

Department of the Classics, Harvard University

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Author(s): G. W. Bowersock

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THE PROCONSULATE OF ALBUS

G. W. BOWERSOCK

THE proconsuls of Asia certified by Aelius Aristides have provided recurring vexation for historians of the Antonine age. The dating of the proconsulates involves urgent and unsolved problems, pertaining to events and personalities of importance. For example, Aristides' Quadratus raises the substantial and thorny issue of the martyrdom of Polycarp.¹ As for Albus, in whose proconsulate a chain of serious earthquakes devastated western Turkey, the recent publication of two new inscriptions by the Austrian Archaeological Institute suggests a new solution to an old problem. When was Albus proconsul of Asia?²

In the third Sacred Discourse, after an account of the death of Zosimus and the dangers of touching cattle flesh, Aristides observes by way of excursus, καὶ χρόνῳ ὕστερον οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ πυκνοὶ σεισμοὶ γίνονται ἐπὶ Ἄλβου ἀρχοντος τῆς Ἀσίας.³ This succession of earthquakes left Mytilene, Ephesus, and Smyrna very badly off, according to Aristides: he mentions those cities not because they were the only ones to suffer — many others did, he says — but because he was himself in Smyrna at the time and won great fame there by sacrificing a βούς and ending the disasters, so great was his influence with divine powers. This, at least, he avers. One indication of the date of these events is, of course, Zosimus' death, which will have occurred, to judge from Aristides' chronological scheme, in the mid-140's sometime,⁴ but the interval

¹ On this notorious issue see the discussion by T. D. Barnes to appear in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, 18 (1967).

² This question was the subject of a long correspondence with my friend Dr. Charles Behr in the summer of 1963, and I am very grateful to him for his criticisms. His own views are to appear in his *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*. I am also grateful for discussion about Albus during seminars which I conducted at Harvard, Oxford, Leeds, and Toronto in 1966/1967. I owe particular thanks to Prof. C. P. Jones.

³ Aristid. 49.38 K. The excursus is due to the mention of cattle flesh: the god ordered Aristides to sacrifice a βούς at the time of the earthquake.

⁴ Cf. A. Boulanger, *Aelius Aristide* (1923) pp. 136 and 486; W. Hüttl, *Antoninus Pius* (1933) II 48; C. Behr (n. 2 above). This dating of Zosimus' death presupposes that Aristides was born in 117, not (the old alternative) in 129: the

implied by χρόνω ὕστερον is unfortunately indeterminable. Expressions of this kind often designate a time lapse of a year or two, but they need not: in one instance χρόνοις ὕστερον allows up to thirteen years.⁵ The plain fact is that Aristides' narrative provides no help in placing Albus' proconsulate, — apart from yielding a *terminus post* of c. 145. And the year 146/147 cannot be assigned to Albus, since T. Atilius Maximus is already securely lodged there.⁶ Hüttl, therefore, deposited Albus in the next space, 147/148, as Maximus' successor; and from that date, simply established, Degrassi proposed a consulate in c. 131.⁷ Charles Behr, in his *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, prefers 148/149.⁸ No earthquakes are otherwise known for either of those years.

For some time Albus' proconsulate has been independently attested. An inscription from Ephesus records the dedication of a gymnasium by that affluent and important Ephesian, Vedius Antoninus, son of the Asiarch of the same name.⁹ The dedication occurred, it is stated, in the proconsulate of Antonius Albus and under the rule of Antoninus Pius. That was very useful information, but disappointingly imprecise. Another inscription from Ephesus revealed the same Vedius as city secretary when Pius bore the title of consul for the third time, hence between 140 and 144.¹⁰ Here was a clue, perhaps, to the dating of Vedius' active career: he might be expected to be dedicating a gymnasium in the 140's. Thus, confirmation of a date like 147/148 or 148/149.

There is other evidence, suggestive, inconclusive, and frustrating. The Acts of the Arval Brothers exhibit among their number a L. Antonius Albus.¹¹ Until recently this name figured in Arval lists from 117 to 150, but it was conspicuously absent from the nearly complete list for 155. A few years ago new fragments of the Arval Acts turned up from the years 109–112: there is no alternative to restoring L. A[n]tonium

fact that M. Nonius Macrinus has to be proconsul of Asia in 170/171 (consul suffect almost certainly in 154) clinches the already strong arguments for the earlier date. Cf. the age of Aristides in the proconsulate of Macrinus according to the subscription of Aristid. 22 K.

⁵ Aristid. 50.9 K (from 153 to 166). Note Boulanger (n. 4 above) p. 136 n. 1 on the phrase χρόνω ὕστερον: "une très vague indication chronologique."

⁶ *IGR* 4.1399.

⁷ Hüttl (n. 4 above) I 333, II 48f; A. Degrassi, *I Fasti Consolari dell'Impero Romano* (1952) p. 38.

⁸ Cf. n. 2 above.

⁹ *SEG* 4.533.

¹⁰ *SIG*³ 849.

¹¹ References are listed in *PIR*², A 810. *AE* 1947.59 is referred by R. Syme to 150: *JRS* 43 (1953) 160.

Albus] as being co-opted a Brother in 111.¹² However, it is not necessary that the L. Antonius Albus recorded now from 111 to 150 be the same man; father and son could be indicated. There happens to be a L. Antonius Albus who was consul suffect in 102, and he may have been the first or only *Arvalis* of that name. (His survival to the age of ninety cannot be proved or disproved.) Such intelligence about one or more persons called L. Antonius Albus is all very welcome, and one may hope that another item will turn up eventually to permit some precision about these details. At the moment, what we know about Albus the Arval Brother cannot be of any assistance in establishing the date of Aristides' proconsul. There is no way of telling whether the proconsul was son or grandson (or anything else) to the consul of 102, nor whether the proconsul was a Brother at all. The evidence of the Acts must itself be interpreted in the light of conclusions reached without it.

Before an otherwise unattested series of Asian earthquakes, frequent and destructive over a wide area, be enshrined in modern reconstructions of Antonine history, it will be fruitful to consider the datable earthquakes that actually are attested for this period. They are three in number, two of which can be rejected at once in a consideration of Albus: the earthquake of 142 is too early, and the earthquake of 178 is too late.¹³ What is left is a series of earthquakes that can be ascribed to early 161, and these merit special attention. Very soon after becoming emperor, Marcus Aurelius delivered an address on a dreadful earthquake at Cyzicus, and in his correspondence Fronto twice mentions the *Cyzicena oratio*.¹⁴ The calamities at Cyzicus are undoubtedly due to the earthquakes which Dio Cassius describes with particular reference to the destruction of a great temple at Cyzicus.¹⁵ The report of Dio survives in both Zonaras and Xiphilinus, and the identical origin of the two passages is made certain by their common account of the trouble at Cyzicus. Now Zonaras presents the material on the earthquake in a group of events which belong partly to Pius' reign and partly to Marcus'; Xiphilinus, on the other hand, ascribes the same material on the

¹² *Bull. Commiss. Arch. Comunale di Roma*, 78 (1961/1962, publ. 1964) 122-123. There is an egregious mistake in the version of the text in *AE* 1964.70, where Aelium instead of Albus appears.

¹³ Earthquake of 142: *SHA* Pius 9.1, Aristid. 24.3, 53, 59 K; cf. Hüttl (n. 4 above) II 38-39. Earthquake of 178: Aristid. 18 and 19 K passim, Philostr. *VS* p. 582.

¹⁴ Fronto *Epist.* pp. 91 and 92 van den Hout. Cf. H.-G. Pflaum, *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium Bonn* 1963 (*Antiquitas*, Reihe 4, n. 2, 1964) p. 113.

¹⁵ Dio 69.15.4. It should perhaps be noted that there was also an earthquake at Dura in October 160: *AE* 1931.114.

earthquake to the reign of Pius. In view of the testimony of Fronto about Marcus' speech soon after his accession, the correct interpretation of the passages in Zonaras and Xiphilinus will be that the earthquakes occurred during the change of emperors, or possibly at the very end of Pius' life (so that when Marcus assumed the power he was left to deal with the catastrophe). In short, we have to do with early 161, for Pius died on March 7th of that year. The earthquakes could naturally be associated with one or the other emperor.

The earthquakes of 161 ought to be connected with a curious document in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. At 4.13 an emperor's rescript to the *κοινόν* of Asia is quoted; although probability is high that the document is fiction, there is no reason why its historical context may not have some verisimilitude. There is a reference to earthquakes that have been occurring and are still occurring: *περὶ δὲ τῶν σεισμῶν τῶν γεγονότων καὶ γιγνομένων*. This rescript is introduced in a dossier of documents which are assigned to the reign of Pius,¹⁶ and yet it is Marcus who appears as the rescript's author.¹⁷ Marcus is there in the fifteenth year of his tribunician power, precisely the year in which he became emperor; hence, as he is here emperor, the document is to fall between March 7 and December 9, 161. In the manuscript of Justin's *Apology* the same rescript occurs, but this time with Pius as author in his twenty-fourth year of tribunician power.¹⁸ That year began on December 10, 160, and Pius died on the following March 7th, still in the twenty-fourth year of tribunician power. The rescript has a genuine historical context, and that is why, bogus as it probably is, it can oscillate between two emperors in the year 161. The earthquakes were connected with both.

It is unpleasant but necessary to record here that some distinguished scholars who have treated the Eusebius passage in conjunction with Albus' proconsulate have through carelessness combined the fifteenth year of tribunician power (which appears for Marcus) with the version ascribed to Pius. They have thus dated the imperial rescript to 152/153, the fifteenth year of Pius' tribunician power. This combination exists nowhere in the ancient texts, but it has been uncritically presented as ancient testimony.¹⁹ The item has to go.

¹⁶ Cf. Eus. *HE* 4.12.

¹⁷ He is there possessed anachronistically of the title *'Αρμένιος*.

¹⁸ Justin *Apol.* 1.70. Cf. E. Schwartz, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte: Eusebios Werke* II 3, pp. clvi-clvii: Schwartz saw that the *KA* in the tribunician number of Pius had to be a simple corruption in transmission of *KΔ*.

¹⁹ Important and influential instances of this error: Boulanger (n. 4 above) p. 487; Hüttl (n. 4 above) II 48.

In the face of arguments for a date in the late 140's for Albus in Asia, it would be rash to express a conviction that Albus belongs in 161 solely because the only available attested earthquakes fall early in that year and were — like those under Albus — frequent. But there is happily now more evidence which calls for exploitation. Two inscriptions which affect the present problem appeared in a single volume, dated 1959;²⁰ but just because they were in the same volume (and published by different scholars) their mutual relevance was not noted. Both texts come from Ephesus.

One text is a rescript on port duties by L. Antonius Albus himself, as proconsul; the rescript is dated by the secretaryship of Ti. Claudius Polydeuces Marcellus, called an Asiarch.²¹ This is an edifying detail, because an inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander, not far from Ephesus, is dated by the secretaryship and high priesthood of a Ti. Claudius Polydeuces Marcellus, also called an Asiarch;²² the Magnesian inscription is dated additionally by the sixteenth tribunician power of Marcus, thus between December 10, 161 and December 9, 162. The parallel names and the duplication of the title Asiarch suggest that this is one man. The secretarial posts are probably local in each case, rather than the *κοινόν* magistracy,²³ but the service of a leading citizen of a smaller city like Magnesia in a larger one like Ephesus would not be surprising.²⁴ The Ephesus and Magnesia inscriptions cannot be dated to exactly the same period, since Albus served as proconsul — at least part of the time — under Pius, and the Magnesia text is not earlier than December 10, 161. But the conjunction of the two texts suddenly makes seductive the view that Albus was proconsul in the early sixties, exactly when attested earthquakes occurred. This is the general period to which, on present knowledge, Marcellus the Asiarch belongs.

It will not be forgotten that Albus was in office when Vedius Antoninus dedicated his gymnasium at Ephesus, and Vedius was apparently active in the 140's. That was a strong argument, until another inscription appeared (the second of the two mentioned above).²⁵ It honors the same

²⁰ *JÖAI* 44 (1959).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142 = *SEG* 19.684 (with a false report of Keil's view of the date).

²² *Inscr. v. Magnesia* n. 187.

²³ Cf. the remarks of J. Keil in *JÖAI* 44 (1959) 146 and J. Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit* (1965) p. 50 n. 2. The evidence for Marcellus was insufficient to persuade Keil of a later date for Albus. But note L. Robert, *Rev. de Philol.* 41 (1967) 60: "vers 160."

²⁴ Note the great Polemo from Laodicea (Philostr. *VS* pp. 530–532): he administered public affairs in Smyrna but did not neglect his native city.

²⁵ *JÖAI* 44 (1959) Beiblatt pp. 257–259.

Vedius, son of the homonymous Asiarch; and it contains the unsuspected revelation that he was in charge of preparing the city of Ephesus to receive Lucius Verus during his visit in 162 on his way to the Parthian War. This text establishes instantly, therefore, that Vedius Antoninus was no less active in the early 160's than in the 140's. Accordingly, nothing remains to obstruct the relocation of the proconsulate of L. Antonius Albus to the year 160/161, encompassing the reigns of both Pius and Marcus as well as the earthquakes which were *πολλοὶ καὶ πυκνοί*. And much exists now to support such a relocation. Nothing remains at all — apart from Aristides' indeterminate *χρόνῳ ὕστερον* — to support any other date for the proconsulate of Albus.

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