THE CURTII RUFII AGAIN

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A. CURTIUS RUFUS’ CONSULSHIP

Dr. Vogel-Weidemann’s note on the consular Curtius Rufus\(^1\) requires comment in the light of Barbieri’s article in *Epigraphica* 29, ’67. The Rufus who was the colleague of M. Pompeius Silvanus in June 45 was not Curtius Rufus, but A. Antonius Rufus, and their consulships ran through till at least 3rd October.\(^2\)

The Curtius Rufus who advanced to a governorship in Germania Superior perhaps as early as 46,\(^3\) and then went on to the governorship of Africa, must have been consul after 38, since, as Degrassi indicates,\(^4\) the consular lists appear to be complete for the period 23 to 38. The *terminus ante quem* is determined by the command in Germany, and 46 itself is excluded as the consular list again appears to be complete.

It is quite possible that it is our subject who is attested in the consular pair ‘L. Oppio, Curtio R[uf]o’ in the period 8th to 14th October of an unrecorded year.\(^5\) If this pair in fact belongs after 38 we can narrow down the possibilities: October 39 is virtually excluded by Dio’s account of Gaius’ intervention in September of that year;\(^6\) October 42 is excluded as we already have a consul *ordinarius* in Caecina Largus;\(^7\) 45 is unlikely as Antonius Rufus and Pompeius Silvanus were still in office on 3rd October, and their dates now exclude 44, for we have to assign to the period 22nd September to 25th October 44 Cn. Hosidius Geta and L. Vagellius.\(^8\) Thus Oppius and his colleague Curtius Rufus may have been suffect consuls in the October of 40, or 41 or 43.\(^9\) Any of these dates would fit in with the rest of what we know about the consular Curtius and would give a credible gap before the governorship in Germania Superior.\(^10\)

B. Q. CURTIUS RUFUS and the date of the *Historiae Alexandri*

Discussion of this dating problem must still centre on Curtius’ eulogy of an emperor whose recent assumption of power had narrowly averted, or perhaps

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1. *AClass* xiii, ’70 79 sq.
4. A. Degrassi *I Fasti consolari* ’52 9 sq.
7. Dio lx, 10.1.
9. For the years 41 and 43 an alternative pair would be Ostorius Scapula and P. Suillius Rufus, attested for both August/September and 10th November; cf. Degrassi, p. 12.
10. Galba and Pomponius Secundus each had to wait five years for this governorship after their consulship; for Vibius Rufinus the gap was shorter.
even terminated, civil war. As Instinsky warned us and Dr. Vogel-Weidemann reminded us, we cannot rely on subjective assessments of what would have been the appropriate phraseology to describe which accession: rather we must try to identify the position of Curtius’ phraseology in the stratigraphy of rhetorical conventions and we must look in particular for links with the non-literary political material.

Instinsky and Weidemann both refer Curtius’ eulogy to the period after Vespasian’s accession and they attach special significance to two points: first to the combination of salus with the clause novum sidus illuxit, and secondly to the clause non ergo revirescit solum sed etiam floret imperium. Curtius coupled salus with the image of the emperor rising like a new star, and Instinsky noted a parallel in Pliny’s *naturalis historia*, where Pliny eulogises the *salutarius* *exortus Vespasiani*. Since Pliny was eulogising Vespasian by contrasting him with Claudius, it is unlikely, wrote Instinsky, that he would have adopted a formula that had been current in laudations of Claudius; thus he concluded that Curtius and Pliny were both using an idea that was a characteristic of Flavian eulogy. Furthermore *Salus Augusta* appears as a legend on Vespasian’s coins from 71.

We can all agree that the star image on its own was a commonplace of eulogies and propaganda in the Julio-Claudian era and again in the reign of Galba; but it may be legitimate to see more in the formulation *huius* (sc. *sideris*), . . . *non solis, ortus*, which may reflect criticism of a previous emperor who had linked the sun with his divine affinities, Caligula perhaps, or Nero. Instinsky’s argument about the parallel in Pliny is weakened in another way by a similar passage in Tiberius Julius Alexander’s eulogy of Galba, where Galba rises as a star to be the saviour and protector of the human race:

\[ \text{παρὰ τῶν ἐπιλάμμαντος ἕμεῖν ἐπὶ σωτηρία τῶν παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους εὐεργέτου . . . Γάλβα.} \]

Then there is a close parallel with what Curtius says in Seneca’s *Consolatio ad Polybiurn*: *sidus hoc quod praecipitato in profundum et demerso in tenebras orbi refulsit, semper luceat* (13,1, cf. 7.2). Furthermore, whilst salus was not a coin

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11. Curtius x, 9, 1-7. The phrase *sine suo capite* implies that the new emperor was not the founder of the Principate. *Caput* may have been used by other authors to refer to the Senate, as Weidemann noted, but Curtius used it as a synonym for *dux* at x, 6.8.


13. *AClass* xiii, '70 esp. 83, n.33. It is here assumed that the choice of date lies between Claudius’ reign and Vespasian’s.

14. xxxiii, 41.

15. H. Mattingly *Coins of the Roman Empire in the B.M.* (hereafter abbreviated *BMC Emp*) ii, p. 124, nos. 574 and 575.

16. *OGIS* 669, also in McCrum and Woodhead *Documents of the Flavian Emperors* '61, no. 328, p. 88; further references in *SEG* xv, 873. Compare too Seneca *de clem.* i, 3.3 and Calpurnius Siculus *Ecl.* 1, 79.
The legend in Claudius’ day, yet the motif salus publica was in official use, for it appears in the Acta Arvalium in the period 50–54, and Claudius revived the Salutis augurium. Finally, though the elder Pliny criticised Claudius in the process of praising Vespasian, it was official policy to re-establish the cult of the deified Claudius, and Josephus’ account of Claudius’ accession which he wrote in Vespasian’s reign presented Claudius as an active and effective force in that crisis, whereas in his later work, the Antiquitates Judaicae, Josephus presented a very different and unflattering picture of Claudius.

Thus there is no real reason to believe that a eulogy of Vespasian, even if it was critical of Claudius, could not have repeated a motif that had been featured in eulogies of Claudius; and the links between Curtius and Pliny’s salutaris exortus Vespasiani are no closer than the links between Curtius’ imagery and Seneca’s depiction of the appearance of Claudius’ sidus.

We turn to the antithesis non revirescit solum sed etiam floret imperium, in which Instinsky saw the elaboration by Curtius of a motif that was basic to descriptions of Vespasian’s programme of reconstruction. Coins of 71 celebrated Roma resurgens and other issues of the same year advertised the benefits of the new deal: salus, pax and libertas. True. Indeed we can go further and agree with Weidemann that when Curtius went on to summarize the fruits of the re-establishment of stable government in the phrase publicae felicitatis he was using a phrase that appeared as a slogan on coins of Vespasian.

However we are not tied by these points to a Vespasianic date. Coins of Galba’s reign advertised Roma renascens and felicitas publica, and both ideas can be traced back into the Julio–Claudian era. For instance Calpurnius Siculus wrote of Nero’s accession:

aurea secura cum pace renasctur aetas (Ecl. i, 42).

Then in the Acta Arvalium we find the goddess Felicitas mentioned in the period 43–48 and Felicitas publica in the record for 58.

Thus to draw up a balance sheet on these rhetorical and official motifs, we

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19. Cf. V. Scramuzza The Emperor Claudius, 40 12 sq.
20. BMC Emp ii, Vespasian nos. 565 and 566 (the Roma Resurgens legend on coins from the mint of Illyricum [p. 87 no. 425] may be earlier than 71); no. 574 (Salus), no. 553 (Pax) and no. 548 (Libertas publica).
21. BMC Emp i, Galba nos. 25 sq. and 120 sq.
have in the Claudian era *salus publica, felicitas* and the image of Claudius as a new star shedding light on a world that has been plunged into darkness; on the other hand Vespasian’s propaganda included the motifs of *Roma resurgens* and *felicitas publica* and the elder Pliny produced the phrase *salutaris exortus Vespasiani* which is reminiscent of Curtius’ expression. My conclusion is that Instinsky and Weidemann have not shifted the balance decisively in favour of dating Curtius’ work to Vespasian’s reign.

Two points in particular seem to militate against the Vespasianic date advocated by Instinsky and Dr. Vogel-Weidemann. First the clause *insociabile est regnum* would not have been a tactful expression to use in eulogy of Vespasian, especially after he made Titus his partner in the principate, apparently as early as February 71. Certainly the idea of *regnum insociabile* was a commonplace, and whilst through association with Gaius, Nero and Domitian it acquired a sinister connotation, on its own it was a respectable principle of government. The issue in 41 was whether there should be a return to Republican collegial government or whether the principate should be continued: the people favoured the appointment of a single ruler - *unus rector*; contrast the scene in 69 when the issue was who should be *princeps*. Curtius’ comment that Rome was *sine suo capite* and that *discordia membra trepidarent,* when taken with his phrase *insociabile regnum,* points rather to the accession of Claudius.

The second obstacle to a Vespasianic date lies in the closing sentence, *absit modo invidia,* etc. (par. 6). The concessive clause implies that some uncertainty shrouded the succession, but this was hardly the case in Vespasian’s reign when there were two sons of mature age. Curtius used the term *posteritas* and not *suboles* or *progenies* and thus he was not thinking of the emperor’s children so much as the succession within the imperial *domus.* This would fit the early period of Claudius’ reign well: Britannicus was born in 41 and Claudius sought to strengthen the dynasty by marrying off his daughters Antonia and Octavia to Cn. Pompeius Magnus and L. Junius Silanus. A prayer for the *posteritas eiusdem domus* was apposite, and one can find a similar vague expression in Seneca’s *Consolatio ad Polybium: quam dui inter mortales erit, nihil ex domo sua mortale esse sentiat!* (12,5)

The prayer for the dynasty must clearly be linked with the *vota* that became a feature of the imperial cult and Instinsky follows Stroux in noting the

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23. Suet. Gaius 22 and Domitian 12, 3, Tac. Ann. xiii, 17; cf. Livy i, 14.3, Seneca Agam. 259, Columella ix, 9.1 and Phaedrus i, 5.1. Weidemann notes that Tacitus used the term *regnum* in the sense of *principatus.* However *rex* and *regnum* were used mainly as pejorative terms by Tacitus, but if one goes back to the Julio–Claudian era one finds that Seneca frequently coupled *rex* and *princeps* together in a non-pejorative sense (Wickert RE xxii, 2111-2). One should add that Curtius’ comment refers primarily to the Macedonian situation and only by implication to the principate.


evidence for special vota for the Flavian dynasty. However again we can push the date back into the Julio-Claudian era, where we find for instance in Tiberius' reign a dedication Tib. Caesar[i Aug.] f. Augusto et pro perpetua salute divinae domus.

Thus a Claudian date for Curtius' prayer for the dynasty would not be inapposite.

It seems likely that Curtius wrote later than Trogus and Livy and knew of the trial of M. Terentius in Tiberius' reign and was aware of Caligula's imitatio Alexandri. His comments on the accession of the new emperor fit the crisis of 41 better than the civil war that preceded Vespasian's principate, and his rhetoric would seem to match the conventions of the 40s more or less as well as those of the 70s.


27. CIL xiii, 4635 and see S. Weinstock MDAI (A) lxxvii, '62 306 sq., esp. p. 317.


30. I. Lana RFC lxxcii, '49 48 sq. I have elsewhere suggested that Curtius' reference to Alexander's concern for his sisters (plural C.R. iii, 6.15 and vi, 3.5) does not match the historical record well but is reminiscent of Caligula's pietas towards his sisters.