

Magistrates without Pedigree: The *Consules Suffecti* of the Triumviral Age*

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ABSTRACT

The use of the suffect consulship began to change with Caesar in 45 B.C., after a number of decades in which no suffect consul had been elected. The office altered dramatically during the triumviral period. The triumvirs openly made use of the suffect consulship as a means of rewarding loyalty. Many of the suffect consuls, who were no longer elected by the people, but designated in advance by the triumvirs, were homines novi who belonged to previously unknown and insignificant Roman or Italian families. Increasing the number of consuls each year eliminated de facto the traditional annuality of the office and reduced its authority. The implicit consequence of these actions was a gradual devaluation of the consulship. The suffect consulship was therefore a powerful tool in the hands of the triumvirs for strengthening their political position, weakening the old aristocracy and giving birth to a new elite based more firmly on personal loyalties.

Keywords: Triumvirate; consulship; *consules suffecti*; Roman elite; *homines novi*; prosopography

The suffect consulship, an institution which had existed throughout the Roman Republic, changed dramatically during the triumviral age. This happened in the context of a period in which successive wars were fought by Roman armies across the Mediterranean under the command of *imperatores* who represented different political interests and, at the same time, struggled for power at Rome. Our surviving accounts narrate the wars in detail but devote little space to internal politics at Rome, making it difficult to reconstruct how republican institutions developed in the years before Octavian's victory at Actium. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the suffect consulship as an example of what was happening to republican magistracies under the triumvirs. In particular, it focuses on the reasons why suffect consuls were nominated, the procedure by which they were designated, who these *suffecti* were, and the nature of their political careers up to that point.¹

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¹ All dates are B.C. unless expressly indicated.

I THE SUFFECT CONSULSHIP DURING THE REPUBLIC

From 509 to 45 we know of twenty-nine suffect consuls.² Two suffect consuls had supposedly been elected in the presumed first year of the Republic, in 509, to replace L. Iunius Brutus, who had been slain in battle against the Etruscans, and L. Tarquinius Collatinus, who resigned from his office. We should obviously question the veracity of this information (as for most accounts of early Rome), but it is clear, at least according to tradition, that the practice of replacing a consul when necessary was in place from the very beginning of the Republic.

A *consul suffectus* replaced an ordinary consul in the vast majority of cases due to the death of a consul in office, either from natural causes or, more frequently, on the battlefield. In other cases the consuls in office resigned, or were obliged to do so because of legal irregularities.³ At any rate, whether the cause was death, resignation or even expulsion,⁴ the election of a *consul suffectus* took place only if an ordinary consul left a vacancy. The suffect consulship was therefore an emergency response in order to maintain the usual number of two consuls as the highest magistracy at the head of the Roman administration. This well-regulated procedure was applied throughout the Republic and was still in force in the first century. The last two known suffect consuls preceding the Caesarian period were elected in 86 and 68.⁵ With respect to the political trajectory of suffect consuls before their election, some recurrent features emerge. Leaving aside the early Republic, when the information is uncertain and a fixed *cursus honorum* had not yet been determined, in the third century all seven known *consules suffecti* had previously held the consulship, in some cases even more than once.⁶ In other words, all the suffect consuls of the third century were prestigious, well-known and experienced politicians.

The other known suffect consuls held the magistracy after the Hannibalic war, specifically after 180, when the Lex Villia annalis was promulgated and, consequently, the *cursus honorum* regulated. In contrast to the third century, in the second and first centuries no *consul suffectus* had previously been a regular consul. However, to the extent that we have evidence about their political careers, we can reasonably assume that they had followed the usual *cursus honorum*, holding junior magistracies in the first stages of their careers. All, or most, of them could have held the praetorship prior to being elected suffect consuls, but, given our fragmentary information, we do not have

² cf. Broughton *MRR*. In this short first section I intend only to give an overview of the suffect consulship throughout the Republic, without analysing the details of name and chronology for each suffect consul.

³ In 215, M. Claudius Marcellus was obliged to step down once the augurs invalidated his election. As a substitute for Marcellus, Q. Fabius Maximus was elected (Livy 23.24–5; 23.31.12–14; Plut., *Marc.* 12.1). In 162, the two consuls in office, P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica and C. Marcus Figulus, were compelled to resign because the auspices had not been taken properly prior to the electoral *comitia* in which they had been elected. P. Cornelius Lentulus and Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus were then elected as suffect consuls (Val. Max. 1.1.3; Plut., *Marc.* 5; Cic., *Q. Fr.* 2.2.1; *Div.* 1.33). Cf. Broughton *MRR* 1.253–4; 1.441–2.

⁴ 87 is a special case, which must be understood in the context of the political struggles that dominated the decade. The consul L. Cornelius Cinna was expelled from Rome by his colleague Cn. Octavius, and L. Cornelius Merula was elected in his place. Cf. Broughton *MRR* 2.46–7.

⁵ The consul C. Marius died in 86 at the beginning of his seventh consulship and was replaced by L. Valerius Flaccus (Cic., *Nat. D.* 3.81; Livy, *Per.* 80; Plut., *Mar.* 45–6; App., *B. Civ.* 1.75; Broughton *MRR* 2.53). In 68, the consul L. Caecilius Metellus died early in the year. One (Servilius) Vatia was elected in his place, but he too died before entering office. According to Cassius Dio (36.4.1; Broughton *MRR* 2.137), no other suffect consul was elected, and consequently the other consul, Q. Marcus Rex, exceptionally continued as the sole consul of the year. Cassius Dio does not clarify why a second *suffectus* was not elected, as one would have expected.

⁶ M. Valerius Maximus Corvus (cos.suff. 299) had been consul five times and dictator twice; M. Claudius Marcellus (cos.suff. 215) had been consul in 222; Q. Fabius Maximus (cos.suff. 215) had been consul in 233 and 228.

evidence for every individual.⁷ The suffect consulship was for all of them the culmination of their political careers, and no one held the consulship — *ordinarius* or *suffectus* — a second time.

II THE REVIVAL OF THE SUFFECT CONSULSHIP BY CAESAR

The changes to the suffect consulship began with Caesar, when events took place that prefigured what would happen after his murder. The institution of the suffect consulship returned in 45 after some decades in which no suffect consul had been elected.⁸ The suffect consulship had not been used since 68, and there had only been ten *consules suffecti* between 180 and 68. It is therefore striking that Caesar promoted the revival of an institution with such a long history — and also reformed it.

In 45, Caesar acted as *consul sine collega* — he was simultaneously dictator — until he stepped down on 1 October.⁹ Then Q. Fabius Maximus and C. Trebonius were designated *consules suffecti*¹⁰ — two *suffecti* replacing a sole *consul ordinarius*. Both seem previously to have followed the usual *cursus honorum*,¹¹ but they were outstanding for their loyalty towards Caesar. Trebonius had served as a legate under Caesar in Gaul (54–49), and, after his praetorship, he was sent by Caesar to Hispania Ulterior as proconsul in 47–46.¹² Trebonius was expelled by his troops, but returned to Hispania with Caesar and participated actively in the final episode of the civil war in 45. Fabius Maximus was one of the most devoted legates of Caesar in Hispania, and as reward he was authorised by Caesar to celebrate a triumph *ex Hispania*, despite not having commanded the army as *imperator*.¹³ His consulship was another reward granted by Caesar. Trebonius and Fabius Maximus were not the only suffect consuls in 45, because Fabius Maximus died suddenly on the last day of the year. Under the circumstances, Caesar decided to appoint C. Caninius Rebilus *consul suffectus* for just a few hours.¹⁴ According to Cicero, Caninius was elected *in comitia*, although he does not give any details of how a

⁷ Q. Fulvius Flaccus (cos.suff. 180) was praetor in Sardinia in 187 (Livy 38.42.6; Broughton *MRR* 1.368). C. Valerius Laevinus (cos.suff. 176) was also praetor in Sardinia, in 179 (Livy 40.44; Broughton *MRR* 1.392). P. Cornelius Lentulus and Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus were suffect consuls in 162. Lentulus had been urban praetor in 165 (Cic., *Leg. agr.* 2.85; Broughton *MRR* 1.438) whereas Ahenobarbus could have been praetor in 170 according to Broughton (*MRR* 1.420; 3.81). The praetorship of M. Acilius Glabrio (cos.suff. 154) is not attested, although Broughton (*MRR* 1.447) dated it to 157 as the latest possible year for his praetorship under the Lex Villia. Likewise with Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos.suff. 130), whose praetorship, which is not attested, has been dated to 133 as the latest date possible according to the Lex Villia (Broughton *MRR* 1.492). There is an identical argument for M. Aurelius Scaurus (cos.suff. 108) and L. Cornelius Merula, whose praetorships, again not attested, Broughton respectively dated to 111 and 99 (*MRR* 1.540; 2.24). Finally, L. Valerius Flaccus (cos.suff. 86) may have become praetor in 96 or 95 (Broughton *MRR* 3.212; cf. 2.14 and 17).

⁸ In 47, Caesar was dictator, and no consuls were elected at the beginning of the year. When Caesar came back to Rome in September, Q. Fufius Calenus and P. Vatinius were elected consuls. They were not *consules suffecti* but *consules ordinarii*, given that they did not replace other consuls. See Frei-Stolba 1967: 46–7; Bruhns 1978: 144.

⁹ Suet., *Iul.* 76; 80.3; Cass. Dio 43.33.1.

¹⁰ Cass. Dio 43.46.2. The procedure was in fact the same as in 47, but in 45 there was a consul to be replaced, and this is why Fufius Calenus and Vatinius were considered *consules ordinarii*, whereas Fabius Maximus and Trebonius were *consules suffecti*. In the last months of both 47 and 45, Caesar was *consul designatus*, since he would become consul the following year.

¹¹ Fabius Maximus was aedile in 57, and he may have been praetor in 48 or earlier (Broughton *MRR* 2.201; 2.273; 3.87; Bruhns 1978: 50; praetor perhaps before 49; Yavetz 1983: 139; praetor in 49; Brennan 2000: 750; praetor before 49? However, Sumner 1971: 251–2: ‘that he was suffect consul in 45 does not establish beyond question that he had held the praetorship ... He may well have been praetor in the period 54–50’). Trebonius had been tribune of the plebs in 55 and urban praetor in 48 (Broughton *MRR* 2.217; 2.273).

¹² Cic., *Fam.* 15.20–1; *B Alex.* 64.2; Cass. Dio 43.29.

¹³ *B Hisp.* 2.2; 12.2; 41.1; Cass. Dio 43.31.1; 43.42.1–2.

¹⁴ Suet., *Iul.* 76.2; Cass. Dio 43.46.3; Plin., *HN* 7.181; Plut., *Caes.* 58.1; Cic., *Fam.* 7.30.1.

popular assembly was convoked and held in such a short timeframe.¹⁵ In any case, there is no doubt that Caesar's choice prevailed. Again, as Tacitus makes clear,¹⁶ the consulship of Caninius Rebilus must be seen as the prize for his loyalty in the civil war: he fought for Caesar as proconsul in 46 in Africa and as a legate in Hispania in 45 before becoming consul.¹⁷

The suffect consulships of Fabius Maximus and Trebonius, as well as the brief consulship of C. Caninius Rebilus, continued the tradition of experienced politicians and soldiers being elected, but in a sense prefigured the political use later given to the suffect consulship by the triumvirs. In all three cases, the consulship was certainly the culmination of their *cursus honorum* and was endorsed by their military expertise, but it must be seen specifically as a reward for their loyalty: this was their principal merit, as would later be the case with the triumvirs' choices. Caesar selected them as trustworthy men for the highest office of the Republic — after himself, of course. It was Caesar (as dictator) who ultimately held power. The consulship of Caninius Rebilus was certainly an object of mockery in antiquity. In a letter to Curio, Cicero amusingly asserted that Caninius had not done anything wrong and had been an extremely diligent consul — for he had not closed his eyes even a moment during his entire office!¹⁸ Cassius Dio noted that Caninius was appointed consul, served as such and left the office all at the same time.¹⁹

That said, the appointment of Caninius as suffect consul had a constitutional logic: one of the two consuls in office had died and, consequently, had to be replaced to restore collegiality in the highest magistracy.²⁰ Certainly Caesar could have had a personal interest in Caninius being designated consul, but, beyond the extraordinary brevity of Caninius' consulship, his appointment did in fact have precedents in the republican constitutional tradition, as we have seen, and consequently Caesar (as Weinstock suggested²¹) could claim to have acted out of institutional scrupulousness according to legal tradition. The suffect consulships of Fabius Maximus and Trebonius, however, mark a new use of the office: they replaced a consul who was not dead nor incapacitated, but who had resigned the office voluntarily, without force majeure or any legal reason that obliged him to do so. Cassius Dio rightly pointed out this flagrant violation of tradition: 'This was the first transgression of established custom at this time: that one and the same man did not hold that office for a year or even for the whole of the remainder of the same year, but while living he resigned from it without any compulsion of ancestral custom or accusation, and another took his place.'²² When in 52 Pompey was — like Caesar in 45 — the sole consul for some months, he remained as consul for the whole year, and a second consul was elected at some point during the year to complete the dual magistracy. For the first time the procedure had changed: Caesar created a precedent with great significance for the future.²³

¹⁵ Cic., *Fam.* 7.30.1. See Frei-Stolba 1967: 55–6; Bruhns 1978: 160–1. Frei-Stolba considered it very likely that Fabius Maximus and Trebonius were elected *in comitia* in October 45, whereas Bruhns doubted it. According to Bruhns, the lack of a regular election could be the cause of the rejection shown by the people towards the suffect consul Q. Fabius Maximus (Suet., *Iul.* 80.2).

¹⁶ Tac., *Hist.* 3.37.

¹⁷ *B Afr.* 86.3; 93.3; *B Hisp.* 35.1. Broughton *MRR* 2.297; 2.311.

¹⁸ Cic., *Fam.* 7.30.1.

¹⁹ Cass. Dio 43.46.4.

²⁰ Hurllet 2017: 288: 'Les mesures prises par César en 45, pour inaccoutumées qu'elles soient, n'étaient toutefois pas à proprement parler illégales et annonçaient les pratiques à venir.'

²¹ Weinstock 1971: 276. Against Bruhns 1978: 155 n. 65. Nonetheless, Q. Marcius Rex continuing as sole consul in 68 after the deaths of two suffect consuls offered a different precedent.

²² Cass. Dio 43.46.3.

²³ Hurllet 2017: 287.

Caesar had anticipated a similar situation for 44. M. Antonius and Caesar himself were the consuls for that year, but Caesar was making arrangements for his campaign in the East against the Parthians. According to Cicero, Caesar had declared that before he departed he would order P. Cornelius Dolabella to be made consul to replace him.²⁴ Consequently, Caesar wanted to designate his substitute in advance, and again this suffect consul had to replace a *consul ordinarius* despite the fact that nothing prevented Caesar from continuing in office. In spite of the opposition shown by Antonius, Dolabella was elected *in comitia*, as Cicero testifies,²⁵ and after Caesar's assassination he became *consul suffectus* for the rest of 44, sharing the consulship with Antonius.

In 43 there were four suffect consuls, who were elected under different circumstances. C. Vibius Pansa and A. Hirtius, the two *consules ordinarii*, died in April as a result of the battles at Forum Gallorum and Mutina. According to tradition, two suffect consuls should immediately have been elected, but this election only took place in August, when Octavian and Q. Pedius became consuls.²⁶ The situation changed again three months later, when on 27 November the tribune of the plebs P. Titius sponsored the law which established the triumvirate. Octavian resigned the consulship and became one of the triumvirs.²⁷ P. Ventidius Bassus, who was at that moment a praetor, resigned and was elected consul in the place of Octavian for only a few weeks.²⁸ As for Pedius, he died shortly before the arrival of the triumvirs in Rome, and was replaced by C. Carrinas for the final part of the year.²⁹ The number of suffect consuls in 43 was unusual, but it was justified by the circumstances: following the usual procedure, in all cases the *suffecti* replaced consuls who had died or had resigned.³⁰

III THE TRIUMVIRATE AND THE SUFFECT CONSULSHIP

The creation of the triumvirate in November 43 marked a turning point. Thanks to their extraordinary office, Antonius, Lepidus and the young Caesar became the rulers of Rome above the Senate and the traditional magistracies. From November 43 until 31, the

²⁴ Cic., *Phil.* 2.80.

²⁵ Cic., *Phil.* 2.82. Cf. Frei-Stolba 1967: 55–6; Bruhns 1978: 160.

²⁶ Broughton *MRR* 2.336–7, with a compilation of the ancient sources.

²⁷ App., *B Civ.* 4.2.7. By contrast, in 42 Lepidus was triumvir at the same time as holding the consulship, and did not resign from office, on account of the particular political situation in that year: the other two triumvirs, Octavian and Antonius, were to fight the murderers of Caesar in the East while Lepidus remained in Rome. The fact that Lepidus held the consulship and the triumvirate simultaneously should have enhanced his authority in the eyes of the Senate and people. This is expressly asserted by Cassius Dio (46.56.1) and Appian (*B Civ.* 4.3.1). Cf. Fadinger 1969: 40; Bleicken 1990: 41.

²⁸ App., *B Civ.* 4.2.7; Vell. Pat. 2.65.3. According to Aulus Gellius, Ventidius was a man of obscure birth. His rise to the consulship was publicly ridiculed as a *prodigium* (Aul. Gell. 15.4.3–4). Cf. Rohr Vio 2009: 76–8.

²⁹ The consulship of Carrinas was so irrelevant that Cassius Dio, when he refers to the substitutes of Octavian and Pedius, mentions Ventidius 'and another man', without even giving the name of Carrinas (Cass. Dio 47.15.2). It is likely that Cassius Dio did not even know the name of the consul who replaced Pedius. When speaking about Carrinas on the occasion of the celebration of his triumph over the Germans in 28, Cassius Dio asserted that Carrinas had been excluded from holding office because Sulla put his father to death, and so he failed to mention his previous suffect consulship.

³⁰ The political careers of these suffect consuls, and also of Dolabella in 44, were relatively important, although they had not always followed the regular *cursus honorum*. This is obvious in the exceptional case of the young Caesar. Dolabella had been tribune of the plebs in 47 but never held the praetorship. Carrinas was sent by Caesar to Hispania in 45 to continue the war against Sextus Pompeius after Munda, but we do not know which office he held. His command in Hispania does not prove that he held a praetorship in 46 or in another year (App., *B Civ.* 4.83–4; Broughton *MRR* 2.295; 2.308; Sumner 1971: 267). Pedius was certainly praetor in 48 (Caes., *B Civ.* 3.22) and Ventidius Bassus had been tribune of the plebs in 45 and was a praetor when he was designated *consul suffectus* in 43. Political and military loyalty no doubt played a decisive role in the nomination of these consuls, but they were also generally people who were already recognised in Rome.

triumvirs legally ruled Rome over the consuls, who became in practice subsidiary magistrates, although Appian asserts that the triumvirs had consular power.³¹ Additionally the practice was established, and later on in 39 institutionalised, that each year several consuls were appointed, two of them *ordinarii*, the others *suffecti*.³² The suffect consuls were nominated in advance at the same time as the regular consuls, merely for political reasons and not out of necessity. Simultaneously, even though the consulship remained a dual and collegial magistracy, as it always had been throughout the Republic, in practice it lost its annual character, since it became usual during the triumviral period that a consul did not remain in office for the whole year.

*Consuls from 45 to 31*³³

45:	C. Iulius Caesar (ord.)	
	Q. Fabius Maximus (suff.)	C. Trebonius (suff.)
	C. Caninius Rebilus (suff.)	
44:	C. Iulius Caesar (ord.)	M. Antonius (ord.)
	P. Cornelius Dolabella (suff.)	
43:	C. Vibius Pansa (ord.)	A. Hirtius (ord.)
	C. Iulius Caesar (Octavian) (suff.)	Q. Pedius (suff.)
	P. Ventidius Bassus (suff.)	C. Carrinas (suff.)
42:	M. Aemilius Lepidus (ord.)	L. Munatius Plancus (ord.)
41:	L. Antonius (Pietas) (ord.)	P. Servilius (Vatia) Isauricus (ord.)
40:	Cn. Domitius Calvinus (ord.)	Cn. Asinius Pollio (ord.)
	L. Cornelius Balbus (suff.)	P. Canidius Crassus (suff.)
39:	L. Marcius Censorinus (ord.)	C. Calvisius Sabinus (ord.)
	C. Cocceius Balbus (suff.)	P. Alfenus Varus (suff.)
38:	Ap. Claudius Pulcher (ord.)	C. Norbanus Flaccus (ord.)
	L. Cornelius Lentulus (suff.)	L. Marcius Philippus (suff.)
37:	M. Vipsanius Agrippa (ord.)	L. Caninius Gallus (ord.)
		T. Statilius Taurus (suff.)

³¹ App., *B Civ.* 4.2. The pre-eminence of the triumvirs is shown in the *fasti* of the year 37. Cf. Roddaz 1992: 196 n. 40. Bleicken 1990: 37–9 considered that the triumvirate was an extraordinary office with the same powers as the consulship: ‘Das neue Amt stand jedenfalls formal nicht über dem Konsulat; es stand neben ihm’ (50). However, Bleicken conceded that, in practice, the triumvirs had greater powers than the consuls and that this fact implicitly devalued the consulship (48–9). Cf. Fadinger 1969: 45: the powers of the triumvirs were well above those of the consuls.

³² Hurler 2017: 288–9.

³³ See Broughton *MRR*; Salomies 1991; Bodel 1995.

- 36: L. Gellius Publicola (ord.) M. Cocceius Nerva (ord.)
 L. Nonius Asprenas (suff.) Q. Marcius (suff.)
- 35: Sex. Pompeius (ord.) L. Cornificius (ord.)
 P. Cornelius Dolabella (suff.) T. Peducaeus (suff.)
- 34: M. Antonius (ord.) L. Scribonius Libo (ord.)
 L. Sempronius Atratinus (suff.) C. Memmius (suff.)
 Paullus Aemilius Lepidus (suff.) M. Herennius (suff.)
- 33: C. Iulius Caesar (Octavian) (ord.) L. Volcatius Tullus (ord.)
 L. Autronius Paetus (suff.)
 L. Flavius (suff.) C. Fonteius Capito (suff.)
 M. Acilius Glabrio (suff.)
 L. Vinicius (suff.)
 Q. Laronius (suff.)
- 32: Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (ord.) C. Sosius (ord.)
 L. Cornelius (Cinna?) (suff.) M. Valerius Messalla (suff.)
- 31: M. Antonius (ord.) C. Iulius Caesar (Octavian) (ord.)
 M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (suff.)
 M. Titius (suff.)
 Cn. Pompeius (suff.)

In 42 and 41 only *consules ordinarii* were appointed, and they remained in office for the whole year. The four consuls were well-known politicians in Rome. Lepidus had already been consul in 46 and was designated triumvir just a few weeks earlier. Munatius Plancus was one of the *praefecti urbi* appointed by Caesar in 45 when he departed for Hispania.³⁴ Isauricus had been consul for the first time in 48. L. Antonius had perhaps a less prominent political career, but he had played a significant role at Rome in 44 as a tribune of the plebs, and, no less importantly, he was the brother of the triumvir M. Antonius.

From 40 onwards we find suffect consuls appointed in increasing numbers every year until the end of the triumviral period. Most of the *consules suffecti* who were designated in the first years were men of prestige and had undeniable political weight in Rome. L. Cornelius Balbus, one of the two suffect consuls of the year 40, is a good example. Balbus, a native of Gades in Hispania and one of the wealthiest men of his time,³⁵ was the first foreigner to reach the highest magistracy in Rome.³⁶ Throughout his life he stood out for having served Caesar faithfully and for being his trusted man in Rome. After Caesar was killed, Balbus provided significant services on behalf of Octavian. However, Balbus did not follow a normal *cursus honorum*. Indeed, the

³⁴ Broughton *MRR* 2.313; 3.146; cf. Osgood 2006: 277–80.

³⁵ Cass. Dio 48.32.2. Syme 1939: 220, called him the ‘millionaire from Gades’.

³⁶ Plin., *HN* 7.136.

consulship is his only known magistracy, and very likely he only gained access to the Senate once he had been consul.³⁷ His consulship was therefore not the culmination of a previous political career, but a reward for services rendered to Caesar and Octavian. The other suffect consul in the year 40 was P. Canidius Crassus. He is the only Canidius who is recorded as having held an office throughout the Republic. Balbus and Canidius were therefore absolute *homines novi* in the broadest sense of the term. Like Balbus, we do not know whether Canidius had a political career prior to his consulship, which was primarily a consequence of his service under the command of M. Antonius in 41–40.³⁸ Canidius was above all a *vir militaris*, and he always remained a loyal follower of Antonius.³⁹

The suffect consulships of Balbus and Canidius Crassus were the result of the reconciliation between Antonius and Octavian at Brundisium. As a consequence of the new political situation, the *consules ordinarii* of the year stepped down and were replaced by the two *suffecti*. The two consuls had complementary expertise: Canidius was an experienced military man, while Balbus was a civilian of significance. Canidius and Balbus prefigured the sort of men the triumvirs wanted as consuls, and the characteristics they prioritised: above all, loyalty.

The creation in 39, just a few months later, of a permanent system of suffect consuls every year, which implied the designation in advance of *consules ordinarii* and *consules suffecti* for several years ahead, was an understandable development: the triumvirs wanted to have the highest republican office under their control, and at the same time had many loyal followers to be rewarded.⁴⁰ According to Cassius Dio, the triumvirs appointed the consuls eight years in advance, and they designated not two annual consuls, as had been the custom, but several.⁴¹ Cassius Dio asserts that the novelty lay in the fact that these consuls were not chosen to be in office for the whole year but just for a portion of it — something that happened for the first time and represented a break with tradition. The information provided by Cassius Dio is substantially accurate with respect to the institutionalisation of the suffect consulship for the following years, but the eight-year period for which the consuls were appointed in advance seems dubious.⁴² Be that as it may, it is the case that suffect consuls were appointed by the triumvirs, and not elected by the people *in comitia*, each year between 39 and 31.

In 39, the *consules suffecti* were C. Cocceius Balbus and P. Alfenus Varus.⁴³ Following the pattern established in 40, both were *homines novi* and belonged to families with no previous presence in Roman public life.⁴⁴ Neither Cocceius Balbus nor Alfenus Varus is known to have developed a political career prior to their consulship. They reached the consulship thanks to their achievements as *virii militares* in the service of the triumvirs:

³⁷ Syme 1939: 81; Yavetz 1983: 171.

³⁸ App., *B Civ.* 5.50.

³⁹ Ferriès 2007: 359–62. After his consulship, he served under Antonius in Armenia and against the Parthians, and finally took part in the Battle of Actium fighting against Octavian. After the defeat, Canidius escaped to Egypt, where he was executed (Vell. Pat. 2.87.3; Oros. 6.19.20).

⁴⁰ Cass. Dio 48.35.1, makes it clear that the main purpose of the triumvirs was to gratify those who had co-operated with them in the past and to win the favour of others for the future.

⁴¹ Cass. Dio 48.35.2.

⁴² Welch 2012: 243–4 has pointed out that a designation from 39 to 31 is a nonsensical period of time in a context of such political uncertainty. According to Welch, Appian's account seems more feasible, although he overlooked the previous arrangement that had designated consuls down to 35: Appian leaves out the appointment of the consuls of previous years and mentions only the designation of the regular consuls for the four years between 34 and 31 (App., *B Civ.* 5.73). However, Freyburger and Roddaz 1994: 92 n. 319, did not consider the texts of Cassius Dio and Appian to be contradictory, since the latter would then refer to a modification for the years 34 to 31 of a previous agreement.

⁴³ Broughton MRR 2.386; Bodel 1995: 285.

⁴⁴ One M. Cocceius Nerva was later *consul ordinarius* in 36.

Cocceius was Antonius' man, Alfenus Octavian's.⁴⁵ The *consules suffecti* of 38, however, offer some points of contrast. L. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Marcius Philippus belonged to prominent families and had, particularly for such a turbulent period, quite a traditional *cursus honorum*.⁴⁶ Fidelity and alliances in 38 continued to be of importance for Lentulus and Philippus in obtaining the consulship; their lineage seems also to have played a role as well.

T. Statilius Taurus was the only *consul suffectus* in 37, replacing on 1 July the *ordinarius* L. Caninius Gallus, while the other, Agrippa, remained in office for the whole year.⁴⁷ This shows that, amongst the consuls of the year, Agrippa had the greatest power and influence. By contrast, there is no substantial difference between the ordinary consul Caninius and the *suffectus* Statilius. Both are obscure individuals who at that moment, according to the evidence we have, seem barely to have developed a regular *cursus honorum*,⁴⁸ but had enough military merit to attain the highest magistracy. Likewise, both were *homines novi* whose families had no prior political presence in Rome. There was, however, an essential divergence in their careers after their consulship. Whereas Caninius seems to have disappeared from politics, Statilius gained increasing prominence both as proconsul in Africa — he celebrated a triumph *ex Africa* in 34 — and in the years following fighting for Octavian. As a result, Statilius held a second consulship in 26, but this time as *consul ordinarius*, which signalled his political promotion, having Augustus as his colleague in office. The case of Statilius is of great interest for showing the rise of a certain type of man in the triumviral period. His military abilities made him a *suffectus* consul in 37, and his subsequent military successes allowed him to become an ordinary consul in 26, as well as *praefectus urbi* in 16. He was one of the most influential individuals in the inner circle of Augustus' advisers. His *suffectus* consulship was therefore not his highest achievement, but rather the point of departure for a distinguished political career.

From the year 36 onwards, the number of *consules suffecti* increased at the same time as the social and political prominence of many of them, even of most of them, progressively diminished. L. Nonius Asprenas and Q. Marcius were the two *suffectus* consuls in 36.⁴⁹ Nonius belonged to a family with a secondary participation in Roman politics up to that moment. He is known to have served in 46 as proconsul in Africa under the command of Caesar, and again in Hispania the following year, but he disappears from our sources during the first years of the triumvirate until his re-emergence in 36 as consul.⁵⁰

Given the lack of information about them, it is appropriate to suggest that some *suffectus* consuls who were appointed in the following years are merely phantoms. The only hint of their existence is the presence of their names in the *fasti consulares*, since we know nothing about their behaviour or actions as consuls. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the ancient accounts focus on military events and on the triumvirs rather than on persons with

⁴⁵ Alfenus Varus also was a renowned jurist in his time: Aul. Gell. 7.5.1.

⁴⁶ Broughton *MRR* 2.390; 3.66; Bodel 1995: 285. Lentulus could be the son of Lentulus Niger, who had been a candidate for the consulship of 58, or of Lentulus Crus, consul in 49 (Sumner 1973: 143). With respect to Philippus, with the marriage of his father to Atia he had become stepbrother to Octavian. Both had been praetors in 44 (Broughton *MRR* 2.322; 3.66; 3.138; Sumner 1971: 365 n. 52; cf. Bruhns 1978: 57–8). We know that Marcius Philippus had been *monetalis* by 56 and tribune of the plebs in 49 (Crawford *RRC* 448–9 no. 425; Broughton *MRR* 3.138). After his consulship, Philippus was proconsul in Hispania and obtained a triumph in 33.

⁴⁷ Broughton *MRR* 2.395–6.

⁴⁸ There is actually no real evidence of their praetorships, but Broughton, *MRR* 2.380, included Caninius and Statilius among the praetors of 40 as the latest possible year under the Cornelian law, taking into consideration the fact that Agrippa was praetor that year.

⁴⁹ Salomies 1991: 187; Bodel 1995: 279–80.

⁵⁰ He must have been praetor at some point in the 40s, given that he is mentioned in third place within the list of senators in the *SC de Aphrodisiensibus* and in the *SC de Panamareis*. Cf. Broughton *MRR* 3.147–8.

a secondary role. Q. Marcius is certainly one of those suffect consuls who remain completely obscure. We only know that he replaced the *consul ordinarius* M. Cocceius Nerva during the rest of the year 36.⁵¹ Marcius was merely the first of a series of unremarkable consuls in the following years for whom we have no information. In 35, a P. Cornelius was one of the two suffect consuls. He was long presumed to be a Cornelius Scipio,⁵² but we are sure now that he was P. Cornelius Dolabella.⁵³ Despite all the speculation, nothing is known about him.⁵⁴ The other suffect consul in 35 was T. Peducaeus. As in other cases, Peducaeus was a *consul suffectus* without history who came from nowhere and disappeared without a trace.⁵⁵

This description of Peducaeus' political 'career' — or rather of his lack of a political career, again according to our sources — can properly be applied to other suffect consuls. There were four *consules suffecti* in 34.⁵⁶ C. Memmius and M. Herennius were two of them, and both are strangers to us. Nothing is known about them before or after their consulships, no other office is recorded,⁵⁷ and their relationships to other individuals of the same name is merely speculative.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that there seems to have been a negative progression throughout the year with respect to the prestige of the consuls, which apparently decreased as the year passed. The ordinary consuls in 34 were M. Antonius and L. Scribonius Libo, whose prominence, obviously on a different scale, is beyond doubt. Libo took part in the talks that led to the so-called Pact of Misenum in 39, an agreement which included the assurance that he would attain the consulship in the following years.⁵⁹ When the war between Octavian and Sextus Pompeius re-ignited in 36, Libo abandoned Pompeius, his son-in-law, and joined Antonius. This led to him finally being rewarded with the appointment to *consul ordinarius* in 34.⁶⁰ The irrelevant Memmius replaced Libo on 1 July, and he was subsequently replaced by the no less irrelevant Herennius for the last weeks of the year.

On his side, the triumvir Antonius resigned on the first day of the year and was immediately replaced by L. Sempronius Atratinus, who was officially therefore a *consul suffectus* but in practice could be seen as an *ordinarius* for having taken office right at the beginning of the year.⁶¹ Atratinus had been suffect praetor in 40, and he had stood out above all in the previous years serving loyally under the command of Antonius.⁶² Atratinus was therefore designated suffect consul, and he held the office until 1 July.⁶³ For the rest of the year he was replaced by Paullus Aemilius Lepidus, a member of one

⁵¹ He has tentatively been identified with Q. Marcius Crispus or with Q. Marcius Philippus: on Q. Marcius Crispus, Syme 1939: 199 n. 3; Broughton MRR 3.137; Bruhns 1978: 45–6; on Q. Marcius Philippus, Syme 1986: 28 n. 111; Salomies 1991: 187–90. The two identifications are as feasible as they are speculative. He could just as easily be another utterly unknown Marcius, about whom his consulship would be the only evidence.

⁵² Syme 1939: 229 n. 7.

⁵³ Salomies 1991: 190–1; Bodel 1995: 285–6.

⁵⁴ See specially Salomies 1991: 190–1, who, after suggesting some possible identities, concluded that the man could not possibly be identified and that consequently it is not worth speculating.

⁵⁵ Salomies 1991: 189 n. 10; Bodel 1995: 285–6.

⁵⁶ Salomies 1991: 191–2; Bodel 1995: 287.

⁵⁷ A C. Memmius was a moneyer (Broughton MRR 2.446), but Crawford RRC 451 attributed his coins to the tribune of the plebs of 54, and not to the consul of 34.

⁵⁸ Herennius may have been a relative of the Herennii who held various offices in the first part of the first century (Broughton MRR 3.101), but the link is far from certain. Syme, 1939: 92 n. 2 and 498 n. 3, pointed out that the consul of the year A.D. 1 was his son. Again it is a hypothesis without clear evidence.

⁵⁹ On the details of the Pact of Misenum see Wallmann 1989: 190–9.

⁶⁰ App., *B Civ.* 5.139. Welch 2012: 299–300; Kondratieff 2015: 445–6.

⁶¹ Cass. Dio 49.39.1 explains that this is the reason why some historians mention Atratinus as consul in 34 and omit Antonius.

⁶² Broughton MRR 2.389; 3.188; Ferriès 2007: 464–6. On his coinage while legate under Antonius in Greece, Crawford RRC 533 no. 530, who dated it to 39.

⁶³ Atratinus later abandoned Antonius and joined Octavian, though we do not know exactly when (Syme 1939: 282); he was proconsul in Africa under Augustus.

of the most distinguished families of the Roman Republic.⁶⁴ All in all, he himself does not seem to have developed a remarkable career until that moment. Nonetheless, he certainly did so after his consulship, and even became censor under Augustus in 22.

Far from changing the background of many *suffect* consuls as the triumviral period progressed, obscurity and, presumably, lack of prominence remained the rule or even deepened. The year 33, in which six *consules suffecti* were appointed, is a good example. L. Autronius Paetus replaced the ordinary consul Octavian on the first day of the year.⁶⁵ His consulship is the first evidence of this individual. However, he was later proconsul in Africa and celebrated a triumph in 28.⁶⁶ L. Flavius and C. Fonteius Capito entered office on 1 May. Flavius was a follower of Antonius, but his consulship is virtually the only evidence of his career.⁶⁷ More is known about Fonteius, who was also a supporter of Antonius. Fonteius was a tribune of the plebs in 39 and a member of a priestly college, perhaps the augurs.⁶⁸ M. Acilius Glabrio entered office on 1 July and resigned on 1 September.⁶⁹ Nothing certain is known about him except his consulship.⁷⁰ L. Vinicius became consul on 1 September.⁷¹ He is actually the only Vinicius known to have held an office during the Republic.⁷² Finally, Q. Laronius entered office on 1 October. As in the case of Vinicius, he is the first Laronius recorded as a magistrate.⁷³

The year 32 shows clearly the contrast between the prominent political and military curricula of the ordinary consuls, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and C. Sosius, and the apparently irrelevant trajectories of the *suffecti*, L. Cornelius (Cinna?) and M. Valerius Messalla. Both Domitius and Sosius had been respected commanders in the years previous to their consulships.⁷⁴ On the contrary, the *suffect* consuls reached the highest magistracy without having left a record of their political or military activities.

Finally, the successive appointments of consuls for 31 allow us again to see clearly how the political weight of the magistrates decreased gradually throughout the year. The ordinary consuls designate for that year were the triumvirs Antonius and Octavian. The latter remained in office for the whole year. By contrast, Antonius was deprived of the consulship, and M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus was appointed in his place. Valerius Messalla obviously belonged to a well-known family which had provided some consuls in the first century. He also had an acknowledged *cursus honorum*, as he had been praetor in 40 and commander of the fleet in 36 in Agrippa's absence.⁷⁵ When Valerius Messalla resigned his consulship on 1 May, he became a promagistrate and held a command at the centre of Octavian's fleet at the Battle of Actium.⁷⁶ He continued to be a significant politician under Augustus and obtained a triumph in 27. There is no doubt

⁶⁴ In fact, he finished the construction of the Basilica Aemilia that his father had begun, undertaking the task as a family matter (Cass. Dio 49.42.2).

⁶⁵ Cass. Dio 49.43.6; Suet., *Aug.* 26.3. See Salomies 1991: 188; Bodel 1995: 287.

⁶⁶ Syme 1939: 292 and 303; Broughton MRR 3.33. No descendant is known.

⁶⁷ Ferriès 2007: 400.

⁶⁸ Broughton MRR 3.93; Ferriès 2007: 401–3; Rüpke 2008: 695 no. 1734. Fonteius was the author of works on sacral law, and the ordinary consul of A.D. 12 was probably his son.

⁶⁹ Bodel 1995: 287.

⁷⁰ Broughton, MRR 2.285 n. 8 and 525, recorded the uncertain hypothesis that he may have been *quaestor pro praetore* in 45–44.

⁷¹ Salomies 1991: 188; Bodel 1995: 287–8.

⁷² He was probably the same L. Vinicius who was *monetalis* in 52 and tribune of the plebs in 51. Broughton MRR 3.221; Crawford RRC 457, no. 436.

⁷³ This must be the same Laronius who in 36 was sent by Agrippa with an army to help Cornificius (App., *B Civ.* 5.112).

⁷⁴ On Domitius, Ferriès 2007: 392–7. Sosius was active as consul on behalf of Antonius and against Octavian: Cass. Dio 49.41.4; 50.1–2. See Wallmann 1989: 298–304; Ferriès 2007: 470–2.

⁷⁵ Joseph., *BJ* 1.284–5; App., *B Civ.* 5.102; *Ill.* 17; Cass. Dio 49.38.3. Cf. Broughton MRR 2.403; 3.213–14; Ferriès 2007: 481–3.

⁷⁶ App., *B Civ.* 4.38; Broughton MRR 2.422.

that Valerius Messalla was in 31 a prominent man at Rome, and that his prestige was decisive in his becoming consul.

M. Titius replaced Valerius Messalla on 1 May, and remained in office for five months. Titius had a long military trajectory in the previous years, first under Antonius and then under Octavian, when he defected from Antonius. As suffect consul Titius participated in the Battle of Actium, defeating, together with T. Statilius Taurus, the cavalry of Antonius. Given his collaboration in Octavian's final victory, Titius would later, under Augustus, have a significant political role.⁷⁷ Finally, Cn. Pompeius was the last suffect consul of the year 31.⁷⁸ As was characteristic of a *consul suffectus* holding the office in the last months of the year, in his case only in November and December, Pompeius is one more of the undistinguished consuls of the period, and his consulship is actually his only known office.⁷⁹

IV CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the triumviral period the consulship continued officially to be the highest republican magistracy, but now under the supervision and control of the triumvirs. The office continued to be dual and collegial, since there were never more than two consuls simultaneously, but it became usual that several pairs of consuls held the office during the year, the pair starting the consular year being called *consules ordinarii*, the following magistrates being *consules suffecti*. Augustus put an end to this practice in 28, the year in which only a pair of consuls was once more elected for the whole year.⁸⁰ However, suffect consuls became regular again from 5 onwards.⁸¹

Many of the *consules suffecti* of the triumviral age were obscure. This generalisation is substantially correct, especially if we make a comparison with consuls of prior periods, but it should not be forgotten that this obscurity could, at least partially, be a misleading perception arising from the gaps in our information. Nonetheless, not all of them were inconspicuous men. Some of them reached the consulship after a well-known career, and this allows us to understand how the *suffecti* were normally recruited during this period and which attributes qualified them for the office. However, a significant difference with regard to the traditional consulship was that many of the suffect consuls between 43 and 31 had no known previous political career: as a matter of fact most of them did not fulfil the legal requirements for holding the consulship. Most were military men under the command of Octavian or Antonius. Their military exploits catapulted them to momentary glory, in many cases apparently without further great political success. In some cases the consulship is their only known magistracy (which does not necessarily mean they did not hold any other public office). They disappear from the sources as silently as they make their appearance.

The consulship had never been completely closed to newcomers throughout the Republic,⁸² but the triumviral period saw an unusually large emergence of *homines novi* propelled by the triumvirs to reach the highest magistracy, partly because of the

⁷⁷ Ferriès 2007: 475–7.

⁷⁸ According to Syme 1939: 279 n. 3, he was the son of Q. Pompeius Rufus, the tribune of the plebs in 52.

⁷⁹ However, he may have been designated *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* in the aftermath of the Pact of Misenum in 39 (Rüpke 2008: 844 no. 2747).

⁸⁰ Cass. Dio 53.1.1–2; cf. Hurlet 2009: 78.

⁸¹ On the *consules suffecti* under Augustus see Dalla Rosa 2015: 581–2; Hurlet forthcoming.

⁸² See, for instance, Hopkins and Burton 1983: 40: 'one quarter of consuls elected between 178 and 82 B.C. came from clans or clan segments which had never produced a consul before.'

casualties among the *nobilitas* during the endless civil wars.⁸³ Many of them belonged to previously unknown and insignificant Roman or Italian families — not known in Rome but clearly neither poor nor unimportant in their places of origin. This access to the consulship, and in particular to the suffect consulship, for such a large number of newcomers had as an incidental (or intended) consequence the sudden increase in representation of Italians in the higher Roman magistracies.⁸⁴ The fact that Italian cities were the origin of some of these newcomers — something that in itself did not undervalue the office — made the message even more evident: the elite in Rome was open to new people, but access was in the hands of the rulers, the decisive factor being a devoted attachment to the leader. In all cases the main merits that the *consules suffecti* could adduce were of a military rather than civil nature, and had been obtained while serving under the command of one or other triumvir. The consulship was therefore a prize in the hands of the triumvirs, a means to reward and promote loyalties. In practice, during the triumviral age the consulship, and in particular the suffect consulship, became a gift given by the triumvirs to whomever they considered worthy of it. The consulship was not an exception but rather the rule, and the triumvirs likewise designated senators, praetors, aediles and priests among their followers.⁸⁵

In this process the people played little part, given that the appointments were made in advance directly by the triumvirs according to their personal interests and considering their right to give the offices to whomsoever they pleased without taking into account the Senate and people.⁸⁶ The consular elections consequently lost all meaning. How did this procedure of consular designation affect the legitimacy of the consuls during the triumviral period? It is not easy to say, because we have very meagre information about what the consuls actually did while in office.⁸⁷ When Cassius Dio mentions the permanent institutionalisation of the suffect consulship in 39, he makes clear that,

⁸³ Wiseman 1971: 166: in ten years of triumviral rule there were nineteen consular *homines novi*. On *novitas* and consulship in the triumviral period see van der Blom forthcoming: in the 40s, almost every year has a *novus* consul, sometimes as suffect, but nevertheless a consul.

⁸⁴ Syme defined as ‘undistinguished crew’ the group of consulars ‘impressive in number but not in dignity’ that in theory occupied in the Senate the place of the traditional leadership of the state (Syme 1939: 235 and 243–4; see also Osgood 2006: 251–60). Syme analysed the topic in *The Roman Revolution* (1939) and *The Augustan Aristocracy* (1986), but also in a good number of more specific articles. He concluded that some traditionally influential families, such as the Metelli, Marcelli and Calpurnii, disappeared from the political scene, replaced by others without any political presence up to that point, many of them from different regions of Italy. This is one of his conclusions: ‘the consulate falls in the main to the newest of the new ... strange names of alien root or termination now invade and disfigure the *Fasti* of the Roman people’ (Syme 1939: 199). Syme was interested in stressing the regrettable intrusion, in his opinion, of second-rate individuals into Roman politics as an important part of the moral collapse of the Republic. Consequently his viewpoint, although substantially correct with respect to the appearance of new protagonists within the political scenario, is somewhat coloured. In any case, the renewal of the group of consulars after the civil war between the Caesarians and Pompeians was compulsory, given that almost all previous consulars had died during the conflict. On this subject see Pina Polo forthcoming.

⁸⁵ Cass. Dio 47.15.1–3 (praetors and priests); 47.19.4 (all magistrates in general); 48.32.3 (aedile); 48.34.4 (the triumvirs appointed the senators they wanted, even slaves; cf. 48.35); 49.16.1 (M. Valerius Messala Corvinus was appointed augur by Octavian); 49.43.7 (praetors); App., *B Civ.* 4.5.1 (Cicero’s son was designated *pontifex* by Octavian before being nominated by him as a consul).

⁸⁶ Cass. Dio 46.55.3; App., *B Civ.* 4.2.7; Roddaz 1992: 196. We have clear evidence that the triumvirs appointed the new consuls: Cass. Dio 47.15.2 (in 43 Ventidius); 48.32.1 (40); 48.35.1–2 (39); 50.10.1 (31). The *Lex Titia* no doubt included the right of the triumvirs to designate magistrates, whatever the office (Frei-Stolba 1967: 81–3; Fadinger 1969: 35–6), and they did so (Cass. Dio 47.19.4: in 42, the triumvirs appointed the city magistrates for several years in advance). However, this does not necessarily mean that they actually appointed all the magistrates every year (see Millar 1973: 52: ‘there remain a few indications that the ritual of the elections continued, and even that some places were filled by election’). For instance, the people apparently elected M. Oppius in 37 as aedile (App., *B Civ.* 4.41; cf. Cass. Dio 48.53.4). In any case, there is no evidence that the people elected the consuls *in comitia* during the triumviral age.

⁸⁷ Millar 1973: 53.

although all the consuls of a year bore the same title, the *suffecti* remained unknown to many citizens of the empire, and were consequently called ‘inferior consuls’.⁸⁸ Cassius Dio seems to refer to citizens living out of Rome, who could hardly be aware of the names of consuls following in such quick succession. It is reasonable to assume, nonetheless, that this lack of interest may also have been the case in Rome itself. Roman society within the city must have had the impression that the *suffecti* were ‘secondary consuls’ of poor social visibility. Certainly, during the triumviral period, many of these suffect consuls had barely been in Rome since they were almost permanently engaged fighting in one war or another. Ultimately their legitimacy did not come from the people, but from the *imperatores* under whose command they had fought, and who had graciously promoted them.

Throughout the period, even though a difference between the functions of *consules ordinarii* and *consules suffecti* did not exist, there was implicitly a difference of social and political prestige between the two categories of the same magistracy. It is obviously not by chance that the triumvirs themselves held the regular consulship some years (M. Antonius in 34 and Octavian in 33, and both had been designated consuls for 31, as Lepidus had been *consul ordinarius* in 42), but never became suffect consuls. Some of the great leaders of the moment held the ordinary consulship (M. Agrippa was *consul ordinarius* for the first time in 37, and Sextus Pompeius should have become regular consul in 35, the year of his death), even as a merely honorary magistracy (M. Antonius resigned his consulship on the first day of 34, immediately after taking office, and Octavian did the same on the first day of 33).⁸⁹ In any case, at the beginning of the period the ordinary consuls had a previous political career behind them. For example, in 40 the consul Cn. Domitius Calvinus had already been consul in 53, whereas his colleague Cn. Asinius Pollio had been praetor in 45. Throughout the period, however, the situation was changing. Increasingly, many ordinary consuls were obscure individuals, such as L. Caninius Gallus in 37, the colleague of Agrippa,⁹⁰ equalling the unimportant social and political origin that apparently characterised many suffect consuls. This convergence of ordinary and suffect consuls in the social and political insignificance of their holders implicitly emphasised the secondary character of the consulship with respect to the triumvirate — the office that really mattered.

Nevertheless, the consulship was formally still the highest republican magistracy, and therefore the triumvirs could still present this means of rewarding loyal followers as a gesture of respect towards the republican forms, with an appearance of continuity in the traditional offices. But it is quite possible that many people in Rome saw the appointment of *consules suffecti* every year as irregular, as a deviation from republican tradition.⁹¹ This complaint⁹² would explain why Augustus considered it appropriate to eliminate the suffect consulship in 28. Aware of the exceptional situation of the consulship during the triumvirate, Augustus wanted to return to the old republican

⁸⁸ Cass. Dio 48.35.3.

⁸⁹ Cass. Dio 49.39.1; 49.43.6. Suet., *Aug.* 26.3; Octavian’s consulship lasted only a few hours.

⁹⁰ Syme 1939: 200 n. 7: ‘about L. Caninius Gallus (*cos.* 37 B.C.) nothing is known, save that he married a first cousin of M. Antonius (Val. Max. 4, 2, 6).’

⁹¹ Referring to the year 37, Cassius Dio claims that many people in Rome were upset by the fact that not only the consuls, but also praetors and even quaestors were continually replacing one another (Cass. Dio 48.53.1). According to Cassius Dio, in 40 Octavian and Antonius had removed certain consuls and praetors in order to appoint others, despite the fact that these men would remain in office for just a few days. When an aedile died on the last day of the year, the triumvirs chose another to fill the remaining hours, exactly as Caesar had done in 45 with Caninius (Cass. Dio 48.32.1–3). Additionally, Cassius Dio gives an image of institutional disorder in Rome when he asserts that in the year 38 sixty-seven praetors were appointed and held office in succession (48.43.2).

⁹² It must not be forgotten that in 45 one of the *consules suffecti*, Q. Fabius Maximus, had been jeered at in the theatre while the multitude cried that he was not really a consul (Suet., *Iul.* 80.2).

tradition and to give a sense of the restoration of lawfulness after years of continuous civil wars. In addition, consular elections were returned to the *comitia centuriata* and so the people were once again able to elect the consuls annually, under the supervision of the Princesps. It is in any case significant that the restoration of the consulship in 28 was the symbol of the return to the normal order of things.⁹³ When years later the suffect consulship was reintroduced as a regular office Augustus had reaffirmed his dominant position, but he still had loyal individuals to reward.⁹⁴

To summarise. The triumvirs openly made use of the suffect consulship to reward loyalties and consolidate their support. The implicit consequence was the gradual depreciation of the consulship. It is no coincidence that Antonius and Octavian were *consules ordinarii* for just a few hours in 34 and 33, and that both preferred to resign and to go on taking decisions as triumvirs. The message was clear: the triumvirs had the real power, not just the extraordinary legal power provided by the Lex Titia in 43. The consuls, *ordinarii* and *suffecti*, were no longer elected by the people but designated in advance by the triumvirs: making the designation of consuls depend on the will of the triumvirs clearly emphasised the inferiority of the consulship. Multiplying the number of consuls each year eliminated *de facto* the traditional annuality of the office and reduced its authority. The suffect consulship was therefore a powerful tool in the hands of the triumvirs for strengthening their social and political position, weakening the old aristocracy and giving birth to a new elite on the basis of loyal personal relationships. The suffect consulship was a significant step in the path to the subsequent Principate under Augustus.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Broughton *MRR* = T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (3 vols), Atlanta, 1951–2, 1986.
 Crawford *RRC* = M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, Cambridge, 1974.

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⁹³ Millar 1973: 52; Roddaz 1992: 202.

⁹⁴ On the consulship under Augustus see Hurlet 2011.

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