

CANIDIUS OR CANINIUS?¹

IN Plutarch's account (*Cato min.* 34–9) of the younger Cato's mission to Cyprus² a fairly prominent place is given to one Canidius, described as one of Cato's friends. He is also twice mentioned in connection with the same events in *Brut.* 3. 2–3, but here the great majority of our MSS. read *κανίνιον*, while only one family (Z), and perhaps a later hand in the early MS. L, have *κανίδιον*.

Canidius is a very rare *gentilicium*—a fact obscured perhaps by scholars' familiarity with Horace's witch—and besides the subject of the present investigation there is only one known bearer of the name in Republican times, namely P. Canidius Crassus (Münzer, *R.E.* iii. 1475 f., no. 2) *cos. suff.* 40. He served with Lepidus in Gaul and then became a partisan of Antony, whom he accompanied to the East after earning a suffect consulship. He served his master until the bitter end and was executed by Octavian. The main source for his career is Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, where he is mentioned ten times.

Yet there exists a highly instructive addition to these Canidii in Plutarch: in *Pomp.* 49. 10 we hear about a tribune Canidius, who proposed a law that Ptolemy Auletes should be restored to Egypt by Pompey, accompanied by two lictors, but no army. Now, although apparently all the MSS. here have *κανίδιος*, it is generally accepted that the reference is to the tribune L. Caninius C. f.³ Gallus (Münzer, *R.E.* iii. 1477, no. 3)—albeit this identification has not induced any of the modern editors to abandon the paradoxos.

To return to Cato's emissary to Cyprus: since the MSS. in the *Brutus* are divided between *κανίδιον* and *κανίνιον* (the majority having the latter), and since in the *Pompey* all the codices read *κανίδιος* when the reference is certainly to a Caninius, the MS. tradition in the *Cato minor* should be regarded as anything but conclusive, and we should not on it alone arrive at a decision concerning the identity of Cato's friend.

If we are to accept the paradoxos in the *Cato minor* the two alternatives open to us are: (a) to assume Canidius to be an otherwise unattested person with a rare *gentilicium* (in itself a quite reasonable possibility), or (b) to identify him with P. Canidius Crassus *cos. suff.* 40.⁴ On the other hand if we choose to emend the text in the *Cato minor*—and retain the reading of the majority of the MSS. in the *Brutus*—the identification with L. Caninius Gallus presents itself at once.

¹ I wish to thank Sir Ronald Syme, Mr. E. L. Bowie, and Dr. I. Shatzman for their criticism and advice.

² Two important studies of the subject in recent years are S. I. Oost, 'Cato Uticensis and the Annexation of Cyprus', *CP* 1 (1955), 98 ff., and E. Badian, 'M. Porcius Cato and the Annexation and Early Administration of Cyprus', *JRS* lv (1965), 110 ff.: throughout this paper their argument is taken for granted. P. Grimal, *Études de chronologie cicéronienne* (Paris, 1969), 93 ff. offers little and is apparently unaware of the two above-mentioned papers (cf. the review by J. Briscoe, *Gnomon* xli (1969), 758). For the background see E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism*

in the Late Republic (Pretoria, 1967, Communications of the University of South Africa, B26), esp. ch. 6.

³ For his filiation see *AE* 1928. 43; cf. also *IG* iv. 1410.

⁴ This identification was already rejected by Münzer, as well as the one with the CRAS(sus), who at some time struck coins in Cyprus, as it was then believed (Babelon, *Monnaies de la Rép. Rom.* i. 308 ff.; cf. Grueber, *BMCRR* 532); but it seems now much more probable that these coins were struck by M. Licinius Crassus in Crete in the mid thirties (Grant, *From Imperium to Auctoritas*, 55 ff., followed by Sydenham, *Rom. Rep. Coinage*, 200 n.).

In what follows an outline of the latter's career, based upon this identification, will be attempted. It will be shown, it is hoped, that there is more to this identification than a chance resemblance of names and that it will help to throw some light on a hitherto shadowy personality of the Late Republic.

We are told (*Cato min.* 35. 2 ff., cf. *Brut.* 3. 2 f.) that Cato sent Caninius from Rhodes to Cyprus to propose to the king terms for a peaceful abdication. After the suicide of the king, Cato, while himself sailing to Byzantium to settle there the question of the exiles, sent out his nephew Brutus to supervise Caninius, whom he distrusted in charge of the royal wealth. Between these two events Plutarch relates the interview of Cato with Ptolemy Auletes, king of Egypt and brother of the king of Cyprus, who had fled his country and was on his way to Rome. Though the flight of Ptolemy Auletes is very well attested in a variety of sources, Plutarch alone informs us that he visited Rhodes on his way. If we are to accept this information—and there is no reason for the contrary—it would be only natural to assume that the king's route led through Cyprus. Now Dio (39. 12. 2) tells us that one of the reasons for the popular uprising against Ptolemy Auletes was his passive behaviour towards the annexation of Cyprus by the Romans. Be that as it may, there can be little doubt that the Cyprus affair must have been regarded as of primary interest in Egypt, especially so if the annexation of Cyprus was legally based on the testament of Ptolemy Alexander:¹ in that case there can be no overestimating the relevance of what happened in Cyprus to the events in Alexandria. It is difficult to imagine that in this situation Ptolemy Auletes would bypass Cyprus and deprive himself of first-hand information. Again, if the king disembarked in Cyprus on his way from Alexandria, we are on fairly safe ground in assuming that he contacted the Roman representative there, L. Caninius Gallus. What would happen at such an encounter is purely matter for the imagination: but later events will perhaps provide a clue. It is a fact, though, that Cato's suspicions against Caninius arose after his own interview with the king of Egypt.

The probable date of Caninius' arrival in Cyprus is midsummer 58.² It is not stated when he left, but he must have been back in Rome in time to stand for the tribunician elections for 56, i.e. in midsummer 57. It is the early weeks of Caninius' tribunate that provide us with the main facts of his political activity. Ever since September 57 the question of the restoration of Ptolemy Auletes had been on the agenda in Rome,³ but with the new tribunes entering office⁴ agitation against the assignment of the task to Lentulus Spinther and in favour of Pompey gave a new turn to events. We first hear of Caninius in this context on 13 January, when an *altercatio* between him and the consul Lentulus

¹ See Badian, *RhM* cx (1967), 178 with further literature.

² Cf. Oost, loc. cit. 111. 37; on the other hand Ptolemy Auletes left Alexandria certainly after 11 Aug. 58, and very probably after 7 Sept. (A. E. Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* [Munich, 1962], 155 f.), thus leaving ample time for their meeting even if a wide margin of error is taken into consideration.

³ The standard works on the period grant, as a rule, ample and satisfactory treatment to the Egyptian question. On the other hand

E. Bloedow, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ptolemaios XII.* (Diss. Würzburg, 1963), 58 ff. and E. Olshausen, *Rom und Aegypten von 116 bis 51 v. Chr.* (Diss. Erlangen, Nürnberg, 1963), 49 ff. should be consulted with caution: for example Bloedow calls the tribune C. Cato consistently M. Cato, while Olshausen is careless in his handling of dates.

⁴ For C. Cato's agitation from the very beginning of his tribunate see Fenestella, frg. 21.

Marcellinus prevented the senate from reaching a decision on the various proposals for the restoration of the king.¹ What the contents of this *altercatio* were we learn to some extent from what happened the next day: at the beginning of the debate on the 14th² the senate passed a decree that the Egyptian question should not be brought before the People, but this was reduced to a *senatus auctoritas* by the intercession of the tribunes C. Cato and Caninius.³ Again no decision was reached on the various proposals, and the session ended in a procedural debate. Apparently some kind of compromise was achieved in the meantime with the two tribunes, since on the next day they promised not to promulgate any law on the issue before the elections in the summer.⁴

In the end the only resolution passed in the senate was that *cum multitudine eum* [scil. *regem Alexandrinum*] *reduci periculosum rei publicae videri*.⁵ No decision was taken as to Lentulus and Pompey and the *dies comitiales* filling the entire second half of January did not allow of any further senate business. Still, Cicero feared that Caninius might bring the matter eventually before the People,⁶ though for the time being this threat was not realized.

But in the first half of February the controversy on the Egyptian settlement was renewed, and entered a new phase when the main activity passed from the senate to the People: C. Cato proposed a law *de imperio Lentulo abrogando* and Clodius agitated violently on behalf of Crassus,⁷ who had not until now been mentioned in the context of the allotment of the Egyptian command, and was perhaps not even interested in it. It is reasonable to assign to this time the report of Plutarch (*Pomp.* 49. 10) that Caninius (MSS. Canidius) brought a *rogatio* before the People, appointing Pompey to the task of the restoration of the king, with the proviso that he should be accompanied by two lictors, but no army.⁸ The exact development of the affair is not altogether clear, but in the end a motion was passed in the senate, reduced once again to an *auctoritas* (by the veto of Caninius, one would venture to guess), *ut ne quis omnino regem reduceret*.⁹ Thus the Egyptian question in Rome died quietly: but it is perhaps significant that Cicero could refer to this time as *suspiciosissimum tempus Caninianum*.¹⁰

Though there was some lively agitation on Pompey's behalf during the discussion of the Egyptian question, it is difficult to assess to what extent he was interested in getting the command. He was, as usual, reticent about his own wishes, and it should be seriously doubted whether it is advisable to attribute to him such sinister plans as are sometimes suggested.¹¹ But even if he was interested in obtaining the command, his efforts cannot be otherwise described than as half-hearted.

On the other hand there can be no doubts as to what Ptolemy's preferences were:¹² these were announced publicly, when the tribune A. Plautius read

¹ Cic. *fam.* 1. 2. 1. For a valuable analysis of the various proposals and the debate in the senate see W. Sternkopf, *Hermes* xxxviii (1903), 28 ff.

² Thus correctly Sternkopf, op. cit. 37.

³ Cic. *fam.* 1. 2. 4.

⁴ Ibid. 4. 1.

⁵ Id. *Q. fr.* 2. 2. 3.

⁶ Ibid.: *suspicio per vim rogationem Caninium perlaturum*.

⁷ Ibid. 3. 1-2.

⁸ Essentially the same is told by Dio 39. 16. 1-2, though without the tribune's name and setting the proposal in the senate,

which seems less probable than the version of Plutarch: cf. Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie*³, 131; Gelzer, *Pompejus*, 159.

⁹ Cic. *fam.* 1. 7. 4; cf. Dio 39. 55. 1.

¹⁰ *Fam.* 1. 7. 3; cf. also *Q. fr.* 2. 4. 5.

¹¹ e.g. by Mommsen, *RG* iii.⁸ 317; Meyer, op. cit. 128 ff.; Gelzer, op. cit. 158 is more cautious.

¹² Cic. *fam.* 1. 5b. 2: *Nunc id speramus, idque molimur, ut rex, cum intellegat sese, quod cogitabat, ut a Pompeio reducat, adsequi non posse etc.*

a letter in the senate in which the king asked to be restored in his realm by Pompey.¹

According to Timagenes² Ptolemy was not actually driven out from Egypt, but left on the instigation of Theophanes in order to secure a command for Pompey. Though the malice and anti-Roman bias of Timagenes are notorious, it should not be forgotten that this is an eyewitness account: it should be accepted at least in so far as it points to the obvious wish of Ptolemy Auletes to be restored by Pompey.

From all this it should be clear that there is more reason to believe that Caninius acted as an agent of the king of Egypt than as a henchman of Pompey. This association seems to be the outcome of their first encounter in Cyprus, and could perhaps also explain Cato's suspicions towards his emissary and his advice to the king not to go to Rome; at any rate it throws some light on the recorded political activity of L. Caninius Gallus.

The next we hear of him is that he was defended in a trial by Cicero in the late summer or early autumn of 55.³ Perhaps his accuser was a M. Colonius.⁴ The details of the trial are lost, but upon the above evidence we may perhaps conjecture that it was a prelude to the prosecutions of Gabinius and Rabirius Postumus, who were also defended by Cicero.

All our later references to Caninius Gallus appear in Cicero's correspondence and are of a purely social nature. Thus we know that Cicero spent a few days with Caninius in Athens in the summer of 51;⁵ in 46 we find Caninius on friendly terms with both Cicero and Varro.⁶ On 25 October 44 Cicero makes for us a completely enigmatic reference to Caninius,⁷ and shortly afterwards he records his death.⁸ It is worth while to quote this last reference. Cicero writes: *Caninium perdidit, hominem, quod ad me pertinet, non ingratum*. Shackleton Bailey (ad loc.) deduces that '*non ingratum*' suggests that Caninius was in a good position to show his gratitude, hence that he was on the winning side in the Civil War'. This may, or may not, be so (it is surely not in conflict with the above conclusion that Caninius was not a Pompeian in the fifties): but the sentence is certainly a general evaluation, or short obituary notice, of the deceased. What it does suggest is that he was ungrateful towards somebody, though not to Cicero. It is tempting to think that this could be connected with Caninius' behaviour towards Cato in the Cyprian mission.

One last point: L. Caninius Gallus was a plebeian tribune in 56, and thus a quaestor by 58 at the latest. Now it seems to be fairly certain that Cato, setting out to Cyprus with the title *pro quaestore pro praetore*, had a quaestor on his staff:⁹ could this quaestor be Caninius? Probably Plutarch's description of him as 'one of Cato's friends' should not be taken as a technical term. But there is another connection to be considered: L. Caninius L. f. Gallus *cos.* 37 (Münzer, *R.E.* iii. 1477, no. 4) is most probably a son of our Caninius; their respective ages can more easily be harmonized by assuming that a long interval elapsed between Caninius' quaestorship and his tribunate in 56 than by assuming that he was a quaestor in 58. In the former case he might have been a quaestor in the

¹ Dio 39. 16. 2. ² Plut. *Pomp.* 49. 13.

³ Cic. *fam.* 7. 1. 4.

⁴ Val. Max. 4. 2. 6. If this identification is to be accepted he was married to a daughter of C. Antonius whom he had previously prosecuted.

⁵ Cic. *fam.* 2. 8. 3.

⁶ Ibid. 9. 2. 1, 3. 1, 6. 1.

⁷ Att. 15. 13. 3.

⁸ Ibid. 16. 14. 4.

⁹ Vell. 2. 45. 4; Badian, *JRS* lv (1965)

sixties; if he served in the sixties in the East, he might have gathered there the experience that brought him a legateship under Cato in Cyprus.

To sum up: though our textual tradition does not offer a cogent choice between the names Canidius and Caninius for Cato's friend in Cyprus, the identification with L. Caninius Gallus seems to offer by far the most coherent interpretation of the available evidence.

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