

NOTES ON TWO PASSAGES IN TACITUS (ANN. 4. 24. 3 and 15. 25. 3)*

At one stage in his account of the war against Tacfarinas, Tacitus describes the strategy of the proconsul of Africa, P. Cornelius Dolabella, as follows: 'excito cum popularibus rege Ptolemaeo quattuor agmina parat, quae legatis aut tribunis data; et praedatorias manus delecti Maurorum duxere: ipse consultor aderat omnibus'.¹ In discussing Ptolemy's military achievements, D. Fishwick and D. B. Shaw have advanced the suggestion that 'Tiberius apparently placed him in charge of the combined Roman and Mauretanian army against Tacfarinas, the Roman proconsul having to settle for the role of *consultor*'.² They appear to regard *consultor* as a somewhat derogatory term: from its Sallustian antecedents, however, its connotations are far more active.³ Although not stated, it would appear that their interpretation is coloured by a remark of M. Hofmann in Pauly-Wissowa,⁴ who proposed reading *regi* instead of *rege*.⁵ This makes Ptolemy the real leader of the expedition, with Dolabella acting only as adviser (Hofmann refers specifically to *consultor*) to him.

This proposal has interesting implications for Roman military strategy, implying the voluntary surrender of command by a Roman commander to a local expert. It was not unusual for Roman soldiers to be assigned to client kings,⁶ but these were then not under the command of a proconsul or other magistrate with *imperium*. In the African context Juba I played a dominant role on the Republican side before the battle of Thapsus and offended the Pompeians by so doing.⁷ A century later, in A.D. 69, a strange rumour was reported from Mauretania. The

* Professor F. R. D. Goodyear has been kind enough to read an earlier draft of these notes.

¹ Tac. *Ann.* 4. 24. 3. For P. Cornelius Dolabella cf. *PIR*² C 1348; B.E. Thomasson, *Die Statthalter der römischen Provinzen Nordafrikas* . . ., (Lund, 1960) ii. 26; for Tacfarinas, Stein, *RE* iva (1932), 1985 f.; for Ptolemaeus, M. Hofmann, *ibid.* xxiii (1959), 1768 ff. (no. 62).

² D. Fishwick and B. D. Shaw: 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and a Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', *Historia* 25 (1976), 493.

³ This passage is quoted by *TbLL* s.v. under the rubric 'is qui alicui consilium dat, suadet, fauet'. A. Gerber and A. Greef, *Lexicon Taciteum* (1877, r. Hildesheim, 1962), give only one other instance of the word in Tacitus: 6. 10. 2, where Furneaux ad loc. translates it as 'devisers'. Here Church and Brodribb translate 'Dolabella in person directing every operation', M. Grant 'Dolabella himself attended and directed the different units in turn'. So too D. R. Dudley. The closest parallels in Sallust are Marius saying to his troops 'egomet in agmine aut ['ut'

Kunze] in proelio consultor idem et socius periculi uobiscum adero' (*B.J.* 85. 47) and 'simul ab eo petunt, uti fautor consultorque sibi adsit' (103.7).

⁴ Fishwick and Shaw do not refer to the passage under discussion (Hofmann, loc. cit. 1, 1774), but discuss various other points in Hofmann's article in some detail.

⁵ *Rege Ptolemaeo* is itself an emendation of M's *recepto leameo* (with 'g' traceable under 'c') by Beroaldus.

⁶ The most notable examples occur in Judaea. In 49 B.C., for example, Caesar gave a Jewish prince 'two legions' to cause trouble in Syria (*Jos. A.J.* 14. 7. 4. 123). When he became king in 41 Agrippa I was allowed to take over six auxiliary regiments which had previously served in the Roman army (*Jos. A.J.* 19. 9. 2. 365 as interpreted in A. Momigliano, *Ricerche sull'Organizzazione delle Giudee sotto il Dominio Romano* (1934, repr. Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 68 ff.).

⁷ For Juba, cf. Lenschau, *RE* ix, 1916, 2381 ff. (no. 1), and especially *B.Afr.* 57, where the Roman general submits to him.

procurator, Lucceius Albinus, was said to have rejected the title of procurator and assumed the name of Juba and the trappings of a king to strengthen his military position in the area.⁸ Both these incidents, however, occurred in times of civil war (and the second cannot even be regarded as fact): neither can be taken to mean the constitutional subordination of a Roman governor to a client king. Furthermore, Tacitus does not say, as Fishwick and Shaw state, that Ptolemy was given the *triumphalia insignia*, like a Roman commander: special honours of ancient and respectable republican precedent were voted him (Tac. *Ann.* 4. 26. 2).

There is no concrete support for the dative *regi* or for assigning Dolabella a subordinate role to Ptolemy, however valuable Ptolemy's services may in fact have been. Dolabella made his arrangements in the classical pattern.⁹ The core of his force remained the legions (*quattuor agmina*) under the command of Roman officers (*legatis aut tribunis data*)¹⁰. Professional auxiliary regiments are not mentioned but may be presumed to have been present. *Ad hoc*¹¹ troops were supplied by a local client king and Moorish chieftains. The fact that Ptolemy's forces are called *populares* suggests that Tacitus is thinking of their local, and hence especially suitable, character: the Moorish *manus* imply auxiliaries almost of the guerrilla type, necessary against Tacfarinas in the desert areas. Dolabella remained the guiding spirit ('ipse consultor aderat omnibus') allowing maximum flexibility to the different components in his army against an elusive enemy.

II

When, in A.D. 63, Corbulo was given *maius imperium* in the East, instructions were sent to various authorities to obey his orders: 'scribitur tetrarchis ac regibus praefectisque et procuratoribus et qui praetorum finitimas provincias regebant iussis Corbulonis obsequi' (Tac. *Ann.* 15. 25. 3). Furneaux ad loc. comments on *praefectis* as follows: 'is best taken, with Nipperdey, to be those commanding the *cohortes* or *alae* in the lesser provinces. But we have also record in inscriptions of *praefecti* as officers placed in charge of special districts, e.g. vallis Pennina or Maritime Alps'. Koestermann ad loc. (p. 210; cf. p. 212 on 26, 2) merely accepts Furneaux's interpretation. Translators, except for Church and Brodribb, who resort to 'prefects', follow suit. Thus Grant 'neighbouring governors of all ranks' and Dudley 'all governors of neighbouring provinces, of whatever rank'. *Procurator* replaced *praefectus* as the title of a governor of a small imperial province under Claudius: the use of *praefectus* as a synonym for *procurator* is anachronistic and unlikely. *Praefecti gentium* generally controlled small frontier areas in the transition from conquest to full provincialization and were not of much importance. Auxiliary prefects would be even more incongruous in this company.¹²

Praefectisque should rather be associated with *tetrarchis ac regibus* as indigenous administrators of areas in the large loose-knit kingdoms of the East such as

⁸ Tac. *Hist.* 2. 58. 2. For Lucceius Albinus, cf. *PIR*² L 354.

⁹ Cf. D. B. Saddington, *ANRW* (Festschrift J. Vogt) ii. 3 (1975), 183.

¹⁰ For prominent roles being assigned by a governor to prefects (and tribunes), cf. Tac. *Agr.* 8. 2; cf. 5. 1.

¹¹ On these terms cf. D. B. Saddington, *AClass* 13 (1970), 101 f.

¹² On *praefectus* in these senses, cf. A. H. M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 117 ff.; W. Ensslin, *RE* xxii (1954), 1290 ff.; 1278 ff.

Cappadocia and Armenia. These are referred to as *megistanae Armenii* (Tac. *Ann.* 15. 27. 3) later in the narrative, and the districts under their control as *praefecturae*.¹³ The *praefecti* of Tac. *Ann.* 15. 25. 3 are Eastern magnates or sheikhs or chieftains, not Roman officials.

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¹³ Tac. *Ann.* 15. 28. 1; the term is also used in 11. 8. 3; 13. 37. 3; cf. Pliny, *N.H.* 6. 9. 27; Strabo 12. 1. 2. 533.