

LIVY AND THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE YEARS 168–167

All our ancient sources agree on the basic sequence of events after the battle of Pydna on 22 June 168:¹ the consul L. Aemilius Paullus advanced to take possession of the whole of Macedonia and finally managed to capture Perseus, the defeated king, who had taken refuge on Samothrace. Once in complete control of the situation he sent his troops into winter quarters and himself set off on a trip that was to take him round the most famous sights of Greece. Only when he heard of the arrival of the customary senatorial commission did he return to Macedon, settle its affairs, hold magnificent games, and finally return to Italy. Thus far there is little cause for concern, but what most of these events lack is a properly established date. Livy, our only ancient source venturing to date them,² places everything up to sending the troops into winter quarters (45.8.8–9) in the same consular year as Pydna and assigns the remaining events to autumn and winter 167 (45.27ff.). He thereby creates an awkward gap of somewhat more than a year between the battle of Pydna and the subsequent actions of Aemilius Paullus. A majority of scholars either seem to have ignored this point altogether or silently corrected Livy's chronology by simply shifting the events in question back to 168/7 (Julian calendar).³ Others, ranging from Müller and Weissenborn to Hammond and Walbank in their magisterial *History of Macedonia*, have kept Livy's date,⁴ while only one scholar has actually attempted to argue for a correction of Livy.⁵

The point at issue is of importance not only because of the enormous discrepancy of an entire year but chiefly because of the implications the late date of Livy would have for the interpretation of Roman policy towards Greece and Macedon. Is it conceivable that it took the senate more than a year to decide on its future policy and dispatch a commission, meanwhile leaving Aemilius Paullus a free hand? What is the victorious Roman general supposed to have done during all the time which, according

¹ The major source for events after Pydna is, of course, Livy (44.43ff.), of whose source, Polybius, only a few fragments survive in Books 29 and 30. Cf. also Plu. *Aem.* 23ff., Diod. 30.21ff. and 31.8, App. *Mak.* 16 and Flor. 1.28.9ff.

² Plu. *Aem.* 23.1 merely connects the journey with the preceding reception of Perseus in the Roman camp through a vague ἐκ τούτου.

³ See e.g. G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* IV.1 (Torino, 1923), 338 (the problem is not discussed in his chronological appendices either); S. I. Oost, 'The Roman calendar in the year of Pydna (168 B.C.)', *CPh* 48 (1953), 220; R. M. Errington, *The Dawn of Empire: Rome's Rise to World Power* (Ithaca, NY, 1972), 223; E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* 2^e (Nancy, 1982), 282.

⁴ H. J. Müller and W. Weissenborn, *T. Livi Ab Urbe Condita* 10.2, *Buch XXXXV und Fragmente*² (Berlin, 1881), ad 45.27.5, comment that Paullus' journey must have taken place more than a year after the battle. N. G. L. Hammond and F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia* III: 336–167 B.C. (Oxford, 1988), 563 and n. 2, mention that the date is disputed and opt for the later one (Hammond, responsible for this section, has thus changed his mind since his *Epirus* [Oxford, 1967], 632). Also the relevant chapters of Livy in J. Briscoe's Teubner edition are headed by the date '167 A.C.', although Briscoe has on other occasions changed Livy's date to the correct one (see e.g. Livy 32.32.1ff.: according to Livy in 197 but on the evidence of Polybius clearly still in 198).

⁵ For this see P. Meloni, *Perseo e la fine della monarchia macedone* (Rome, 1953), 408 with n. 3 and 413, n. 3, restated in 'Ancora sul calendario romano nell'anno della battaglia di Pidna (168 a. Cr.)', *Latomus* 13 (1954), 558–9.

to Livy, he had at his disposal? These and other such troublesome questions should pose a serious problem if one were to adhere to the Livian chronology, but have never been touched upon. This brief paper seeks to demonstrate that they have been rightly—though mostly unknowingly—neglected, since Livy's chronology can be proved to be at fault. To anticipate the conclusion, here, as on several other occasions, the Roman historian found himself incapable of correctly synchronizing the Olympiad years of his Greek source with the Roman year. A large part of his Greek events of 167 thus really still took place in 168. The discussion of the relevant sections of Livy will not, however, end with the explanation of this chronological slip but will also cast some doubt on an exaggerated preoccupation with such issues.

I

The triumph of Aemilius Paullus provides a convenient starting-point for an enquiry into the chronology of this period. Livy reports the celebration of this general's three-day triumph under the same Roman year in which his journey through Greece and the subsequent settlement of Macedonia are said to have taken place (the journey: 45.27ff.; the triumph: 45.40). More precisely, the *Fasti Triumphales* date it to 27–9 November 167 (*CIL* I².1, p. 48, no. XXVII)⁶—a date that would roughly correspond to a Julian one around mid-September 167.⁷ It is immediately obvious that such a date is completely incompatible with Livy's own chronology for the events starting with Paullus' trip through Greece for which he set out *autumni fere tempus* (45.27.5). Even if Livy had in mind the Roman beginning of autumn just before 13 August,⁸ Paullus could never have accomplished all he did and returned to Rome in time for a triumph only three months later. The contradiction is still more apparent if Livy's *autumnus* refers, as I believe it does, to Polybius' beginning of the winter season which would be at just the time of Paullus' triumph, according to the *Fasti Triumphales*.

While the Livian date of autumn 167 for Paullus' journey thus encounters formidable obstacles, the rival date of autumn 168 is far more promising. After the battle of Pydna, Paullus' son Q. Fabius Maximus was sent home to report the news at Rome. He arrived there twenty-one days after the battle (Liv. 45.2.3: 25 September [Roman] = 13 July [Julian]). Granting Fabius Maximus a few days of rest in the capital and a more leisurely journey back to his father, he could easily have reached Macedonia again around late October or early November (Roman = mid or late August Julian). His return would have been just in time for his next recorded achievements: once back with the army in Macedon he executed Paullus' instructions to sack the towns Aeginium and Agassae; after this both of them began their tour

⁶ Although the crucial latter part of a.u.c. DXXC[VI] does not survive, there can be no reasonable doubt about the correct restoration of this particular year. Livy's account of the triumph and the preceding complications are, however, likely to derive from annalistic sources (cf. H. Nissen, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius* [Berlin, 1863], 277) which are usually reliable on such Roman dates. See also F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* III (Oxford, 1979), 491.

⁷ Throughout this paper I shall accept the crucial synchronism of the battle of Pydna on 22 June 168 (Julian) with the Roman date 4 September 168. For this synchronism—now almost the *communis opinio*—see Meloni (n. 5, second item), 553ff., P. S. Derow, 'The Roman calendar, 190–168 B.C.', *Phoenix* 27 (1973), 345ff., P. Brind' Amour, *Le Calendrier romain. Recherches chronologiques* (Ottawa, 1983), 151ff., N. Prack, *Der römische Kalender (264–168 v. Chr.). Verlauf und Synchronisation* (Sinzheim, 1996), 134ff. The synchronization of Roman and Julian dates for 167 is argued by Derow (355) and Brind' Amour (156).

⁸ This was argued by Oost (n. 3), 219 and n. 19 (with ancient references).

through Greece. These punitive measures (Liv. 45.27.1ff.) in fact constitute the first action in the Macedonian theatre of war we hear of since the capture of Perseus and the sending of Roman troops into winter quarters (45.7–9). What could be more natural than to interpret these events as the direct sequel to the dispatch of Fabius to Rome and the capture of Perseus? There is definitely enough time left to accommodate the only intervening event, Fabius' journey to Rome and back, and it hardly needs saying that the punishment of defiant Macedonian towns makes much more sense in 168 than a year later. Moreover, Livy himself confirms this chronology by stressing the fact that Fabius Maximus had already returned from Rome (45.27.1: *iam ab Roma regressum*).⁹ Such an explanatory gloss would be completely unnecessary, if not meaningless, had Livy at that point born in mind that his own chronology actually gave Fabius more than a year to travel back. Dating Fabius' return and Paullus' journey with Livy to 167 would on the other hand destroy this convincing order of events and create a more than awkward gap of an entire year during which we learn absolutely nothing about what was happening in Macedonia.

A closer look at other sections of Livy Book 45 confirms the chronology established above and proves that the Roman historian has torn apart a continuous sequence of actions. At 45.27.1 he reverts to Macedonian affairs by means of the synchronizing phrase *dum haec in Illyrico geruntur*, a characteristic device for indicating that these accounts from different theatres of action are contemporaneous. In the longish preceding chapter Livy had reported the achievements of the praetor Anicius Gallus after his defeat of the Illyrian king Genthius:¹⁰ Gallus had proceeded to reduce those parts of Epirus that had revolted from Rome and then dismissed his troops into winter quarters. Following the arrival of a senatorial commission of five, he had settled the affairs of Illyria from where he once more returned to his former winter quarters. From Livy's account it is clear—and has to my knowledge never been doubted¹¹—that these activities directly ensued on the defeat of Genthius in late spring or early summer 168. The winter in question must hence be the one of 168/7.¹² Since Livy regarded these events as roughly contemporaneous with Paullus' moves recounted from 45.27.1 onwards, our suspicion of the date he gives for all of these events is confirmed. Indeed, just as with the reference to the quick return of Fabius Maximus mentioned above, Livy himself appears to be unaware of having moved on to the next consular year at 45.16.1.

Apart from the chronological plausibility of the earlier date, it should also be noted that a date in 168 instead of 167 provides a coherent historical sequence: Anicius Gallus and Aemilius Paullus conquered their respective enemies quite early in the campaigning season. They then devoted the rest of the year to mopping-up operations before sending their troops into winter quarters. While Anicius remained with his troops, Paullus set out on his trip around Greece, but both of them joined the senatorial commissions as soon as they learnt of their arrival. The appointment of

⁹ This seems to be the most natural translation of this passage, but even a less forceful rendering of *iam* (e.g. 'by now' or 'at this time') emphasizes Fabius' timely return.

¹⁰ The victory over Genthius had been described at Livy 44.30.1–32.5 (under the year 168), preceding Macedonian affairs just as here. Illyrian affairs are thus picked up at 45.26.1 by the phrase *rege Gentio, sicut ante dictum est, in potestatem redacto*.

¹¹ See the regional Epirote histories of P. Cabanes, *L'Epire de la mort de Pyrrhos à la conquête romaine* (Paris, 1976), 301–2 (cf. the chronological table p. 310), and Hammond, *Epirus* [n. 4], 632.

¹² Gallus' advance into Epirus flows straight out of his measures in Illyria where he had garrisoned the surrendered places (Liv. 45.26.1): *praepositis his Illyrico reliquo exercitu in Epirum est profectus*.

these commissions was one of the very first items on the senate's agenda in the new consular year 167 (Liv. 45.17.1ff.) and if the *legati* defied the dangers of a winter crossing of the Adriatic they could easily have reached their destination around February 167 (Julian). They would then have had all of spring and part of summer 167 at their disposal to complete the delicate task of working out the details of a settlement for the conquered territories.

It should, therefore, be clear that Livy has consistently dated the Greek and Illyrian events of the latter part of Book 45 one year too late. If this were an unheard-of blunder by the Latin historian we might perhaps still remain slightly hesitant to convict him of such a grave mistake. Such chronological slips are, however, common in Livy. The explanation of his mistake proves in consequence relatively easy: Polybius, Livy's source for most of his Greek material, used a very different chronological scheme from Livy. Following Timaeus, he dated by Olympiad years. Strictly speaking, they began some time around August,¹³ but Polybius stretched them until autumn in order to report each year's campaigning season without interruption.¹⁴ The victory of Paullus and his autumn journey through Greece will, of course, have fallen in different years (Olympiad 152/4 and 153/1)¹⁵ and there remain clear traces of what in Polybius originally constituted the ending of the *Res Graeciae* of spring/summer 168: the report that Paullus dismissed his troops into winter quarters is followed by a brief obituary on the Macedonian royal house which, on account of its dynastic material, must be mainly Polybian in origin. This will have formed both an appropriate and characteristic ending to Polybius' *Res Graeciae*.¹⁶ As opposed to Polybius' universally applicable Olympiads, Livy, following the annalistic tradition, employed a—by Polybian standards distinctly parochial—chronological scheme which dated by Roman consular years. Faced with the horrendously difficult task of synchronizing his own fluctuating Roman calendar—which at the time in question was two and a half months ahead of the Julian calendar—with the Polybian Olympiads, Livy often succumbed to the temptation of schematically equating Olympiad years with his own Roman ones.¹⁷ In our case Livy has thus wrongly equated Polybius' Olympiad 152/4 (= 169/8) with the consular year 168 and the ensuing Olympiad 153/1 (= 168/7) with that of 167.

Now that both the fact of a chronological slip as well as its explanation are established, it is time to subject Livy and his technique to a closer scrutiny. Before doing this it will, however, be useful to provide a short chronological summary of events referred to in the course of the above argument:

¹³ The exact date of the Olympic Games—and even more so of the change from one Olympiad year to another in years in which the Games were not celebrated—is still disputed. For references see F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley, 1972), 101.

¹⁴ On Polybius' method of dating by loose Olympiads, see P. Pédech, *La Méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris, 1964), 449ff. and Walbank (n. 13), 101–2.

¹⁵ Cf. the correct order and arrangement of the corresponding fragments from Polybius' history (29.14–18; 30.10) by Walbank (n. 6), ad loc.

¹⁶ Polybius was fond of such 'obituaries', which usually summarize the life and character of some important personality (e.g. 18.41: Attalus I, 32.8: Eumenes II, 36.16: Massinissa) but can, just as here, in the rare case of states coming to an end include the entire dynasty (e.g. 7.7–8: the Sicilian kingdom of Hiero, Gelo, and Hieronymus).

¹⁷ On this rather typical mistake, see J. Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy. Books XXXI–XXXIII* (Oxford, 1973), 2–3, with his comment 'Livy evidently found difficulty in marrying these two systems'; for this various examples (e.g. Greek events of autumn 198 dated to 197) are provided. Cf. also the remarks of H. Tränkle, *Livius und Polybios* (Basel/Stuttgart, 1977), 46ff.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date (all dates are Julian)</i>
Defeat of Genthius in Illyria	late spring/early summer 168
Battle of Pydna	22 June 168
Arrival of Fabius in Rome	13 July 168
Capture of Perseus	late July/early August 168
Troops sent into winter quarters	August 168
Return of Fabius to Macedonia	mid-late August 168
Expedition against Aeginium and Agassae	shortly thereafter
Departure of Aemilius on tour of Greece	September 168
Arrival of commission in Macedonia	c. February 167
Triumph of Aemilius Paullus	mid September 167

II

No matter how crucial it may seem from a historical point of view to establish the correct chronology of the years 168 and 167, an exclusive focus on such matters is neither helpful nor just. For one thing, it cannot be doubted that, against all odds, Livy was for the most part struggling to create as coherent a chronology as possible and ought to be given credit for this. On the occasions he failed to do so—as with the synchronization scrutinized above—we can nevertheless detect some signs of unease at places where his faulty chronology proves least satisfactory. Yet, while it is fairly obvious that Livy would have liked to achieve a correct synchronization with his sources—and thus has to take the blame for not doing so in the case of autumn 168—to judge him as an historian on chronological grounds alone is to apply modern and anachronistic standards. Some other instances from Books 44 and 45 will demonstrate that his priorities can often be found to be artistic rather than chronological.

To take those points in order, it is worth drawing attention to a few inconsistencies in Livy's text that are best explained as signs of his own unease at his attempt to synchronize the various events. A first point has already been noted in the context of Livy's shift to the Macedonian theatre in autumn 168 (in Livy 167). There the remark on Fabius Maximus' early return from Rome (*iam ab Roma regressum*, 45.27.1) is, on Livy's chronology, completely out of place. It is not an unreasonable assumption that it originated from his source, Polybius, who, though he had advanced to the next Olympiad year, was well aware that the autumn in question was the one that followed on the summer of Pydna. At the same time Livy, on the basis of his wrong chronology, feels compelled to insert a gloss to inform the reader that the punitive measures executed by the already returned Fabius Maximus took place *ante adventum decem legatorum* (45.27.1). As opposed to the previous remark, which it of course implicitly contradicts, this phrase is probably Livian in origin because it takes the dispatch of the senatorial commission—reported before this episode (45.17.1ff.)—for granted.¹⁸ It thus on the one hand conforms with the wrong date of autumn 167, while on the other expressing Livy's evident puzzlement at the fact that the commission, whose appointment had been one of the first actions of the new consular year, had still not reached its destination. These two brief glosses of Livy, clearly intended to provide the

¹⁸ Theoretically, of course, it could go back to Polybius whose *Res Italiae* 168/7 preceded the *Res Graeciae* of this period. Polybius, however, will probably have been aware that the commission had not even been appointed at that moment.

reader with some guidance, on closer inspection achieve just the opposite and are an obvious result of his muddled chronology.

It is only to be expected that Livy is most prone to such conflicting statements at the crucial transitions from one theatre of action to another. Confirmation for this can be found only one chapter before, at 45.26.1, in Livy's summary of Illyrian affairs. The paragraph opens with a sweeping phrase that tries to create as smooth a transition as possible but can hardly conceal Livy's bewilderment at the exact sequence of events: *dum haec ibi, alia in Macedonia, alia Romae geruntur, interim in Illyrico L. Anicius* . . . We are here evidently confronted with a vain attempt at synchronizing wildly disparate events. To begin with, Anicius' activities in Illyria and Epirus are for the most part neither contemporary with the war of Rhodes in Asia Minor to which *haec ibi* refers (45.25.11ff.) nor with the beginning of the new consular year that inspired the *alia Romae geruntur*. Chapter 45.26 instead extends from summer 168 to late winter 168/7 and the chronological equation is thus only warranted for the latter half of this period. The Macedonian synchronism appears, superficially speaking, more exact because Gallus' operations in Epirus will have occurred around the same time as the capture of Perseus (45.4–6). According to Livy's chronological superstructure, however, they form part of different consular years. Moreover, we soon learn that Livy at the same time wants us to regard Gallus' activities as roughly contemporary with those of Aemilius Paullus after the capture of Perseus, introducing 45.27 with the words *dum haec in Illyrico geruntur*. On Livy's chronology only the latter synchronism is possible but historically both are correct—Livy is again stumbling over his own error of blindly equating Polybius' year 168/7 with his consular year of 167.

While we can thus trace Livy's failure to achieve an adequate synchronization even on the level of single phrases, we should nevertheless be careful of condemning him outright for utter negligence. In a crude way his method can be vindicated because he at least managed to place the crucial military victories in the correct Roman year—and that might be all he cared about. Support for this is provided by his account of Illyrian affairs which demonstrates that he sometimes consciously compressed less important material which he must have known to have taken place in different years: Chapter 45.26 stretches from events immediately after Anicius Gallus' victory over Genthius in late spring or early summer 168 to late winter 168/7. This period evidently belongs in two Polybian Olympiad years and we can find the original dividing line—the Romans moving into winter quarters—in the middle of the chapter (45.26.11). Here Livy clearly sacrificed even the most rudimentary chronological considerations for the sake of simplicity. Such a point, however, does little more than prove how indifferent Livy was to chronological details, but it was not merely the desire to save the reader (or himself) from frequent changes of the theatre of action which prompted this apparent indifference. A closer analysis of the arrangement of his narrative in Books 44 and 45 reveals a more sophisticated approach where artistic considerations several times outweigh those of chronology and historical accuracy.

Livy evidently noticed the above-mentioned neat historical parallel between developments in Illyria and Macedonia and skilfully used it to his advantage in the structure of Books 44 and 45:¹⁹ at 44.30.1 all generals simultaneously assume command of their armies in the eastern provinces at the beginning of spring. Having to decide now which campaign to report first, Livy opts for the minor one in Illyria (44.30.2–32.5). He concludes his account with the news of Anicius' swift victory

¹⁹ On other aspects of the arrangement of Livy's source material in those two books, see e.g. T. J. Luce, *Livy. The Composition of His History* (Princeton, 1977), 117ff.

reaching Rome even before that of the commencement of hostilities (44.32.5). The ensuing campaign and victory of Aemilius Paullus (44.32.5—end of book) thus take an auspicious start, the success in Illyria featuring as a sort of good omen which anticipates what follows. Yet, when it comes to reporting the news of Pydna at Rome, Livy chooses to have the messengers from Macedonia arrive before those from Illyria (45.1–2: Macedonia; 45.3.1–2: Illyria). This arrangement has caused considerable confusion, particularly among those scholars who are attempting to use Livy's chronological indications for the synchronization of the Roman with the Julian calendar.²⁰ Even more striking is the fact that the Illyrian messengers are no longer the same: the original messenger at 44.32.5 was the former Roman envoy to Genthius, Perpenna, while the messengers at 45.3.1 are Nerva and Decius. In my opinion the changed sequence of events and the different sets of messengers make it only too obvious that Livy is here deliberately deflating, by means of a slight narrative distortion, the news from Illyria in comparison to that from Macedonia.²¹ It is granted precedence over anything else, accompanied by good omens and even introduces a new book. Little, I fear, can be deduced about the relative chronology of these reports from this passage—the news of Pydna simply holds a place of honour beyond any such considerations.

Later on in the same book, when it is time for a description of the settlements imposed on the conquered territories, Livy reverts to the order previously adopted for the campaigns themselves. Illyrian affairs are summarily dealt with in one single chapter (45.26) before we move on to Macedonia (45.27ff.). At the end of a much fuller account of Paullus' arrangements, Livy, in the context of his hero's return to Rome, once more tampers with the facts to produce a maximum effect on his audience. A few days before the victorious general is seen sailing up the Tiber, Livy mentions the arrival of the royal prisoners, both Genthius and Perseus, as well as all other detainees (45.35.1ff.). For the sake of highlighting Paullus' return and magnifying his glory—whereby he implicitly castigates the undignified later squabble over his triumph—Livy condenses the arrival of the human booty into a single moment. Just as with the victory announcements, Livy himself contradicts this order of events since, according to him, Genthius had been dispatched to Rome almost immediately after his capture (44.32.4), hence certainly a long time before Perseus. Only towards the end of Book 45 do historical facts for once coincide with artistic needs in the case of the triumphs: Paullus did indeed celebrate his first (25–7 November), Anicius followed after some interval (17 February), and Livy does not fail to stress that Anicius' took place under the shadow of that of Paullus (45.43.1).

To sum up, it is time to acknowledge that the Livian chronology for events after the battle of Pydna cannot be upheld. Various problems and inconsistencies arise if one accepts Livy's date of 167 for the activities of Anicius Gallus and Aemilius Paullus after their respective victories in Illyria and Macedonia. However, a date still in 168 and the ensuing winter poses no such problems and is historically much more plausible. Livy himself only diverged from the original path of events due to his

²⁰ See e.g. Brind' Amour (n. 7), 156, who seeks to accommodate this date in his chronological system.

²¹ What exactly the relation between the different messengers from Illyria is, can, I fear, only be guessed. Perpenna may well have been the original messenger of victory while Nerva and Decius perhaps accompanied the captured king whom Anicius is said to have sent to Rome soon after Perpenna's dispatch (44.32.4). Such an interpretation is, however, contradicted by Livy's account of Genthius' arrival in Rome, on which I will comment below.

schematic equation of the Olympiad years of his source Polybius with his widely divergent consular years. His own confusion at the resulting chronological mess can be gauged from several vain attempts to resynchronize what he himself had torn apart. However, it would be unfair to end this paper on a note of condemnation of Livy. From our perspective it might appear of crucial importance to establish a satisfactory chronology, and this I hope to have achieved. At the same time it is important to bear in mind what a closer inspection of the way Livy structured his material has revealed: while one has to acknowledge that Livy did commit some grave chronological blunders, chronological considerations were clearly not always the most significant, let alone the only ones, that influenced Livy in the composition of his work. In particular his deliberate attempt at twisting the order of events to grant Paullus' Macedonian victory even greater prominence than Anicius Gallus' Illyrian exploits reveals his sense of artistry. One should therefore not judge this historian by his merits and failures in the chronological field alone but follow some of the many rewarding lines of approach that remain.

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