

## T. Statilius Taurus, Augustus' Left Hand Man

Owing to his victories at the battles of Actium, Naulochus, Mylae, in Gaul, and in the East, Agrippa won recognition as Augustus' right-hand man, his champion, and top general in the Empire. Tacitus *Ann.* 1.3.1 refers to him as a commoner, but a first rate soldier, and a man whom Augustus promoted to be his son-in-law and partner (and potential successor). As a *novus homo*, Agrippa faced considerable resentment and resistance from the established aristocracy as he ascended to power. However, by a very fortuitous accident of birth, Agrippa's closest rival in ability was also a *novus homo*: T. Statilius Taurus, and as such equally unpalatable to the blue bloods.

Had it not been for Agrippa, Statilius Taurus would have been the second man in the Empire, and had it not been for this "accident of birth," he would likely have surpassed Agrippa. If Agrippa was Augustus' right hand man, Statilius Taurus was his left. His shorter military resumé read almost as impressively, and he suffered far fewer casualties in his many victories.<sup>1</sup> The enemy was generally inclined to surrender to Statilius Taurus, rather than fight him in battle, as in Africa in 36 and Antony's army in 31 during the Actium campaign. Aside from Agrippa, Statilius Taurus alone held multiple consulships (until Tiberius as Augustus' son-in-law matched that feat in 7 BC) and priesthoods, as good a sign as any of Augustus' marked preference and gratitude. The state awarded him the right to choose one of the praetors every year, and Augustus later made him *praefectus urbi* in 16. That he triumphed goes almost without saying.

In addition, Statilius Taurus managed to enter the old aristocracy through a marriage connection, something that Agrippa could only accomplish by the direct intervention of Augustus. This paper will announce the hitherto unknown identity of Statilius Taurus' aristocratic wife and examine briefly his in-laws and descendents, of whom two descendents made a bid for the throne, and a third was empress - nearly twice.

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<sup>1</sup>He was the Leotychidas to Agrippa's Pausanias: according to Herodotus 8.59-105, esp. 8.100, the battles of Plataea and Mycale were fought at the same time far away from each other. In the former the allied Greek army under the command of Pausanias won a bloody, but decisive victory over Mardonius and the Persians; in the latter the allied Greek fleet under Leotychidas, at few or no losses to themselves, sank the entire Persian fleet in the harbor and then killed the marines, permanently disabling the Persian war effort.