NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

THE MONEYERSHIP OF MARCUS LEPIDUS TRIUMVIR

The later career of M. Aemilius M.f. Q.n. Lepidus, triumph rei publicae constituentes, if not exactly glorious, must surely, at least, be regarded as distinguished. Yet while his activities between 46 and 36 are reasonably well attested, although mostly in literary sources more interested in the lives of Antony and Octavian, relatively little can be unearthed from the literature concerning his early career as an up-and-coming politician. On the whole, Lepidus' character, achievements and failings have been treated in so cursory a fashion in comparison to his fellow triumvirs, that, for a politician who gained the highest offices in the res publica, and who belonged to one of the most prestigious senatorial families, he has remained a rather shadowy figure in Roman politics. Beyond the barest factual information, his rise to eminence seems to have gone largely unnoticed by contemporaries. This paper discusses new evidence which not only throws light on the reason why Lepidus served as moneyer, but also reveals that his entry into a political career was, as for most republican politicians, the result of a well planned strategy.

The date of Lepidus' moneyership has been variously attributed to between 66 and 61, but more recently, with the aid of coin hoard evidence, Crawford suggested that Lepidus was a monetalis in 61, the year after his elder brother, L. Aemilius Paullus Lepidus, held the same position. More recently still, a new hoard, discovered about five years after the publication of Crawford's work, has thrown considerable doubt on the claim that Lepidus was in fact moneyer in that year. 5940 republican denarii found at Mesagne in Calabria, have been examined and catalogued by Hersh and Walker. These have tied the hoard securely to 58 since it contains a fair quantity of the aedilician issue of M. Aemilius Scaurus and P. Plautius Hypsaeus. The rather small denarius issue of Lepidus, with thirty or so dies, is barely represented, but in good condition, which points to a date of production between 59 and 58. Thus Hersh and Walker conclude that the 'issues of Lepidus are apparently the latest in the Mesagne Hoard'. Of the three reverse types, all of which are dedicated to the memory of his illustrious ancestor M. Aemilius Lepidus, consul in 187, pontifex maximus and princeps senatus, one (denarius no.419, 2a) is of particular interest in
assessing Lepidus' potential calibre as a politician and his ability to exploit his family connections and contemporary political affairs. Thus:

'Togate figure on r., crowning figure on l., who wears chiton and holds staff; on r., PONT. MAX upwards; on l., TVTOR REG downwards; above, S.C; below, M. LEPIDVS. Border of dots."

The general opinion as to the significance of this type used to be that it referred to the embassy which went to Egypt and Macedonia in 201–200, of which M. Aemilius Lepidus was the junior member. In the course of this embassy Lepidus was later reputed to have been appointed guardian of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, the young king of Egypt, who had succeeded to the throne in 203 aged about five years. Hence the legend 'tutor regis' on this denarius.

It is true that Livy relates that three legati were despatched to Ptolemy to announce the defeat of Hannibal and Carthage, but at no stage in his account does he discuss a guardianship over the young Egyptian monarch. Since neither Livy nor Polybius, the latter the source nearest in time to the alleged events, note such a tutorship over Egypt in their histories, scholars have tended to dismiss the claim as unhistorical, and have seen it as most likely the result of family propaganda of the Aemilii Lepidi. That this family should have possessed a special relationship with the Ptolemaic house in the second century would be not all unusual, given the instances attested in the sources of senatorial families who acted as patrons or advisors of newly conquered regions, of client states, or of provincial or foreign aristocrats elsewhere in the Mediterranean. The reverse type of this denarius makes more sense, therefore, if it is taken as an illustration of the well known and longstanding intimate link between the Aemilii Lepidi and the ruling family of Egypt.

The portrayal of a famous ancestor and his legendary links with a foreign power was a very sensible way for a young and ambitious politician to advertise himself to the citizen body. Lepidus who was born a little after 90 was ready to embark on a political career at the beginning of the 50's. By obtaining a moneyership immediately prior to a quaestorship he could have utilised his time by making his name conspicuous, a useful factor before elections. Moreover, Lepidus, like his brother, had more than the usual reasons for becoming a monetalis, an officer who traditionally used his position to display family propaganda. His father, the consul of 78, had, of course, raised a rebellion against the state and had subsequently died in exile; his reputation was, therefore, no help at all in furthering the careers of his sons. Hence the rather blatant way in which Paullus Lepidus avoided the ignominious association with his father by drawing on his more distant relationship with the conqueror of Perseus of Macedon. This connection was thus barred to his brother who evidently chose instead to illustrate events from the career of his second century forebear, for which,
no doubt, sufficient architectural and artistic edifices remained at Rome to jog the memories of the citizens. And it seems highly likely, considering the evidence from the Mesagne hoard, that Lepidus was prompted in this move by contemporary political affairs. It so happens that the redating of Lepidus’ denarius ties in well with events affecting the Ptolemaic dynasty at that time. In 59 Ptolemy XII Auletes had asked to be granted the title of ‘friend and ally of Rome’ which he secured, so it is claimed, by an enormous bribe. When he tried to recoup this expense by taxing his subjects in 58, he was expelled and made his way to Rome in the hope of winning support from the Senate for his cause. Such news was certainly notorious enough, and sufficiently in the public domain, for Lepidus to be able to remind the average Roman of his family’s previous links with the Ptolemies. And although he is not known to have been an active participant in the wheeling and dealing which finally secured Ptolemy’s eventual return in 55, he surely benefitted from the affair and made his denarius relevant to the times in which it was minted.

To all intents and purposes the literary tradition has branded Lepidus the passive partner of more ruthless and astute men. Yet this summary of a political career which culminated in the highest offices of the res publica is surely infected with bias. A moneyership in 58 accords well with Lepidus’ career, and his denarius issue should be regarded as a skillful way of attracting public attention, blurring the connection with a disgraced father, proclaiming a family link with a famous senatorial ancestor, showing this ancestor’s many and varied successes in public life both at home and abroad, and capitalising on a rather sordid, sensational and current political issue. Naturally enough, a successful monetālis was not assured of an unfettered rise in the cursus honorum, but a notable denarius type was bound to ease the difficulty of winning future public office. In the light of the evidence from the Mesagne hoard, it may be argued that Lepidus’ first steps in the political arena are not to be reconciled with the sluggish and torpid behaviour with which he was later credited, and which has so influenced, in my view unfairly, modern opinions about this man.

Notes

2. Plut. Ant. 6.4, 10.1, 14.1, 18–21; Cic. 46.3; Suet. Aug. 8.3, 12.1–13.1, 16.4, where in a brief account of the triumvir’s relegation mention is made of his ‘superbia’.
3. Cicero evidently knew Lepidus well, ad Att. 13.42.3, 13.47a.1, but there is little mention of him prior to 45. While Lepidus was a loyal supporter of the Senate against the ambitions of Antony, Cicero regarded him with favour, Phil. 3.23: ‘De supplicatione, credo, M. Lepidi, clarissimi viri’; Phil. 5.38, 5.41; Phil. 13.7–16, 13.17: ‘quis fortunator Lepido’, 13.43, 13.49: ‘vir ornatissimus’; ad fam. 10.27.1–2. When
Lepidus joined Antony shortly after Mutina, however, Cicero’s comments quickly turned to outright hostility, *ad Brut.* 2.2.1, 1.10.2, 1.13.1, 1.12.1–2, 1.14.2, 1.15.4, 9–12; *ad fam.* 12. 8.1, 12.9.2, 12.10.1. Useful evidence concerning Lepidus’ various offices is, nevertheless, provided by Cicero. Thus *ad fam.* 13.26.3 (consulship in 46); *ad Att.* 13.42.3, 13.47a.1 (magister equitum in 45); *Phil.* 5.38, 13.17 (magister equitum in 44); *Phil.* 5.41, 13.7, 13.15 (pontifex maximus in 44).


7. Altogether 196 denarii minted by the aediles Scaurus and Hypsaeus were found in the Mesagne Hoard compared with just 7 of Lepidus, 279 of Paulus Lepidus and 268 of his probable colleague in the moneyership L. Scribonius Libo, Hersh and Walker (above note 6) 112.

8. The rare issue of Lepidus’ fellow triumvir M. Pupius Piso M.f. Frugi, Crawford, no.418 (10 obverse dies, 11 reverse dies) is absent, though this is hardly surprising and does not affect the new dating proposed by Hersh and Walker (above note 6) 131.

9. Hersh and Walker (above note 6) 133


11. Crawford (above note 5) 443.

12. On the embassy see Liv. 31.2.1–4, 18.1; Pol. 16.27, 34.1–7, who also notes Philip V’s interview with, and amused dismissal of, the handsome young Marcus Lepidus in 200; *MRR.* 1.321.


14. The senior members of this embassy were C. Claudius Nero, cos.207, and P. Sempronius Tuditanus, cos.204, *MRR.* 1.321.


16. Thus E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*, Oxford, 1958, 154–67, discusses senatorial families and their overseas clients, including the Claudii Marcelli and Syracuse, the Valerii Laevini and the Aetolians, the Minucii Rufi and the Ligurians, the Domitii Ahenobarbi and Transpadane Gaul and the Corneli sti Scipiones and Numidia (Sall. *Ing.5.4*).

17. Scullard (above note 13) 237, n.3; F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Oxford, 1979, Vol.3, 326–327, who also notes that M. Aemilius Lepidus, princeps senatus, on account of his connections with Egypt, played a significant role on the eve of the war between Ptolemy VI and Antiochus IV of Syria, Pol. 28.8.

18. The portrayal of famous ancestors on first century denarii was not, however, an innovation of the Aemilii Lepidi. See also the reference to L. Cassius Longinus.
Ravilla, cos.127, who as tribune was responsible for the lex Cassia tabellaria, on an issue, with a portrait of Libera, by L. Cassius Q.f., dated to about 78, Crawford, no.386, and on an issue, with a voting scene, by L. Cassius Longinus, dated to about 63, Crawford, no.413. Furthermore, M'. Aquillius, cos.101, and his provincial command in the Servile War in Sicily, is referred to on the denarius of M'. Aquillius M'.f. M'.n. (presumably a son) dated to about 71, Crawford, no.401. The portrait of C. Coelius Calclus, cos.94, appears on the denarius of his son, moneyer in about 51, Crawford, no.437. Most famous perhaps is the denarius issue of Q. Caepio Brutus, dated to about 54, Crawford, no.433, with the portrait of his ancestor L. Iunius Brutus, cos.509, on the obverse and C. Servilius Ahala, magister equitum in 439, on the reverse.


19. Lepidus' quaestorship is not attested, MRR. 2.527, but would certainly fit comfortably into 59 or 57 since he was praetor in 49, probably suo anno, and elected before the civil war put paid to the normal electoral process.

20. Thus the reverse of Paullus Lepidus' denarius issue shows Perseus and his sons as captive of a togate figure who must obviously be L. Aemilius Paullus, as the legend PAVLLVS indicates, Crawford, no.415.

21. Lepidus' denarius no.419, 1a illustrates an equestrian statue dedicated to the princeps senatus for his bravery in the Second Punic War, Val. Max. 3.1.1. Lepidus' denarius no.419, 3a, with its portrayal of a female head on the obverse and the façade of a building on the reverse with the legend AEMILIA REF., is usually taken to refer to the Vestal Aemilia and to the 'Basilica Aemilia', Crawford (above note 5) 444; E. Nash, Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome, London, 1968, I.174–175. The Basilica Aemilia or Basilica Aemilia et Fulvia was first built in 179 during the censorship of M. Aemilius Lepidus and M. Fulvius Nobilius, Liv. 40.46.16, 51.5; Varro, De Lingua Latina, 6.4, and is generally assumed to have been restored by the moneyer's father in 78, Pliny, NH. 35.13. R.D. Weigel, 'A Reevaluation of Lepidus's 'Basilica Aemilia' Denarius', Proceedings of the International Numismatic Congress, (1986) 147–152, argues, however, that this assumption is incorrect and that what is actually portrayed on this denarius is the goddess Concordia and the Porticus Aemilia. The Porticus Aemilia was constructed by Lepidus, the future princeps senatus, when he was aedile in 193, Liv. 34.44.5. Furthermore, Pliny's evidence for a reconstruction of the Basilica Aemilia in 78 is extremely vague, and refers only to the setting up of clipeatae imagines by the consul, and not to any actual rebuilding work. The Basilica was indeed restored, but in 54 and 34 by the triumvir's brother Paullus Lepidus and his son. Thus Weigel's main hypothesis that Concordia and the Porticus Aemilia are to be preferred to the Vestal and the Basilica Aemilia, seems sound, in my opinion, especially when seen in the context of the moneyer's other issues.

22. Cic. ad Q. fr. 2.2.3; ad Att. 2.5.1, 16.2; Diod. 1.83.8; Plut. Cato Min. 35.2; Suet. Jul. 54.3.

23. The illustration of a Ptolemy 'crowned' could also be construed as a Ptolemy 'friend and ally of Rome', although Auletes can hardly be described as an infant in 59. E.S.
Gruen, ‘Pompey, the Roman Aristocracy, and the Conference of Luca’, *Historia* 18 (1969) 87, points out that Lepidus and his brother Paullus were enemies of Pompey and allies of Caesar. The latter was responsible for the decree of friendship to Ptolemy Auletes, and this denarius issue may thus, moreover, be an indication of Lepidus’ support for Caesar’s activities in 59.

24. G. Huber, *Untersuchungen zu Caesars Oberpontifikat*, Tübingen, 1971, 93–97, suggested that Lepidus’ denarius with the ‘tutor regis’ reverse implied that the present *pontifex maximus*, in other words Caesar, was just the man to be sent to restore Ptolemy Auletes to his throne. Suet. *Iul.* 11, 13, noted that Caesar had been ambitious for an Egyptian command as early as 65. In 59 such a command certainly had more potential for personal *gloria* than a command north of the Alps. Crawford (above note 5) Addenda, 753, found this argument ‘inherently improbable’ due to the date of Lepidus’ moneyership, but his objections may now be ruled out.

25. My thanks to Harold Mattingly and Christine Chapman for their helpful and pertinent remarks on the draft of this paper. They are not, of course, responsible for any misconceptions which may still remain. Thanks is also due to Colleen Wharton-Hood whose perspicacious comments brought my attention to the problem of Lepidus and his coinage.

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**JUVENAL AND THE HISTORIA AUGUSTA: TWO POSSIBLE CONCORDANCES**

Alan Cameron¹ suggested that the celebrated lines of Juvenal 3. 76–8, ‘grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes, / augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus, omnia novit / Graeculus esuriens’, were consciously echoed in the *HA*, both at *Hadr.* 16.10, ‘grammaticos rhetores musicos geometras pictores astrologos habuit’, and *Saturn.* 8.3, ‘nemo illic (in Egypt) archisynagogus, Iudaeorum, nemo Samarites, nemo Christianorum presbyter non mathematicus, non haruspex, non aliptes’, this latter passage occurring in an alleged letter of Hadrian.

Cameron’s conclusion was subsequently accepted by J. Schwartz.² Neither adduced the description of Hadrian presented in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* 14.2, wherein the emperor is called a ‘Graeculus’ adept in ‘canendi psallendi medendique scientia, musicus geometra pictor ficto rque ex aere vel marmore proxime Polycletus et Euphranorae.’ Here there is the same sequence of ‘musicus geometra pictor’. ‘Medendi scientia’ is (of course) tantamount to ‘medicus’. The collocation of ‘canere’ (or ‘cantare’) and ‘psallere’ is routine, the most pertinent example being Suetonius, *Titus* 3.2, where a similar inventory of that emperor’s cultural pursuits includes the phrase ‘cantaret et psalleret iucunde scienterque’. A further echo of
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