

# Pomponius Atticus, Titus

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Titus Pomponius Atticus (ca. 110–32 BCE) was born into a prosperous family that could claim descent from POMPILIUS NUMA. He was an *eques*; that is, he did not hold political office at Rome and he was not a member of the Senate (see *EQUITES*, REPUBLIC AND EMPIRE). However, he was friends with some of the most powerful men of his day including Cicero, whose letters, together with the biography by CORNELIUS NEPOS, furnish the best evidence for Pomponius' character and life. In 86/5, Pomponius left Italy for Athens, where he lived for about twenty years (hence the *cognomen* Atticus). Here he combined leisure and culture with a sharp sense for business. Above all, he pursued his philosophical interests and attended lectures on the philosophy of Epicurus, towards which he maintained a particular leaning (Cic. *Fin.* 1.16). Pomponius' wealth derived initially from a paternal inheritance of two million sesterces; however, the vast scale of his loans to the Athenians suggests that he generated income beyond this. To judge from his later transactions, his wealth probably derived from investments in property and money-lending activities. Scholarly opinion accepts that Pomponius was politically neutral, yet sympathetic to the cause of the *Optimates* (based on Nep. *Att.* 6.1), although it is clear that he was actively involved in the political process at Rome through his friends. In the mid-60s, Pomponius returned to Rome; he was certainly present between 64 and 62 for Cicero's electoral campaign and consulship. Thereafter he frequently made lengthy visits to EPIRUS, or further afield, where he expanded his financial empire. In 58, he inherited 10 million sesterces by the testamentary adoption of his uncle, Quintus Caecilius. Nepos creates the impression that Pomponius' wealth derived entirely from his inheritances and

property (Nep. *Att.* 14.3). However, there is ample evidence for other sources of income, such as the infamous loan made to SIKYON (Cic. *Att.* 1.13.1) and dealing in gladiators (Cic. *Att.* 4.4.a 2). He looked after the business affairs of the Ciceros, Marcus Cato, and Quintus HORTENSIVS HORTALUS, among others, and he also acted as Cicero's "publisher"; but this would not have been a profit-making business. Pomponius was a dedicated scholar and an antiquarian. He composed several works on the genealogies of distinguished families. His most important work was the *Liber annalis*, which traced the history of Rome with consideration of the magistrates, laws, wars, and peace settlements (Nep. *Att.* 18.1, cf. Cic. *Brut.* 14). His literary interests and business affairs enabled him to nurture friendships with Rome's leading politicians. He was also connected with some of the leading families by way of marriage: he himself married his beloved Pilia, and their daughter, Caecilia, married Marcus VIPSANIUS AGRIPPA; Atticus lived to see his one-year-old granddaughter, Vipsania, betrothed to the future emperor Tiberius. Throughout his life he assisted his friends without partisanship, and it was these alliances that enabled him to survive the turbulent period of the Late Roman Republic. He died in 32 by committing suicide following an incurable illness.

SEE ALSO: Cato, Marcus Porcius; Cicero, Marcus Tullius; Cicero, Quintus Tullius; Epicurus and Epicureanism.

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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