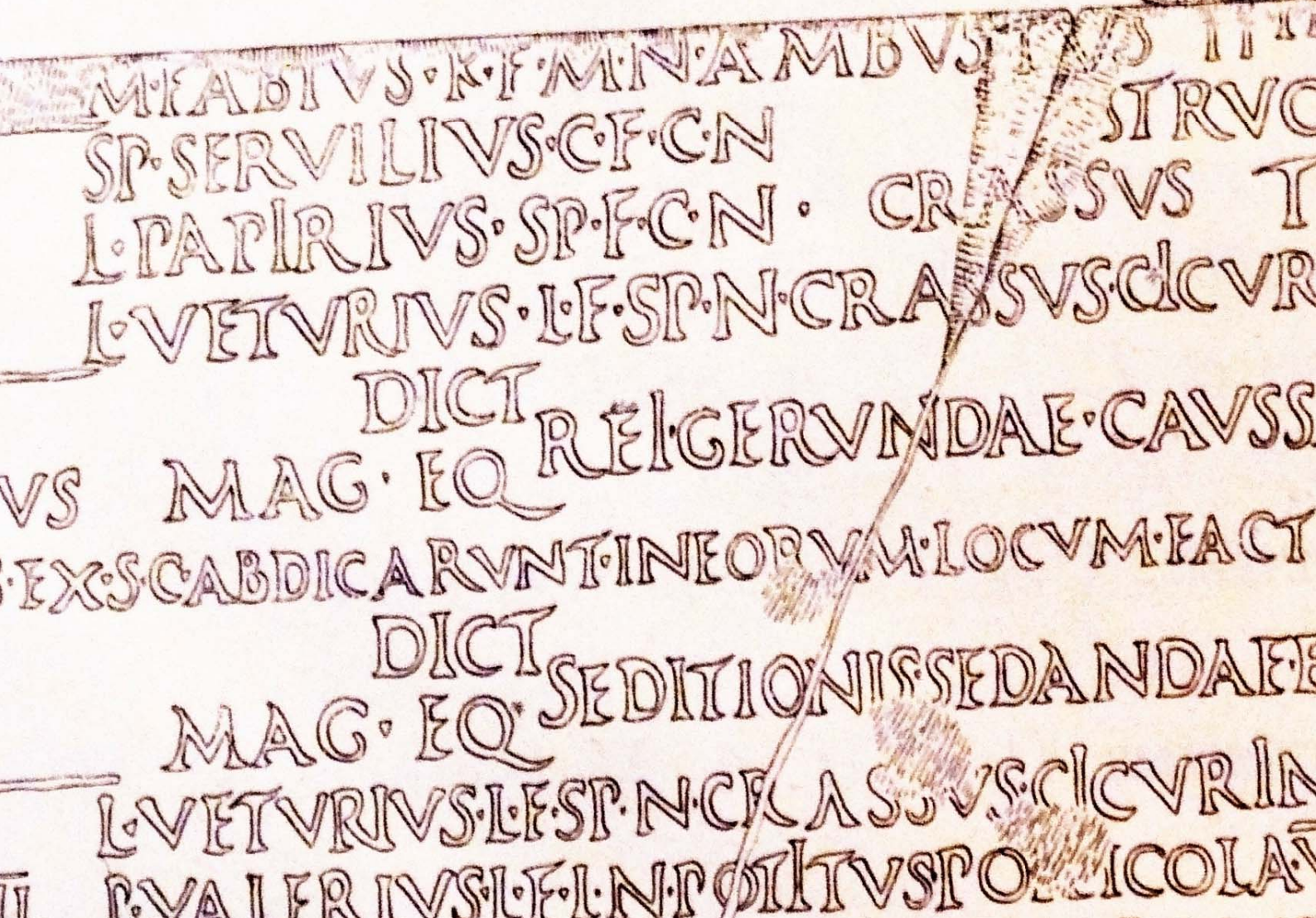


# Roman History through Roman Eyes

*On the problems in dating the Early Republic and the divergences in consular fasti*

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# 1. The need for studies on *fasti*

*“It is not of great importance for our real appreciation and understanding of the development of the history of Rome, that we should know whether a Fabius or a Claudius was consul in any particular year.”<sup>1</sup>*

In this quote Samuel Platner criticizes the grand introduction Giovanni Costa gave his own study on the Roman *fasti*. It is true that the actual names of Roman magistrates in the Republic do not matter *that* much in detail, but ancient authors refer to the magistrates as indicators of chronology. This does make the lists of consuls, *fasti*, an important object of study. That these *fasti* are not as reliable as one might think, I will elaborate in this essay.

The traditional dates of Roman history are taught to give a comprehensive view on classical antiquity: ‘Rome was founded in 753 B.C. by Romulus and the last king was expelled in the year 509 B.C.’; ‘The Republic ended with the rise of the empire in 27 B.C., which lasted until the second half of the fifth century A.D.’. But these dates are not so factual as they seem to be. After all it is obvious that myths and facts intermingle in classical literature and that ancient historiography served specific purposes. As Livy tells us that:

“Such traditions as belong to the time before the city was founded, or rather was presently to be founded, and are rather adorned with poetic legends than based upon trustworthy historical proofs, I purpose neither to affirm nor to refute. It is the privilege of antiquity to mingle divine things with human, and so to add dignity to the beginnings of cities.”<sup>2</sup>

This means that even the scholars living in antiquity were troubled by the mixture of facts and fiction. Just like Dionysius of Halicarnassus who rejected all those “‘histories’ which were neither just nor true”<sup>3</sup>. But as I said, it is implicated that there are fixed dates available for Rome’s chronology. How are we able to present a start-and end-date for the greatness of Rome when even our sources were troubled?

Actually all dates of our current Early Republican chronology were calculated by a man named Atticus in his *Liber Annalis* and passed on through the works of

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<sup>1</sup> S.B. Platner (review), *I Fasti Consolari Romani* by Giovanni Costa; *L’Originale dei Fasti Consolari* by Giovanni Costa, *Classical Philology* 8 (4) (1913) pp. 487.

<sup>2</sup> Liv. I.7 (transl.: Foster)

<sup>3</sup> D.H. I.4.1-3 (transl: Cary)

Varro. This gave the canonized chronology the name *Varronian dating*<sup>4</sup>. The use of fixed (absolute) dates was based on the yearly elected pairs of consuls. From the expulsion of the last king on, Rome elected two consuls each year to lead the people. This gave the historians the opportunity to count backwards from the moment of writing towards the establishment of the Republic, giving us the present absolute date of 509 B.C. But as Agnes Michels states, even Varro could only try to impose order where there was disorder, just like us.<sup>5</sup> But this order is clearly falsified. Christopher Mackay writes: "...years were at times inserted into the lists to bring them into line with various preconceived notions of chronology."<sup>6</sup> Since Greek authors provided absolute dates for the sack of Rome in the fourth century B.C., a memorable occasion, the Roman chronology had one fixed moment to base its chronology on<sup>7</sup>. But as Mackay states: "Between the consular year traditionally reckoned as equivalent to 301 B.C. and the sack, there are only eighty-one eponymous years, leaving a shortfall of five "missing" years"<sup>8</sup>. All the ancient authors recognised this problem, but all dealt with it in completely different ways. This makes it clear that they simply *did not know*. Since the lists of consuls appear more or less consistent down to 300 this study will focus on the consuls of 'Varronian' 509-300<sup>9</sup>.

This essay deals with the reliability of the Early Roman chronology and the consequences of this reliability for our image of the Roman Republic. To approach historical 'truth' as close as possible within the extent of this study it is of importance to first focus on the primary sources and their backgrounds. In the literature there appear variant versions of *fasti* so the background, methods and objectives of the most relevant sources are essential in this research. After the study of the available sources I will set out the several ways of absolute dating (attributing certain occasions to fixed dates). Every author uses an other way of dating which makes the study unnecessarily difficult. When I have explained my choices for the use of certain dating methods in this essay, I believe it to be necessary to say something about the different calendar types. To understand the references to years in *fasti*, we should first understand the meaning of a Roman 'year'. Since this study focuses on lists of

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<sup>4</sup> C.S. Mackay, *Ancient Rome, A Military and Political History* (New York 2004) 24.

<sup>5</sup> A.K. Michels, *The Calendar of the Roman Republic* (Princeton 1967) 145.

<sup>6</sup> C.S. Mackay, *Consuls of the Roman Republic*, University of Alberta 1998, <http://www.ualberta.ca/~csmackay/Consuls.List.html> (03-24-2012).

<sup>7</sup> This will be considered later on

<sup>8</sup> Mackay, *Ancient Rome*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Following the practise of John Pinsent I will refer to Varronian dates as 509V-300V.

consuls, we should especially understand the use of a consular year, i.e. the term of office. The moment in a year on which consuls were elected changed through time and this can possibly explain the divergences in the variant versions of chronology. I will go on by elaborating the attribution of the marble *fasti Capitolini* to a certain monument. For my ease and to prevent repetition I will refer to these tablets with consuls with the abbreviation *FC*. These *FC* are preserved for us in a magnificent way, so these will be some sort of case study in my research. The discussion of their origin seems irrelevant, but it will appear that the extent of possible manipulation of these lists depends on the monument on which they hung.

Perhaps it will be disappointing when no concluding answers are given and that some of my statements will be even weakened at the end of this essay. The reason that this thesis is still of great importance lies in the fact that it should be the basis of any study on archaic Rome to be aware of the evolving difficulties in dating. In this essay all dates are before our common era unless otherwise mentioned.





## 2. The sources

Attilius Degrassi published the marble list of the *FC* in the middle of the twentieth century of our common era, with the literary references to consuls attached. This provides us an extensive source for references to consular names. When so many of these *fasti* are handed down through literature it is frustrating that comparison cannot lead to a complete and consistent list of consuls. In order to present comparison of sources correctly we should observe the differences between the most important authors, their objectives, their consular lists and their subsequent sources<sup>10</sup>.

### Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Dionysius was a first century historian from today's Turkey. He arrived in Rome around the battle at Actium and stayed there for 22 years<sup>11</sup>. He devoted himself to writing the history of a city whose supremacy "*far surpassed all those that are recorded from earlier times*"<sup>12</sup>. In these *Roman Antiquities*, of which unfortunately only the first ten books survived completely<sup>13</sup>, he describes the history of Rome from the very beginning to the rise of the empire. He was a teacher in rhetoric and he refers to several historians whose works he has apparently read<sup>14</sup>. This combination makes him a well-educated man. He claims that historians should take the greatest care and discrimination in the use of sources<sup>15</sup>, something which he himself did not. He evidently praises the greatness of Rome throughout his works. He even shows how the earliest Romans gave birth to none but pious and brave men, which made the city so great<sup>16</sup>. He states that his main objective is not to flatter but to write history in regard for "truth and justice"<sup>17</sup>. There appear to be some contradictions in his histories<sup>18</sup>, but overall he is even keen to express contradictions between one ancient author and another to make us aware of multiple versions of the history of

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<sup>10</sup> I will not put too much effort in embedding this chapter in present discussions on the works of a single author. My object is to give an overall picture of the most important sources available to us, and to illustrate the common opinion on their subsequent sources, goals and methods.

<sup>11</sup> E. Cary, *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, Loeb Classical Library (1950) vii, D.H. I.7

<sup>12</sup> D.H. I.2

<sup>13</sup> Cary, *Dionysius*, xii

<sup>14</sup> He was aware of the lack of a coherent, critical and complete history of Rome (xiv, note 1) and clearly knew and read the existing histories of Rome (I.89. For example: Theopompus and Anaximenes (D.H. I.1), Polybius and Timaeus, Lucius Cincius, Quintus Fabio, Porcius Cato and Eratosthenes (D.H. I.74.1-2). For more examples, see Cary, *Dionysius*, xxxii

<sup>15</sup> Cary, *Dionysius*, xii

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* xiii

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* xiv

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* xxxiii

Rome<sup>19</sup>. Although Dionysius tries to stay away from partiality, translator Earnest Cary states:

“Unfortunately...his *Antiquities* is an outstanding example of the mischievous results of that unnatural alliance between rhetoric and history...The rhetoricians regarded history as a work of art whose primary purpose was to give pleasure...[Dionysius] was first and foremost a rhetorician and could see history only through a rhetorician's eyes. The desire to please is everywhere in evidence.”<sup>20</sup>

Dionysius has become notorious for his not too critical selection of sources, and his account should be read with some scepticism. He was clearly not critical enough, but because of his solid references to the sources it must have been possible for contemporary historians to check his account. So perhaps his sources were not always reliable, but he is transparent in his dating methods. Since we are able to compare his histories with the other consular *fasti*, his information on the dating of the Republic should be considered of great value. Even though he has not been critical enough, his list of consuls must be compared to the other lists. Especially his apparent use of the now lost Chronicles of Eratosthenes<sup>21</sup>, a mathematician and astronomer, and the – probably indirect – use of really important sources like the *Annales Maximi* and other sacred inscriptions makes his method of dating really valuable<sup>22</sup>.

### Titus Livius

Titus Livius (Livy) lived in the Augustan era, writing an enormous work on the history of Rome from the foundation of Rome until his time. Livy is fond of praising Rome's greatness which makes him suspect in advance<sup>23</sup>. In doing so, he makes use of all kinds of evidence, from the priestly records to the works of historians of his time and before. But it seems that he studies his primary sources through the works of others, without consulting the original document<sup>24</sup>. Livy's work on history is worthy of praise for its literary quality and the effort put into it, but his work shows his lack of experience and knowledge on the subject. If we should rely on the critical approach

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. xv-xvi

<sup>21</sup> D.H. I.74

<sup>22</sup> Cary, *Dionysius*, xxxv

<sup>23</sup> A.H. McDonald, 'Introduction', in: Bettenson (transl), *Livy: Rome and the Mediterranean*, Penguin Classics (1976) pp. 7

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 111, 113; Livy seems not to have known the *FC*, see O. Hirschfeld, 'Die Kapitolinischen Fasten', *Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie*, 9 (1875) pp. 96.

by Walsh, *Ab Urbe Condita* should be considered as a work full of errors and misinterpretations with an uncritical selection of sources<sup>25</sup>. Polybius' *Histories* seems to have been one of Livy's most important sources, but Livy does not meet Polybius' requirements of a good historian at all<sup>26</sup>. He has neither true warfare experience nor extensive knowledge of Italy's geography, and he unquestioningly reproduced the mistakes of his predecessors<sup>27</sup>. He bases his main story on a single author and mentioned variant versions at the end of chapter, without a critical analysis of his sources beforehand<sup>28</sup>.

Still all these aspects do not make his works useless. Livy had access to all kinds of sources now lost to us and he recorded historical views of other authors' works now lost too. This means that, although his main story should not be fully relied upon, we can derive valuable information about lost works from his account. Besides, Livy's work is especially useful as a 'psychological account' since he has put so much effort in reconstructing the motives of acts and the subsequent reactions<sup>29</sup>. To conclude, Livy's chronological view should not be used as firm evidence, but we will consult *Ab Urbe Condita* in order to reconstruct lost sources.

### **Diodorus of Sicily**

Diodorus, again a first century historian, was a Greek historian who wrote a typical 'world history'. Fortunately, Rome was part of this world and he refers often to Roman consuls. Actually everything we know about Diodorus is written in his own works. He spent some thirty years writing his history, but is usually counted as a less reliable source, especially on chronology. As I will later explain he just made consular pairs up to make the list fit his chronology and attached wrong consuls to the wrong occasions. In his works it is obvious that he does not like the Romans; he takes every opportunity to emphasize Rome's cruelties and misbehaviour<sup>30</sup>. We know that he used many sources, Polybius above all others, but we also know that he did not use them as a critical historian. He simply rewrote his sources and gives nothing more

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<sup>25</sup> P.G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge 1963) pp. 138, 141-5, 154.

<sup>26</sup> Walsh, *Livy*, 138

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 144

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 141

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 168

<sup>30</sup> G. Perl. 'Kritische Untersuchungen zu Diodors Römische Jahrählung', *Schriften der Sektion für Altertumswissenschaft der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 9 (Berlin 1957)

than a summary of their accounts<sup>31</sup>. In his thirty years of writing he wrote forty books from which some fifteen completely survived. The most valuable in his world history is the information on periods in history for which no other literary sources are extant.

### **Comparison is needed**

The works of Degrassi have been praised because of the valuable tables for comparison of the consuls mentioned in multiple sources. It is true that this overview provides useful references when studying the *fasti consulares*, but Degrassi's primary objective was the publication and interpretation of the *fasti Capitolini*. He wasn't studying the Roman chronology but wanted to reconstruct the original content of the lists. This means that he worked the other way round: he studied the tablets, than noticed that he should hold Varro as starting point, but omitted the lack of coherence in the literary sources. For example: in 506 Varro sets Spurius Largus and Titus Herannius as consular pair. This pair is mentioned by Dionysius in V.36.1. So for 506V Degrassi refers to Dionysius V.36.1.<sup>32</sup> But a look at Dionysius' dating methods shows a start of the Republic in 508/7 and an election of Largus and Herannius in 505/4.<sup>33</sup> So Degrassi here only proves a coherent order of appearance of the colleges, but not that Dionysius and Varro held on to the same college for the same year. There have been innumerable attempts to reconstruct somewhat of a true Roman chronology but unfortunately there is no overview available with the names and dates of colleges as mentioned in the sources.<sup>34</sup> If this extensive comparison would be published we would have a comprehensive and coherent overview of the differences in colleges attached to specific years. This would make the study on consular *fasti* much easier and effort could be spent on the true research itself instead of having all researchers first find out which ancient author states what.

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<sup>31</sup> Perl, *Diodors Jahrzählung*, 158.

<sup>32</sup> A. Degrassi, *Fasti Consulares et Triumphales, Inscriptiones Italiae, Volumen XIII – Fasti et Elogia, Fasciculus IA* (Rome 1947) 349

<sup>33</sup> D.H. I.74.1-2

<sup>34</sup> For some examples of a reconstruction, see: C. Bennett, *Roman Dates*, January 2012, [http://www.tyndalehouse.com/egypt/ptolemies/chron/roman/chron\\_rom\\_intro\\_fr.htm](http://www.tyndalehouse.com/egypt/ptolemies/chron/roman/chron_rom_intro_fr.htm) (03-24-2012); A.E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology, Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity* (München 1972).; Mackay, *Consuls*, University of Alberta 1998, <http://www.ualberta.ca/~csmackay/Consuls.List.html> (03-24-2012).

### 3. Ancient dating methods

In this chapter I will discuss the problems in dating archaic Rome and the consequences for our knowledge of the chronology. To understand the scholarly debate I will first elaborate the different ways of counting years, since both ancient and present authors use different ways of referring to dates<sup>35</sup>. The current discussion is needy for a more strict separation of calendar types to avoid confusion.

First of all there is 'our' Gregorian dating method with years before and after the birth of Jesus Christ. These years will only named by me in attaching an absolute year to a person or occasion. These years 'before Christ' are our own perception of time and should only be used when we want to establish absolute dates. As we do not know when Rome has been founded, it should be avoided to call 753 the year of the founding of Rome. When comparison of sources does give us a fixed date, for example Augustus' reign, I will use the dates according to our own perception of 'time', i.e. 27 B.C.- A.D. 14. The difference between the use of Christian dates and those of Varro lies in the difference of absolution. Varro should only be used as chronology, the Christian dates only as fixation of occasions.

A third method very common in today's scholarly debate is the use of Olympiads. Olympiads are Greek four year-terms in which the winner of a match on the Olympics could hold his title, with the Olympics of 776 as starting point of the first Olympiad. It should be noted that the Olympics were held in summer season, which makes it apparently wrong to attach single Christian years to it<sup>36</sup>. This means that the first year of the first Olympiad ran from the summer of 776 through the winter of 775. So the first Olympiad ended after the winter of 772, not in 773 as one would count four years up from 776 to 775, 774 and 773.

Besides this already complex system of dating methods the Romans themselves had at least two ways of referring to certain years. Ancient scholars very often refer to A.U.C., *ab urbe condita* (from the foundation of the city) and some

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<sup>35</sup> It is clear that ancient authors refer to fixed dates in different manners, but even today there is no coherent dating system in discussions on the Republic. F.e. Hirschfeld uses A.U.C. in accordance with Varro, Jean Bayet uses Livy's A.U.C. in the Budé Livy, Frier uses dates before Christ, Pinsent uses 'Varronian' dates before Christ. By far the worst case is that of Beloch whose notation is A.U.C./Varronian. So the sack of Rome by the Gauls is referred to as 354/390. Naturally this is erroneous since the use of A.U.C., together with Varronian dating, presupposes fixed dates which we do not have. Besides, his addition of Varronian 390 (even though he implicates an absolute 'Gregorian date') make the use of A.U.C. unnecessarily complicated. Perhaps it looks more scientific than other easy unambiguous dating systems but it makes mistakes inevitable. Evidently he was wrong in referring to 269/445 (pp. 11) and 358/406 (pp. 309).

<sup>36</sup> Samuel, *Chronology*, 191-194

present scholars refer to A.L.C., *a libertate constituta* (from the establishment of the Republic). No fixed dates should be attached here, as each author uses another date as 'the founding of Rome'. So this dating method does not necessarily start at 753V. Even more difficulties arise when considering the fact that the pre-Julian calendar was not a canonized system of days and months. For the biggest part the structures of this calendar were based on the moon and the subsequent religious and economical activities. Though these structures seem to have changed throughout time as different ancient authors write about the unknown dating methods of the past.<sup>37</sup> So to understand archaic Rome we should first understand how the early calendar probably looked like. The importance will be expressed by the different ways in which we can regard the time of a 'consular year' as we find them in the *fasti*.

### **A Luni-solar calendar**

Calendars are meant to establish a common notion of time and are most likely being set up for religious practices<sup>38</sup>. Such a 'calendar' is based on the observation of objects in the sky as seen from the earth. First of all there is the projection of the sun against a background of stars. In observance of this projection it seems that the sun rolls around the earth. It takes a so-called *tropical year* for the sun to return to the same background of stars, an interval of over 365 days. Such a revolution by the moon takes a little more than 27 days and is called a *sidereal month*. To establish a calendar based on natural processes, people search for the shortest possible process. The shorter the time of an interval, the more precise it is to calculate. Because the interval of a sidereal month is much shorter than a tropical year the moon is the easiest reference point of a calendar<sup>39</sup>. So usually each society starts with moon-based (*lunar*) calendars. Now when the sun has continued its apparent orbit during the sidereal month, it takes "about two days longer than the sidereal month to catch up with the sun again for conjunction"<sup>40</sup>, in which this 'conjunction' is the in-line position of earth, sun and moon. Now the interval between two of these conjunctions is our month, a *synodic month* in jargon<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Samuel, *Chronology*, 249

<sup>38</sup> R. Garland, Countdown to the Beginning of Time-Keeping, *History Today*, 49 (4) (1999) 37; L. Johnson, 'The Prehistoric Roman Calendar', *The American Journal of Philology*, 84 (1) (1963) 28

<sup>39</sup> Samuel, *Chronology*, 1-4

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 5

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

The moon's speed in the revolution around the earth is not only affected by the earth but by the mass of the sun as well. Combined with the ellipse-shaped orbit of astronomic objects in general, so the varying distance between these objects, synodic months do not have constant lengths. The months can even vary for almost thirteen hours!<sup>42</sup> Twelve synodic months make up a total of 354 days average<sup>43</sup>. Though it seems that the latest Regnal calendar listed 355 regular days<sup>44</sup>. This means that each tropical year the lunar calendar 'lost' over 10 days in respect to the sun. By *intercalation*, adjustment of the lunar calendar by inserting extra time-units, both calendar types were to be synchronized.<sup>45</sup> The Roman king Numa changed the calendar from a ten month- to a twelve month calendar in the late eighth century<sup>46</sup>. So perhaps the regal calendar down to Numa consisted of ten months with a total of 304 days, with the reign of the first kings almost six years shorter than the 39 tropical years we rely on in our Varronian dates<sup>47</sup>. It is even stated by Van Johnson that the earliest Roman calendars consisted of four (synodic) months, based on the gestation period of boars. This would mean that three regal years in our sources are to be counted as only one tropical year<sup>48</sup>. Now besides this speculation whether the regal length can be determined by prehistoric calendar types, it is in support of this investigation to say something about the Early Republican calendar and the role of time in the election of consuls.

### **Consular office and the Republic calendar**

The later Republican calendar is preserved in especially Ovid in his *Fasti* and in the paintings of the *fasti Antiatates Maiores*. There the most obvious are the month names. The month names are quite the same as the names in our calendar of these days, with the exception of Julius and Augustus, later named after 'some famous Romans'. The original names of these two months were *Quinctilis* (5) and *Sextilis* (6). These two names, together with those from *September* (7) to *December* (10), clearly indicate an original calendar starting in *Martius* and confirm an original calendar of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 5,6,11

<sup>43</sup> Michels, *Roman Calendar*, 12,14; Samuel, *Chronology*, 11

<sup>44</sup> This difference exists because a calendar for practical purposes can not be based upon partial days. This was overcome by intercalation (30/31 days) or omission (28/29 days) of single days to keep the calendar on track in relation to the moon. Though the total of this type of reckoning was slightly higher than the actual twelve moon revolutions. See Michels, *Roman Calendar*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel, *Chronology*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> The sources seem to be in agreement on this: Samuel, *Chronology*, 164-5. Contra: Bennett, *Roman Dates*.

<sup>47</sup> On the sum of days, see Samuel, *Chronology*, 166-7; A tropical year amounts about 365,25 days, so in 39 years they lost 51,25 days per year.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *Prehistoric Calendar*.

ten months, as described above<sup>49</sup>. When Numa noticed that the position of the moon in regard to the sun dropped about ten days a year, he introduced a twelve month year. Alan Samuel confirms the plausible existence of a ten month lunar calendar, covering the most important period of spring to fall<sup>50</sup>. In the changes Numa applied, he saved the original month names but made his new calendar start in January, as thought by Samuel and Michels and affirmed by ancient suggestions<sup>51</sup>. But as twelve months with an average of 29,5 days still do not reach the necessary 365,25 days the calendar still needed intercalation<sup>52</sup>. Unless they had a true lunar calendar.

If Ennius was correct in putting the famous eclipse on the *Nones* of *Junius* in 350 A.U.C. the calendar of the Early Republic definitely was not a true lunar one<sup>53</sup>. The *Nones* of *Junius* fell on the fifth day and as a lunar calendar begins a month at the conjunction with the sun (when the sun enlightens the not visible side of the moon) eclipses can only occur on the first day of a sidereal month. This would mean that the Early Republic already used a lunisolar calendar, as widely accepted today<sup>54</sup>, which makes intercalation inevitable as explained above. This intercalation, at least in the time of the *fasti Antiates Maiores* (*Ant. Mai.*), was applied somewhere in *Februarius*<sup>55</sup>. Due to lack of evidence, it is thought that priests may have decided when intercalary days had to be inserted. This could be done since the hills of Rome gave an absolute ideal situation for observations on the positions of astronomical objects and the priests would have noticed the relation of sun and moon and could apply intercalation<sup>56</sup>. Robert Garland suggests a political motive for the arbitrary insertion of extra days and months, as to influence the length of consular office<sup>57</sup>. But there were no unlimited intercalary units and the priests were bound to the sun's position. They could not adjust the calendar purely arbitrary since all Romans could see the position of the sun more or less accurately. The *Ant. Mai.* indicate that the

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<sup>49</sup> Michels, *Roman Calendar*, 18; *Quinctilis*= 5, *Sextilis*=6, *September*=7, *October*=8, *November*=9, *December*=10 so *Martius* is thought to be the first month. See especially Johnson, *Prehistoric Calendar* for an extensive explanation for the first months' names based on observed periodical repeating processes in nature and the true derivation of the month names. He goes far beyond the usual proposal that the other month names were derived from deities.

<sup>50</sup> Later I will explain the impossibility of this suggestion.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel, *Chronology*, 164; Michels, *Roman Calendar*, 99.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Ennius' calculations are described by Cic., *Rep.*, I.25.

<sup>54</sup> J. Rüpke, *Kalender und Öffentlichkeit, die Geschichte der Repräsentation und religiösen Qualifikation von Zeit in Rom* (Berlin 1995) 291; Bennett, *Roman dates*.

<sup>55</sup> Michels, *Roman Calendar*, 17-8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

<sup>57</sup> R. Garland, 'Countdown to the Beginning of Time-Keeping', *History Today*, 49 (4) (1999) 38.



intercalation had a fixed length and moment, although we do not understand how it was applied. Garland also suggested an omission of winter season in the Early Calendar, since the consular office focused on summer campaigns<sup>58</sup>. But looking at the part of the FC where triumphs were enlisted, we find that the generals could have a triumph on the *Kalends* of *Februarius* or the *Ides* of *Januarius* respectively<sup>59</sup>. If it is correct that the Romans used a lunisolar calendar, these two triumphs were definitely held in winter months, because the sum of months including intercalation approached the tropical year. This rejects the possibility of a calendar that omits the winter season. This does not tell us so much about the consular year, but it is important to notice that even winter season was incorporated in the consular term of office.

All the natural processes described above are in some way regarded as facts these days. So the first part of this chapter primarily provided an introduction in the perception of 'time' without new insights on Roman chronology. But it has become clear that there is not so much evidence on the application of early calendrical systems. Most answers are only hypothetical solutions and the lack of contemporary written sources gives us a blurred view on archaic Rome. The most definite conclusion related to the reliability of consular *fasti* is to state that there exist suggestions that the Early Republic used a lunisolar calendar and if this determination is correct winter season was obviously not to be excluded from the consular office. This is of great importance for the reliability of the *fasti* since it helps us to understand the time span the consular colleges have covered. Until now we use the *fasti* as indication of years, but here I have shown how these years can be interpreted in completely different ways. To be able to understand the early Roman calendar it is inevitable to understand the basics of Roman chronology and especially the consul lists called *fasti*.

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<sup>58</sup> Garland, *Countdown*, 37.

<sup>59</sup> See Degrassi on year 346V and 339V.



#### 4. The attribution of the *fasti Capitolini*

After the literary sources and calculation of years it is important to understand one other important source for the list of successive consuls: the inscriptions set up on several locations both in- and outside Rome. Traditionally the Roman senate, probably already present since Romulus as advisory body for the kings, started to elect two magistrates with the expulsion of the last king. These magistrates would hold office for one 'year' in which they had some sort of absolute power. The function of consul was a desired one, since it was the highest, most prestigious and above all eponymous office. The *fasti* with this specific office enlisted, are the inscriptions we need to understand.

The *pontifex maximus*, literally the highest priest, had a whiteboard on which he wrote down all public happenings that had to do with godly omens<sup>60</sup>. One of these happenings was the election of these consuls. At the end of his term the *pontifex maximus* let his records partially be inscribed on the overall priestly record. Since the consuls were consistently introduced into the list of this pontifical record, their names became the reference point of dating. If we trust authors like Polybius, Livy and Dionysius, some literary and epigraphic sources from early Rome were still visible in their times. They mention both the sacred laws of Servius Tullius and the priestly records, the *libri lintei* and the *Annales Maximi*. But some of the ancient authors suggest that these records were destroyed at the 'devastating' Gallic invasion<sup>61</sup>. The primary problem is that the period between Tullius' reign and the historical research contained at least five centuries and that these *Annales* have not been preserved for us today. However, we do have access to one other of the most important sources for early Roman chronology: the *fasti Capitolini*.

##### The contents of the *fasti Capitolini*

The *fasti consulares Capitolini* were marble tablets containing the names of curule magistrates from the founding of Rome<sup>62</sup>. It should be noted that there exist *fasti consulares Capitolini* and *fasti triumphales Capitolini*; the former defining the order of consuls and the latter marking all *triumphs* and *ovatio*s of Roman generals. These

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<sup>60</sup> The senate decided whether some omen was to be considered public or private.

<sup>61</sup> Consider Quadrigarius for example. Traditionally the story is slightly different: the Gauls left most of the city intact and sold it back to the Romans, since they did not know what great an empire would derive from this town.

<sup>62</sup> See below; they clearly included the regnal period, though some fragments are missing.

are better preserved than any other inscribed *fasti*, which makes them the primary focus of practically all studies on consular lists. Krister Hanell translates the word *fasti* as 'calendar'. But from the usage of the Latin word in ancient texts he deduced the true meaning: there we find meanings like 'almanac' or 'list of days'. The combination of these three meanings is exactly how we should interpret the consular *fasti Capitolini*<sup>63</sup> (FC). These lists with Roman names have each tenth year numbered, which make comparison really easy. On each line there are two names to be read, as both consul names are inscribed on one line. In the years of crisis a so-called *dictator* was appointed whose name, together with that of his *magister equitum*, was slightly indented. In the republican part of the lists you will further find *censors* and the colleges of military *tribunes*. In the Varronian tradition we find years when no high magistrates were elected and anarchy ruled Rome. It is thought that the consular *fasti* started with the magistrates of the regnal period, because the triumphal lists do so as well and the measurements of the tablets give an idea of the missing lines<sup>64</sup>. Though these parts are still missing. The consular FC seem to omit one of the regal years of the Varronian tradition, which sets its founding of the city one year earlier. The lists of the FC continue up to the end of Augustus' reign.

### The origins

Most fragments of the FC, not named after where they were found but after their current location, were unearthed during the sixteenth century. Though some fragments were found as late as the twentieth century. Most fragments have been found East of the temple of Castor, where the foundations of an arch were found too. Until the end of the nineteenth century the view of Pirro Ligorio was adopted, in which the *fasti* belonged to this arch. Now due to scholarly speculation and, according to Lily Ross Taylor, 'Mommsen's authority', the *fasti* came to have belonged to the *Regia*<sup>65</sup>. This *Regia* was the house and office of the highest priest where the yearly records were published so this restoration clearly made sense. But Atilius Degrassi, the modern publisher of the FC, disagreed on this points, since he noticed that there could no space have been left on the *Regia*-walls for the large, marble tablets. He pointed to the triple arch again as the carrier of the *fasti*, which at his time was

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<sup>63</sup> K. Hanell, *Das altrömische eponyme Amt*, Acta Instituti Romani Regni Sueciae, Series II (8) (Lund 1946) 68.

<sup>64</sup> L.R. Taylor, 'The Date of the Capitoline Fasti', *Classical Philology*, 41 (1) (1946) 2.

<sup>65</sup> L.R. Taylor, 'Degrassi's Edition of the Consular and Triumphal Fasti', *Classical Philology*, 45 (2) (1950) 87-8.

thought to be an Augustan<sup>66</sup>. Perhaps the restoration of marble tablets seem to have nothing to do with the study of Roman *fasti* in general but the reliability of this Varronian chronology, which is thought to be more or less represented in the *FC*<sup>67</sup>, is connected to the place of erection: either the house of the *pontifex maximus* where the records may have hung since archaic times or the imperial arch which commemorated Augustan victories. Degrassi's remarks restarted the scholarly debate. But this time the *place* of erection was not questioned, since it was speedily agreed that it was the arch, but the *origins* of the arch to which they were attributed. The discussion was based on the probable existence of two arches on the spot of the foundations that were found: one for his triumph over Parthia and the return of the legionary standards (19) and one for his victory over Marcus Anthonius at Actium (30). Here, too, it is important to understand the difference between the monuments: a senatorial, republican one or an imperial arch set up by the emperor himself. Taylor expressed this as follows:

“Degrassi and I differ only about a decade in our dates, but it is a very important decade. If Degrassi is right, the Fasti represent not an official Augustan list but an earlier list, which, with some adaptation, was based on the *Liber annalis* [italics mine] of Atticus”.<sup>68</sup>

Taylor reasoned that the foundations were of an Parthian arch. She found no different writing styles before and after 30, which pointed to an engraving at once.<sup>69</sup> Otto Hirschfeld, too, believed that the part of *FC* where triumphs were recorded was inscribed after 19. Degrassi's interpretation fell into disfavour as Taylor's analysis seemed the most probable.

One abiding feature in the debate is the *damnatio memoriae* of Marcus Antonius. We know of a senatorial decree which ordered the *damnatio memoriae* of the name 'Marcus' in the house of the Antonii after his loss at Actium<sup>70,71</sup>. This is

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid; C.J. Simpson, 'The Original Site of the Fasti Capitolini', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 42 (1) (1993) pp. 65-6.

<sup>67</sup> It should be noted however that the *FC* included only 243 regnal years, omitting one Varronian regnal year. Though down to 509V the *FC* hold on to Varronian tradition.

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, *Degrassi's Edition*, 95.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor, *Date of the Fasti*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Plut. *Cic.* 49.6; Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 51,19,3.

exactly what is seen in the consular *FC* where scratches point to erasure of Marcus Antonius' name, both his own and that of his grandfather. Degrassi used this erasure as an indication that the lists were erected before the decree of 30 with an erasure after this decree. But Taylor used another occasion, the death penalty for Marcus' son Lullus in year 2, as a possible moment for erasure of the Antonii. On other records not only Marcus had been erased, but the other Antonii as well. Besides, on the *FC* even Marcus has been re-inscribed. Taylor was convinced of an unauthorized erasure in year 2 of all the Antonii in official lists, which were restored by Augustus afterwards<sup>72</sup>. This is absolutely no reason to accept it as a *terminus ante quem*, since the fragments for the years after 12 are simply missing, but it only upholds Taylor's view for a *possible* erection on a non-Actian arch.

She strengthened her position by pointing towards "*new indications on Augustan editing*" as convincing evidence for an imperial arch in 19.<sup>73</sup> But new problems arise when we consult numismatic evidence. Elizabeth Nedergaard and Leicester Holland refer to a Roman coin (Fig. 2, next page) and a Spanish one (Fig. 4) where two different types of triple arches are depicted, which complicated the discussion of the layout of the Parthian triple arch. As far as I know these were the only two coins used in the discussion, while some others make it even more complicated. Figures 1 to 5 represent coins depicting the arches of Augustus. In the first instance we see Octavian's Actian arch with a single entrance. No difficulties so far, since it is generally accepted that the Actian arch was a single one. The second is the Roman coin depicting a Parthian triple arch, just like the third but without *quadriga*. Besides, the third is only a single entranced porch. The fourth is the Spanish coin showing a triple Parthian arch again. The most curious one is fig. 5 depicting a double arch, contradicting all other 'evidence'. So five completely different types of arches are to be seen where only two of these truly existed. No other evidence points to a double arch so fig. 5 definitely does not depict an arch the way it stood on the forum. But which coin does? In the discussion on coins 2 and 4 Ruth Stiehl already stated: "*die Münzen vermögen nichts Eindeutiges für unsere Frage*

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<sup>71</sup> R. Stiehl 'Die Datierung der Kapitolinischen Fasten', *Aparchai* 1 (Tübingen 1957) 15; Taylor, *Date of the Fasti*, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Date of the Fasti*, 1-6.

<sup>73</sup> L.R. Taylor, 'New Indications of Augustan Editing in the Capitoline Fasti', *Classical Philology*, 46 (2) (1951).

*auszusagen*<sup>74</sup>. With my interpretation of the other coins we know even less about the Parthian arch.



Fig. 1 Octavian in quadriga on top arch for Actium



Fig 2. 'Vinicius'-coin, Rome, Parthian triple arch, return of standards



Fig 3. Augustus in *quadriga* on top of Parthian singular arch, Pergamum



Fig. 4. Augustus in *quadriga* on top of Parthian triple arch, Colonia Patricia



Fig. 5. Augustus in *quadriga* on top of double arch, Colonia Patricia

I believe that the best of all visions is to be found in the reconstruction by Holland, pointing towards a triple arch built in two phases. This means that the Actian arch could have been a single entranced porch and that the addition of two extra entrances on both flanks resulted in an triple semi-Parthian arch<sup>75</sup>. This would be confirmed by the A.D. fourth century Servius Honoratus writing only about a Parthian

<sup>74</sup> Stiehl, *Datierung der Fasten*, 12.

<sup>75</sup> E. Nedergaard, 'Zur Problematik der Augustusbögen auf dem Forum Romanum', in: *Antikemuseum Berlin, Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik : eine Ausstellung im Martin-Gropius-Bau* (Berlin 1988). 225.

arch on the Roman forum without any reference to an Actian arch<sup>76</sup>. It is generally accepted that the *FC* have belonged to the most inner walls, so they were part of the Actian part of the triple arch. Perhaps Hirschfeld was right in his reconstruction of the triumphal lists after 19, because the decoration of the triumphal and consular lists differ in architectural style<sup>77</sup>. These respectively Doric and Corinthian styles make it even more convincing to distinguish two different building purposes. It is believable that Augustus seized the opportunity to turn this senatorial arch into one of his own. Since the beneficiary of both arches was one and the same – Augustus – he could change the layout without resistance. He may have used this occasion to express his rise above the senate’s voice. Even though this seems most plausible, firm evidence is lacking.

### **A fresh view**

Much has been said about which arch the *fasti* could have belonged to. Now, over forty years after Taylor’s published articles Simpson opens an interesting counterattack on the visions of both Degrassi and Taylor. Simpson criticizes the presupposition of both camps as they were only defending their position without regard for the meaning of the fragments. All their accounts were based on their supposition that the *fasti* did belong to an Augustan arch, which had not been proven at all, he states<sup>78</sup>. The placing of a list on a triumphal arch had been unprecedented, according to Simpson<sup>79</sup>. Although ‘unprecedented’ does not mean ‘unlikely’, especially not in Augustus’ case, his statement has a clue: it is too easy to just ‘assume’ these lists to have been on a type of monument where we have never found them before. Second, the ‘fact’ that there was no room for these marble tablets on the reconstruction of the *Regia* does not necessarily mean that this actually was the case. “*Intuition has taken over scholarly rigour*”, Simpson writes<sup>80</sup>. He does not understand the placement on the arch when the fragments of the *fasti* have been found widely scattered. He continues by stating how inappropriate it would have been for an Augustan arch to carry the triumphal records that ended with Balbus’ *ovatio*, while Augustus would return right after Balbus from his Eastern campaigns? In his article Simpson gives an approach unknown to me: ‘Augustus vowed a temple to

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<sup>76</sup> M.S. Honoratus, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Virgil*, G. Thilo (transl.), (1888) 7,606.

<sup>77</sup> Nedergaard, *Augustusbögen*, 232-3.

<sup>78</sup> Simpson, *Site of the Fasti Capitolini*, 67, note 27.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 62.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 66.



Mars Ultor on his forum with which Mars' position in the Regia diminished. The end of the triumphal *fasti* around 19 B.C. make sense when we would notice that the Augustan forum where the temple for Mars Ultor was built was completed that time and the imperial archives were moved to the forum. The Regia first burned down in 39 and according to Simpson there exist indications that it was rebuilt, partially with marble. A century later, during the great fire of A.D. 64 the Regia was destroyed again and probably never rebuilt. Martial equipment, found alongside the arch' foundations, has previously been connected with the Parthian victory of Augustus but Simpson proposes an easier link with the important position of Mars in the nearby Regia.' In this reconsideration he states that *fasti* were usually only to be found in *templa* which the Regia was and which Augustus' arches were not. The Regia still seems to be the most probable place for the FC, especially when taking into account that one table – which was found *in situ* – fits the indicated position of the Regia. He therefore wants to revive restoration on the Regia, which would be a far more common place for consular *fasti*.

### **Authenticity**

It is most likely that Holland was right in adopting a single Actian arch and adding the lateral Parthian porches on both sides. This is confirmed by both numismatic and literary evidence, though our sources are not unambiguous. The lateral entrances of the triple arch seem an improbable place for the *fasti*, and actually all scholars position them to be on the outer walls of the middle entrance. Now Simpson disagrees with the others in placing the *fasti* on an arch and reconsiders the fragments. He discusses the inappropriate 'orthodoxy' Degrassi has been holding on to and restudies the *fasti* fragments, concluding with a convincing reply on Degrassi's opinion and the selective methods Degrassi seems to have applied.<sup>81</sup> Simpson is correct in reviewing the historiological methods of his colleagues and points back to the Regia as the origin of the FC.

It is far beyond the extent of this essay to consider the revival of the Regia as possible origin of the FC, but it seems clear that a complete new approach is needed. As far as the authenticity of the *fasti* concerned, none of the studies is meaningless. If Simpson is correct the lists have been inscribed during the early 30's and may have their origin in the pontifical records. If he is *not* correct, the arch, of which the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 78-80.

foundations have been found, was its carrier. I showed that the origin of the walls of the *FC* was quite certainly Actian. So even if the *FC* should be ascribed to the central porch they were inscribed during the late 30's. So whether the Regia was its carrier or not, we may assume that the *FC* were inscribed during the fourth decade. In this decade we should find any inconsistency in the lists to demonstrate this thesis.

## 5. The archaic consular year

Now to estimate the importance of the eponymous magistracy of consul and to study the meaning of a 'consular year', it is essential to say something about the function of consul. Francisco Pina Polo published several detailed works on the Republican Roman consul but he restricted his research to the Roman Republic from 367V on, the year of the Licinio-Sextian Rogations, as this year marked the start of the Roman consular office as we learn about it today. In this specific year a series of laws had been accepted to gain more equality between the patricians and plebeians. Whether a citizen of the post-Sextian Republic was to be a patrician or not depended on the election of consuls. In fact, everyone had access to the consular office, but the largest part of the votes was needed. So 'nobility', the fact that one of your family members or ancestors had been elected consul, depended on the extent of your patronage<sup>82</sup>. When a non-patrician was elected consul due to his large patronage, this man became a *homo novus*. According to Krister Hanell this was exactly the other way round in archaic Rome. In the Early Republic it was not the office that made nobility, but it was required to be noble to gain the consular office<sup>83</sup>.

The biggest problem is the unreliability of the historic accounts, since the authors knew the outcome of the clash between plebeians and patricians, which may have given way to manipulation of history or the content of early lists. Besides, during the later centuries the consul became increasingly the most important military leader, setting focus on the campaigning months, but we do not know the exact purposes of the earlier consular office. Some military functions undoubtedly were part of the consular office, since they were sometimes replaced by 'military tribunes'. That this can not have determined their term of office I already showed in the reckoning of months. In the triumphal *fasti* we find 'absolute' dates attached to certain triumphs and *ovatio*s which gives us some indications of the term of office since they can be compared to consular lists. Besides, we know that usually the commander in question gained his triumph usually just before the end of his term, after his return from foreign campaigns. However, we can not deduce any consistency in the consular office from the triumph dates. The term of office clearly fluctuated.<sup>84</sup> When

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<sup>82</sup> Hanell, *Altromische Amt*, 23-4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 21-25.

<sup>84</sup> F. Pina Polo, *The Consul at Rome: The Civil Functions of the Consuls in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2011) 14.

we do not rely on the literary tradition and only focus on the fragments from the *FC* that have survived, we should find *any* pattern or indications of a 'habit'. But when we take a look on *parastata primus*, fragment XII of the *fasti triumphales* for example, covering 326V-302V, there is no system to be found. We find all triumphs scattered between *Martius* and *November* which makes no sense to our recognition of months. I already mentioned the fact that even in the months that are reckoned by us to be 'winter months' we find triumphs. Combined with the fact that the Romans did hold on to a lunisolar calendar, we can state that the *consular* year clearly did not at all approximate the *tropical* year. Even after the third century the consular year did not meet the calendar year. It started in *Martius*, opposed by the start of the calendar in *Januarius*<sup>85</sup>. Besides, even the second century calendar still differed from the tropical year: eclipses mentioned by several authors sometimes differ over half a year in our reckoning of months from present day astronomical calculations.<sup>86</sup>

But if it is true that the consular year did not approximate the tropical year what do the absolute dates in the lists mean? Actually, I believe that it is an first century invention to publish a coherent list of magistrates, with no regard for the notion of 'time'. Our sources of the first century interpreted the Early Republic by their own perception of a consular year, which apparently gave problems up to 300V. The A.U.C. dates attached to the triumphs in the *FC* should not be treated as tropical years, but as consular relative 'years'. Since consuls were appointed from the expulsion of the kings on, they should be treated as A.L.C. So the college of the sack did not take office in the 119<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic, as stated by the *FC*, but only was the 119<sup>th</sup> consular college of Rome.

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<sup>85</sup> Pina Polo, *Consul at Rome*, 213.

<sup>86</sup> P.S. Derow, 'The Roman Calendar, 218-191 B. C.', *Phoenix* 30 (3) (1976) 279.

## 6. Comparison of sources

An examination of conclusions drawn from the preceding chapters reveals the problematic nature of our sources. The most notorious occasions are where so-called dictator years (333V, 324V, 309V and 301V<sup>87</sup>) or years of anarchy were inserted. Both these dictator years and the anarchical years were inserted into the eponymous lists of the *FC*. At first sight there is nothing uncommon or contradictory, but a closer look at the list of magistrates given by Livy, Diodorus and Dionysius results in incompatible views on history. Only by looking at one's date of foundation we will find variant versions. For example: Diodorus agreed with Polybius in putting the date in 750, surrounded by that of Livy (749) and Dionysius (751); Timaeus went as far as putting it in 841, Fabius stated it to be 747 and Cincius thought it to be much later, in 728<sup>88</sup>. This shows the extreme variant views on Early Roman history. At this point I could repeat the work of scholars by outlining where contradictions are to be found, but an illustration at this point of the multitude of scholarly contradictions and differences of opinion are immaterial at this point and would cause unnecessary confusion, as in case of the work by Pinsent.

### Dictators and anarchy

The earlier-mentioned *dictator years* seem to have been unknown to Cicero, Dionysius, Diodorus and Livy<sup>89</sup>. It even gets worse, as Pinsent states, since the Capitoline *fasti* are actually the *only* source to mention this construction<sup>90</sup>. According to Mommsen - how could he not be included in this essay - these dictators as presented by the *FC* are absolutely constitutionally impossible.<sup>91</sup> Dictators were in the Early Republic appointed together with regular consul pairs in cases where emergency required this, but only for a term of six months maximum.<sup>92</sup> This is a view

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<sup>87</sup> It should be noticed that the *FC* are not fully preserved for all of these dates. The assumption that these years were accepted as dictator years is explained by Drummond, *Dictator Years*; Pinsent, *Tribunes and Consuls* 4; It is primarily based on the comparison of the *FC*, the *fasti Hydatiani* and the *Chronograph of 354 A.D.*

<sup>88</sup> Alle dates derived from J. Pinsent, *Military Tribunes and Plebeian Consuls: The Fasti from 444 V to 342 V*, *Historia - Einzelschriften* 24 (Wiesbaden 1975) 2 en 4-5.

<sup>89</sup> A. Drummond, *The Dictator Years*, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 27 (4) (1978) 551; for Diodorus see 555-7.

<sup>90</sup> And of course all subsequent lists that derived from the *FC*.

<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately I have not been able to check his account. For representations, see: Taylor, *Date of the Fasti*, 10; Drummond, *Dictator years*, 563.

<sup>92</sup> Pinsent, *Tribunes and Consuls*, 20. Pinsent counted an amount of 61 dictator pairs down to 300V.

that has been widely accepted by today's scholars<sup>93</sup>. So definitely Livy was more correct in mentioning the dictators and placing them under the consuls of the preceding year, which means that two years of these FC are to be the same year according to Livy.<sup>94</sup> Diodorus agrees with Livy in placing all Fabius' activities in 310V, while in the *FC* this Fabius is listed as dictator in the succeeding year.

Many attempts have been undertaken to understand the motivation for the chronographer to implement these dictator years, but it is simply unknown. There are hardly references to emergencies that required a dictatorial intervention for these specific years, but definitely not for all of these four years<sup>95</sup>. Actually all indications point towards an invention but it is unknown who the inventor could have been. Some point towards Atticus and subsequently Varro, whose dates are thought to have been implemented in the *FC*, but the fact that Cicero adopts Atticus' chronology and has mentioned not one dictator year makes this hard to believe<sup>96</sup>..

The other option for extension that can be found is that of anarchical years. This year or possibly these years in which no curule magistrate was to be elected followed a consular decree that forbade election. This happened just some years before the Licinio-Sextian Rogations of 367V. So it is generally agreed that one year of anarchy followed the college of 376V, which makes 375V an anarchical year<sup>97</sup>. But when we start counting years of anarchy we find, besides the one year of anarchy known, another four of these in Livy's account<sup>98</sup>, one in Diodorus' (and three probably fictional consul pairs)<sup>99</sup> and Dionysius' account is unfortunately missing for this part. The *FC* include these years of anarchy besides the dictator years.

The reason for the insertion of 'extra years' is supposed to be based on the Greek chronology that synchronized the Gallic sack with the so-called 'King's Peace'<sup>100</sup>. The latter is the peace of Antalcidas, the notorious peace between Sparta

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<sup>93</sup> Taylor, *Date of the Fasti*, 10; Drummond, *Dictator Years*, 563-5 on this topic and the explanation for Caesar's exception.

<sup>94</sup> Drummond, *Dictator Years*, 551.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 565.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 556, Cic. *Brut.*, 72.

<sup>97</sup> Liv. VI.35.10

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> T.J. Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome, Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 BC)* (London 1995) 400; G. Forsythe, *A Critical history of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the first Punic War*, (Berkeley 2005) 264, see especially commentaar 27.

<sup>100</sup> This synchronism is adopted by Fabius Pictor, Polybius, Diodorus; probably by Timaeus too (see Pinsent, *Tribunes and Consuls*, 1; Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome*, 400).

and Athens in which Athens lost her Asian cities to Persia<sup>101</sup>. These events were equated with the archonship of Theodotos in Athens, ruling in the second year of the 98<sup>th</sup> Olympiad. This means that the Gallic sack appears to have taken place in 387/6<sup>102</sup>. According to most scholars the problematic construction of all *fasti* on this point is clear: Between 300V and the sack 85 colleges should have held office, but the ancient historians only found 81. The four missing years had to be inserted somewhere. So it appears that authors who followed Livy's work followed him in his extension from one to five years of anarchy too. It is generally accepted that this solution could possibly contain some authenticity, since it makes sense that not one, but 5 years of anarchy ruled Rome. Others solved the issue with the repetition of three colleges and only one year of anarchy. There is a lot to say both for and against all options, but especially that of the extended amount of years of anarchy can not be rejected. Though the most remarkable and incomprehensible solution seems the insertion of 8 – not the needed 4 – extra years in the *FC*. So where most sources rely on the equation of the sack with the King's Peace, the chronographer of the *FC* inserted four additional years. Why this mistake has been made is not known, but in my view these somewhat 'random' insertions were absolutely not a 'stupid mistake', as shown by both the extent and measurements as well as the money, energy and attention that have been paid on the marble tablets - perhaps even more just the fact that it was a public visible monument in the heart of Rome<sup>103</sup>. I believe that such an impressive list in a time where history was rather manipulated to meet traditional requirements than to change tradition these lists were part of an Augustan or non-Augustan but at least thorough, manipulating policy<sup>104</sup>.

The best explanation so far in my opinion has been given by Drummond. He states that by the first century the insertion of anarchical years as a stopgap measure had been well established. Those historians that accepted both the anarchy and had interpreted the dictators as being separated from their preceding college pushed the year of the Gallic sack back to 390.<sup>105</sup> He cites other plausible views on this point too, like that the foundation of Rome was calculated based on the date of the sack of

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<sup>101</sup> Diod. 14.110.

<sup>102</sup> Forsythe, *Early Rome*, 370; Pinsent, *Tribunes and Consuls*, 1-2.

<sup>103</sup> Whether these years were randomly chosen, see:

<sup>104</sup> B.W. Frier, 'Licinius Macer and Consules Suffescti of 444 B.C.', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 105 (1975) 90.

<sup>105</sup> Drummond, *Dictator Years*, 568.

Troy and that this foundation date gave the end of the kings some four years earlier.<sup>106</sup>

### **Ancient documents as evidence**

It is impossible to say whose account to adopt based on real evidence. The FC have undoubtedly been manipulated but the origin of manipulation is unknown. Although Dionysius, Diodorus and Livy all based their chronologies on the work of Fabius Pictor, the first Roman annalist, still the content of their *fasti* differed. So who to follow?

In my own view Dionysius is by far the most reliable source on the chronology. In his method of dating he primarily made use of an archaic document which mentioned a *census* just before the sack of Rome:

*"...I find that in the second year before the taking of the city there was a census of the Roman people, to which, as to the rest of them, there is affixed the date, as follows: "In the consulship of Lucius Valerius Potitus and Titus Manlius Capitolinus, in the one hundred and nineteenth year after the expulsion of the kings." So that the Gallic invasion, which we find to have occurred in the second year after the census, happened when the hundred and twenty years were completed. If, now, this interval of time is found to consist of thirty Olympiads, it must be allowed that the first consuls to be chosen entered upon their magistracy in the first year of the sixty-eighth Olympiad, the same year that Isagoras was archon at Athens."*<sup>107</sup>

As confirmed by all other *fasti*, this document is dated two years before the college of military tribunes that held office during the sack. Whether Quadrigarius was right or not in that all records were destroyed during the Gallic sack, this document seems to include some authenticity, especially since all his fellow-historians could have checked his object of research. Besides, the sacred laws of Servius Tullius and a law of 456V still seem to have existed too at Dionysius' time. These sources should quite certainly have been widely known, so Dionysius practically can not have invented it.<sup>108</sup> Both Livy and Polybius too relied on the Early Republican inscriptions that were still preserved<sup>109</sup>. Besides, even *if* Quadrigarius was right and most records were

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> D.H. I.74.5-6 (transl. Cary).

<sup>108</sup> Forsythe, *Early Rome*, 72.

<sup>109</sup> Plb. 3.22 refers to the earliest treaty with Carthage of 509V; Liv. VII.3 quotes an archaic law which seems unreadable.



indeed devastated, the Capitol was never taken and some archives may have been saved.

Based on the abovementioned document and the overall –not secure though verifiable- use of ancient sources I prefer to accept Dionysius' chronology up to the Sack, and especially reject the other literary accounts. Livy clearly has not conducted inscriptions and documents himself, but relied on the works of others including their mistakes. His apparent use of the *Annales Maximi* and the *libri lintei* is interesting, but the information mentioned neither indicates that he proposed a more trustworthy chronology nor that his sources even contradicted with those of Dionysius. The rejection of Diodorus' view has been widely accepted due to his false information and manipulation of history.

Tim Cornell states that Dionysius had access to all important sources and dated with 'extreme skill'<sup>110</sup>. He affirms my trust in Dionysius since in his opinion we should not doubt on the authenticity of this censorial document. By the use of synchronisms with Greek history Dionysius made his account even more convincing. If I am right in putting my trust in the detailed information of Dionysius, this would give us a foundation date of Ol. 7.1, which is equivalent to 752/1<sup>111</sup>. But that we accept his arguments for putting the sack just after the completion of the 120<sup>th</sup> year does not mean that his account down from the sack up to 300V is reliable too. According to Pinsent especially the time between the Gallic sack and the restoration of the consulship after a period of only tribunes, was vulnerable for expansion of the *fasti*.

I believe I have shown that the traditional Greek date for the Gallic sack of Rome is 387/6 and that it is most plausible that Dionysius is right in following the censorial document and setting the college two years before the sack in 119<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic. The abolishment of the four constitutional impossible dictator years pushes the sack from 390 to 386. This means that it could reasonably be correct to omit the dictator years and follow the practice of inserting anarchical years. Combined with Dionysius' account this gives us a republic starting in 508/7. This is indeed the practice usually applied by present day scholars.

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<sup>110</sup> Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome*, 219 says that we should believe the authenticity of this document as everyone knew the preliminary consuls. Naturally this makes no sense, since the variant versions of *fasti* prove the fact that they did *not* know the earlier consular colleges in the correct order. I'd rather believe in authenticity since all the other researches must have had access to this document too, so it made no sense for him to manipulate or invent names. Contra: Samuel, 251.

<sup>111</sup> D.H. 1.75.1.



## 7. Plausible explanations

If we are supposed to believe Plutarch's Clodius, plebeian 'pseudo-ancestors' were introduced in Early Roman chronology<sup>112</sup>. Whether this could be true is worth a completely separated essay, but it remains that already in antiquity it was recognized that the lists appeared manipulated to the Romans. How then were the chronographers of the FC – or rather the priests that had to set up a list of consuls – able to reconstruct the order of consuls when no overall list seems to have been preserved and early documentation was not easily comprehensible? Both Polybius and Livy referred to ancient documents that were incomprehensible due to archaic words and grammar, so even if the *fasti* were *not* manipulated, errors could easily slip in through misinterpretations, incomprehensible archaic accounts or manipulated documents of the past. I have already shown that the *FC* are mistaken several times.

A few plausible explanations can be given at the end of this study based upon earlier statements:

- The primary focus of current studies of the *fasti Capitolini* lies on the probable manipulation of the lists. There are many moments on which the lists may have been manipulated, but the constitutional impossibility of a year in which a dictator was appointed without consuls points to late Republican manipulation.
- The most obvious divergences in the consular lists seem to originate in incorrect assumptions of ancient historians. The first and second century writers undoubtedly used their own notion of time in describing archaic Rome. I have shown that this is without doubt erroneous and could have resulted in the differences in the *fasti*. Months, years, calendars and intercalation have continuously changed over time and the attachment of absolute dates to relative chronology results in false assumptions.
- There have been many manipulative historians who may have made up official documents or inserted family names to give a consular ancestry to their relatives. Valerius Antias is often mentioned as falsifier of history, but even Fabius Pictor is suspect of giving undeserved credit to his family. Clodius confirms this, but Dionysius and Cicero too<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> Frier, *Licinius Macer*, 93

<sup>113</sup> Hanell, *Altrömische Amt*, 45.

- A second time-related explanation is the changing meaning of the consular office in the Republic. It seems clear that the archaic consular year did not approximate the tropical year, which makes references like '350 B.C.' simply wrong. The years of the *fasti* can not be used as absolute dating method, only as a relative chronology until we know more about the duration of the early consular year.

### **Contra indication**

Even when one would accept the reasoning in this essay for my point of view new difficulties arise. In my opinion absolute dating based on the *fasti* should be abandoned, but this clearly is just too easy to conclude. This thought is based on the most plausible explanations for my findings: that *if* Ennius was right in determining his solar eclipse, *if* the dates given by the *fasti triumphales* are original and *if* the triumphs in the Early Republic were in fact held at the end of the term of office, the consular term did not at all approached a tropical year and could enormously differ over time. The consequence would be that all late Republican *fasti* did clearly not even approximate the true chronology with their use of an unchanging, unambiguous 'consular year'. The use of 'years' in *fasti* would be completely meaningless. I showed how unfortunately this seems the most probable conclusion of this research. But one big contradictions lies in this statement.

As earlier mentioned, the variations in the *fasti* are believed to be caused by the synchronisation of the Gallic sack of Rome with the King's Peace. This King's Peace does have a fixed date in Greek chronology and the consular college of the sack is known in Roman tradition. This means that the famous college of the Ambusti seems to have a fixed year, which is 387/6. 81 colleges of magistrates are known for the 85 years between 300 and 386, so the use of 'years' seems not to be *completely* meaningless. Thus either the synchronisation of the sack is erroneous or fictional consular pairs were inserted in the Roman tradition (and the amount off colleges in reality was much smaller). But actually I believe in a third option as most probable: one of the constraints for my statement above is incorrect. There is only a slight incongruence between the 81 colleges and the 85 years needed between 300 and 387 which is too small to reject *any* consistent use of 'time'.

I believe that the problems in dating the Republic do not lie in the content of the *fasti* – giving differences of only one to eight years<sup>114</sup> – but rather in the premises I relied on in the conviction that the consular office did not approach a solar year. So even when my reasoning is correct our evidence remains ambiguous and unreliable. Perhaps the dates attached to triumphs in the *FC* may be a first century representation of Early Republican happenings and are in fact incorrect or Ennius' calculations may have been wrong (Chris Bennett writes how Ennius incorrectly referred to a Julian date, which he should not have applied to archaic Rome<sup>115</sup>). There exist variant *fasti*, but the largest problems exist in the underlying evidence for our understanding of the early chronology.

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<sup>114</sup> Of course several ancient historians differed much more than eight years in their *fasti*. Since their lists are not preserved, any verification is impossible. The available sources only differ in the extension between 300 and the sack.

<sup>115</sup> Bennett, *Roman dates*.



## 8. Concluding the research

It seems sufficiently grounded to state that our notion of time is completely different from that of the Roman historians, and even more from the early republican Romans. Even though the earliest Republic already used a lunisolar calendar, the perception of 'time' has changed throughout the ages. The *fasti* can only be used as relative chronological indicator and are undoubtedly not suitable for usage as a absolute dating method. But there is more to be said:

I believe that Simpson correctly re-established the *Regia* as possible carrier of the Capitoline *fasti*. We have leaned too much on the orthodoxy of Degrassi and assumptions without firm evidence are in this case meaningless. There are no indications that FC should be dated to Augustus' Parthian victory, but epigraphic and architectural evidence does suggest a date – whether on the *Regia* or the arch of Actium – around 30. However, the lists are definitely corrupt and have manipulated content. This manipulation primarily lies in the years where we find dictators as only magistrate and perhaps in the years of anarchy too. It is obvious that these manipulations extended our Roman chronology for several years, though we do not know how long these 'years' actually were. Dionysius' use of plausibly reliable documents makes him the favourite source on ancient Rome, which results in a sack of 387/6 and a start of the republic in 508/7. The dictator years should be omitted without doubt and our chronology tightened for four years. This practice is clearly the most reliable way of constructing an Early Republican chronology of Rome. Above all, the awareness of the difficulties in attaching fixed dates to the Republic is the main point of this thesis. After all, I showed how the need of manipulation seem to lie in the ever changing meaning of 'time', but that it is not this manipulation which causes obscurity. Not the *fasti* are our problems due to their manipulation, but the lack of coherent and unambiguous evidence. Much more research is needed to understand early Roman chronology and the origin of the *fasti Capitolini*. I look forward to the moment when new fragments of the FC will be found, or any other indications come to light, but until that moment we should trust on our current information and use the *fasti* as relative chronology only. Unfortunately the Early Republic is shrouded in mystery and Ancient History is needy for new insights.





## 9. Epilogue

Jona Lendering was awarded with the OIKOS Public Price 2010 for his outstanding efforts in bringing ancient history to a broader audience. As he established *Livius Education* and gives lectures throughout the year and his information reaches many people, I believe it to be important to place a critical note at the end of this essay.

Lendering refuses to put literary references in his texts. He has some comprehensive motivations for it, but it makes his publications quite useless in scholarly discussion. He makes some curious statements on his website without references or argumentation. For example, he states that “*the Roman year did not start on 1 January, but on 1 September (in the fifth century) or 1 July (in the fourth century).*”<sup>116</sup> As I showed in this essay, these observations are without firm indications, since we simply do not know how the Early Republican years were reckoned. A second example is directly presented beneath my last quote. On Varronian chronology he says: “*The list seems to be incomplete. Probably, four couples of consuls are missing. This is the main problem.*”<sup>117</sup> As I clearly indicated above, it is not that couples are missing in Varronian chronology, but rather that the FC have been extended and manipulated. The historians were missing four years in their tradition and all expanded the length of the list in a different way. When considering *Varro* it is incorrect to propose the *missing* four couples as main problem.

These are only the first two examples, but when reading the information given by Lendering every student will find false, erroneous information<sup>118</sup> with a lack of references, argumentation or scholarly foundation. I do not know for what part of his effort he has gained the OIKOS award, but it clearly was not for his effort on Varronian chronology or early Roman history.

Bram Mulder

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<sup>116</sup> J. Lendering, *Varronian chronology*. Livius Education, November 2010, <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronology/varro.html> (03-24-2012).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Other examples of errors: the years of anarchy were *not* in the 360's; Diodorus was *not* independent from Polybius; we can *not* be certain about Livy's dates after 346 since Livy presents many, many errors for the late fourth and early third century; the lists of magistrates are *not* fully reliable for the fifth century since there are too many contradictions in our sources, switched consular colleges, different cognomen and many other difficulties; we do *not* know whether Varro included the years of anarchy. All examples can be found on his website on Varronian dating.



## 10. Sources

### FIGURES

- Cover Drawing Varronian 371-363 of the *Fasti Capitolini*, fragment IXs, Tabulae Secundae Pagina Sinistra, Tab. XXXII, in: A. Degrassi, *Fasti Consulares et Triumphales, Inscriptiones Italiae, Volumen XIII – Fasti et Elogia, Fasciculus 1A* (Rome 1947) pp. 32.
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