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HANNAH M. COTTON

## Military Tribunes and the Exercise of Patronage<sup>1</sup>

Pliny's correspondence with imperial legates often proves a rich source of information which the author did not intend to convey – perhaps even tried to suppress.<sup>2</sup> Thus his requests for military tribunes for his protégés<sup>3</sup> constitute, together with one later document,<sup>4</sup> the only evidence we have for the right of imperial legates to grant this post directly and without reference to the emperor.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise our sources seem to be

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Professor F. MILLAR and Dr. N. HORSFALL for a critical reading of an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See R. SYME, Pliny and the Dacian Wars, *Latomus* 23, 1964, 750 = Danubian Papers (1971), 245, who comments on the omission, deliberate according to him, of all military details in all of Pliny's letters to consular legates.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 3, 8; 4, 4; 7, 22. Ep. 2, 13 is often taken as a request for this post; cf. MOMMSEN, *Staatsr.* II, 1<sup>3</sup>, 266, n. 3. SYME gives along with the tribunate the alternative of a post on the governor's staff; cf.: Pliny's Less Successful Friends, *Historia* 9, 1960, 365 = Roman Papers (1979) II, 480. See below, pp. 237. Ep. 3, 2 might also be a request for this post, but it is fraught with problems. The addressee, Vibius Maximus, should perhaps not be identified with his homonym, the Prefect of Egypt in 103–107 (cf. A. STEIN, *Die Präfecten von Ägypten in der römischen Kaiserzeit* [1950], 49f.); there were at least three Vibii Maximi at the time (cf. P. WHITE, Vibius Maximus, the Friend of Statius, *Historia* 22, 1973, 295). Moreover, SYME, who does make the identification, alerts us to the fact that Ep. 3, 2 belongs before 103, hence when Vibius Maximus held a different post (C. Vibius Maximus: Prefect of Egypt, *Historia* 6, 1957, 483 = Roman Papers I, 356).

<sup>4</sup> CIL XIII 3162, col. ii; cf. H.-G. PFLAUM, *Le marbre de Thorigny* (1948), 26–7. See below, p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. MOMMSEN, *op. cit.* (above, n. 3), II<sup>3</sup>, 265–6; F. MILLAR, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977), 284f.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E. BIRLEY, Promotions and Transfers in the Roman Army II: the Centurionate, *Carnuntum Jahrb.* 1963/64 (1965), 81. However, it seems that the Prefect of Egypt could commission auxiliary decurions: cf. P. Mich. III, 164 (= FINK, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, no. 20), A.D. 213–244, with H.A. SANDERS, *Papyrus 1804 in the Michigan Collection*, in: *Classical Studies in Honor of J.C. Rolfe* (1931), 265, esp. p. 281 and J.F. GILLIAM, *The Appointment of Auxiliary Centurions* (P. Mich. 164), *TAPhA* 88, 1957, 155; BGU 696, col. i, 11. 20f. (= FINK, no. 64), A.D. 156 with GILLIAM, *Paganus in BGU 696*, *AJPh* 73, 1952, 75–6. *Ann. Epigr.* 1917/18 nos. 74–5 are dedications to the legate of Numidia in A.D. 211–12, M. Aurelius Cominius Cassianus (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1265), and to his wife by his former *cornicularius* made a *decurio* by him: C. Iulius Rogatianus *decur ... ex corniculario eius provectus ab eo*.

united in the belief that commissions to the equestrian military posts, namely the prefecture of a cohort, the military tribunate and the prefecture of an *ala* – as well as commissions to the centurionate<sup>6</sup> – were all in the gift of the emperor.<sup>7</sup>

We happen to possess two pieces of literary evidence, contemporary with Pliny's, whose message is diametrically opposed to his. The first is Statius' famous address to Abascantus, Domitian's freedman and *ab epistulis*:<sup>8</sup> Silvae V, 1. Enumerating the man's various responsibilities (*numerosior cura*), he mentions *inter alia* (94–98):

*Praeterea, fidos dominus si dividat enses,  
pandere quis centum valeat frenare maniplos  
inter missus eques, quis praecepisse cohorti,  
quem deceat clari praestantior ordo tribuni,  
quisnam frenigerae signum dare dignior alae.*

It has long been recognized that the equestrian *militiae* are enumerated here in an ascending order following upon the centurionate.<sup>9</sup> It was the *ab epistulis*' task to inform (*pandere*)<sup>10</sup> the man concerned – or perhaps, as will be suggested below, his commander-in-chief – of his commission, after the emperor had made the various appointments (*fidos dominus si dividat enses*).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> MOMMSEN, Staatsr. II<sup>3</sup>, 851. For a full discussion of the evidence see MILLAR, loc. cit. (above, n. 5).

<sup>8</sup> CIL VI 8598–9; PIR<sup>2</sup> F 194.

<sup>9</sup> MOMMSEN (Staatsr. II<sup>3</sup>, 851, n. 3) followed by A. v. DOMASZEWSKI (Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres, 47f.) and PFLAUM (loc. cit. above, n. 4) identifies the *quis centum valeat frenare maniplos* / *inter missus eques* as the officer of the legionary cavalry, also called *tribunus militum* or *legionis*, who, as one may infer from the ascending order in Statius, occupied the lowest grade of the *militia equestris*. Hence DOMASZEWSKI (op. cit. esp. p. 48, n. 1) makes the further identification of this commander with the *tribunus semestris* (on whom see below, p. 236f.). However, the only epigraphic proof for the post of *tribunus militum* standing beneath that of the *praefectus cohortis* is ILS 9471 discussed by A. v. PREMIERSTEIN (Die Offizierslaufbahn eines kleinasiatischen Ritters, JÖAI 13, 1910, 200f.) who, while accepting MOMMSEN's and DOMASZEWSKI's four-stage equestrian *militia* starting with the cavalry officer, restricts it to the period between Domitian and Trajan. However, it has been suggested recently (D. BREEZE, The Organization of the Legion: The First Cohort and the *Equites Legionis*, JRS 59, 1969, 50) that the absence of epigraphic evidence for the post of a commander of the legionary cavalry may not be accidental, especially in view of the fact that we do possess such evidence for non-commissioned officers of the cavalry: this post may not have existed at all. MILLAR's neat proposal, op. cit. (above, n. 5), p. 286, n. 49, to identify Statius' *eques* as *centurio ex equite Romano* (on whom cf. H. ZWICKY, Zur Verwendung des Militärs in der Verwaltung der römischen Kaiserzeit [1944], 90ff.) seems much more attractive.

<sup>10</sup> For *pandere* = to inform, make known, followed by an indirect interrogative clause cf. Stat. Theb. I, 671f.: *tu pande, quis Argos / advenias*.

<sup>11</sup> E. BIRLEY understands the indirect object of *pandere* to be the emperor; his interpretation turns the *ab epistulis* into an 'Adjutant General' and 'Military Secretary' (The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Army, in: Roman Britain and the Roman Army [1956], 142; 151; cf. also by the

Florus uses similar terms in Verg. or. III, 5 (MALCOVATI = HALM, p. 108): *Nempe si mihi maximus imperator vitem*,<sup>12</sup> *id est centum homines regendos tradidisset, non mediocris honos habitus mihi videtur; cedo si praefecturam, si tribunatum: nempe idem honos, nisi quod merces amplior.*

Neither Statius nor Florus could have stated in less ambiguous terms the fact that all appointments emanated from the emperor. However, Pliny's evidence that imperial legates exercised complete freedom in this sphere is likewise beyond suspicion. His appeals to them to bestow military tribunes upon his protégés show that he entertained no doubt as to his addressees' ability to comply with his wish, did they so desire; no other obstacles were foreseen. Nor would a man like Pliny be found guilty of such gross indiscretion as to solicit a post knowing that the man solicited was not free to grant it.

The only way to reconcile these contradictory – and contemporary<sup>13</sup> – pieces of evidence seems to be to accept MOMMSEN's solution, namely that imperial legates were entitled to dispose of a limited number of military tribunes.<sup>14</sup> A clue to the exact way in which this was done is perhaps to be found in the later document mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> In a letter to his friend and protégé, the Viducassian T. Sennius Sollemnis, the governor of Lower Britain at the time (c. A.D. 220), T. Claudius Paulinus,<sup>16</sup> writes:<sup>17</sup> *Semestris autem epistulam*,<sup>18</sup> *ubi propediem vacare coepi[t], mittam.* From this text MOMMSEN concludes that a certain number of commissions (*epistulae*),

same author: Promotions and Transfers ..., op. cit. [above, n. 6], 21–2). But surely the emperor is personally responsible for the appointments; he is the one who distributes 'loyal swords'. The *ab epistulis* merely makes it known which job went to whom. This interpretation given long ago by O. HIRSCHFELD (*Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten bis auf Diokletian*<sup>2</sup> [1905], 322, n. 2) seems to have been dormant for a long time. PFLAUM, however (loc. cit. above, n. 4), accepts it. The issue is of considerable importance for the present discussion, as will be seen shortly.

<sup>12</sup> For the 'rod' as the symbol of the centurionate cf. Juvenal 14, 193: *vitem posce libello* with MAYOR's comment ad loc.

<sup>13</sup> Those letters of Pliny which come under discussion here, namely 2, 13 (cf. above, n. 3); 3, 8; 4, 4 and 7, 22, belong to the years 100/101 (cf. below, n. 45); 101 (cf. SYME, Tacitus II [1958], App. 14, p. 647, no. 27); 103 (cf. below, n. 43); and 107 (cf. below, n. 51) respectively. Book IV of the *Silvae* was published in A.D. 95: cf. F. VOLLMER's edition (Leipzig, 1898), 10f. Book V might have been published posthumously (cf. D. W. T. C. VESSEY, *Varia Statiana*, CB 46, 1970, 51); however, there is no evidence that Statius outlived Domitian. *Vergilius, Poeta an Orator*'s dramatic date is A.D. 102–3, and it shows traces of immediate publication: cf. P. VAL's Budé edition II, 101f.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. (above, n. 3), II 1<sup>3</sup>, 266.

<sup>15</sup> N. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. CIL VII 1044 (RIB 1280, High Rochester) from 1 Jan.–Dec. 220; cf. A. F. BIRLEY, *Governors of Britain*, Epigr. Stud. 4 (1967), 88, no. 48.

<sup>17</sup> CIL XIII 3162, col. ii, 11. 13–5.

<sup>18</sup> For *semestris epistulam* = *semestris tribunatus epistulam* cf. Pliny, Ep. 4, 4: *Hunc rogo semestri tribunatu splendidiorem et sibi et avunculo suo facias* (below, p. 236 f.) and Juvenal 7, 88: *ille et militiae multis largitur honorem / semestris, vatum digitos circumligat auro.*

taking the form of 'letters-patent' or 'blank forms' were issued (perhaps by the *ab epistulis*) to the legate, who would insert the names of his nominees later on.<sup>19</sup> In this way these commissions too would be regarded as emanating ultimately from the emperor.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, one may suggest, that without losing his grip on the 'power of patronage', the emperor was graciously sharing it with his legates, who, in their turn – as Pliny's correspondence makes quite clear – shared it with their friends. Thus the continuous and inexorable growth of the imperial power was counter-balanced by the simultaneous emergence of a system of patronage going in the other direction – a not unfamiliar feature of political systems «where all decisions were made at the centre».<sup>21</sup> Delegation of power was thus painlessly achieved, not by means of an impersonal set of rules,<sup>22</sup> but by personal influence exercised by well-placed persons close to the emperor, who obtained for their protégés the favours (*beneficia*), which it was the emperor's exclusive prerogative to grant. The case of military tribunates was, therefore, unique only in so far as it seems that here the exercise of patronage was not merely encouraged from above,<sup>23</sup> but made technically possible with the aid of letters-patent.

Pliny's correspondence with imperial legates gives us the rare opportunity to discover how and under what terms this 'power of patronage' was shared with friends; secondly, as will be seen below, it adds some technical detail to the actual working of the system, and in turn may be used in support of MOMMSEN's hypothesis; finally, Pliny's requests for military tribunates for his protégés are highly reminiscent of a late Republican practice well documented in Cicero's correspondence with Caesar and his own brother, Quintus, in Gaul: they sometimes echo the very terminology used in that context. The continuity in language, style and social assumptions has interesting implications if MOMMSEN's hypothesis is accepted. It may suggest that the extra-legal, unofficial Republican practice of sharing one's 'power of patronage' with friends had gone through a process of formalization under the Empire. In other words, once the emperor had become the sole recognized source of patronage, the Republican practice

<sup>19</sup> Loc. cit. (above, n. 14): «Vermuthlich stellte der Kaiser den einzelnen Statthaltern nach Maßgabe ihres Ranges eine Anzahl solcher von ihm vollzogener Offizierspatente zu beliebiger Ausfüllung zu», followed by PFLAUM, loc cit. (above, n. 4).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: «und sind dem Rechte nach auch diese Ernennungen als kaiserliche zu betrachten».

<sup>21</sup> MILLAR, op. cit. (above, n. 5), 286. See also the apt comment of P. A. BRUNT in a review of P. GARNSEY, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (1970) in JRS 62, 1972, 169: «A monarch may seek to depress all his subjects to the same level: the Roman Emperors upheld a hierarchical order.» For modern examples of similar political systems see e.g. the anthropological studies of J. K. CAMPBELL, *Honour Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (1964), 259f. and of J. A. PITT-RIVERS, *The People of the Sierra* (1954), 155f.

<sup>22</sup> For the frame of reference see MAX WEBER, *The Types of Legitimate Domination, Economy and Society I* (Edd. G. ROTH and C. WITTICH, University of California, 1978), 212f.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. below, pp. 234 and n. 32 there.

crystallized into an official and formal prerogative bestowed by the emperor on his legates and taking the form of letters-patent.<sup>24</sup>

We may begin with the last-mentioned point. It fell to the commanders of the Roman army in Republican times to nominate military tribunes in excess of the twenty four *tribuni militum a populo*, or *comitiati*, elected in the *comitia tributa* and assigned to the first four legions. Those personally chosen by the commanders were known by the obscure title of *Rufuli*.<sup>25</sup> The bestowal of the military tribunate would be regarded by the beneficiary as a *beneficium*, as Cicero's words in the recommendation of his former tribune, Q. Fufidius, seem to suggest: *fuit in Cilicia mecum tribunus militum; quo in numero ita se tractavit, ut accepisse ab eo beneficium viderer, non dedisse* (epist. 13, 12, 1).

Cicero, no doubt, was personally acquainted with Q. Fufidius, who hailed from his own home town<sup>26</sup> and belonged to the municipal aristocracy.<sup>27</sup> However, personal acquaintance was by no means an indispensable condition: on occasion a governor in command of legions might bestow a military tribunate on a complete stranger, being induced to do so by the intervention of a third party. Furthermore, like Caesar he might betray complete indifference as to the identity of the candidate, and seek simply to satisfy the latter's patron.<sup>28</sup> Nor, it would seem, did the patron himself care much for the military tribunate: his foremost concern was to obtain the governor's goodwill for his protégé. Thus Cicero did not press for any particular post in his recommendation of the young jurisconsult, C. Trebatius Testa, to Iulius Caesar in Gaul in 54 B.C. (epist. 7, 5, 3): *Huic ego neque tribunatum neque praefecturam neque ullius benefici certum nomen peto, benevolentiam tuam et liberalitatem peto neque impedio quo minus, si tibi ita placuerit, etiam hisce eum ornes gloriolae insignibus*. As it happened, Caesar offered Trebatius a military tribunate which the latter looked down upon (epist. 7, 8, 1): *Sed ex tuis litteris cognovi praeproperam quandam festinationem tuam et simul sum admiratus cur tribunatus commoda, dempto praesertim labore militiae,*

<sup>24</sup> Another illustration of the process may be seen from a comparison of a late Republican and an Imperial grant of citizenship. Cic. epist. 13, 36 (46 B.C.) and the 'Tabula Banasitana' (text in W. SESTON and M. EUZENAT, Un dossier de la chancellerie romaine: la *Tabula Banasitana*, CRAI 1971, 470–2) are extremely similar in both terminology and procedure: the Republican document mentions the intercession of Cicero (*rogatu meo*) and the Imperial document mentions *favor*, *testimonia* and *suffragatio* of the procurator who supported the request for citizenship; Caesar's *beneficium* has its counterpart in the *indulgentia principalis*, but the latter has acquired by now almost a technical sense and a legal status, for the emperor alone could grant citizenship.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. MOMMSEN, *Staatsr.* II 1<sup>3</sup>, 577–9; J. SUOLAHTI, *The Junior Officers of the Roman Army in the Republican Period* (1955), 36f.

<sup>26</sup> See his warm recommendation of the three legates from Arpinum: *non dubito quin scias non solum cuius municipi sim, sed etiam quam diligenter soleam meos municipales Arpinatis tueri* (epist. 13, 11, 1).

<sup>27</sup> As suggested by his equestrian status as well as by his presence among the three legates sent by Arpinum to collect the municipality's revenues in Cisalpine Gaul: epist. 13, 11, 1. See further, CL. NICOLET, *L'ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine 312–43 av. J.-C.* II (1974), no. 153.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Cic. epist. 7, 5, 2 cited on p. 234.

*contempseris*.<sup>29</sup> Somewhat earlier Cicero requested and obtained a military tribunate for M. Curtius from Caesar (ad Q. fr. 3, 1, 10): *De tribunatu quod scribis (scil Quintus), ego vero nominatim petivi Curtio et mihi ipse Caesar nominatim Curtio paratum esse perscripsit meamque in rogando verecundiam obiurgavit*. In fact on this occasion Caesar invited Cicero to put more requests of this kind before him (epist. 7, 5, 2): *M. Curti filium*,<sup>30</sup> *quem mihi commendas, vel regem Galliae faciam, vel hunc Leptae delega, si vis. Tu ad me alium mitte quem ornem*. The last phrase sets the familiar ‘petition and request’ pattern into which fell such a large proportion of the emperor’s contacts with his subjects.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it heralds the new regime’s unconcealed – even advertised – readiness to grant favours to individuals (and communities) for the sake of the intercessor – a key role in the life of the Empire.<sup>32</sup>

Caesar did indeed turn Cicero into a lodestone for petitions by shedding on him the ‘power of patronage’. No wonder that applicants for military tribunes became insistent and pestered Cicero, as the latter informs his brother (ad Q. fr. 3, 1, 10): *Si cui praeterea petiero ... facile patiar mihi negari, quoniam illi qui mihi molesti sunt sibi negari (a) me non facile patiuntur*.

The bitter remark of the consul of that year (54 B.C.), L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, is exceptionally apposite in this context: *se ne tribunum militum quidem facere* (ad Q. fr. 2, 14, 3). He was conscious of the weak hold he had on the ‘power of patronage’ and would have felt himself derided, had Cicero requested a tribunate from him (*nam Domitius se derideri putasset, si esset a me rogatus*, ad Q. fr. 2, 14, 3). Caesar’s monopoly over the sources of patronage galled his rivals, who felt the loss to their prestige keenly.

One can hardly avoid the impression that as early as the Late Republic, military tribunes, even if not used merely as sinecures,<sup>33</sup> derived their importance from the

<sup>29</sup> P. SONNET, (Gaius Trebatius Testa, Diss. Gießen, 1932, p. 54 f. = RE VI A, 2259) maintains that Caesar never offered Trebatius a tribunate, but only the financial benefits that went with the post, understanding *commoda* as the salary of a tribune. *Commoda*, however, may also mean ‘advantages’ in this context (cf. D. R. SHACKLETON BAILEY’s translation of the passage in: Cicero’s Letters to his Friends I [Penguin Books 1978], 90), in other words the advantage of holding the tribunate as a sinecure *dempto labore militiae*. This could be viewed as the prototype of the *imaginarie militiae genus, quod vocatur super numerum, quo absentes et titulo tenus fungerentur* instituted by Claudius (Suet. Div. Claud. 25), namely a titular tribunate which may not have compelled its bearer to leave his home town; cf. MILLAR, op. cit. (above, n. 5), 284.

<sup>30</sup> SHACKLETON BAILEY’s emendation of the meaningless *M. itifium* to *M. Curti filium* (cf. Cicero: Epistulae ad Familiares I [1977], 329–30, no. 26) is extremely attractive, especially in view of ad Q. fr. 2, 14, 3 and 3, 1, 10 cited in the text.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. MILLAR, op. cit. (above, n. 5), 6 f.

<sup>32</sup> Octavian in a letter of 30 B.C. to the people of Rhodus invites them to put forth requests which he will grant them on account of their citizen Seleucus (SHERK, RDGE, 298, no. 58, iv, ll. 91–93): οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ἄνδρες καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰς [πατρίδας] εὐνοίαν προθυμότεραν ποιοῦσιν· ὥς οὖν ἐμοῦ πάντα δυνατὰ ποιήσαντος ὑμῖν ἦδει[ον διὰ Σέ]λευκον, θαρροῦντες περὶ ὧν ἂν βούλησθε πρὸς με ἀποστέλλετε.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. above, n. 29.

fact that their bestowal was triggered by the exercise of personal influence on the one hand and demonstrated the donor's 'power of patronage' on the other.

Pliny's Ep. 3, 8 is perhaps the best illustration of the persistence of the same emphasis and the same attitudes under the Empire. In it we discover the future biographer of the Caesars, C. Suetonius Tranquillus, still a young protégé of Pliny,<sup>34</sup> declining to take up the military tribunate Pliny had obtained for him from the governor of Britain, L. Neratius Marcellus,<sup>35</sup> and proposing to transfer it to his relative, Caesennius Silvanus: *petis ut tribunatum, quem a Neratio Marcello clarissimo viro impetravi tibi, in Caesennium Silvanum propinquum tuum transferam*. However, no one loses as a result of Suetonius' change of mind; on the contrary, it looks as if everybody stands to gain by it, as Pliny politely suggests (or archly hints?):<sup>36</sup> *Praeterea intellego mihi quoque gloriae fore, si ex hoc tuo facto non fuerit ignotum amicos meos non gerere tantum tribunatus posse verum etiam dare*. By now no less than five people have become involved in the allocation of this one single tribunate: the Emperor, the governor of Britain, Pliny, Suetonius and Caesennius; the economy with which the benefits from the 'power of patronage' could be distributed stands in need of no further comment.

This letter may also give us a clue as to the concrete way in which the system of requesting, obtaining and granting military tribunes operated. The crucial passage comes towards the end of the letter: *Neque enim adhuc nomen in numeros relatum est, ideoque liberum est nobis Silvanum in locum tuum subdere*. The expression *nomen in numeros referri*, once known only from legal sources relating to military affairs, is now documented in military records on papyrus. Thus we learn from the former that a soldier could make a military will only from the day *ex quo in numeros*

<sup>34</sup> Born about A.D. 70 (cf. SYME, Tacitus II, App. 76, p. 778), Suetonius was now (A.D. 101) in his early thirties. For the age of military tribunes see BIRLEY, The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Army, op. cit. (above, n. 11), 135 f.

<sup>35</sup> By January 19, 103 he was governor of Britain; cf. CIL XVI 48 (= ILS 1032). However, he was not at the beginning of his tenure; cf. SYME, Tacitus II, App. 14, p. 647, no. 27; id., The Jurist Neratius Priscus, Hermes 85, 1957, 491 = Roman papers I, 349. We have now a reference to *Im Marcellum* described as *clarissimum* and *consularem* in the 'Vindolanda Tablets'; cf. A.K. BOWMAN and J. DAVID THOMAS, The Vindolanda Tablets and their Significance: An Interim Report, Historia 24, 1975, 463 ff. BOWMAN, Roman Military Records from Vindolanda, Britannia 5, 1974, 360.

<sup>36</sup> I would not put it beyond him to be actually hinting to Suetonius to advertise what has happened: after all it is but another feather in Pliny's own cap. Cf. his argument in the recommendation of T. (Priferinus Paetus) Rosianus Geminus, his ex-quaestor, to the Emperor Trajan (Ep. 10, 26, 3): *teque, domine, rogo, gaudere me exornata quaestoris mei dignitate, id est per illum mea, quam maturissime velis*. An observation made about the fourth century Empire applies no less to the early second century: 'The strongest evidence of the existence of ... close relations (with prominent officials of the administration) was ability to obtain favours for third parties', W. LIEBESCHUETZ, Did the Pelagian Movement Have Social Aims?, Historia 12, 1963, 230.



*relatus est*;<sup>37</sup> the best commentary on this is an instruction of the Prefect of Egypt, C. Minucius Italus,<sup>38</sup> to the prefect of the *cohors* III (or II) *Ituraeorum* (A.D. 103):<sup>39</sup> *tirones sexs probatos a me in coh' cui praees in numeros referri iube ex xi kalendas martias*. As the context suggests, *numeri* has the meaning of 'lists' or 'rolls' and the phrase as a whole means 'to be entered on the rolls'.<sup>40</sup> Since Suetonius' name had not yet been on the rolls, no technical difficulty arose as a result of his sudden withdrawal from the tribunate.

The exact location of the 'rolls' or 'lists' (*numeri*) in the case of appointments made by imperial legates is not clear.<sup>41</sup> We may be right in assuming that the names of people who received their appointment directly from the emperor were kept on the 'rolls' in Rome with the *ab epistulis*, who issued the commissions (*epistulae*). It was suggested above that even when appointments were not made directly by the emperor, but by his legates, the *epistulae* were issued in the form of letters-patent in order to ensure that their holders should enjoy equal status with the others. However, it is likely that in this case the 'rolls', on which the names of the personal appointees of the legate were entered, were kept in the governor's provincial headquarters. But how then did the emperor ever come to learn the names of the tribunes who were, so to speak, 'his'? If there was any exchange of information between the centre and the provinces to bring the 'rolls' in the former up to date we are completely in the dark about it.

It stands to reason that it was necessary to apply in advance, that is, before the governor entered into office or at the beginning of his tenure: otherwise one might have to be satisfied with less, namely with a short-term tribunate – *tribunatus semestris*<sup>42</sup> – as seems to have happened in the case of Pliny's application on behalf of C.

<sup>37</sup> Dig. 29, 1, 42 (Ulpian) and cf. Dig. 29, 1, 4, 38; 37, 13, 1, 2 for the expression *in numeris*.

<sup>38</sup> PIR<sup>1</sup> M 435; STEIN, op. cit. (above, n. 3); 49f.

<sup>39</sup> P. Oxy. 1022 = FINK, no. 87.

<sup>40</sup> J. F. GILLIAM, Enrolment in the Imperial Army, *Eos* 48: *Symbolae Raphaeli Taubenschlag Dedicatae* II (1957), 209; see the whole argument there, 207–16. Cf. also R. W. DAVIES, *Joining the Roman Army*, BJ 169, 1969, 221f.; 229f.

<sup>41</sup> GILLIAM, (op. cit. 209, n. 12) is in favour of Rome rather than the governor's provincial headquarters, citing the *laterculum maius* and *minus* of the *Notitia Dignitatum*; cf. A. H. M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire* II, 574f. (on the *primicerius* in charge of the *laterculum maius*) and 641f. (on commissions issued to officers). From Dig. 4, 6, 32 (Modestinus) it seems that in the third century the names of *tribuni militum*, *praefecti* and *comites legatorum* were referred to the *aerarium* or the imperial archives (*commentarii*).

<sup>42</sup> MOMMSEN (*Ges. Schriften* VIII, 167) maintains that the salary of the *tribunus semestris* was equal to that of the annual tribune since his service lasted *maiore parte anni*. He makes his calculations on the basis of HA Claud. 14. B. DOBSON (*Legionary Centurian or Equestrian Officer*, *AncSoc* 3, 1972, 196) admits that the only established fact about the pay-scales of equestrian officers is that the salary of a *tribunus semestris* c. A.D. 220 was 25,000 sesterces. However, by various deductions he admirably reconstructs these pay-scales, suggesting (*ibid.*, 201) that the 25,000 sesterces reflect half the pay of the *prima militia* i.e. of the *praefectus cohortis* and not of the *secunda militia* i.e. of the *tribunus militum*.

Calvisius to Q. Sosius Senecio (Ep. 4, 4). In A.D. 103 Senecio was not at the beginning of his tenure of Upper Moesia:<sup>43</sup> *Multa beneficia in multos contulisti* (ibid.). Hence Pliny's request is more modest: *Hunc rogo semestri tribunatu splendidiorem et sibi et avunculo suo facias*. That a vacancy in a *tribunatus semestris* might occur in the middle of one's term of office can be inferred from the words of the governor of Lower Britain c. A.D. 220 quoted above.

The consideration just mentioned may account for the vague and imprecise language used by Pliny in his solicitation on behalf of Voconius Romanus,<sup>44</sup> sent to the governor of Syria, L. Iavolenus Priscus c. A.D. 101<sup>45</sup> (Ep. 2, 13). It is generally assumed that in the clause *quem rogo pro ingenio pro fortuna tua exornes*<sup>46</sup> (§ 10) Pliny is requesting a military tribunate.<sup>47</sup> If so, how are we to account for the fact that contrary to his practice in other requests he here deliberately refrains from spelling it out to the governor? Perhaps this time it is not the military tribunate that he is requesting, but rather an inclusion in the governor's *cohors*. Pliny's vague language, it could be supposed, corresponds to the informality of a post on this amorphous body.<sup>48</sup> A pedantic literal interpretation of the expression, *In primis ama hominem: nam licet tribuas ei quantum amplissimum potes, nihil autem amplius potes amicitia tua*, may even construe it as the proper technical language in the context. However, it seems wrong to read so much into platitudes and phrases left deliberately vague, and for a good reason: Iavolenus Priscus was not at the beginning of his tenure; it would be impertinent to ask for the specific post of *tribunus militum* at this late hour, when he had already recruited his staff. The most Pliny can do is to turn this fact, namely the governor's long term in office, to his own advantage (Ep. 2, 13, 2): *Regis exercitum amplissimum: hinc tibi beneficiorum larga materia, longum praeterea tempus, quo amicos tuos exornare potuisti. Convertere ad nostros nec hos multos*. Another reason for rejecting a literal reading of the recommendation of Voconius Romanus to Iavolenus Priscus' *amicitia* would be the striking resemblance it bears to that of Trebatius Testa to Caesar's *benevolentia* and *liberalitas* cited above. By refraining from a request for a specific post or dismissing it (as Cicero does), both writers adroitly

<sup>43</sup> Cf. SYME, *The Lower Danube Under Trajan*, JRS 49, 1959, 29; id., *Legates of Moesia, Dacia N.S.* 12, 1968, 331–2 = *Danubian Papers* (1970), 213; C.P. JONES, *Sura and Senecio*, JRS 60, 1970, 102.

<sup>44</sup> His full name is C. Licinius Marinus Voconius Romanus; cf. CIL II 3865–6; G. ALFÖLDY, *Flamines Provinciae Hispaniae Citerioris* (1973), no. 37.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. SYME, *Tacitus II*, App. 3, pp. 631–2; id., *The Jurist Neratius Priscus op. cit.* (above, n. 35), 487f. = *Roman Papers I*, 346f.; C.P. JONES, *Phoenix* 22, 1968, 119–20.

<sup>46</sup> *Exornare* like *ornare* may refer of course to 'commission' or 'promotion'. For *ornare* used to express the idea of 'commission' cf. Cic. epist. 7, 5, 2 ('*ornem*'); 3 ('*ornes*') quoted on p. 234.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. above, n. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Officially only a limited number was allowed: cf. Dig. 29, 1, 47, 2: *Eorum qui rei publicae causa absunt comites, qui sunt intra statutum numerum, de tutela ... excusantur*. But the composition of the body was still a matter of the governor's personal choice. For the complete freedom exercised by the governor in choosing his *cohors* cf. Fronto, *Ad Ant. Pium* 8 (VAN DEN HOUT, 161).

manage to pay the recipient a courteous compliment: a concrete favour in the form of a post is only secondary to the acquisition of his general goodwill and friendship.

The argument so far may be summed up as follows. Ep. 3, 8 demonstrated that as long as the man's name was not entered on the rolls, a tribunate obtained for him could be transferred to someone else. It is likely that the rolls were completed shortly after the governor's entry into office. Therefore, a request for a tribunate submitted at a later date had perforce to be more modest: one might hope for a vacancy in a *tribunatus semestris* – perhaps invented for the very purpose of enlarging the range of opportunities for exercising the 'power of patronage' and for exchanges of favours between friend;<sup>49</sup> alternatively, one may omit all mention of a tribunate.

Yet a further problem is raised by Ep. 3, 8: did Pliny obtain a tribunate from L. Neratius Marcellus unconditionally, that is, not specifically for Suetonius, but rather for whomsoever Pliny might have had in mind?<sup>50</sup>

This question receives a satisfactory answer from another request for a military tribunate. In A.D. 107 Pliny wrote to Q. Pompeius Falco, then governor of Judaea<sup>51</sup> (Ep. 7,22): *Minus miraberis me tam instantanter petisse, ut in amicum meum conferres tribunatum, cum scieris quis ille qualisque. Possum autem iam tibi et nomen indicare et describere ipsum, postquam polliceris. Est Cornelius Minicianus*. Evidently Pliny, on his side, petitioned for the post before divulging or even knowing for whom he was soliciting it; and Pompeius Falco, on his side, promised to reserve a tribunate for a protégé of Pliny without requiring to know the name of the man and who he was.<sup>52</sup> There could hardly be a more palpable demonstration of how tribunates were kept in reserve for friends, and friends of friends. Furthermore, it was hardly necessary for a man to be in an official position to be able to dispense patronage and make appointments; it was sufficient for a *privatus* to have, like Pliny, friends in advantageous official positions.

<sup>49</sup> DOBSON (op. cit. [above, n. 42], 196, n. 37) suggests that the post of *tribunus semestris* 'was not taken by men who wished to have a serious military career'. Perhaps in spite of PFLAUM (loc. cit. above, n. 4) one may compare the *tribunatus semestris* to the *imaginae militiae genus* of Claudius; cf. above, n. 29.

<sup>50</sup> An affirmative answer to this question would be, incidentally, a strong presumption in favour of accepting MOMMSEN's hypothesis: see above, pp. 231.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. SCHÜRER-VERMES-MILLAR, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175 B.C.–A.D. 135) I (1973), 516–7.

<sup>52</sup> SYME (Consulates in Absence, JRS 48, 1958, 4 = Roman Papers I, 383) puts Falco's entry into office in Judaea in 105. There could be several explanations for the fact that as late as 107 (for the book-date of Pliny's Epistulae VII see A.N. SHERWIN-WHITE, *The Letters of Pliny* [1966], 37–8; SYME, *Tacitus II*, App. 21, p. 661) the name was not entered on the rolls, but it is hardly necessary to enter into them here. Likewise it is irrelevant whether or not C. Cornelius Minicianus actually served under Pompeius Falco. SYME (Pliny's Less Successful Friends, op. cit. [above, n. 3], 364 = Roman Papers II, 479) identifies Cornelius Minicianus with his homonym of ILS 2722, who was *praef. coh. I Damascenorum, trib. leg. III Augustae* (in Africa). Hence he opines that he did not get (or accept) the post in Judaea. Against the identification see BIRLEY, *The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Army*, op. cit. (above, n. 11), 141, n. 17.