

## Carthaginian Kings, Consuls, and Praetors: The Suffetes and their Roman Equivalent in Livy

Carthage was led by two annually elected joint magistrates called suffetes, from the Phoenician word *špt* (*shophet*), literally meaning “judge.” Their competencies were varied and included participation in the judicial courts, presiding over the city’s senate, and occasionally leading armies in the field. Greek authors consistently rendered them as *basileis*, or “kings” (Hoyos 2010). Latin writers, however, were less uniform in their terminology regarding the office. Some chose to directly transliterate them into Latin as the singular *sufes*, or plural *sufetes* while many others decided to equivocate them with Roman offices (Bell 1989). One possible equivalent office was the consulship. Consuls and suffetes were both diarchic, elected each year, and the highest-ranking officers in their respective states. Several Latin authors echoed this sentiment, notably, Seneca, Festus, and Pompeius Trogus.

The Latin historian Livy presents a seemingly contradictory case in understanding the suffetes. While he often uses the transliterated *sufes*, he has also been understood to have equated them to consuls. This position originates solely from 30.7.5 of *Ab urbe condita*, in which the suffetes are seen invoking a meeting of the Carthaginian senate: “senatum itaque sufetes, quod uelut consulare imperium apud eos erat, uocauerunt,” or “The suffetes—among the Carthaginians they held the equivalent of consular power—accordingly convened the senate.” Modern translations, such as the above by J.C. Yardley, generally take this line as a direct equivalence between the consuls and suffetes. Likewise, modern scholarship has mostly passed over the Carthaginian office, with the few, often dated, articles on its treatment in Livy assuming it to be a consular equivalent.

This assertion, however, is ultimately undermined by Livy himself, who later calls a *sufes* “praetor” in 33.46.3, along with other mentions of *suffetes* performing state functions analogous to those of Roman praetors. Consequently, this paper will argue that the confirmed mentions of *suffetes* in *Ab urbe condita* (28.37.2, 30.7.5, 33.46.3, and 34.61.14-15) point toward a primary identification with Roman praetors instead of consuls according to Livy. In addition, it will be proposed that 30.7.5 should be interpreted as merely a recognition of the ability for both the *suffetes* and consuls to convene their respective senates and not a full equivalence of the two offices. Lastly, a comparison between Livy and other relevant Latin authors will illustrate that his understanding of the office as corresponding to the praetorship is notably unique among surviving texts and consequently cannot be credited to a previous author. Such analyses will better illuminate Livy’s place among other historians of the Punic Wars and demonstrate Latin literature’s fluid ability to understand and reshape foreign terminology and offices.

### Bibliography

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