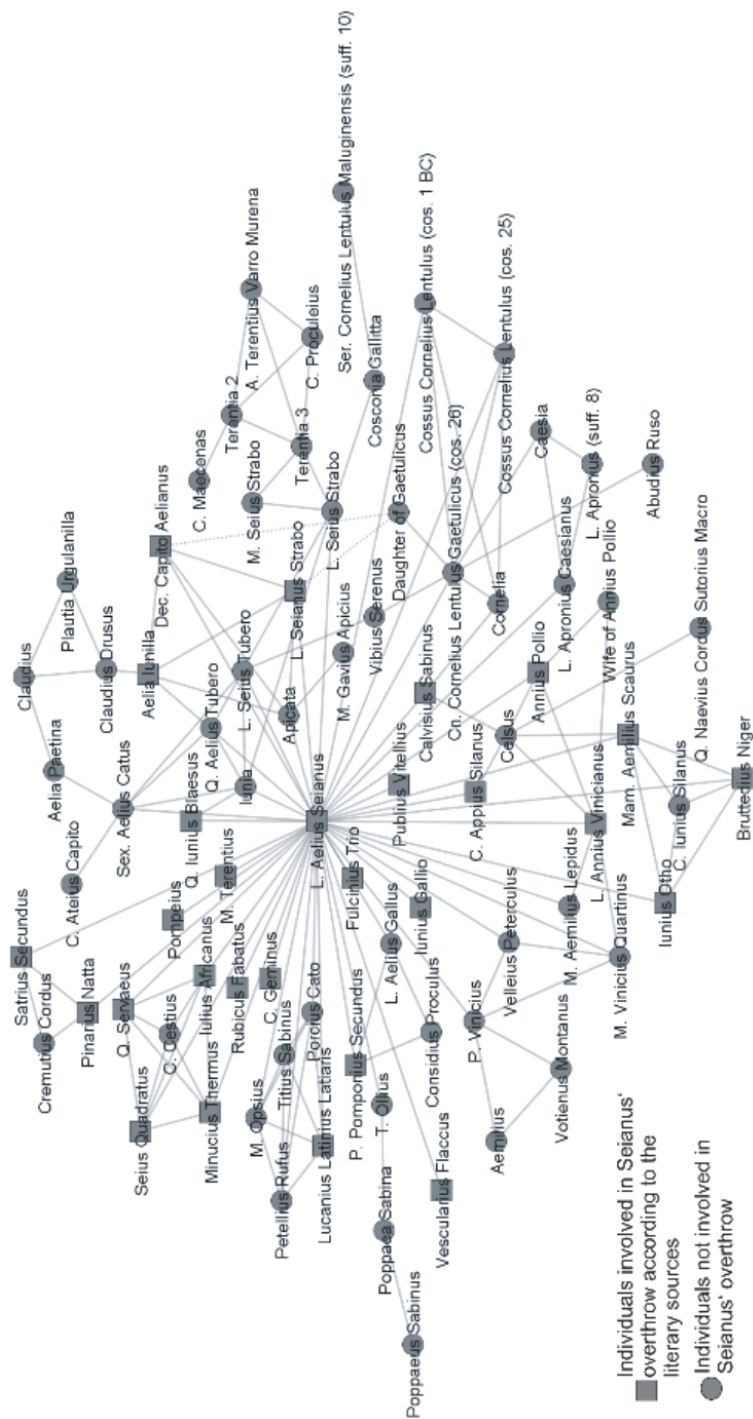


Fig. 3: Seianus' complete network

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