

IMPERIAL CHRONOLOGY, A.D. 337–350

T. D. BARNES

THE period after the death of Constantine on 22 May 337 is among the most obscure in Roman imperial history. The extant narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus commences only with events of 353, and the much inferior Zosimus passes with extreme rapidity over the decade between 340 and 350. More is known about ecclesiastical history from documents, from fourth-century polemical writings and from the narratives of Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus. But ecclesiastical events must often be dated with reference to secular affairs whose chronology is difficult to establish precisely. Moreover, by a singular misfortune, Otto Seeck's chronology of the period following 337 falls below his normally high standard of reliability.¹ The present brief article proposes a skeleton chronology for the movements of the emperors Constantinus, Constantius, and Constans from their proclamation as Augusti on 9 September 337 (*Chr.min.* 1.235) to the death of Constans in the early months of 350.²

I. THE THREE EMPERORS

The sons of Constantine conferred in Pannonia during the late summer or early autumn of 337 (Julian *Orat.* 1, 19A). Their dynastic rivals now safely dead, they set aside Constantine's arrangements for the succession and divided the Roman Empire into three.³ Constantinus was to govern Britain, Gaul, and Spain: although he received no increment of territory in 337, he appears to have been granted some symbolic mark of pre-eminence in the imperial college.⁴ Constantius and Constans split the provinces of the murdered Caesar Dalmatius: the former added the Thracian diocese to Asia Minor and the East which he already held,

¹O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (Stuttgart 1919) 184 ff. Seeck distorts the chronology of 337–340 by proceeding as if there were two emperors, not three, and by wrongly making Evagrius praetorian prefect in 339/40 (see, provisionally, *PLRE* 1.284 f.; 1049).

²For the format, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), Chapter V (20 November 284 to 9 September 337).

³For the division of 335, *Origo Const. Imp.* 35; *Epitome* 41.20; for that of 337, Eusebius *VC* 4.51.1; Zosimus 2.39.2 (both retrojecting it to 335); *Passio Artemii* 8 = Philoſtorgius, *HE* 3.1^a. On the elimination of the brothers' rivals, see still A. Olivetti, *Riv. fil.* 43 (1915) 67 ff.

⁴O. Seeck, *ZfN* 21 (1898) 44 ff.

while the latter now ruled the rest of the Danubian region, Greece, Italy, and Africa. Early in 340, however, Constantinus invaded the territory of Constans, was defeated and killed: with his disappearance, Britain, Gaul, and Spain passed under the rule of Constans, who condemned his brother's memory and perhaps executed some of his most prominent supporters.⁵

The residences of the three brothers faithfully reflect the division of 337 and the elimination of Constantinus in 340. Constantinus resided in Trier, after 337 as he had before (Eusebius *Triac.* 3.4). Until 340, Constans clearly resided in Illyricum, perhaps with Naissus as his principal residence. After 340, he resided mainly in Italy and Gaul: in Italy he is most often attested at Milan and Aquileia, while in Gaul his principal residence was presumably Trier (cf. Athanasius *Apol. ad Const.* 4).⁶ As for Constantius, he settled down into a routine imposed by the war against Persia: from 338 he spent his winters in Antioch, his summers on campaign in Mesopotamia (Libanius *Orat.* 18.206/7).

II. IMPERIAL MOVEMENTS

The following pages note the exact or approximate dates at which Constantinus, Constantius, and Constans are attested either at a specific place or in a definite geographical area. It should be observed that the chronology of the years 342–344 depends partly on the view (taken as proved elsewhere) that the Council of Serdica convened during the autumn of 343, not of 342, as several modern reconstructions of ecclesiastical politics under Constantius assume.⁷ (The superscript 's' indicates acceptance of Seeck's emendation of the date or place of issue of a document in the *Codex Theodosianus*, usually for the reasons which he states in justification.)

⁵For the erasure of Constantinus' name on inscriptions, *Diz. ep.* 2.657. A victim of the hypothetical purge in 340 can be identified by an attractive conjecture (*PLRE* 1.51). Ambrosius was praetorian prefect in Gaul when his son was born in 339 (Paulinus *Vita Ambrosii* 2.3, cf. Ambrose *Epp.* 59: on the historical context of this letter, written in 392, see J. R. Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'Empire romain* (Paris 1933) 542 f.; F. H. Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose* (Oxford 1935) 415 f.). The biographer of Ambrose is totally silent about the circumstances of his father's death shortly thereafter (2.4). The prefect will be the son or son-in-law of Aurelius Valerius Tullianus Symmachus Phosphorius, consul in 330 (on whom see recently G. Polara, *Parola del Passato* 39 [1974] 261 ff.), if his son Ambrose is, as appears to be implied by the evidence, the cousin of Symmachus (Ambrose *De excessu Satyri* 1.32; Symmachus *Epp.* 1.63). The kinship of Ambrose and Symmachus has sometimes been forgotten in discussions of their political and religious antagonism.

⁶E. M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (London 1970) 60.

⁷*AJAH* 3 (1978) 67 ff.

Constantinus

337, ca Sept.	In Pannonia	Julian <i>Orat.</i> 1, 19A
‡338	German campaign	<i>CIL</i> 3.12483 = <i>ILS</i> 724 + add. (3, p. clxxii) ⁸
339, Jan. 8	At Trier	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.27
340, spring	Invades territory of Constans and is killed near Aquileia	<i>Chr.min.</i> 1.236; <i>Epitome</i> 41.21 ⁹

Constantius

337, ‡Aug./Sept.	Campaign against the Sarmatae	<i>ILS</i> 724 ¹⁰
337, ca Sept.	Confers with Constantinus and Constans in Pannonia	Julian <i>Orat.</i> 1, 19A ¹¹
	Returns to Constantinople	Socrates <i>HE</i> 2.7
337, late	Travels to Antioch	Socrates <i>HE</i> 2.7, cf. Libanius <i>Orat.</i> 59.75 ff.
338, ‡spring	At Caesarea in Cappadocia	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 5
	Restores Arsaces to the throne of Armenia	Julian <i>Orat.</i> 1, 20/21
338, Oct. 11	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.23
Oct. 28	At Emesa	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.25
Dec. 27	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 2.6.4
340, Aug. 12	‡At Edessa	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.30 ⁸
Sept. 9	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 6.4.5/6

⁸Constantinus is here *Al[aman(nicus) ma]x. G[erm(anicus) max.]*, whereas he was bare *Alaman(nicus)* c. February 337 (*AE* 1934.158): that implies that he won a victory over Germans in the field in spring 337 or later (cf. *ZPE* 20 [1976] 149).

⁹Zosimus 2.41 mistakenly makes Constans the aggressor.

¹⁰The inscription shows that Constantius took the title *Sarmaticus* between 337 and 340: Constantine's conquests north of the Danube were lost in 337 or 338 (cf. Julian *Caes.* 329 B-D), not in 346/7, as proposed by E. A. Thompson, *Hermes* 84 (1956) 375 ff.

¹¹Since Athanasius returned to Alexandria on 23 November 337 (not 338), his meeting with Constantius at Viminacium (*Apol. ad Const.* 5) probably occurred in August 337 (*AfAH* 3 [1978] 65 f.).

341, Jan. 6	Attends the “Dedication-Council” at Antioch	Athanasius <i>De synodis</i> 25.1; Philostorgius p. 212.19 ff. Bidez ¹²
Feb. 12	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 5.13.1/2
341/2, winter	In Antioch	Socrates <i>HE</i> 2.13.5; Sozomenus <i>HE</i> 3.7.5; cf. <i>Chr.min.</i> 1.236
342, early	Travels to Constantinople	Libanius <i>Orat.</i> 59.96
	Returns at once to Antioch	Libanius <i>Orat.</i> 59.97; Socrates <i>HE</i> 2.13.7; Sozomenus <i>HE</i> 3.7.8
342, March 31–May 11	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 3.12.1; 12.1.33 (April 5); 12.1.34 (April 8); 11.36.6
343, Feb. 18	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 9.21.5; 22.1 ⁸
June 9	At Hierapolis	<i>CTh</i> 8.1.1 ⁸ ; 12.1.35 = 7.22.4
July 4	At Hierapolis	<i>CTh</i> 15.8.1
summer/ autumn	Victory over the Persians near Singara	Athanasius <i>Hist.Ar.</i> 16.2; Festus <i>Brev.</i> 27; Philostorgius p. 213.1 f. Bidez = Theophanes p. 37.11 f. de Boor ¹³
344, ca April 15	At Antioch	Athanasius <i>Hist. Ar.</i> 20/21, cf. Festal Index 17
345, May 12	At Nisibis	<i>CTh</i> 11.7.5, cf. Ephraem <i>Carmina Nisibena</i> 13.4–6 ¹⁴

¹²On the date, W. Eltester, *ZNW* 36 (1937) 254 f. E. Schwartz, *ZNW* 34 (1935) 142, had dated the council to autumn 341.

¹³Festus lists nine serious battles against the Persians under Constantius, but states that the emperor was present only twice, at a *pugna Singarena*, and at a *nocturna Eliensis prope Singaram pugna* (*Brev.* 27). When Julian, *Orat.* 1, 26 B, dates the famous battle of Singara approximately six years before news came of the death of Constans, he presumably confuses two battles fought near the same city in 343 and 348.

¹⁴I rely on the German translation of E. Beck, *CSCO* 219 = *Scriptores Syri* 93 (Louvain 1961) 40. It is sometimes asserted that Constantius relieved the siege of Nisibis in 346 (J. W. Eadie, *Breviarium of Festus* [London 1967] 150 f.). But Ephraem's words which are adduced in support need not mean that Constantius and Sapor were at Nisibis at the same time, and Libanius' silence about such an exploit in *Orat.* 59 discountenances the idea (O. Seeck, *RE* 1A [1920] 2337, cf. 17 [1937] 742).

346, March 21	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 10.14.1 ⁸
?spring	In Edessa	Athanasius <i>Apol. sec.</i> 51.6 ¹⁵
ca Sept.	At Antioch	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad</i> <i>Const.</i> 5; <i>Hist. Ar.</i> 44.5, cf. Festal Index 17; <i>Historia acephala</i> 2; Jerome <i>Chronicle</i> 236 ^e
347, March 8	At Ancyra	<i>CTh</i> 11.36.8
May 11	At Hierapolis	<i>CTh</i> 5.6.1
348	Defeats the Persians in a nocturnal battle near Singara	<i>Chr. min.</i> 1.236, cf. Festus <i>Brev.</i> 27; Jerome <i>Chronicle</i> 236 ¹ 16
349, April 1	At Antioch	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.39
October 3	At Constantinople	<i>CTh</i> 12.2.1; 15.1.6

Constans

337, ca Sept.	In Pannonia	Julian <i>Orat.</i> 1, 19A
337, Dec. 6	At Thessalonica	<i>CTh</i> 11.1.4 ¹⁷
probably 338	Campaigns against the Sarmatae	<i>ILS</i> 724 ¹⁸

¹⁵Seeck, *Regesten* 194, registers Constantius' presence at Constantinople on 26 May 346 (*CTH* 16.2.10: consular date emended from 353) and on 27 August (*CTh* 11.39.4). That seems most improbable for a year when the Persians besieged Nisibis for three months (Jerome *Chronicle* 236^b). Moreover, the addressee of *CTh* 11.39.4 is the otherwise unknown Aurelius Mimenius. I propose to emend *Mimenio* to *Limenio*, *dat(a)* in the subscription to *prop(osita)* and *Constantio IIII et Constante III AA. cons.* to *Constantio III et Constante II AA. cons.*: if that is correct, then *CTh* 11.39.4 was published (not issued) at Constantinople on 27 August 342 by Ulpius Limenius, who is independently attested as proconsul of Constantinople in 342 (Libanius *Orat.* 1.45 ff.).

¹⁶J. B. Bury, *BZ* 5 (1896) 302 ff., mistakenly dated the battle to 344, with appeal to Julian *Orat.* 1, 26–31 (on which see above, n. 13).

¹⁷*CTh* 11.7.7, also issued at Thessalonica on 6 December, but transmitted with the consular date *Constantio VI et Constante III AA. cons.*, appears to be another fragment of the same document, cf. Seeck, *Regesten* 185. *PLRE* 1.764 emends the date to 346—which implies that Constantius made an otherwise unattested journey to Thessalonica in the winter of 346/7.

¹⁸O. Seeck, *ZfN* 21 (1898) 56 ff. In his later *Regesten*, Seeck dated the campaign ca March 339 (187), and in *ZPE* 20 (1976) 154 I proposed a joint campaign by Constantius and Constans in 337 or 338, because I had failed to realise that Constantius returned to the East before the end of 337 (*AJAH* 3 [1978] 66).

338, June 12	At Viminacium	<i>CTh</i> 10.10.4
July 27	At Sirmium	<i>CTh</i> 15.1.5; <i>Cŷ</i> 10.48.7
?339, April 6	At Savaria	<i>CTh</i> 10.10.6 ^a (342 ms)
340, Jan. 19– Feb. 2	At Naissus	<i>CTh</i> 12.9.29; 10.10.5
April 9	At Aquileia	<i>CTh</i> 2.6.5; 10.15.3
June 25	At Milan	<i>CTh</i> 9.17.1
	?Visits Rome	Philostorgius <i>HE</i> 3.1 ^{a19}
341, June 24	At Lauriacum	<i>CTh</i> 8.2.1 = 12.1.31
	Fights Franci in Gaul	<i>Chr.min.</i> 1.236
342, spring or summer	Victory over Franci and alliance with them	<i>Chr.min.</i> 1.236; Socrates <i>HE</i> 2.13.4
	Interviews Athanasius in Milan	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 4
342, Dec. 4	At Milan	<i>CTh</i> 9.7.3
343, Jan. 25	At Bononia	<i>CTh</i> 11.16.5, cf. <i>Cŷ</i> 3.26.6
343, shortly after Jan. 25	Crosses to Britain in winter	Firmicus Maternus <i>De errore prof. rel.</i> 28.6; Libanius <i>Orat.</i> 59.139; Ammianus 20.1.1
spring	Quickly restores order in Britain and returns to the continent	Libanius <i>Orat.</i> 59.139; 141
June 30	At Trier	<i>CTh</i> 12.1.36
343, summer or early autumn	Interviews Athanasius in Gaul, presumably at Trier	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 4
?344/5, winter	At Poetovio	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 3
345, April 7	In Aquileia at Easter	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 15, cf. Festal Index 17
345, after Easter	In Gaul, presumably at Trier	Athanasius <i>Apol. ad Const.</i> 4, cf. Festal Index 17

¹⁹For the hypothesis of a visit to Rome, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 327 f.

345, May 15	At Trier	<i>CTh</i> 10.10.7
June 9 or July 11	At Cologne	<i>CTh</i> 3.5.7
?346, March 5	At Sirmium	<i>CTh</i> 10.10.8 ^a (353 ms) ²⁰
348, June 17	At Milan	<i>CTh</i> 10.14.2
?349, May 27	At Sirmium	<i>CTh</i> 7.1.2; 8.7.3 ²¹
350, shortly after Jan. 18	Killed at Helena, in Gaul	<i>Chr.min.</i> 1.237; Eutro- pius <i>Brev.</i> 10.9.4; Jerome <i>Chronicle</i> 237 ^c ; <i>Epitome</i> 41.23; Zosimus 2.42.5

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

²⁰Seeck, *Regesten* 195, emended the date of *CTh* 11.1.6; 12.1.42 from 22 May 354 to 22 May 346 to show Constans at Milan on the latter date. That could be correct, but his arguments are not compelling, cf. *PLRE* 1.782 f.

²¹The title of the addressee appears to favour emending the date to 352 or 353, cf. *PLRE* 1.840 f.