

THE PROCONSULSHIP OF P. CORNELIUS SCIPIO (COS. 16 B.C.)

Not much is known about P. Cornelius P.f. P.n. Scipio (cos. 16 B.C.) apart from the rudiments of his *cursus*. As a young man, he was *quaestor pro praetore* in Achaëa;¹ in due course, he held the praetorship, and he later became the first of a series of aristocratic consuls to serve over the coming decade.² Following an interval of uncertain length, he became proconsul of Asia.³ A scholarly consensus exists for the date of his proconsulship. Its *termini* were set by Syme in 1956 at 10 and 4 B.C.,⁴ limits which subsequent commentators have consistently accepted.⁵ The date, however, is open to question, and I want to argue here that Scipio's governorship belongs slightly earlier.

The proconsulship of Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11) provides a convenient starting place. Its timing is one of the most striking in the history of the province of Asia: he was consul in 11 B.C., yet his proconsulship is dated to the very next year, 10/9. This stands in stark contrast to the five-year interval that was made mandatory only a few years previously.⁶ The date of his proconsulship can be firmly established by the details of a solar calendar that he introduced in Asia.⁷ His calendar decree sets out a system of intercalation that is identical to the one introduced in Rome by Julius Caesar, even repeating its famous mistake of intercalating every third year, instead of every fourth. The error was eventually discovered in 8 B.C., but not before the Roman calendar had advanced three days ahead of the solar year. To correct this, the next twelve years went without intercalation.⁸ Since Fabius' calendar decree describes the old erroneous method of intercalation, with a day inserted every three years instead of every four, it must have been composed before the error was discovered in 8 B.C. The calendar decree itself foresees an intercalation in the coming February;⁹ the leap-years of this period are 42, 39, 36, 33, 30, 27, 24, 21, 18, 15, 12, and 9 B.C.¹⁰ Since Fabius' term as proconsul included February of that year, it must be 10/9.

The date, however, is remarkable, given the strikingly short interval between the

¹ *IG* II/III² 4120–1.

² For the evidence for these offices, see Groag, *PIR*² C 1438. For aristocratic consuls of 16–7 B.C., see R. Syme, *Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1986).

³ K. Sherck, *Roman Documents from the Greek East: Senatus Consulta and Epistulae to the Age of Augustus* (Baltimore, 1969) (hereafter *RDGE*), no. 66 = *IGR* 4.1211 (Thyatira); A. Burnett, M. Amandry, and P. P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London, 1992) (hereafter *RPC*), 2392 = M. Grant, *From Imperium to Auctoritas* (Cambridge, 1946) (hereafter *FITA*), 229 (Pitane).

⁴ 'Some friends of the Caesars', *AJP* 77 (1956), 265 = *Roman Papers* 1.293; Syme (n. 2), 406.

⁵ See below nn. 17–21 with the accompanying text.

⁶ Dio 53.13.2, 14.2; cf. P. A. Brunt, 'The role of the senate in the Augustan regime', *CQ* 34 (1984), 431 and n. 45, 433; K. M. Giardet, 'Die Entmachtung des Konsulates im Übergang von der Republik zur Monarchie und die Rechtsgrundlagen des augusteischen Prinzipats', *Pratum Saraviense: Festgabe für Peter Steinmetz* (Stuttgart, 1990), 89–126, at 115–6.

⁷ V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reign of Augustus* (Oxford, 1976²) (hereafter *EJ*), no. 98.

⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 31.2, Dio 55.6.6–7, Macrob. *Sat.* 1.14.13ff.

⁹ *EJ* no. 98, verses 71–2.

¹⁰ A. E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity* (Munich, 1972), 155–8; U. Laffi, 'Calendario della provincia d'Asia', *Studi Classici et Orientali* 16 (1967), 27–34.

consulship of Paullus Maximus and his provincial command—shorter than for any other proconsul of a public province in the imperial period. Indeed, a shorter interval is impossible, since Paullus Maximus went to his province within a few months of the end of his consulship of 11 B.C. Paullus Fabius Maximus is significant in another way. His portrait is found on a series of coins minted by a city in his province, Hierapolis,¹¹ a phenomenon that is attested for only a handful of governors. Numismatic portraits of governors have long been a matter of interest. Mommsen discussed it over a century ago, identifying five governors of public provinces whose portraits appeared on provincial coins. These are listed in Table 1, along with the dates that Mommsen originally assigned their terms as proconsul (parentheses enclose Mommsen's subsequent revisions to these dates).¹²

TABLE 1. Governors of public provinces whose portraits appeared on provincial coins

Proconsul	Province	Mommsen's date
P. Quinctilius Varus (cos. 13)	Africa	7/6
L. Volusius Saturninus (cos. 12)	Africa	6/5
Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11)	Asia	5/4 (later changed to 9) ¹³
Africanus Fabius Maximus (cos. 10)	Africa	4/3
C. Asinius Gallus (cos. 8)	Asia	1 B.C./A.D. 1 (later changed to 6/5 B.C.) ¹⁴

All five proconsuls date to a relatively short period, a period that Mommsen originally identified as 7–1 B.C. and subsequently shifted to 9–3 B.C. Mommsen argued that Augustus granted the authority to mint coins with governors' portraits only from the beginning of this period.

Mommsen's argument was influential, and scholars since his time have in general followed his interpretation of these coins, even though the specific dating of some governors has changed. Grant, however, took the explanation a step further.¹⁵ He supposed that this group of proconsuls had not only temporal limits, but social ones too: only those governors who were Augustus' friends could mint coins during these years.¹⁶ Grant also pointed out, however, that the group had at least one more member.

¹¹ *RPC* 2930–42.

¹² T. Mommsen, 'Über die Bildnisse der römischen Proconsuln auf den Provincialmünzen der augustischen Epoche', *Hermes* 3 (1869), 268–73 = *Ges. Schr.* 4.183–8; cf. idem, 'Zu den Münzen mit den Bildnissen der Proconsuln von Asia und Africa', *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* 2 (1874), 69–73 = *Ges. Schr.* 4.190–2.

¹³ T. Mommsen, 'Die Einführung des asianische Kalendars', *MDAI(A)* 24 (1899), 275–88, at 286 = *Ges. Schr.* 5.518–529, at 527.

¹⁴ Mommsen (n. 12) (1874), 73 = 192.

¹⁵ *FITA*, 229: 'These contemporary phenomena are explained by a decisive link between the six governors. Five of them were relatives by marriage to the princeps, and the sixth, Gallus, is explicitly stated by him to be his φίλος. . . . These six were of the *amici*—members of the *cohors primae admissionis*: and the same can be established of the few other Romans whom cities henceforward honour with portraits. . . . Thus portraiture on city coinage was, from c.7 B.C., the prerogative of a select band of *amici*.'

¹⁶ Cf. Syme (n. 4 [1956]), 265 = *RP* 1.293: 'The date and period at which the honour of coin portraits was permitted would be worth knowing for its political relevance. The limits are fairly narrow. Six of the seven proconsuls in question cannot be proved earlier than 10 B.C. or later than 4 B.C.'

A portrait of P. Cornelius Scipio (cos. 16) appears on a coin of Pitane,¹⁷ and so he is included among this group of proconsuls.

Scipio's term of office would therefore (according to the argument) fall within the same chronological boundaries as the rest of the group. Consider the reasoning of Sherck, who has accepted the argument of Mommsen, Grant, and Syme:¹⁸

A general date of 10–4 B.C. for Cornelius is obtained by a comparison with the dates at which portraits of such proconsuls on coins were allowed by Augustus. Mommsen (*Gesammelte Schriften* 4, 183ff.) set the limits at 10–3 B.C., but R. Syme (*AJP* 77 [1956] 265) reduced them to 10–4 B.C. The governorship of C. Asinius Gallus in 5 B.C. would reduce the limits of Cornelius to 10–6 B.C.

Others before Sherck used this argument,¹⁹ and I cite him because (to his credit) he has clearly stated the assumptions that practically everyone has made. Atkinson seems to have used it: she mentions the coin portrait and Grant's idea that he belonged to a group of *amici principis*, and proposed a date of 8/7.²⁰ Thomasson has apparently used it in his recent repertorium of provincial governors: he cites Grant, Atkinson, and Sherck, and he dates the proconsulship 'sub Augusto (a.c. 9^a–3^a)'.²¹ Finally, *Roman Provincial Coinage* has dated Scipio's coin (*RPC* 2392) after 9 B.C.,²² citing Thomasson and Grant as authorities for the date of proconsulship.

With *Roman Provincial Coinage*, the argument has become circular. It dates the numismatic evidence for Scipio's proconsulship after 9 B.C. on the basis of the accepted date for his proconsulship; the date of his proconsulship, however, was based on an interpretation of this same numismatic evidence. Even on its own terms, the argument is weak. Assigning a *terminus post quem* of 9 B.C. merely assumes that Paullus Fabius Maximus (whose proconsulship can be firmly dated to 10/9 B.C., as we have seen) was the first of the group to have his portrait on a coin, and this assumption is by no means safe. It is far from clear that this group has any recognizable chronological or social consistency: portraits of officials are found on coins both before and after this decade (see Appendix). The phenomenon does seem more common in the last decade of the first century B.C., but the concentration is not so great that it need be anything more than a passing fashion in provincial coinage. In any case, reconstructions of the proconsular *fasti* of Asia are generally successful in filling the twenties B.C.²³ and the final decade of the century, while the 'teens' are largely vacant. Given the state of our knowledge of the governors of these provinces in this decade, conclusions about precisely when this phenomenon began should be avoided. Even if it were clear, however, that there existed a group of proconsuls with numismatic portraits, the chronological limits of the group would have to be deduced from the dates established for its individual members, not vice versa. Only three of the six proconsuls in this group are firmly datable, and Paullus Fabius Maximus falls roughly in the middle of

¹⁷ *FITA* 387; *RPC* 2392.

¹⁸ *RDGE* no. 61, 339.

¹⁹ E.g. E. Groag, *RE* 4 (1900), 1438 s.v. Cornelius no. 333; idem, *PIR*² C 1438; K. M. T. Atkinson, 'The governors of the province Asia in the reign of Augustus', *Historia* 7 (1958), 300–330 at 326.

²⁰ Atkinson (n. 19), 326.

²¹ *Laterculi* 207 no. 9; cf. also Syme (n. 2), 406.

²² *RPC* 1.1, 406.

²³ On which, see now C. Eilers, 'M. Silanus, Stratoniceia, and the governors of Asia under Augustus', *Tyche* 14 (1999), 77–86.

the group in terms of consular seniority.²⁴ His term is therefore not a reliable *terminus post quem* for the rest of the group.

How might Scipio's proconsulship be dated, then? There was a rule that five years must separate consulship and proconsulship.²⁵ If the rule was applied to Scipio (cos. 16), his term could be no earlier than 11/10 B.C., i.e. immediately before Fabius Maximus. Perhaps he served for the biennium reported by Dio,²⁶ that is, 12/10. This would make Scipio earlier than the other proconsuls with portraits, but since he is the most senior consular in this group, and seniority played a role in the provincial lottery, this should not be surprising. It is presumably not a coincidence that P. Scipio's consular colleague in 16 B.C., L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, was proconsul in Africa in 12 B.C.²⁷ Dio seems to think that the lottery worked normally in this year, but that the proconsul of Asia was appointed for a two-year term instead of a single-year term.²⁸ It is more likely, however, that the biennium is the result of a prorogation during 12 B.C.²⁹ Be that as it may, if the lottery was working normally (as Dio explicitly states to be the case), the two men sent to Africa and Asia would have been the two most senior consulars available. Therefore it would not be surprising if the two public provinces were allotted to men who had been colleagues in the consulship.

In conclusion, P. Scipio (cos. 16) was probably governor of Asia before Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11), not after him, as is only appropriate given his seniority. Unless other evidence arises, it is better to assign to Scipio the biennium beginning in 12 B.C. mentioned in Dio 54.30.3. Consequently, the proconsuls of Asia for these years should probably be arranged roughly as follows (proconsuls whose dates are firm are in bold characters):

13/12	M. Vinicius (suff. 19)
12/11	P. Cornelius Scipio (cos. 16)
11/10	P. Cornelius Scipio (cos. 16)
10/9	Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11)
9/8	L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex (cos. 15)
8/7	
7/6	Iullus Antonius (cos. 10)
6/5	C. Asinius Gallus (cos. 8)

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²⁴ Seniority was an important principle in the assignment of provinces, cf. R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), 349.

²⁵ See above, n. 6.

²⁶ Dio 54.30.3. Atkinson (n. 19), 311, argued that this biennium began in 11 B.C. This cannot be correct, since Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11) was governor in 10/9 (as we have seen) and his term could hardly have started until his consulship was completed.

²⁷ *CIL* 8.68 = *ILS* 6095 = EJ, 355.

²⁸ Dio 54.30.3 (ἀρχοντά οἱ ἐκ τοῦ κλήρου, ἀλλ' οὐχ αἰρετόν, ἐπὶ δύο ἔτη προσέταξε—'he appointed its governor for two years by lot, not by choice'). The text should probably be regarded as sound; contra Fitzler-Seeck, *RE* 10 (1919), 359; Atkinson (n. 19), 308 nn. 31–2.

²⁹ J. W. Rich (ed. and trans.), *Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement (Roman History 53–55.9)* (Warminster, 1990), 209.

APPENDIX. EARLY IMPERIAL COINS WITH OFFICIALS' PORTRAITS

This list is derived from Burnett *RPC* 1(2), 736. Coins are listed chronologically, though the dates are often approximate.

Name	City	Date	Ref.
M. Tullius Cicero (cos. 30)	Magnesia ad Sipylum	27/26	<i>RPC</i> 2448
Potitus Valerius Messala (suff. 29)	Aezani	26/24	<i>RPC</i> 3067
Thorius Flaccus	Nicea	c. 25	<i>RPC</i> 2027–30
P. Vedius Pollio	Tralles	before 15	<i>RPC</i> 2634–5
P. Cornelius Scipio (cos. 16)	Pitane	12/10?	<i>RPC</i> 2392
L. Volusius Saturninus (suff. 12)	Hadrumetum, Achulla	10/9	<i>RPC</i> 778, 800–1
Paullus Fabius Maximus (cos. 11)	Hierapolis	10/9	<i>RPC</i> 2930–42
P. Quinctilius Varus (cos. 13)	Hadrumetum, Achulla	7	<i>RPC</i> 776, 798
Africanus Fabius Maximus (cos. 10)	Hippo Regius	6/5	<i>RPC</i> 710
C. Asinius Gallus (cos. 8)	Temnos	6/5	<i>RPC</i> 2447
L. Passienus Rufus (cos. 4)	Thaena	A.D. 3?	<i>RPC</i> 808
M. Plautius Silvanus (cos. 2)	Pergamum	A.D. 4/5	<i>RPC</i> 2364
[Cn. Pompei]us Macer	Priene	late Augustus?	<i>RPC</i> 2687
A. Vibius Habitus (suff. A.D. 8) ³⁰	Thaena	A.D. 16/17	<i>RPC</i> 810
L? Arruntius (cos. 6?) ³¹	Cibyra	c. A.D. 16/17	<i>RPC</i> 2887
L. Apronius (suff. A.D. 8)	Hippo Regius	A.D. 20/21	<i>RPC</i> 713
Q. Veranius	Cibyra	Claudius	<i>RPC</i> 2889
M. Annius Afrinus (suff. c. A.D. 67)	Pessinus	Claudius	<i>RPC</i> 3557
T. Clodius Marcellus (suff. A.D. 62)	Cibyra	Nero	<i>RPC</i> 2890

³⁰ It is not clear whether the portrait on the coin is Tiberius (*RPC* 1.1, 203–4) or Habitus (G. Stumpf, 'Eine Porträtmünze des A. Vibius C.f. C.n. Habitus, Proconsul von Africa unter Tiberius', *Gazette Numismatique Suisse* 33 [1983], 33–5).

³¹ Burnett tentatively identified the governor portrayed on *RPC* 2887 as L. Arruntius (cos. A.D. 6).