

Proconsuls of Africa, the future Emperor Galba, and the *togatus* in the Villa Massimo

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Recently in this journal Thomas Schäfer presented an illuminating study of the headless *togatus* in the Villa Massimo, Rome.¹ Seated on a badly damaged *sella curulis*, the statue evidently represents a senior senator; stylistic and typological considerations plausibly permit it to be dated to the Claudian era.² The frontal cross-beam of the *sella* is decorated, in a manner characteristic of the 1st c. B.C. and A.D., with a small relief alluding to offices or functions exercised by the chair's owner. The toga 'covers' the central part of the relief, but two barbarians, kneeling in submission with their hands tied behind their backs, are visible on each side of the statue's legs. The one on the left is beardless and clad in trousers, the one on the right beardless and nude. Winged Victories form the upper parts of the *sella's* front legs — a unique decoration otherwise known only from the 5th c. A.D. onwards. Schäfer reasons, compellingly, as follows: (a) the theme of victory and conquered barbarians can meaningfully refer only to military activity on the part of the *togatus* — in other words, a provincial command rather than urban functions;

(b) the only provincial governors — the *sella curulis* permits no lesser rank — wearing the toga as their official garb were those of the so-called 'senatorial' provinces;³

(c) the only 'senatorial' province still entailing a genuine military command was Africa — until A.D. 39, when Caligula placed the forces stationed there under a *legatus Augusti pro praetore exercitus Africae*;⁴ hence

(d) the *togatus* was a Proconsul of Africa, most likely in the reign of Tiberius during the wars against the Numidian chief Tacfarinas, A.D. 17-24. Four candidates for identification are offered by Schäfer: M. Furius Camillus *cos.* A.D. 8, *pro cos.* 17-18;⁵ L. Apronius *cos. suff.* 8, *pro cos.* 18-21; Q. Iunius Blaesus *cos. suff.* 10, *pro cos.* 21-23; and P. Cornelius Dolabella *cos.* 10, *pro cos.* 23-24. We may yet be able to narrow down the choices, and, with due caution, advance a fifth.

A tacit assumption inherent in Schäfer's argument is that both barbarians on the *sella* refer to one and the same provincial command. This creates a difficulty of which he is well aware: while the naked one can easily symbolize North Africans, the man in trousers

1 "Ein Prokonsul von Africa in der Villa Massimo?" *JRA* 3 (1990) 187-94 (henceforth cited as Schäfer). I wish to thank Lisa Carson for bringing this article to my attention, Jerzy Linderski, for advice and furnishing materials difficult to access, and Thomas Schäfer, for a stimulating critique. Thanks also to Yann Le Bohec and another referee for *JRA*. None of these scholars must be held responsible for the arguments or errors advanced herein.

2 Ibid. 193; cf. Schäfer, *Imperii insignia: Sella curulis und Fasces* (Mainz, 1989 = *RömMitt Erg.* 29) 149-50; H. R. Goette, *Studien zu römischen Togadarstellungen* (Mainz 1989) 77 (cf. 156) M 42.

3 As ordained by Augustus: Dio 53.13.3, cf. Mommsen, *StR* 2³, 260. Governors of the 'imperial' provinces wore military dress: parade armor (on whose function as an *insigne* see Schäfer, *Imperii insignia* 247 n.89), sword, and *sagum* or *paludamentum* (Dio 53.13.6); see further below. The conventional terms 'imperial' and 'senatorial province' are employed herein, out of sloth and for the reader's convenience. Properly one should speak of 'Caesar's provinces' (*provinciae Caesaris*) and 'public provinces' (*provinciae publicae populi Romani*): see F. Millar, "'Senatorial' provinces: an institutionalized ghost," *AncW* 20 (1989) 93-97. (Such agreement on the terminology is not meant to endorse Millar's tendency to downplay the oligarchic character of the Republic.)

4 Tac., *Hist.* 4.48; Dio 59.20.7.

5 Not, however, "ein kriegserprobter Mann," as Schäfer 194 would have it: *bellorum expers* (Tac., *Ann.* 2.52.5), not *expertus*.