

M. PLANCIUS VARUS AND THE EVENTS OF A.D. 69–70¹

GEORGE W. HOUSTON

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Marcus Plancius Varus has long been known as a senator and magistrate of the time of Nero and Vespasian. He is mentioned by Tacitus as an ex-praetor, present in Rome in late April or May of 69,² and he is attested on both coins and inscriptions as proconsul of Pontus Bithynia in an uncertain year under Vespasian.³ Further, it seems certain that the senator and proconsul is to be identified with Marcus Plancius Varus, a native of Perge in Pamphylia who is known to have had at least one daughter, Plancia M.f. Magna, and one son, C. Plancius Varus, and whose family was apparently connected by adoption with Pliny's friend C. Iulius Cornutus Tertullus.⁴

Nothing more of the career of Plancius Varus had been known,⁵

¹ I would like to thank Professor T. Robert S. Broughton for the help and encouragement he has given me in the preparation of this article, and Professor Christopher P. Jones for reading an earlier draft, making numerous very helpful suggestions, and directing me to some recent items of bibliography. Any remaining mistakes, omissions, or errors of judgment are, of course, my own responsibility.

² Tac. *Hist.* 2.63. The *praenomen* Marcus is not given by Tacitus.

³ Inscriptions: *IGRR* 3.4 and 37. Coins: Babelon and Reinach, *Recueil général des monnaies grecques* 1.2 (Paris 1906) 269 nos. 4 f. (Claudiopolis); 359 nos. 87 f. (Heraclea); 1.3 (Paris 1908) 403 f. nos. 45–49 (Nicaea); etc.: further references given by W. Hoffman, *RE* 20 (1941) 2015 f. no. 5. To this list should be added *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 95 no. 149, which was incorrectly assigned to Apamea in Phrygia by Head, see C. Bosch, *Die Kleinasiatischen Münzen der römischen Kaiserzeit* 2.1 (Stuttgart 1935) 88 note 83, and Shelagh Jameson, "Cornutus Tertullus and the Plancii of Perge," *JRS* 55 (1965) 54–58.

⁴ The family of the Plancii, and the probable connection with Cornutus Tertullus, was discussed by Jameson, *ibid.* She noted, page 55 with note 12, the extreme rarity of the *nomen* Plancius; it is this rarity which makes the identity of the Tacitean senator, the proconsul, and the Varus of Perge virtually certain.

⁵ It was once thought that he was proconsul of Asia under Vespasian (thus, e.g., von Rohden in *PIR*¹; W. Hoffman in *RE*, *loc. cit.*), the evidence being two coin types, *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 95 nos. 149–51, but this was disproved by C. Bosch, *op. cit.* 88 note 83, and Jameson, *loc. cit.* The second of these coin types will be discussed further below.

however, until the recent discovery and publication of an inscription found at Babadat Köy (the ancient Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Germa), on the Ancyra–Pessinus road in Galatia. The inscription was copied and the text made available in provisional form by S. Frederick Starr in his report to the National Geographic Institute, *The Ancient Roads of Asia Minor: 1961 Expedition* (1962),⁶ but a generally available text appeared only with the publication of the inscription, based on a copy originally made by I. MacPherson, by Hans von Aulock in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Istanbul* 18 (1968) 231. The text of the inscription, with supplements, appears as follows: M(arco) Planc[io ? f(ilio)] / Varo, Xviro stl(itibus) / iud(icandis), q(uaestori) pro pr(aetore) pro / vinciae Ponti et / Bithyniae, tr(ibuno) pl(ebis) / pr(aetori), leg(ato) pro pr(aetore) pro / vinciarum Acha / iae et Asiae / P(ublius) Cornelius P(ubli) f(ilius) / Fab(ia) Pro[. . .].

We now have, therefore, additional evidence concerning the earlier part of Varus' career, and it will be the purpose of this paper to discuss this evidence and to see what conclusions or conjectures may be based upon it. I would like to consider three separate matters: first, the probability that Varus is also the man honored on the Greek inscription SEG 6.650; second, the possible dates for Varus' proconsulate of Pontus Bithynia; third, the significance of the coin of Apamea in Phrygia⁷ which mentions Varus as a magistrate; this section will also involve a consideration of the date of Varus' legation in Asia and a discussion of the events of A.D. 69–70.

The acephalous inscription SEG 6.650 was found built into the Byzantine walls of Attaleia, on the coast of Pamphylia. It was copied and described by N. Ferteclis, and immediately broken up for use in construction; it was published in 1929 by Vittorio Viale.⁸ The text:

[... ταμίαν, ἀντιστρά-
τηγον ἐπαρχείας]
Πόντου καὶ Βειθυ-
νίας, δήμαρχον,
στρατηγόν, πρεσβευ-

⁶ Starr also published a photograph of the upper part of the inscription in *Archaeology* 16 (1963) 169.

⁷ *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 95 nos. 150 f.

⁸ *Annuario della regia scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni italiani in Oriente VIII–IX* 1925–26) 365–68 (= SEG 6.650).

τὴν καὶ ἀντιστρά-
 τηγον ἐπαρχειῶν
 Ἀχαΐας καὶ Ἀσίας
 Μᾶρκος Σεπρώνιος (sic)
 Ἀλβανὸς ἀρχιερεὺς
 καὶ ἀγνωσθέντης,
 ἑπαρχος ἱππέων Ἰλλης
 Σεβαστῆς Γερμανικί-
 ανῆς, τὸν ἑαυτοῦ φίλον.

In publishing the inscription, Viale dated it in the second century, and argued that the honorand was Sex. Quinctilius Varus Maximus, but his suggestion was subsequently rejected for a variety of reasons by both E. Groag⁹ and M. N. Tod,¹⁰ both of whom preferred to assign the inscription to an otherwise unknown proconsular legate in Achaia. J. H. Oliver conjectured M. Calpurnius Longus as the honorand, comparing another inscription of Attaleia, but the careers on the two inscriptions were not completely parallel.¹¹

It will be noted, however, that the *cursus honorum* described on SEG 6.650 corresponds precisely to the career of M. Plancius Varus as given on the inscription of Germa, even to an exact Greek rendering of the title *legatus pro praetore provinciarum Achaiae et Asiae*; that SEG 6.650 was found at Attaleia, slightly more than twelve miles from Perge, the *patria* of Plancius Varus; and that both inscriptions seem to have been erected by friends, perhaps veterans who had served with Varus. Nor is it difficult to restore the missing part of the Attaleia inscription on the assumption that it contained the *cursus honorum* of Varus: one may

⁹ *Die römischen Reichsbeamten von Achaia bis auf Diokletian* (Vienna 1939) 108, cf. 125–28. Groag noted, *inter alia*, that Maximus seems to have been *candidatus Caesaris* as tribune, and that no mention of this appears on the present inscription.

¹⁰ *Anatolian Studies Presented to William Hepburn Buckler* (Manchester 1939) 339–44. Tod went on to suggest that the inscription might best be dated in the first, rather than in the second, century. There is in fact little evidence for the date of the inscription: the *ala Augusta Germaniciana* is known from four inscriptions of Pisidian Antioch, three undated (CIL 3.6821 f., 6831), and one of the first century (W. M. Calder, *JRS* 2 [1912] 99 f. = *AE* 1914.128; cf. *AE* 1966.472); M. Se[m?]pronius Albanus seems to be otherwise unknown, although he could be identical with a M. Semp[ro]n[ius] whose name appears on a sarcophagus of Attaleia, SEG 17.604, cf. J. and L. Robert, *REG* 61 (1948) 202 f. no. 229.33.

¹¹ *AJP* 69 (1948) 437. Longus held consecutive positions in Pontus Bithynia and Achaia, unlike the subject of SEG 6.650.

suggest, purely for the sake of an example, the following Greek version of the earlier part of Varus' career:¹²

[Μ(άρκον) Πλάνκιον
 Μ(άρκου) υἱὸν) Οὐάρον,
 δέκανδρον ἐπὶ τῶν
 κληρονομικῶν δικα-
 στηρίων, ταμίαν ἀντι-
 στράτηγον ἐπαρχείας]
 Πόντου καὶ Βειθυ-
 νίας, etc.

Viale argued, probably correctly, that some seven to nine lines of the inscription have been lost;¹³ although only six lines are restored here, it is not difficult to assume, if necessary, that Varus held one or more local magistracies and/or priesthoods; these might well appear in an inscription erected in or near his hometown, while being omitted in the Latin inscription erected at Germa. One may note in this connection that Se[m?]*pronius* included his own local positions, and that they appear on the inscription before his *praefectura alae*. In short, it seems virtually certain, considering the parallels between the two inscriptions and the possibilities available in restoring the missing part of the inscription, that the subject of the Attaleia inscription was in fact Plancius Varus.¹⁴

Assuming, then, that the material above all relates to one man, one may summarize the known facts of Varus' career as follows:

¹² The lines suggested here, except for the two containing the name, remain within the limits of thirteen to eighteen characters found on the extant portion of the inscription; all titles are written out in full, also as on the extant portion. The Greek version of *xviri stlitibus iudicandis* is from a contemporary inscription of Phrygia published by W. M. Ramsay, *JHS* 84 (1883) 415 f. = *MAMA* 6 (1939) 96 no. 262.

¹³ *Op. cit.* 365.

¹⁴ In the course of preparing this paper, I have found that two other scholars have independently arrived at the same conclusion: S. Jameson, following G. Bowersock, in *RE Suppl.* 12 (1970) 119–20, and C. P. Jones, in a review of W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian*, to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Gnomon*. Although the identification of Varus as the honorand of *SEG* 6.650 is almost certain, it is not impossible that another man, unknown to us, had a career identical with that of Varus: aside from the quaestorship of Pontus Bithynia and the legations in Achaia and Asia, the positions held by Varus are standard, and the career is not such as to preclude all possibility of duplication. I know of only one other man who was legate in both Achaia and Asia, [...]*us Claudianus* (*PIR*² C.753), and his career, as given on *ILS* 8821, includes various elements (for example, a legionary legation) which probably, but not certainly, exclude him as a possibility for the subject of the Attaleia inscription.

*Decemvir stlitibus iudicandis.*¹⁵

Quaestor pro praetore provinciae Ponti et Bithyniae.

Tribunus plebis.

Praetor, in 68 or earlier.¹⁶

Legatus pro praetore (proconsulis) Achaiae.

Legatus pro praetore (proconsulis) Asiae.

Proconsul Ponti et Bithyniae, in some year under Vespasian.

We may now turn to the second problem, a consideration of the date of Varus' proconsulate of Pontus Bithynia. Bosch noted that the coins which mention this proconsulate form a unified dedicatory group to the emperor, and suggested that the occasion for this dedication was the death and consecration of Vespasian.¹⁷ Jameson, however, argued that they might better be taken as an accession issue and suggested that Varus might therefore have been proconsul of Pontus Bithynia in 70–71 or even in 69–70.¹⁸ The latter date (69–70), however, is probably not possible, for, as was noted by W. Eck,¹⁹ Varus is attested as proconsul on an inscription of Nicaea which apparently calls Titus *imperator*, a title which Titus did not receive until late in 70, after the fall of Jerusalem.²⁰

It is, on the other hand, quite possible that Varus was proconsul of Pontus Bithynia in 70–71,²¹ and that the coins form part of an accession

¹⁵ Even before he became *decemvir*, Varus must have been granted the *latus clavus*, evidently either by Claudius or by Nero. On such grants, see A. Stein, *Der römische Ritterstand* (Munich 1927) 310–16.

¹⁶ Varus was praetor in some year before 69, not in 69 as was thought by C. Bosch, *op. cit.* (above, note 3) 87 note 83: Tacitus uses the phrase *praetura functus* as equivalent to *praetorius*. See, for example, *Ann.* 2.33.1: *a Quinto Haterio consulari, Octavio Frontone praetura functo*; *Ann.* 3.65.2: *omnes consulares, magna pars eorum qui praetura functi (erant)*; *Ann.* 1.39.3: *Munatium Plancum consulatu functum*, where the reference is to A.D. 14, Plancus having been consul previously, in A.D. 13; and the numerous other instances cited in Gerber and Greef, *Lexicon Taciteum*, s.v. *fungor*.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* (above, note 3) 87.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* (above, note 3) 56. She noted that Pick also had viewed the coins as an accession issue. I have not seen his discussion, which is in *NZ* 23 (1891) 77 f., but the comments of Bosch (*op. cit.* 87 f. note 83) seem to indicate that one of Pick's reasons was his belief that Varus was also consul and proconsul of Asia under Vespasian, which both Bosch and Jameson have shown to be untrue.

¹⁹ *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (Munich 1970) 231 note 506.

²⁰ *IGRR* 3.37, with notes of Cagnat *ad loc.*

²¹ Bosch, *op. cit.* (above, note 3) 87 note 83, argued that Varus could not have been proconsul in 70–71 because he was praetor in 69 and there must have been a lapse of five years between his praetorship and proconsulate. This is based on a misunderstanding of the text of Tacitus: see note 16 above.

issue. One of the inscriptions referring to Varus as proconsul, *IGRR* 3.4, was erected by the shipowners of Nicomedia, and may be translated as follows: "To the Emperor Caesar Vespasianus Augustus the shipowners [... present? ...] their land and boat house(?), Marcus Plancius Varus the proconsul advising (or having advised) that this be carried out, and CA... (or CL...?) the proconsul dedicates..." Because of the fragmentary state of the inscription, a number of uncertainties remain, but one may make two observations. First, a proconsul seems to be named as successor (not necessarily immediate) to Varus; his name may begin with CA or CL, or these letters may just be a part of *καί*, the proconsul's name following.²² Second, it seems probable that Vespasian was still alive at the time the inscription was cut: it is of course possible that *θεῶν* appeared in the lacuna at the beginning of the second line, but *θεός* seems more often to appear at the beginning of or within Vespasian's titlature than at the end,²³ and of course the great majority of inscriptions including the emperor's name in the dative are addressed to a living rather than to a deceased emperor. If this is so, then at least one other proconsul followed Varus during the principate of Vespasian, so that the Bithynian coins mentioning Varus could not be a dedication to the deified Vespasian and might better be taken as an accession issue.

One may note also that there is some evidence for congratulations directed to Vespasian at a very early date in his reign. Josephus assures us that Vespasian was received with ovations in Rhodes and the cities of Ionia as he sailed toward Rome from Alexandria late in the summer of 70;²⁴ datable inscriptional evidence is almost totally lacking, but one may note an inscription from Apollonia in Mysia,²⁵ dated before September 26 of 70, mentioning Vespasian as *Σεβαστός*; other inscriptions which omit all of the official titlature of Vespasian appear in

²² W. Eck, *op. cit.* (above, note 19) 231 note 506^a, accepted CA or CL as part of the proconsul's name. There is a difficulty, however: CA or CL cannot begin any Roman *praenomen*, and Marcus, Varus' *praenomen*, is written out in full on the inscription; thus, unless we assume that only the *praenomen* of the second proconsul was abbreviated (in which case his name might be C. Appius, or C. Licinius, etc.), it might be better to take the letters as part of *καί*.

²³ See, e.g., *AJP* 7 (1887) 145; *BCH* 6 (1882) 286; *IGRR* 3.724. *Θεός* does appear at the end of the titlature in *IGRR* 4.846.

²⁴ *BJ* 7.22.

²⁵ *IGRR* 4.120.

various cities, and may well date from 69 or 70, although of course no certainty is possible.²⁶ It is not necessary to suggest that the series of Bithynian coins was connected directly with any of these monuments, but rather simply that such monuments help to establish the possibility of a united Bithynian coinage celebrating Vespasian's accession. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Varus was proconsul of Pontus Bithynia in 70–71, but it must be admitted that the evidence does not permit certainty, and that it remains possible that Varus was proconsul late in the principate of Vespasian or in some year between 70–71 and 78–79.

In considering the rest of Varus' career, it will be useful to base our discussion upon the various possible interpretations of the coins of Apamea in Phrygia which indicate that Varus was a magistrate, either local or imperial, during the principate of Vespasian and which have frequently been taken as evidence that Varus was proconsul of Asia.²⁷ One of the two coin types was shown by Bosch and Jameson to belong in fact not to Apamea, but to Nicaea, so that it refers to Varus as proconsul of Bithynia.²⁸ The significance of the second²⁹ is less clear: the legend on the reverse is paralleled in form on coins of Phrygia only by two other coins of Apamea which mention officials of the time of Nero, Marius Cordus and M. Vettius Niger.³⁰ It has been assumed that these two men also were proconsuls of Asia, but unfortunately nothing further is known of their careers.³¹ In a very helpful discussion of

²⁶ For example, *IGRR* 3.37 (Nicaea); *IGRR* 4.14 (Eresus, on Lesbos); *IGRR* 4.1138 (Ialysus, on Rhodes); *SEG* 2.850 (Egypt); *SEG* 17.558 (Attaleia). Simplicity of titlature alone does not prove an early date, however: see *SEG* 8.796; *SEG* 23.450. One may note here in passing that the date assigned to *MAMA* 6.177 by the editors should be corrected from 65/66–69 to 68/69–73/74.

²⁷ Thus, e.g., by D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* 2 (Princeton 1950) 1582; W. Hoffman, *RE* 20 (1941) 2016; von Rohden, *PIR* ¹ III P.334.

²⁸ *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 95 no. 149. See notes 3 and 5 above.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 95 nos. 150f. The obverse, with a head of Vespasian, laureate, reads ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΟΥΕΣΣΙΑΣΙΑΝΟΣ. The reverse, with a sheaf of five ears of corn, reads: ΕΠΙ ΠΛΑΝΚΙΟΥ ΟΥΑΡΟΥ ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΦΡΥΓΙΑΣ ΑΠΑΜΕΙΣ.

³⁰ Cordus: *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 94 no. 143; further references given by Groag, *RE* 14 (1928) 1824 f. no. 39; Niger: *BMC Phrygia* (London 1906) 94 nos. 147 f.; MacDonald, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection* 2 (Glasgow 1901) 479 no. 19.

³¹ Vettius Niger, however, might be the M. Vettius who was consul in an unknown year with M. Ar[...], attested on a *tessera nummularia* (Herzog, *RE* 17 [1937] 1431 f. no. 31).

these coins, S. Jameson pointed out that all three men—Cordus, Niger, and Varus—might have been not proconsuls of Asia but local officials at Apamea, either real or honorary. She also mentioned another possibility, suggested to her by R. Syme: “seeing the tide turn against Vitellius, he [Varus] could have gone to join Vespasian. He might have held the post of legate or acting *proconsul* of Asia. The latter appointment could have occurred in the autumn of 69, occasioned by the removal of the *proconsul*, Fonteius Agrippa, to Moesia, and would have terminated with the arrival of a consular governor.”³²

There are, therefore, several possible explanations of these coins: all three men might have been local officials, either real or honorary; all three men might have been proconsular legates; all three men might have been proconsuls; Cordus and Niger might have been proconsuls, and Varus (following Syme’s suggestion) an acting proconsul. Let us consider each of these possibilities.

First, it is quite possible that all three men were local officials, either of Apameia or of the Phrygian *koinon*; such a possibility can be neither proved nor disproved and calls for no further comment.

It is, on the other hand, quite unlikely that all three men were honorary magistrates at Apamea. Although it would appear reasonable to expect that Roman imperial officials might be made honorary magistrates in cities within their provinces, the known cases of such an occurrence are in fact quite limited in number. One may note the list on page 175.³³

It will be noted that, with the single exception of Hadrian, who is perhaps to be considered a special case, all such grants of honorary magistracies occur in colonies and all appear during the principates of Augustus or Tiberius. Apamea, of course, was not a colony, and the coins mentioning Cordus, Niger, and Varus were minted by the *κοινὸν Φρυγίας Ἀπαμεῖς*; in the absence of a single parallel from a

³² *Op. cit.* (above, note 3) 57 f.

³³ These grants of honorary magistracies have been previously discussed by Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* 2³ (Leipzig 1887) 828 note 5; G. L. Cheesman, *JRS* 3 (1913) 256; and B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford 1967) 81. I am by no means certain that the list given here is a complete one, but I am fairly sure that no proconsular legate of Asia is known to have received such a magistracy, and that no *ἀρχων* or *στρατηγός* in any inscription in *IGRR* Volume 4 was a Roman imperial official. Emperors and their families were, of course, frequently so honored; we are concerned here with private individuals.

Magistrate	Evidence	Position	Status of City
M. Barbatus and M. Acilius ³⁴	Coin of Parium: see Mommsen, <i>Röm. Staatsrecht</i> 2 ³ p. 828 n. 5 and <i>BMC Corinth</i> XXXIX	Ilviri	colonia (whether Parium or Corinth)
P. Dolabella	<i>CIL</i> 3.14712	Ilvir quinq., Salona in Dalmatia	colonia
Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus	<i>ILS</i> 2696	Ilvir, Pisidian Antioch	colonia
Drusus, son of Germanicus	<i>CIL</i> 3.14712	Ilvir quinq., Salona in Dalmatia	colonia
	<i>ILS</i> 7201	Ilvir ann. secund., Pisidian Antioch	colonia
Hadrian, before his accession	<i>CIL</i> 3.550	archon at Athens	not a Roman colony
Iuba II	<i>ILS</i> 840	Ilvir quinq., Carthago Nova	colonia
M. Servilius	<i>ILS</i> 9502 f.	Ilvir, Pisidian Antioch	colonia
T. Statilius Taurus	<i>CIL</i> 3.605	Ilvir, Ilvir q.q., Dyrrachium	colonia
P. Sulpicius Quirinus ³⁵	<i>ILS</i> 9502 f.	Ilvir, Pisidian Antioch	colonia

³⁴ G. L. Cheesman, *ibid.*, doubted that these men were an example of such an honorary magistracy.

³⁵ One further instance might be T. Statilius Severus, attested as having a *praefectus*, but with no office specified, on an inscription probably of Caes, *CIL* 10.3910.

non-colonial city, it is best to assume at present that these men were not made honorary magistrates at Apamea.

Third, it would seem at first sight to be most likely that all three men were proconsular legates, since this is the only position in Asia independently attested for any of them. Unfortunately, I know of no other evidence that such legates might appear on coins; *legatus* and *πρεσβευτής* do, of course, appear on coins from Roman provinces in the East, but always, as far as I know, on coins of imperial provinces, where the legate is *legatus Augusti* and so governor of the province.³⁶ I have been able to find only one example of a magistrate other than the proconsul appearing on coins issued in a senatorial province: Capito, quaestor in Cyrenae after 23 B.C., appears on coins of Cyrenaica.³⁷ This, however, does not seem to provide a satisfactory parallel, since it is much earlier, a quaestor rather than a legate, and in an African rather than an Asian province; thus it seems best, at least for the present, to assume that Varus, Cordus, and Niger were not proconsular legates.

Next, it does not seem possible, for reasons of chronology, that Varus was a proconsul of Asia. As was noted by Jameson,³⁸ Varus could not have been consul before the end of his proconsulship in Bithynia, and so in 71 (or just possibly 70) at the earliest. This means that, in all probability, he was consul after Ulpian Traianus, whose consulate apparently fell in 70;³⁹ Varus would then have had to *precede* Traianus as proconsul of Asia, since Traianus' proconsulate is to be dated in 79–80, and this seems quite unlikely.

Finally, we may consider the possibility that Cordus and Niger were proconsuls of Asia and that Varus was an acting proconsul with the rank of *legatus*. The most likely time for such an occurrence is, of course, the unsettled period in 69–70, although some later date in the principate

³⁶ For example: coins of Byzantium, Perinthus, Bizya, and Philippopolis in Thrace (*BMC Thrace* [London 1891] 104 f. nos. 92–94; 150 no. 22; 88 no. 3; B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum* [Oxford 1911] 287); coins of Ancyra, Caesarea, and Tyana in Galatia and Cappadocia (*BMC Galatia* [London 1899] 3 no. 3; 48 no. 23; 49 no. 27; 50 nos. 34 and 36; 96 no. 3).

³⁷ *BMC Cyrenaica* [London 1895] plate XLIV, nos. 5 f.; discussion on page ccxxv, where Robinson, noting this as a reversion to republican practice, cites a similar republican coin from Macedonia in H. Gaebler, *Antike Münzen Nordgriechenlands* 3.1 65–74 (which I have not seen). For Capito, see also E. Groag in *PIR*² C.405.

³⁸ *Op. cit.* (above, note 2) 58.

³⁹ J. Morris, *JRS* 43 (1953) 79 f.

of Vespasian cannot be excluded entirely. When he became acting proconsul, Varus may already have been a proconsular legate; or he may have been appointed directly as acting proconsul, either because Vespasian wished to have his own supporters in control,⁴⁰ or because the three regular legates were employed on other matters, such as the embassy sent to the Parthians and to Armenia, probably in the summer of 69.⁴¹ The occasion for his appointment as acting proconsul might well have been the transfer of Fonteius Agrippa to Moesia in the fall of 69:⁴² it may well be that Fonteius' replacement⁴³ did not arrive for several months, since the transfer of Fonteius seems to have been a response to an emergency, and since the sailing season may have ended by the time a replacement was appointed.

We may perhaps, then, assume with Syme that Varus withdrew from Rome about the time of Vitellius' arrival;⁴⁴ he may have proceeded directly to Vespasian, or to his home in Perge.⁴⁵ He will then have

⁴⁰ There is some evidence that Vespasian made other similar administrative changes: Fonteius Agrippa, who was apparently proconsul in Asia in 68–69, seems to have been retained as proconsul for several months after July of 69, before being transferred to Moesia (Tac. *Hist.* 3.46); also, A. Larcus Lepidus Sulpicianus may have been summoned directly from a quaestorship in Crete and Cyrene to become legate of the legion X Fretensis, and P. Tullius Varro, *quaestor urbanus*, in turn called to become *pro quaestore* in Crete and Cyrene, as suggested by J. Morris, *JRS* 43 (1953) 80. (See, however, G. Alföldy, *Fasti Hispanienses* [Wiesbaden 1969] 157, arguing that Lepidus joined the legion perhaps as early as 68; but *ILS* 987, which he cites, is undated; Josephus, *BJ* 6.237, which he mistakenly cites as 3.237, refers to August of 70; and the article of Syme in *JRS* 48 (1958) which he cites supports Morris' conjecture.) Such changes were, of course, illegal so long as Vitellius survived, but this would not have mattered to Vespasian. We know that he also appointed prefects and procurators, and that he adlected men *in senatum* in the summer of 69, all illegally (Tac. *Hist.* 2.82.2).

⁴¹ Tac. *Hist.* 2.82. We know of one man who could well have been a legate in Asia in 69, and who was apparently pro-Flavian, so that he might have been used on such an embassy: C. Rutilius Gallicus, cf. E. Groag, *RE* 1A (1914) 1255–63.

⁴² Tac. *Hist.* 3.46. The suggestion is, of course, Syme's, cited by S. Jameson, *op. cit.* (above, note 3) 58. The date of Fonteius' transfer is uncertain; it is also possible that he joined Vespasian's staff even before the transfer, necessitating the appointment of an acting proconsul soon after July 1.

⁴³ Perhaps M. Suillius Nerullinus, *cos. ord.* in 50. Cf. W. Eck, *op. cit.* (above, note 19), 83.

⁴⁴ It is not impossible that Varus was compelled by the Vitellians to undertake the prosecution of Dolabella. Varus and Dolabella were close friends; Tacitus emphatically attributes the blame for Dolabella's death to Vitellius and his party; Varus had no proof, and repented of his action (Tac. *Hist.* 2.63). If this is so, it is not unlikely that he was frightened and alienated by the subsequent murder of Dolabella.

⁴⁵ If he returned to Perge, he might later have been included in an embassy to

been appointed either acting proconsul (with the rank of *legatus*) or proconsular legate. In either capacity, he may well have played an active part in the preparations for Vespasian's campaign: Mucianus, in marching from Syria to Byzantium, is said to have proceeded through Cappadocia and Phrygia;⁴⁶ although his exact route is unknown, it is not at all unlikely that the road from Pessinus in Galatia to Nicaea in Bithynia, which makes its way through the northeastern section of Phrygia, was part of his route; and one may perhaps conjecture that Varus played a part in the securing of this road.⁴⁷ If this is so, it might explain the presence of an inscription honoring Varus at Germa, which is only a few miles from Pessinus, although it should be noted that neither of these towns was strictly within the limits of Varus' jurisdiction as a legate in Asia.⁴⁸ This is not the only possible explanation of the provenience of this inscription, of course. Cornelius, the dedicator, might simply have come from Germa; but an explanation with reference to Varus' legation in Asia is at least a possibility.

It must be admitted that there is a difficulty in the suggestion that Varus was an acting proconsul: although he seems to have been recognized as a proconsul on the coins of Apamea, so that he is mentioned on a type which had been used with two earlier proconsuls,⁴⁹ no recognition of his position as acting proconsul, in some formula such as *vice proconsulis*, appears on either of the two inscriptions which describe his career. One is then forced to assume that he was acting proconsul for so short a period that it was not regarded as worthy of

Vespasian. We are told that numerous cities of both Syria and the other provinces sent embassies to Vespasian when he travelled from Berytus to Caesarea: Josephus, *BJ* 4.620.

⁴⁶ Josephus, *BJ* 4.632.

⁴⁷ Cf., for such attempts to secure strategic points, the career of [...]tilius P. f. Lo[?] or n? . . .], known from an inscription of Apamea in Bithynia, on the southern coast of the Propontis (*CIL* 3.335, cf. 6991 and 14188¹; republished by E. Kalinka, *JOEAI* [1933] B.108 f., no. 88). He was made military tribune by Claudius (*beneficio divi Claudii*), then prefect of a cohort, and then adlected *inter praetorios* by Vespasian and made proconsular legate in Asia. The reason for his sudden promotion by Vespasian ought to lie in the events of 69; he might have been adlected in 69, since there is no mention of Vespasian's censorship or of Titus, and so one may perhaps suggest that he was asked by the Flavians, or took it upon himself, to secure the port town of Bithynian Apamea.

⁴⁸ Pessinus is some fifteen or twenty miles from the border between Phrygia and Galatia.

⁴⁹ This assumes that Cordus and Niger were proconsuls. This is not certain, of course.

note; or that he never received any official title as acting proconsul, continuing simply as *legatus*, but with the effective powers of the proconsul; or that the Babadat inscription was erected before he became acting proconsul, while the Attaleia inscription included this position at the top of the *cursus*, which no longer survives. One of these explanations may be correct, although none is entirely satisfactory.

It is not difficult to suppose that, following his year in Asia, Varus was made proconsul of Pontus Bithynia in 70-71, as argued above, although a later date is also possible. One further item concerning affairs in 69, however, may be worth noting. In narrating the events following the acclamation of Vespasian as emperor by the legions in Egypt, Tacitus noted that all the provinces of the East, as far as Asia and Achaia, declared their support for Vespasian.⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter, when Mucianus was planning his route to Italy, he considered marching straight through Macedonia from Byzantium to Dyrrachium, presumably on the *via Egnatia*. Such a route would have given Achaia considerable strategic importance, and it is not impossible that some military forces were sent to Achaia at this time; Tacitus, at least, depicted Mucianus as considering such a move.⁵¹ Whether or not troops were sent, one might suppose that Vespasian attempted to secure administrative control of the region by the appointment of a legate, perhaps as early as July or August. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that this legate was Plancius Varus, but the title of Varus as it appears on both the Babadat and the Attaleia inscriptions makes this unlikely: one would almost certainly expect that an extraordinary command such as is implied here would contain some reference to Vespasian, even though imperial legates do occasionally omit the *Augusti*,⁵² but neither inscription mentions the emperor. It seems best, therefore, to assume that Varus was proconsular legate in Achaia at some earlier date.

Much of the discussion which has preceded has been hypothetical in

⁵⁰ *Hist.* 2.81: *quidquid provinciarum adluitur mari Asia atque Achaia tenus, quantumque introrsus in Pontum et Armenios pateat, iuravere . . .*

⁵¹ *Hist.* 2.83. The relationship between Mucianus' route and the strategic importance of Achaia was suggested to me by Professor T. R. S. Broughton.

⁵² Examples given by G. Iacopi, *Dizionario Epigrafico* 4 (1948) 535. It is unlikely that Achaia was made into a senatorial province by Vespasian at this early a date, so that Varus cannot be taken as a proconsular legate of Achaia in 69.

character. Although the evidence available can best be explained, in my opinion, by reference to the events of 69–70, it must be remembered that there is no decisive proof for any single suggestion, and that it is still possible that Varus held both his proconsular legations before 69,⁵³ and/or his Bithynian proconsulship in 78–79; or even that all the praetorian positions are to be dated after 69–70, the legation in Achaia following Vespasian's revocation of the freedom of Greece.⁵⁴ It is to be hoped that future discoveries, or additional items of evidence not noticed here, will help to resolve some of the numerous uncertainties.

⁵³ If this is so, then he was apparently legate in Achaia at latest in 66–67, since Nero granted Greece its freedom late in 67: *ILS* 8794; cf. J. H. Oliver, *GRBS* 12 (1971) 237.

⁵⁴ This may well have been as early as 70: see C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford 1971) 18. If Varus, or some other pro-Flavian legate, was sent to Achaia in 69 as a matter of strategy, his very presence could have provoked some of the factional disturbances which led to Vespasian's revocation of the freedom of Greece (Pausanias 7.17).