

Cicero's Proconsulship in Cilicia 51-50 B.C.*

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As sole consul in 52 B.C., Cn. Pompeius carried a law (confirming a senatorial resolution of the previous year) requiring an interval of five years between a magistracy and the ensuing promagistracy. One of the results of this measure, which cut into the supply of available governors, was that it forced the orator M. Tullius Cicero to accept the proconsulship he had happily forsaken after his consular year of 63.¹ Cicero received the province of Cilicia, which he governed from the end of July 51 until the same time in the following year. The story of Cicero's upright government is a familiar one, and it has already received narrative treatment.² Therefore, rather than simply rechronicling Cicero's year in Cilicia, this paper will consider certain specific topics relating to Cicero and his Cilician proconsulship. After a brief account of Cicero's activities from May 51 to the end of 50, the following topics will be considered: 1) The motivation which made Cicero's government so exemplary; 2) Cicero's reluctance to assume that government and his desire to limit its duration; 3) Cicero's attempt to gain a triumph.

Cicero's immediate predecessor as governor of Cilicia was Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 54), eldest brother of the notorious P. Clodius. In 53 Appius had succeeded P. Cornelius Lentulus Spinther (the consul of 57 who had worked for Cicero's recall from exile). When Cicero entered his province, on 31 July 51 at Laodicea, Appius, far away at Tarsus, successfully avoided meeting him.³ Under Appius' government the provincials "suffered the normal evils of cruelty and extortion."⁴ After returning to Rome, Appius was tried and acquitted successively for *maiestas*, then *ambitus*. The unsuccessful prosecutor was, much to Cicero's embarrassment, his new son-in-law, P. Cornelius Dolabella. Appius' defense was conducted by his own son-in-law, M. Brutus, and by the eminent Q. Hortensius, who died shortly after.⁵

Cicero tarried in southern Italy throughout May and into

*The abbreviations which appear in the text and notes follow the standard form of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

early June 51 before setting sail from Brundisium. He arrived at Athens by way of Actium on 24 June.⁶ Cicero's quaestor was L. Mescinius Rufus, his legates his brother Quintus, C. Pomptinus, M. Anneius, and L. Tullius.⁷ Cicero's son Marcus and nephew Quintus were with the official entourage during much, if not all, of his proconsulship.⁸

Cicero arrived at Laodicea, thereby officially entering his province, on 31 July 51: *ex hoc die clavum anni movebis*, he wrote to Atticus.⁹ Setting out from Laodicea, Cicero travelled through his province to Tarsus, holding assizes at a number of cities along the way. His two depleted legions were reinforced by the arrival of his legate Anneius with five cohorts from Philomelium, and by the auxiliaries of King Deiotarus of Galatia. Cicero also claimed to have saved King Ariobarzanes III of Cappadocia from an assassination plot, though it is not entirely clear how. Cicero's reason for moving eastward was to protect Cilicia and Cappadocia from the Parthians, who were before Antioch. Indeed, an advance party of the enemy was destroyed by a portion of Cicero's cavalry on the eastern border of Cilicia. In the meantime C. Cassius drove the Parthians from Antioch. On 13 October Cicero's forces defeated native tribesmen near the Amanus range on the border between Syria and Cilicia and plundered the area for four or five days. For this exploit, he was hailed as *imperator*. Cicero then moved on to besiege Pindenissum, the chief stronghold of the local outlaws and rebel tribesmen. This he took in mid-December after a siege of fifty-seven days. His military exploits at an end, Cicero left his brother Quintus in charge of the eastern portion of his province and returned to Laodicea, dreaming of a possible triumph.¹⁰

Cicero reached Laodicea in February and remained there until early in May. At Laodicea Cicero was primarily concerned with judicial affairs, including the infamous case of Brutus and his loan to the people of Salamis. Leaving Laodicea, the proconsul travelled east through Cilicia to Tarsus, arriving nearly a month later. He embarked from Tarsus, most likely on 30 July 50.¹¹ During the second half of his proconsulship, Cicero was troubled by two major worries.

He feared a renewed invasion by the formidable Parthians, and he could not decide whom to leave in charge of his province. The Parthians resolved the first problem by withdrawing beyond the Euphrates. Since the legate Pomptinus left the province ahead of Cicero by prearrangement, and Cicero did not trust his quaestor Mescinius, his brother Quintus was the logical man to leave behind (the Senate had not yet appointed a successor). However, this problem was also solved, by the removal of the Parthian menace and the arrival in July of a second quaestor, C. Coelius Calvus. Cicero was at pains to explain his leaving the relatively inexperienced Coelius in command: people would talk if his own brother (who had previously governed Asia for three years) were given his province; besides, he feared that Quintus' temper might lead to problems. With Quintus leaving, Coelius was the logical successor; and Cicero had no desire to make an enemy of him. But if the Parthians had not withdrawn, he would certainly have left Quintus or remained himself!¹²

Cicero proceeded homeward by way of Athens rather slowly, arriving at Brundisium on 24 November. He was becoming more and more agitated by the darkening political situation. Cicero attempted to mediate the dispute between Pompey and Caesar, seeing the former in person and writing to the latter. He arrived at the outskirts of Rome on 4 January 49, still hoping to secure a triumph. However, on 10 January Caesar crossed the Rubicon, and Cicero was soon forced to choose sides.¹³

I. 'Multaque sum secutus Scaevolae'

We have more than Cicero's own testimony as authority for the rectitude and mildness of his government in Cilicia. Plutarch writes at length about the fairness of Cicero's government, his ease of access, and his refusal to accept gifts of any sort. Cicero "pacified [the Cilicians] by his mild government."¹⁴ According to Quintilian Cicero's administration of the province was a model of integrity.¹⁵

What motivated this outstanding uprightness, (certainly atypical of the Roman provincial administration of the time)?

Cicero's constant self-congratulation especially in his letters to Atticus may become a bit tiresome, but in this case it seems quite justified. Cicero's own self-regard would not allow him to be anything less than completely honest in his own eyes, and he appears to have had a genuine feeling of sympathy for the oppressed provincials.¹⁶

Cicero was well aware of the "model administration" of Q. Mucius Scaevola in Asia (probably in 94 B.C.). But he also understood its drawbacks.¹⁷ As shown in letters to his brother Quintus (when the latter governed Asia in 61) and to Lentulus Spinther, Cicero's greatest fear was conflict with the *publicani*. He thought it most difficult to satisfy the *publicani* without ruining the provincials.¹⁸ However, if anyone was in an ideal position to get on with the tax-farmers, it was Cicero with his life-long identification with the Equestrian order. His own success astounded him. He constantly flattered the *publicani*, while seeing that they harmed no one. By setting a 12 per cent rate of interest for payment by a specific date (the rate reverting to that of the original agreement—no doubt higher—if payment was not made), Cicero induced the natives to pay not only their current taxes, but five years' arrears as well. This prompt payment satisfied the tax-collectors.¹⁹

One cannot help but suspect that Cicero's extreme rectitude must have occasionally irritated his staff. However, they certainly knew what they were getting into; and one of the legates was the governor's own brother. Cicero constantly recounts how his staff is upholding *fama mea*.²⁰ He mentions only one transgression, that a relatively minor one (and legal under the *lex Iulia*) by L. Tullius.²¹ When he departed the province, Cicero left Coelius a year's maintenance and returned a million sesterces to the treasury. His staff thought the money should instead be divided among themselves, but to Cicero *mea laus apud me plurimum valuit*.²² He even uses his reputation as an excuse for refusing to supply his friend C. Caelius with panthers and money for the games of the latter's aedileship.²³

But even virtue has its limits. Cicero was not adverse to

using his influence with other governors to advance the business interests of his friends, nor to returning the favor.²⁴ He also endeavored to recover money owed to Brutus and Pompey by Ariobarzanes III of Cappadocia (which the King could ill afford to pay). His conduct in the affair of Scaptius and the Salaminians is not completely clear. Scaptius was a straw man for Brutus, who had loaned the people of Salamis on Cyprus a sum of money at 48 per cent interest in 56. Cicero ruled that they should pay back the loan at 12 per cent (the rate set by Cicero's *translaticium*, and also by the Senate) compounded. Scaptius refused to accept the money. Some believe that when Cicero discovered that Brutus was the real creditor, he first attempted to compromise, then left the matter for his successor. The evidence is not entirely clear.²⁵ Be this as it may, if Cicero did occasionally (and inevitably) compromise his position for powerful friends, this does not detract from the basic fairness and honesty on which he justly prided himself.

There is admittedly a risk in analyzing Cicero's motivation on the basis of his own statements. It has been said that he was more interested in a reputation for honesty than in honesty itself.²⁶ But this very concern for his own repute, a theme echoed throughout his public career, would make Cicero doubly careful to avoid any action which might sully it.

II. 'Haec provincialis molestia'

As has been already noted, Cicero tells us that he had no desire *ever* to govern a province. He enjoyed life at Rome far too much. It was only Pompey's law which finally forced him to go to Cilicia.²⁷ Throughout Cicero's letters *en route* to and from his province, there is a constant appeal to anyone and everyone, that his term not be extended, that the year not be lengthened by intercalary days, and that his successor be appointed. The surviving letters include appeals to Atticus, Appius, Hortensius (through Atticus), Curio, Caelius, M. Marcellus (cos. 51), L. Aemilius Paullus (cos. 50), and C. Cassius (when he had not yet even returned to Rome).²⁸ Cicero probably set sail from Tarsus on 30 July 50, the very day that

his year ended.²⁹ In his anxiety to depart Cicero left the quaestor Mescinius to settle the provincial accounts, not using the extension allowed under the Julian law.³⁰

The only consolation Cicero drew from his provincial government was that it might increase his fame and his reputation for integrity. Yet, even this argument Cicero turned around: he had already gained a reputation for integrity by refusing a province after his consulship of 63;³¹ his justice and restraint might become famous if he could leave early (Scaevola spent only nine months in Asia);³² his fame could no longer be increased (4 April 50).³³ Towards the end of his proconsulship, Cicero had a more compelling reason to get back to Rome: fear of the Parthians.³⁴ Too late, with the crisis impending at Rome, he realized that he might be better off back in the relative safety of his province.³⁵

In fact, Cicero apparently never really appreciated the significance of the work he was doing. To him it was a chore to be gotten over with. Cicero considered the whole business of the provincial command "unworthy of my powers." All foreign service meant nothing, compared with active service at Rome.³⁶ As Cicero admitted at least once,³⁷ Cato's speech praising his "gentle rule and probity" in his province was worth far more than a triumph for minor military exploits. Unfortunately, the lesson was never taken to heart.³⁸

III. 'Res gestae dignae triumpho'

Cicero's military campaign in the autumn of 51 has already been outlined above.³⁹ For the victory on Mount Amanus he was hailed as *imperator*. After capturing Pindenissum in December, he sought and received a *supplicatio* (in April 50) despite the opposition of Cato. Cicero continued to seek a triumph, for which the *supplicatio* was a prelude, until early in 49, when the chaotic political situation rendered the achievement of his aspiration impossible.⁴⁰

One's first reaction is that Cicero, puffed up with his usual pride, expected to triumph with little or no justification. But it is necessary to examine the triumphs of contemporaries to understand what the criteria were. Therefore, those triumphs

voted between 62 and 50 have been studied.⁴¹ That of Pompey in 61, over the pirates, Mithridates, and Tigranes of Armenia was certainly richly deserved. C. Pomptinus (Cicero's legate) finally triumphed for his successful campaign against the Allobroges in 62-61, but *not until 54*. Caesar might have triumphed in 60 after his government of Farther Spain, but he preferred to stand for consul. The claim of Metellus Creticus (cos. 69) for his command against Cretan pirates in 68-67 was much less compelling. He had to wait until 62. Cicero's friend and penultimate predecessor in Cilicia, Lentulus Spinter, triumphed in 51. His exploits were apparently on the same order as Cicero's, success against local robber-tribes.⁴² Appius lost his claim to a triumph when he entered the city, in order to defend himself against the prosecution of Dolabella.⁴³ The grounds for a triumph must have been flimsy (suppression of provincials?): Cicero expresses pleasure to Appius over his prospects but makes no mention of the latter's presumed exploits.⁴⁴ Finally, M. Calpurnius Bibulus (cos. 59), who had arrived as proconsul in Syria after Cassius' victory, received a *supplicatio* in 50—undeservedly if the jealous Cicero is to be believed—and was seeking a triumph.⁴⁵ Cato voted affirmatively for this *supplicatio*, the recipient being his son-in-law.

Thus, it is clear that Cicero's expectation of a triumph after his campaign in 51 was far from absurd. Triumphs could be sought and granted on very slight pretexts. The deciding factor was the efficacy of one's political friends, rather than the justice of the claim. The eminent and deserving L. Lucullus had to wait from 66 to 63 for his triumph. On form Cicero might have had to wait for a time, yet it is not unlikely that but for the civil war he would have triumphed.

Cicero began actively seeking his *supplicatio* (and thereby an eventual triumph) after his military campaign had ended with the capture of Pindenissum.⁴⁶ Among those whom Cicero actively importuned were Atticus, Appius, Cato, Caelius, and Curio; he later says that he wrote to "everyone else" except C. Lucilius Hirrus and P. Furius Crassipes (his former son-in-law).⁴⁷ Cicero's friends Caelius and Lentulus as well as the

tribune Furnius worked for the *supplicatio*. It was passed after a compromise between the consuls C. Marcellus and Aemilius Paullus and the tribune Curio (who, though working for Caesar, was friendly with Cicero): the days of thanksgiving would not actually be celebrated in that year, so that Curio would lose no comital days. Cato voted against the *supplicatio*, but praised Cicero and proposed a decree commending his administration. Hirrus and M. Favonius concurred with him, but refused to obstruct the proceedings.⁴⁸ Thus, there were only three votes against the *supplicatio*, which indicates that Cicero's request was far from controversial.

Cicero was constantly protesting that a triumph was hardly of vast importance to him, though not to be despised if it came. In January 50 he explained to Cato that his aspiration for a triumph resulted from the desire that the honor might repair the injustice of his exile. He pointed out that his success in winning over the province through *aequitas et contentia* was more glorious than any military success.⁴⁹ Cato made the same point in justifying his vote against the *supplicatio*.⁵⁰ Yet still Cicero was irritated, though disclaiming any passionate desire for the triumph (*non enim dicam cupiditatis*).⁵¹ Later he states that he was "never in the least eager" for a triumph until the unworthy Bibulus made his claim.⁵² He even belittles the clearly important achievement of Cassius, which he had himself already praised.⁵³

Cicero began seeking his triumph in earnest after the *supplicatio* had been granted him. The triumph of which Cicero seems quite confident is mentioned constantly in his letters during the last half of 50, along with the ominous political situation at Rome. As late as December Cicero stated that he would gladly give up the desire for a triumph if that were necessary to be an independent statesman, and that he would enter Rome by the first gate he saw (thereby terminating his *imperium* and all hope for a triumph) in order to avoid any unwanted command.⁵⁴ He is also reported to have said that he would prefer following in Caesar's triumphal procession to leading his own, if only the problems between Caesar and Pompey could be settled.⁵⁵ Yet, there sat Cicero outside Rome on 12 January 49, blithely writing that the full Senate de-

manded his triumph and that the consul Lentulus Sura promised to bring the motion forward as soon as the necessary public business had been gotten out of the way.⁵⁶ He was unaware that Caesar had already crossed the Rubicon.

NOTES

1. See Cic. *Fam.* 5.2.3, where Cicero informs Metellus Celer that he had had no desire to govern the province he gave to Celer.

2. T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic* (Oxford, 1923), II, pp. 256-61.

3. Or so Cicero thought. Cic. *Att.* 5.16.4; 5.17.6. Cicero's tone in his letters to Appius (whom he sought as a friend) is naturally much different from his tone in letters about Appius.

N.B. For the letters to Atticus (Books V-VII.9), I have used D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus*, III (Cambridge, England, 1968). This volume is much more thoroughly annotated than the Loeb edition of E.O. Winstedt. All other primary sources employed are Loeb editions (if they are in that series). See the appended map of Asia Minor for the geography of Cicero's province.

4. Rice Holmes, *op. cit.*, II, p. 257. See Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.2-5 (to Appius); 15.4.2; *Att.* 6.1.2.

5. Cic. *Fam.* 3.10.1-5; 3.11.2; 3.12.1-3; *Att.* 6.2.10; *Brut.* 230, 324. Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 8.6.

6. See L.W. Hunter, *JRS* 3 (1913), pp. 73-97, for Cicero's itinerary from Athens to Tarsus (5 October). The itinerary itself is reproduced by Shackleton Bailey, *op. cit.*, Appendix I (p. 313).

7. See Broughton, *MRR*, II, pp. 242, 244-5, 250-3, and the references there. Pomptinus and Q. Cicero were both accomplished soldiers.

8. Cic. *Att.* 5.18.4, and numerous other references in the letters to Atticus. Since Quintus Cicero was married to Atticus' sister Pomponia, young Quintus was his nephew as well as Marcus Cicero's.

9. Cic. *Att.* 5.15.1.

10. For Cicero's military campaign in 51, see Cic. *Att.* 5.20; *Fam.* 2.10; 15.1-4. Plut. *Cic.* 36.

11. Cicero often speaks of quitting his province precisely on 30 July, the day when his year would end. Since he wrote Appius (*Fam.* 3.12.4) that his ship was approaching Side in Pamphilia on 3 August, it is probable that Cicero did begin his homeward journey on the earliest possible day.

12. For Cicero's activities in Cilicia in 50, see Cic. *Att.* 5.21-6.7; *Fam.* 2.11-15, 17-19; 5.19-20; 13.57; 15.5, 10, 13. For his justification for leaving Coelius in the province, Cic. *Att.* 6.6; *Fam.* 2.15.

13. Cic. *Att.* 6.8-7.9; *Fam.* 15.6; 16.11. Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 8.14. Plut. *Cic.* 36-37; *Pomp.* 50; *Caes.* 31. Vellei. 2.48.5.

14. Plut. *Cic.* 36.

15. *Testimonio est . . . integerrime provincia administrata . . .* Quintil. *Inst.* 12.1.16.
16. In Cic. *Att.* 6.1.2; *Fam.* 15.1.5; 15.4.2, he decries the harshness of Roman rule.
17. Cicero mentions Scaevola three times: *Fam.* 1.8.26; *Att.* 5.17.5; 6.1.15. Scaevola's fairness angered the *publicani*, who obtained the conviction of his plainly blameless legate, P. Rutilius Rufus (cos. 105), for extortion. Rutilius went into exile among the people he had "oppressed."
18. Cic. *Q. fr.* 1.1.32-34; *Fam.* 1.8.26.
19. Cic. *Att.* 6.1.16; 6.2.5; *Fam.* 2.13.4.
20. And equivalent terms: Cic. *Att.* 5.10.2 (*fama mea*); 5.11.5 (*existimatio mea*); 5.14.2 (*laus mea*); 5.17.2 (*gloria mea*).
21. Cic. *Att.* 5.21.5.
22. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.6.
23. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.21; cf. *Fam.* 2.11.2.
24. Cic. *Fam.* 1.3; 2.14, 18; 13.9, 53, 54, 56, 57, 61-65; 15.14. Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 8.9.
25. Cic. *Att.* 5.21; 6.1; 6.3. See especially Rice Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-8, "The Affair of Scaptius"; Th. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III (Berlin, 1907), pp. 215-20, "Der Zinswucher des M. Brutus." It is interesting that Cicero held up the payment (*Att.* 5.21: 13 February 50) apparently before he was aware of Brutus' position (6.1: 20 February). Although the money had not been paid, his ruling certainly had some force. Cicero also took from Scaptius the cavalry with which he had harassed the Salaminians as prefect under Appius.
26. Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
27. See, *supra*, p. 36.
28. The references are so numerous and common, it is pointless to specify them. All the letters concerning Cicero's proconsulship are listed by Broughton, *MRR*, II, pp. 243, 251-2.
29. See, *supra*, p. 37 and n. 11.
30. Cic. *Fam.* 5.20; 2.17.4; *Att.* 6.7.2. Mescinius later complained, having lost money through a mistake in the accounts.
31. Cic. *Fam.* 2.12.2.
32. Cic. *Att.* 5.17.5.
33. Cic. *Fam.* 2.11.1.
34. Cic. *Att.* 6.1.14; *Fam.* 2.10.4; 2.11.1. See, *supra*, pp. 37-38.
35. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.5.
36. Cic. *Fam.* 2.11.1; 2.12.2.
37. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.7.
38. The following section considers Cicero's quest for a triumph, including Cato's role.
39. *Supra*, p. 37.
40. The contention of Shackleton Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 287, that "C.'s triumphal aspirations . . . had scarcely developed before Hortensius' death in June [50]," is slightly incredible. As early as 14 November 51, Cicero, writing to Caelius (*Fam.* 2.10) while besieging Pindenissum,

had a triumph in mind, referring to the wish extended in a letter from Caelius (Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 15.4.13-14). Perhaps the point is that he could not be sure of the possibility of a triumph until he knew his *supplicatio* had been voted.

41. When no specific reference is given, see Broughton, *MRR*, under the year in question.

42. Cic. *Att.* 5.21.4; *Fam.* 1.8.7 and n.; 1.9.2 and n. See Degrassi 566.

43. Cic. *Fam.* 3.9.2; 3.10.1. Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 8.6.1. As soon as Ap-pius entered Rome, his *imperium* ended and with it his eligibility for a triumph.

44. See Cic. *Fam.* 3.9.2.

45. Cic. *Att.* 6.8.5; 7.2.6-8; 7.3.5. Broughton, *MRR*, II, p. 250, states that Bibulus' "slight achievement was honored with a *supplicatio*." It is not clear to what, if any, extent Bibulus was responsible for the unexpected retreat of the Parthians in 50. As Shackleton Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 288, points out, Bibulus' services may have seemed greater to his *adfinis* Cato and to the Senate than they did to an embittered Cicero. On this point and on the question of the length of the *supplicatio*, see T. Frank, *AJP* 34 (1913), pp. 324-5. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 6.6.3.

46. Cic. *Fam.* 3.9.4.

47. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.8.

48. Cael. in Cic. *Fam.* 8.11. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.7-8. Caelius says that men like Metellus Scipio and L. Ahenobarbus (cos. 54) voted for the measure, but hoped that Curio would veto it. Caelius may be simply exercising his rancor towards these men.

49. Cic. *Fam.* 15.4.

50. Cato in Cic. *Fam.* 15.5.

51. Cic. *Fam.* 15.6. At one point, Cicero declared that Cato's encomium gave him "more . . . than . . . all the Triumphs in creation" (*Att.* 7.1.7). But see *Att.* 7.2.7, where Cato is described as *turpiter* . . . *malevolus*. This was after he had voted for Bibulus' *supplicatio*.

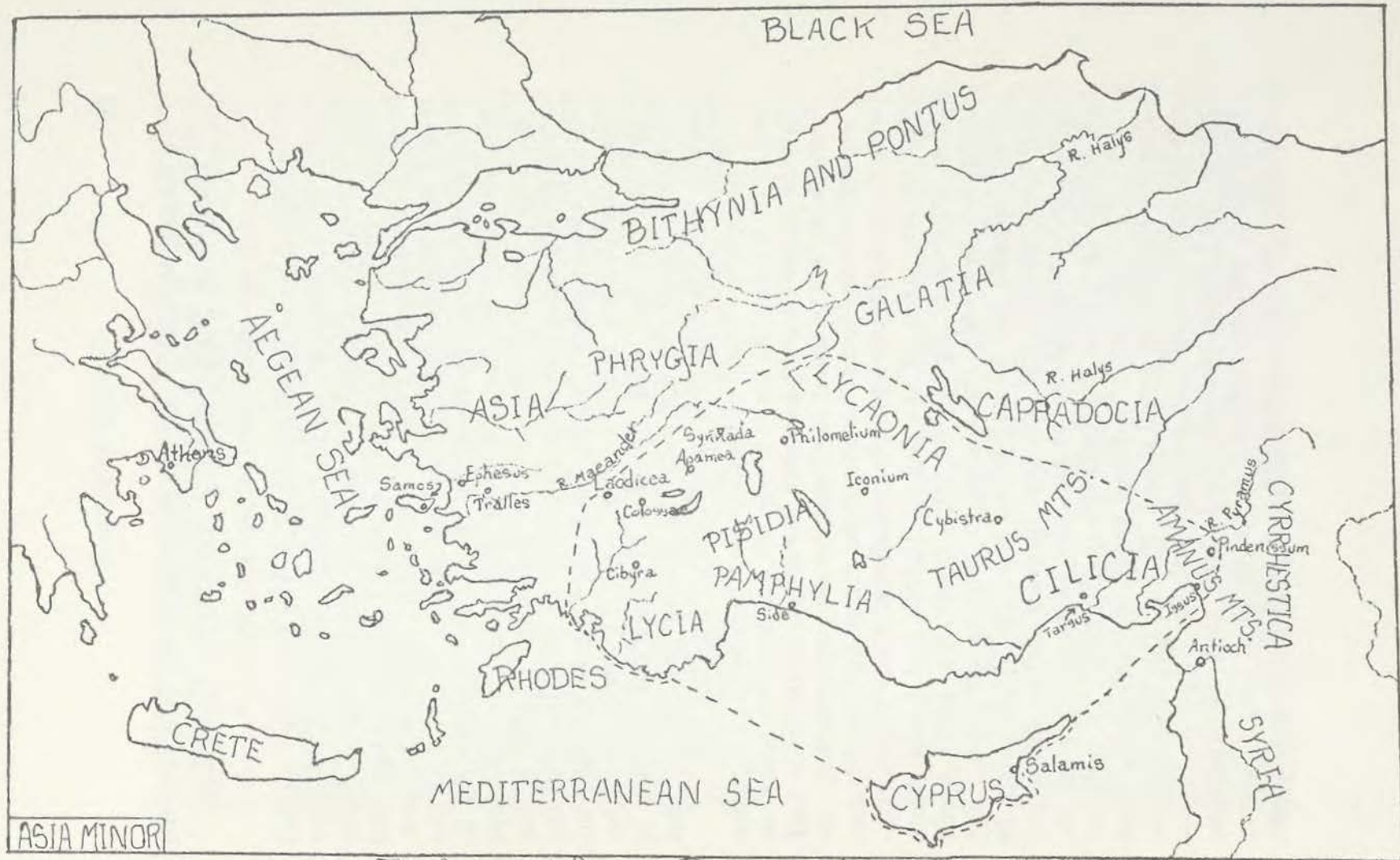
52. Cic. *Att.* 7.2.6.

53. Cic. *Att.* 5.21.2; cf. *Fam.* 15.14.2.

54. Cic. *Att.* 7.3.2; 7.7.4.

55. Plut. *Cic.* 37.

56. Cic. *Fam.* 16.11.3. In fairness, it must be acknowledged that in this same letter he also said that the state had never been in greater danger.



---- The Extent of Cicero's Province of Cilicia