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The Brindisi elogium and Appius Claudius Caecus

A fragmentary mid-first-century AD inscription, part of an elogium, found in Brindisi in 1950, states that when a Barbula was consul the honoree first performed a *lectio* of the senate, and had something to do with a Hannibal. Most have taken “Hannibal” to be the famous invader of Italy, and conclude that the honoree was Fabius Maximus Cunctator. R. Develin started instead with Barbula, and, since the subject first performed a senatorial *lectio*, suggested that he is Appius Claudius Caecus (*Hist* 25, 484-487 (1976)). However Livy explicitly says that the consuls of 311, Iunius Brutus and Aemilius Barbula, rejected Caecus’ *lectio* (9.30.1–2). Diodorus disagrees (20.36), saying that it was the consuls of 310, and placing the other acts of the censorship in that year. A comparison of the accounts suggests that both were using the same source for Caecus’ censorship, and that both misinterpreted the passage to result in different years for the rejection of the *lectio*, both wrong. The elogium should be connected with Caecus.

It reads:

Primus senatum legit et comiti[] Barbula cos circum sedit vi[] diumque Hannibalis et
prae[] militaribus praecipuam glor[

The acts described in the first line can have taken place only in 311 and 230, when a Barbula was consul and there were censors. The censors of 311 were Caecus and C. Plautius Venox, those of 230 Fabius Cunctator and M. Sempronius Tuditanus. For both Caecus and Fabius, this elogium differs from the better known *Forum-Augusti* examples, and presents otherwise unattested activity: for Caecus, we hear of no dealings with a Hannibal, for Fabius there is nothing about a *lectio*.

Diodorus’ placement of the censorial elections in 310 is likely mistaken because it results in three very closely spaced censorships preceded by one at a distance: 318, 310, 307 and 304. This is Diodorus’ only extended mention of any censorship or of Caecus, and the details, as well as his account of the rest of the year, suggest that he was drawing on the same ultimate source as Livy. One solution allows both versions to be accepted with only minor alteration and has the advantage of simplicity. If the consuls of 310 rejected the *lectio* and both Livy and Diodorus believed that the *lectio* took place in the same year as the election of the censors, each could have applied this rule with different results, because applied to different information. In later practice the *lectio* was put into effect immediately; it is entirely possible that the first *lectio* took place later.

Diodorus’ source would have given only the year of the *lectio*’s rejection (310) but not of the election, while Livy found the year of the election (312) and the year of the rejection only in relative terms (e.g., “the year following the *lectio*”), if at all. Livy nearly says as much: *itaque consules qui eum annum secuti sunt...negaverent eam lectionem se...observaturos...* (9.30.1). Each then would have placed the rejection just as he did.