

## TACITUS AND THE CLIENT KINGS

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The notion that the sections of Tacitus' *Annales* devoted to foreign affairs are irrelevant, though necessary, digressions has not withstood scrutiny. On the contrary, they have been shown to be integrated firmly with Tacitus' principal concerns, the emperor and events in Rome.<sup>1</sup> Rather than divert us from the historian's purpose, these carefully placed excursuses add dimension and point to the drama that unfolds around them. In much the same way as Germanicus and Corbulo act as foils to Tiberius and Nero, so too will Tacitus use events abroad to suggest comparisons and contrasts with those in the imperial household. The same principle extends even to minor episodes and characters, including the client kings.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as I shall argue, Tacitus' perception and presentation of these imperial agents seem dictated largely by their connection with the emperor rather than by any deep concern for historical relevance or even accuracy. The resulting characterizations and scenes are notably uniform and predictable. In

<sup>1</sup> See esp. E. Keitel, "The Role of Parthia and Armenia in Tacitus *Annals* 11 and 12," *AJP* 99 (1978) 462–73 (p. 462n. 1 for summary of earlier views), and id., *The Structure of Tacitus Annals 11 and 12* (Diss. Chapel Hill 1977), henceforth abbreviated respectively as "Keitel 'Parthia and Armenia'" and "Keitel *Structure*." See also K. P. Seif, *Die Claudiusbücher in den Annalen des Tacitus* (Diss. Mainz 1973); K. Gilmartin, "Corbulo's Campaigns in the East," *Historia* 22 (1973) 583–626, esp. 584–85, 599; H. Y. McCulloch Jr., *Narrative Cause in the Annals of Tacitus* (Königstein/Ts. 1984) esp. 59–61, 92–93, 140–43; M. Roberts, "The Revolt of Boudicca (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.29–39)," *AJP* 109 (1988) 118–32. See in general on Tacitus' disposition of external and internal affairs for thematic reasons J. Ginsburg, *Tradition and Theme in the Annals of Tacitus* (Salem, New Hampshire, 1981), esp. 53–79. These and the following works will be referred to by author's name alone: G. Walser, *Rom, das Reich und die fremden Völker in der Geschichtsschreibung der frühen Kaiserzeit* (Baden-Baden 1951); R. Syme, *Tacitus*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1958); J. Dobiaś, "King Maroboduus as a Politician," *Klio* 38 (1960) 155–66; E. Koestermann, ed., *Cornelius Tacitus: Annalen*, 4 vols. (Heidelberg 1963–68); F. R. D. Goodyear, ed., *The Annals of Tacitus*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1972–81); A. J. Woodman, ed., *Velleius Paterculus: The Tiberian Narrative* (2.94–131) (Cambridge 1977). I quote from H. Heubner's 1983 Teubner edition of the *Annales*.

<sup>2</sup> As Christ proposed, without specific reference to the client kings, in order to understand fully Tacitus' depiction of the principate one must examine not only the portraits of the emperors themselves, "und ihrer Gegenspieler oder Partner in Familie, Senat oder Heer," but also the rivalries "unter den Frauen der Dynastie, die Kompetenzbescheidung der militärischen Befehlshaber, [und] den Einfluß der Freigelassenen" ("Tacitus und der Principat," *Historia* 27 [1978] 449–87, 486).

short, they reflect and lend unity to a consistent concern of the historian: the indictment of Julio-Claudian foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

# I.

By their very nature the client kings in Tacitus are closely linked with the theme of *servitus* and *libertas*. The historian's distaste for monarchy in general needs no elucidation here; he draws attention to it in the opening sentence of the *Annales* and in his more critical moods identifies the principate itself with the idea of king and kingship.<sup>4</sup> His views on the client-king system in particular are bluntly expressed at *Agricola* 14.2: they exist "ut [sc. *populus Romanus*] haberet instrumenta servitutis et reges." Elsewhere they are termed *inservientes reges* (*Hist.* 2.81.1). By definition, then, the client king is both master and slave, a dual status that in Tacitus' eyes bears some particularly pejorative connotations. The king's association with the emperor, either direct or indirect, often renders him still less respectable, as little better than a minister abroad of the *servitus* dispensed by the emperor in Rome.

On a rough estimate, approximately thirty client kings may be identified in what remains of the *Annales*. For the most part, they are minor characters, brought out for a brief scene or two, then killed off or forgotten. The first and in many ways the most significant of these makes his appearance in the opening chapters of Book 2 in an episode on which Tacitus lavishes particular attention. After an initial book devoted to the situation in Rome following the death of Augustus, events abroad now occupy center stage. Book 2 commences with a brief review of Eastern affairs from 20 BC to AD 14, though by far the larger portion of the Book details Germanicus' campaigns in Germany.

Tacitus reverts to the year AD 6, when Parthian envoys arrived in Rome to request a king from among the four sons previously sent to the capital by their father Phraates IV.<sup>5</sup> Augustus complies by sending out Vonones I. This and Vonones' subsequent reception in Parthia are described as follows:

...venere in urbem legati a primoribus Parthis, qui Vononen, vetustissimum liberorum eius, accirent. magnificum id sibi credidit

<sup>3</sup> On Roman foreign policy as one of Tacitus' central concerns in the *Annales* (deriving from his experience under Trajan and Hadrian) see Syme 2.492–97; cf. 1.376 with note 3.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., *Ann.* 1.4.4, where the Julio-Claudians are uniquely described as a *domus regnatricis*; cf. Eunones at 12.19, with note 45; for Tacitus' appraisal of the sort of behavior typical of a king see *Hist.* 5.8.3. On the connections between the theme of *libertas/servitium* and *regnum* see H. W. Benario, "Tacitus and the Principate," *CJ* 60 (1964) 97–106, esp. 105–6; W. Jens, "Libertas bei Tacitus," *Hermes* 84 (1956) 331–52, esp. 349–52; M. Vielberg, *Pflichten, Werte, Ideale*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* 52 (Stuttgart 1987) 113–28, esp. 126. See also A. D. Leeman, "Structure and meaning in the prologues of Tacitus," *YCS* 23 (1973) 169–208, esp. 186–99.

<sup>5</sup> For the sake of clarity I follow the conventional or "old" chronology and designations of the Arsacid Parthian kings as listed, e.g., in N. C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (Chicago 1938) 270. For the "new chronology" see the *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. 3<sup>1</sup> (Cambridge 1983) Appendix I, pp. 98–99.

Caesar auxitque opibus. et accepere barbari laetantes, ut ferme ad nova imperia. *mox subiit pudor*: degeneravisse Parthos; petium alio ex orbe regem, hostium artibus infectum; iam inter provincias Romanas solium Arsacidarum haberi darique. ubi illam gloriam trucidantium Crassum, exturbantium Antonium, si mancipium Caesaris, tot per annos servitutem perpassum, Parthis imperitet? accendebat dedignantes et ipse diversus a maiorum institutis, raro venatu, segni equorum cura; quotiens per urbes incederet, lecticae gestamine fastuque erga patrias epulas. inridebantur et Graeci comites ac vilissima utensilium anulo clausa. sed prompti aditus, obvia comitas, ignotae Parthis virtutes, nova vitia; et quia ipsorum moribus aliena, perinde odium pravis et honestis.

(*Ann.* 2.2, emphasis mine)

The verbal correspondences in the first few sentences would appear to confirm a deliberate reference to the section of Augustus' *Res Gestae* where this event is recorded: "a me gentes Parthorum...[per legatos] principes earum gentium reges pet[i]tos acceperunt: Par[thi] Vononen, regis Phr[at]is filium..." (*Mon. Anc.* 33).<sup>6</sup> But Tacitus supplies additional, personal details on Vonones which, taken together with the description of the Parthian reaction, certainly may be viewed as an attempt to dispel the illusion of a suppliant Parthia created by Augustus in the *Res Gestae* and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Tacitus' Parthians seem anything but suppliant.

Most instructive, however, is the parallel passage in Josephus:

πρεσβεύσαντες δὲ εἰς Ῥώμην ἡτοῦντο βασιλεῖα τῶν ὁμηρευόντων, καὶ πέμπεται Βονώνης προκριθεὶς τῶν ἀδελφῶν· ἐδόκει γὰρ χωρεῖν τὴν τύχην, ἣν αὐτῷ δύο μέγισται τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον ἡγεμονίαι προσέφερον, ἰδία καὶ ἀλλοτρία. *ταχεῖα δ' ἀνατροπὴ τοὺς βαρβάρους ὑπείσιν ἅτε καὶ φύσει σφαλεροὺς ὄντας πρὸς τὴν ἀναξιοπάθειαν*, ἀνδραποδῶ γὰρ ἀλλοτρίῳ ποιήσῃ τὸ προστασσόμενον οὐκ ἡξιοῦν, τὴν ὁμηρείαν ἀντὶ δουλείας ὀνομάζοντες, καὶ τῆς ἐπικλήσεως τὴν ἀδοξίαν· οὐ γὰρ [ἀν] πολέμου δικαίῳ δεδῶσθαι τὸν βασιλεύοντα Πάρθοις, ἀλλὰ, ὃ τῷ παντὶ χεῖρον, εἰρήνης ὕβρει.

(*Jos. AJ* 18.46–47, emphasis mine)

The similarities between this and the Tacitean passage disclose a common source to which, despite differing perspectives on the Parthian empire, both historians appear to have adhered quite closely.<sup>8</sup> Yet Tacitus differs from Josephus

<sup>6</sup> See R. Urban, "Tacitus und die Res gestae divi Augusti," *Gymnasium* 86 (1979) 59–74, 70–71. There seems to be an additional allusion, not noted by Urban, in 2.3–4 (see below, note 18). For a synopsis of the various opinions on this subject, as well as an unconvincing critique of Urban's thesis, see E. S. Ramage, *The Nature and Purpose of Augustus' "Res Gestae,"* *Historia Einzelschriften* 54 (Stuttgart 1987) 147–50.

<sup>7</sup> *Mon. Anc.* 29. See further *The Cambridge Ancient History*, S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock and M. P. Charlesworth, edd., vol. 10, *The Augustan Empire: 44 BC–AD 70* (Cambridge 1952) 263.

<sup>8</sup> See Walser 72 with note 330. Cluvius Rufus, identified by Mommsen, Norden and others as Josephus' source for Parthian history (see G. Hölscher, "Josephus," *RE* 9.2 [1916] 1985–86), seems a likely candidate. We do not know the point at

in a few details, the most important shift coming in the two sentences I have emphasized, where the common source seems particularly apparent. Both indicate that the Parthians underwent (*subiit/ὑπεισιν*) a sudden (*mox/ταχέια*) change of heart. Josephus identifies two reasons for this, natural Parthian fickleness compounded by indignation at the situation. Their dissatisfaction, Josephus explains, arose more from the circumstances of the installation than from any substantial complaint with Vonones personally.<sup>9</sup> Here, however, the two accounts diverge.<sup>10</sup> In Tacitus' version, Parthian fickleness is not adduced as a reasonable explanation.<sup>11</sup> Rather, he focuses on the second possibility, giving a significantly different analysis of the origins of the Parthian *pudor* or ἀναξιοπᾶθεια from that proposed by Josephus. In Tacitus' view, the problem was Vonones himself. He was, the Parthians complained, no longer one of them. Long years of servitude in Rome had rendered him unfit and effeminate: he did not like to hunt, had no interest in horses, and kept about him a retinue of repulsive Greeks.<sup>12</sup> His affability and openness, while perhaps desirable qualities in a Roman emperor, are instead taken for major character flaws.<sup>13</sup> Tacitus thus directs attention to Vonones himself—this takes up almost as much space as the rest of the episode—and to the consequences of his protracted stay in Rome.

There are, moreover, some troubling omissions in Tacitus' account of Vonones. For while he dwells on Vonones' rejection, details about Vonones' reign are all but ignored. As it happened, Vonones reigned for nearly five years, with at least a modicum of success; certainly he was not without some

which Cluvius' *History* began, though even if with the reign of Nero (as is often assumed), he may have briefly sketched the history of Rome's relationship with Parthia as background to his account of Corbulo's campaigns. That he was one of Tacitus' main sources for the third hexad of the *Annales* (cf. *Ann.* 13.20.2, 14.2) and for the *Historiae* is axiomatic, q.v. J. Tresch, *Die Nerobücher in den Annalen des Tacitus* (Heidelberg 1965) 55–58; Syme 2.289–94. For a general discussion and summary of the work on Tacitus' sources see S. Borsák, "P. Cornelius Tacitus," *RE* Supplementband 11 (1968) 373–511, esp. 449–53, 479–84.

<sup>9</sup> Josephus' conclusion is paralleled in Tacitus in the remarks of the Parthians upon the installation of the client king Tigranes V in Armenia: οὐ γὰρ [ἄν] πολέμου δικαίῃ δεδόσθαι τὸν βασιλεύσοντα Πάρθοις, ἀλλὰ, ὃ τῷ παντὶ χεῖρον, εἰρήνης ὕβρει / "idque primores gentium (viz. Parthians) aegre tolerabant: eo contemptum descensum, ut ne duce quidem Romano incurarentur, sed temeritate obsidis tot per annos inter mancipia habiti" (*Ann.* 15.1.1–2).

<sup>10</sup> There are two possible explanations: 1) either Josephus or Tacitus has consulted a second source, or 2) either Tacitus or Josephus has departed from and embellished the common source. Since, as we shall see, Tacitus' description of Vonones incorporates details applied consistently to many of the client kings throughout the *Annales*, it seems most likely that these are Tacitus' own additions or elaborations. Josephus, on the other hand, does not appear to have developed anything that could be called a standard approach to client kings (cf. *AJ* 20.81 for a pertinent comparison).

<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere Tacitus concurs precisely with Josephus' view of the Parthians: cf. *Ann.* 6.36.4, 12.14.1 ("barbaros malle Roma petere reges quam habere"). Fickleness is a barbarian characteristic generally in Tacitus (e.g., *Ann.* 14.23, of Armenians; *Hist.* 3.48.2, of *barbari*).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Tiberius at *Ann.* 4.58 with Walser 74 and note 337.

<sup>13</sup> Vonones possesses *comitas*, a distinguishing characteristic of Tacitus' Germanicus, q.v. Goodyear on 1.33.2.

support.<sup>14</sup> There is no hint of this in Tacitus. Rather, he advances quickly to the king's ejection by the Arsacid Artabanus III, mentioning only in passing Vonones' initial defeat of Artabanus. But the latter event was memorable enough to warrant at least a commemorative coin<sup>15</sup> and a complete sentence in Josephus (*AJ* 18.48).

The placement of the excursus is equally perplexing and, with respect to the way Tacitus usually begins a year, exceptional. Chronologically, Vonones at this point falls outside of the scope of his work, and while this might be viewed merely as background information, is it necessary? Tacitus anticipates precisely this objection, noting at 2.5.1 that the disturbances in the East provided Tiberius with an excuse for recalling Germanicus from the Rhine, hence the relevance of beginning a Book that focuses primarily on Germanicus with a seemingly irrelevant digression.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, though Tacitus will not return to Parthian affairs in any depth for quite some time, when he does, Vonones and Germanicus are linked, as we shall presently see.

Thus while the transition at 2.5.1 is admittedly strained, it is evident that the first four chapters of Book 2 are pertinent, in Tacitus' eyes at least, to the friction that will develop between Germanicus and Tiberius. A similar disposition of material, for a similar purpose, has been observed in 2.44–46, a digression on Maroboduus, to whom I shall return in Section II.<sup>17</sup> But the characterization of Vonones is prominently placed at the beginning of an important Book in the *Annales* because he is relevant not only to the emerging rivalry between uncle and nephew, but to another, equally important theme that will engage Tacitus' attention on more than one occasion, the dismal failure, despite Augustus' boasts in the *Res Gestae* (esp. 27–33), of the use of client kings. Indeed, the two chapters subsequent to the digression on Vonones comprise a thorough survey of Augustan failures in Armenia, a survey prompted ostensibly by the fact that it was to Armenia that Vonones subsequently retreated.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the *Annales*, Tacitus seems consistently to

<sup>14</sup> According to Josephus, the majority of the Parthians in fact supported him (*AJ* 18.48, συμφορήσαντος αὐτῷ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν Πάρθων), or so I interpret this passage. Cf. the translation of L. H. Feldman, ed. and trans., *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 9 (Loeb 1981) p. 39 with note e.

<sup>15</sup> See P. Gardner, *The Coinage of Parthia* (San Diego 1968) 11, 47 with Pl. V.4–5; R. H. McDowell, *Coins from Seleucia on the Tigris* (Ann Arbor 1935) 223; the *Cambridge History of Iran* (above, note 5) 3<sup>1</sup>.293.

<sup>16</sup> See Ginsburg 26.

<sup>17</sup> On 2.44–46 see Ginsburg 65–66. Tacitus, as often with other events, will occasionally place episodes involving client kings out of strict chronological sequence for thematic reasons, e.g., apart from those noted, Italicus (see below with note 27) or Rhescuporis (see below with note 41).

<sup>18</sup> Tacitus traces the difficulties back to Antony's deceit toward Artavasdes, king of Armenia, in 34 BC (*Ann.* 2.3.1). He then lists in succession the failed Augustan nominees to the throne in Armenia (2.3.1–4.2): Artaxias, betrayed and killed by members of his own family; Tigranes, installed by Tiberius at Augustus' bidding, whose rule was short-lived, as was that of his son and daughter, despite the fact that they had married in accordance with *externus mos* (as though this should have assured their success); Artavasdes, who was violently deposed; Ariobarzanes, whose good looks and exemplary character made him, though not his son, acceptable to the Armenians. The digression is apparently included to ex-

focus on difficulties with client kings and, as he has done here, to magnify those difficulties to advance his criticism of Julio-Claudian foreign policy. The Vonones episode is therefore merely an early chapter in the history of Julio-Claudian foreign affairs, but a chapter deemed by Tacitus to be of particular importance because Augustus' successors for all intents and purposes followed Augustus' lead. Vonones, then, serves as a vehicle both for introducing a theme and establishing a precedent for subsequent, similar episodes. The impression conveyed is that neither Augustus nor his successors foresaw that a king reared in Rome, in isolation from his ancestral home and customs, could scarcely expect to be well received or successful once actually installed on the throne. Nonetheless, instilling young, royal hostages with Roman values was and continued to be precisely the Augustan plan (Suet. *Aug.* 48), though we never read of the generally poor results in the *Res Gestae*. Tacitus compensates for what Augustus omitted or (perhaps more fairly) could not know, and, as in *Annales* 1.9–10, seeks to expose the reality behind the facade. In 2.1–4 he has revealed what sort of methods he will use.

Book 6, for instance, produces a similar episode. The year is AD 35. Dissatisfied with Artabanus III, Vonones' replacement, certain Parthian notables secretly seek a king from Rome (6.31). Tiberius dispatches yet another son of Phraates IV, Phraates V, who, *patriis moribus impar*, quickly perishes once removed from the city where he had lived for so many years (6.32.2). The undaunted emperor enlists yet another hostage reared in Rome, Tiridates III. When Tiridates proves slightly more successful than Vonones I, Artabanus, faced with pressure from both Rome and his own court, withdraws to Scythia. There were those who had hoped *Romanae artes* had rendered Tiridates more congenial than Artabanus (6.41.2). But again dissatisfaction ensues. Like Vonones I, Tiridates is charged with not being an Arsacid, with being rendered *imbellis* by *externa molliitia* (6.43.3). When confronted by Artabanus on the battlefield, Tiridates, *ignavus ad pericula*, retreats...or runs away (6.44).

Claudius proves no more adept at this process than his predecessors.<sup>19</sup> For the fourth time, disgruntled Parthians request a new king from Rome, and in response Claudius sends out a grandson of Phraates IV named Meherdates. It occurs to the emperor that the young prince might need some advice, a scene

plain that the throne in Armenia was vacant when Vonones I was driven out of Parthia, a post he gladly filled until eventually forced to seek refuge in Syria (2.4.3). The more subtle purpose is to disclose that the employment of client kings in Armenia had been consistently unsuccessful. Here again Tacitus appears to be drawing from and expanding upon the *Res Gestae* (cf. *Mon. Anc.* 27.2).

<sup>19</sup> Mithridates the Iberian perhaps figured in Tacitus' lost account of Gaius. As we learn from Dio (60.8.1) and Seneca (*Dial.* 9.11.12), Mithridates had been retained by Gaius in Rome as a hostage or rather as a prisoner. Under Tiberius, he had been enlisted to recover Armenia (*Ann.* 6.32–33) and later, under Claudius, had actually been installed for a time as king (11.8–9), an office in which he showed himself "atrociorem quam novo regno conduceret" (11.9.2). He too, however, is scorned by the Parthians as an *externus rex* (12.50.1) and accused by some of *durum imperium* (12.47.4). Tacitus is equally critical of Rome's or the emperor's occasional indifference to the fate of client kings (see Section III), and thus describes in detail Quadratus' caustic reaction to Mithridates' death (12.48, with Syme 2.478–79).

infused with Tacitean irony (12.11).<sup>20</sup> Claudius' words simply underscore his gross misconceptions about Parthian politics. Aspire to Roman virtues, he counsels: abstain from *dominatio*, treat your subjects not as *servos* but *cives*, behave with *clementia* and *iustitia*, virtues which barbarians will appreciate all the more because they are unknown to them. There can be no doubt that Tacitus intends a parallel between this and an earlier interview between Tiberius and Phraates V (6.32.1) in order to illustrate that Claudius, like Tiberius and even Augustus, did not perceive that a client king nurtured in Rome must inevitably fail.<sup>21</sup> The experience of this new *alumnus urbis* (12.11.3) once again demonstrates that fact. Sent East with Lucius Cassius, and behaving less like a new monarch than a spoiled child, Meherdates is swiftly betrayed to Gotarzes II, the current Parthian king. Gotarzes taunts the prince as a Roman and a foreigner, *alienigenam et Romanum*, and ungraciously cuts off his ears. Meherdates' life, however, is spared as a display of Gotarzes' *clementia* (12.14.3), a detail carefully calculated to recall Claudius' parting words to Meherdates.<sup>22</sup>

This was not, however, Claudius' first experience with a client king. In AD 47 the Cherusci had applied to Rome for a new king, and Tacitus' account of the installation of Claudius' nominee, Italicus, has long been recognized as sharing a number of elements with the episodes involving the Eastern client kings described above.<sup>23</sup> Italicus, the "unum reliquum stirpis regiae",<sup>24</sup> had been born and raised *apud urbem*, and "exercitus in patrium nostrumque morem" (11.16.1). Claudius' counsel to the young prince, like that at 12.11 to Meherdates, reveals a basic misunderstanding of the German psyche; his advice that Italicus consider himself as not an *obses* but a *civis* going to an *externum imperium* was not likely to ensure success (*ibid.*).<sup>25</sup> The narrative bears this out. Italicus' initially warm welcome rapidly cools as the Germans, like the Parthians, soon come to distrust this foreigner whom they fear to be "infectum

<sup>20</sup> See Syme 2.539.

<sup>21</sup> The parallel is not disguised: Claudius compares himself to Augustus—a reflection of Claudius' frequent attempts to stress the similarities between himself and Augustus, a circumstance that Tacitus, for opposite reasons, often exploits (see discussion by Seif 259–62, esp. 260–61; A. Mehl, *Tacitus über Kaiser Claudius* [Munich 1974] 180 with note 709)—and Tacitus faults him for forgetting the experience of Tiberius. Tacitus clearly wants his reader to conclude that between the experiences of Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero (and doubtless Gaius as well) in this area there was not a great deal of difference (see Syme 1.370).

<sup>22</sup> Koestermann on 12.11.2; Seif 239–40. See further on this episode Keitel *Structure* 151–6; *id.* "Parthia and Armenia" 466–68; Syme 2.497.

<sup>23</sup> Fully discussed by J. N. Keddie, "Italicus and Claudius: Tacitus *Annales* XI.16–17," *Antichthon* 9 (1975) 52–60. Italicus is often compared to Vonones I: see *ibid.* 54n. 20; Walser 73 and 140; Koestermann on 2.1.2. Keitel compares Meherdates and Italicus (*Structure* 153n. 50). Even some similarities to Nero have been observed (B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus: A Study in the Writing of History* [Manchester 1952] 70–71; cf. Keitel, *op. cit.* 57–58).

<sup>24</sup> Italicus was Arminius' nephew: the irony of this, and of Italicus' name, was doubtless not lost on Tacitus. Keddie cautiously suggests that in the phrase we may see a "slight against the Julio-Claudian dynasty," noting Tacitus' emphasis on the destruction of heirs (above, note 23, 52n. 6).

<sup>25</sup> See E. A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford 1965) 95–96.

alimonio servitio cultu, omnibus externis" and therefore a potential threat to their *libertas* (11.16.3). His ejection soon follows and although restored, *res Cheruscas adflictabat* (11.17.3).<sup>26</sup> Yet the episode not only instances another Claudian failure, but seems purposefully positioned to lend a degree of irony to Claudius' famous speech at 11.24.<sup>27</sup>

One final example, from the reign of Nero, poignantly depicts this particular aspect of Tacitus' treatment of client kings. Tigranes V, another hostage whose many idle years at Rome had reduced him *ad servilem patientiam* (14.26.1), is dispatched to Armenia. His welcome proves transitory, and despised (as Meherdates at 12.14.3) as a *regem alienigenam*, an "obsidem tot per annos inter mancipia habitum" (cf. Vonones at 2.2.2), he is deposed by Tiri-dates, the brother of Vologaeses I (15.1.1–2).<sup>28</sup>

In sum, Tacitus' portrayals of client kings throughout the *Annales* often follow an observable pattern: a royal hostage, who has been either raised at Rome or spent a good deal of time there, is dispatched to rule a country that for all intents and purposes is foreign to him. The emoluments of Roman life have taken their toll, softening and rendering him unfit for anything but the life of a hostage. Predictably, he is poorly received and despised as a foreigner and one of Caesar's slaves; often his rule proves oppressive if not tyrannical. He is in short both a manifestation and instrument of imperial *servitus*, and therefore not to be tolerated.

## II.

Variations on this theme occur in Tacitus' treatment of other foreign rulers loyal to Rome, most notably the Suebian chieftain Maroboduus. Maroboduus, so Strabo informs us, had traveled to Rome as a young man and private citizen, befriended Augustus, then returned home and acquired authority (ἔδυνάστευσσε, Str. 7.1.3). In the course of the next few years he in fact managed to establish an empire of considerable size and strength over which he wielded virtual monarchical power.<sup>29</sup> Despite generally cordial relations between Rome and Maroboduus, Augustus ordered Tiberius to launch a campaign in AD 6 to bring

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the character of Mithridates' rule at 11.9.1–2 and 12.47. It is therefore difficult to believe with Seif (86) that this episode is not meant to reflect negatively on the emperor.

<sup>27</sup> Cf., e.g., 11.24.4: "quid aliud exitio Lacedaemoniis et Atheniensibus fuit, quamquam armis pollerent, nisi quod victos pro alienigenis arcebant? ...advenae in nos regnaverunt.'" It is perhaps in order to make this irony obvious that Tacitus postponed the account of Italicus to the end of his narrative of the year 47 and begins 48 with the Gallic embassy and Claudius' speech. For similar thematic reasons the Armenian and Parthian narratives (11.8–10) were placed out of strict chronological sequence, q.v. Keitel, *Structure* 42–43, id. "Parthia and Armenia" 463.

<sup>28</sup> See Gilmartin 602–3.

<sup>29</sup> "Maroboduus, genere nobilis, corpore praevalens, animo ferox, natione magis quam ratione barbarus, non tumultuarium neque fortuitum neque mobilem et ex voluntate parentum constantem inter suos occupavit principatum, sed certum imperium vimque regiam complexus animo, statuit avocata procul a Romanis gente sua eo progredi ubi, cum propter potentiora arma refugisset, sua faceret potentissima" (Vell. 2.108.2).



Maroboduus directly under Roman control. A rebellion in Pannonia forced Tiberius to desist from the planned invasion, but Maroboduus, who was apparently disinclined to confront the Romans, came to an agreement with the future emperor. In essence, Maroboduus assumed the status of a client king.

Our fullest source of information on Maroboduus is Velleius, who writes as an eye-witness to these particular events. As Dobiaš has observed, there must be a kernel of truth to Velleius' strikingly favorable portrait of the Suebian.<sup>30</sup> Velleius depicts a bold and dashing German chieftain, a potential antagonist worthy of Rome's, or rather of Tiberius', attention (2.108). He describes with admiration Tiberius' handling of Maroboduus and the Pannonian revolt in AD 6 that forced the Romans to conclude with the Suebian a hasty and doubtless less than satisfactory agreement, described rather honestly as *necessaria gloriosis praeposita* (2.110.3). As he summarizes Tiberius' achievements, Velleius has nothing but praise for the emperor's subjugation of Maroboduus and his (continuing) benevolent treatment of the king after he had been deposed in AD 18:

qua vi consiliorum suorum, ministro et adiutore usus Druso filio suo, Maroboduum inhaerentem occupati regni finibus (pace maiestatis eius dixerim) velut serpentem abstrusam terra salubribus consiliorum suorum medicamentis coegit egredi! quam illum ut honorate ita secure continet! (Vell. 2.129.3)

With all regard for Velleius' aims, there can be no doubt that the concluding of a treaty with Maroboduus was one of the great moments in Tiberius' career, and Maroboduus, arguably one of the most important of Rome's *clientes*.

Tacitus, however, appears once again to give the other side of the picture and to turn the traditional—or at least official—version of events on its head. We might reasonably ask, for instance, why Tacitus did not open Book 2 with a summary of Tiberius' settlement in Germany or at least incorporate it at some point. This surely was as important an event as the Parthian rejection of Vonones or the Augustan experience in Armenia and certainly as essential, if not more so, to understanding the situation in Germany as the material in *Ann.* 2.1–4 was to an appreciation of Eastern affairs. It is a puzzling omission, but with regard to Tiberius' previous achievements in Germany, Tacitus remains silent and thus skews our perspective on Maroboduus;<sup>31</sup> of Maroboduus' friendship with Augustus, his rise to power, his undeniable popularity and the extent of his regime the historian is equally close-mouthed. A digression on these points, it might be argued, would be irrelevant, but no more so than that on Vonones I. Besides, a foray into Maroboduus' past history would necessitate discussion of Tiberius' successes in Germany, a topic Tacitus appears deliberately to avoid. Instead, Maroboduus first appears in the *Annals* at 2.26, where Tacitus paraphrases a letter from the emperor to Germanicus urging his return to Rome and a cessation of campaigns in Germany. This provides the historian with an opportunity to convey (and perhaps distort) the Tiberian perspective on his own campaigns. As he reminds his nephew, “se novies a divo Augusto in

<sup>30</sup> Dobiaš 155.

<sup>31</sup> See Syme 1.370 with note 3.

Germaniam missum plura consilio quam vi perfecisse. sic...regem... Maroboduum pace obstrictum" (*Ann.* 2.26.3).<sup>32</sup>

The phrase seems structured to draw attention to the word *regem*, to stress not only the nature of his position but his status as a Tiberian client king as well.<sup>33</sup> In the process Tacitus has stretched the facts himself and has Tiberius do so as well. As a consequence Maroboduus takes on the appearance of a Tiberian lackey, an impression Tacitus does little to dispel. With the phrase *pace obstrictum*, for instance, Tacitus insinuates that the emperor was being less than honest about the manner in which the treaty with Maroboduus had been achieved; there is no admission that in actuality the pact had been partially forced on Tiberius.<sup>34</sup> Tacitus further informs us that Maroboduus made himself unpopular by affecting the *nomen regis* (2.44), a charge found in no other source. This is scarcely credible unless one understands Tacitus to refer to the situation after AD 6 and the agreement with Rome whereby Maroboduus assumed the status of client king.<sup>35</sup> But with no prior knowledge of Maroboduus or his status, Tacitus' readers would not notice such a rearrangement of the facts. Instead, Maroboduus becomes simply another power-hungry ruler who was willing to sell out to Rome in order to impose his will on his unsuspecting sub-

<sup>32</sup> Tacitus' "plura consilio quam vi" may indeed be lifted from Livy 21.2.5 (so Syme 2.733), but the expression, or something like it, appears to have become proverbial with respect to Tiberius' policy (cf. Tiberius to Phraates V at 6.32.1). Aside from Tacitus and Velleius, Suetonius varies the theme too: "reges infestos suspectosque *comminationibus magis et querelis quam vi* repressit; quosdam per blanditias atque promissa extractos ad se non remisit, ut Maroboduum Germanum..." (*Tib.* 37.4, emphasis mine).

<sup>33</sup> Maroboduus' position, or more aptly that of his successors, is summarized in the *Germania*: "Marcomanis Quadisque usque ad nostram memoriam reges manserunt ex gente ipsorum, nobile Marobodui et Tudri genus (iam et externos patiuntur), sed vis et potentia regibus ex auctoritate Romana" (*Germ.* 42.2). While here and in the *Germania* generally Tacitus uses *rex* freely in describing the political infrastructure of German tribes and especially of the Suebi (e.g. *Germ.* 7.1, 11.5, 44.1 and 3, 45.9; *Hist.* 3.5), in the *Annales* only one other German leader, apart from Maroboduus and Vibilius, king of the Hermunduri (*Ann.* 12.29.1), is called a *rex*: the client king Italicus (11.16.1, q.v. above). See R. Much, ed., *Die Germania des Tacitus* (Heidelberg 1967<sup>3</sup>) on 7.1; and Thompson (above, note 25) 32–41. As Tacitus had observed in the *Historiae*, monarchy was first and foremost an Eastern institution, not German (*Hist.* 4.17.4; cf. *Ann.* 13.54.1).

<sup>34</sup> See Goodyear on 2.26.3 with note 3. Maroboduus, however, is not denied the opportunity to present his own point of view. Tacitus has him deliver a speech at 2.46 in which he defends his actions: "...se duodecim legionibus petitem duce Tiberio inlibatam Germanorum gloriam servavisse, mox *condicionibus aequis* discessum; neque paenitere quod ipsorum in manu sit, integrum adversum Romanos bellum an pacem incruentam malint" (2.46.2, emphasis mine).

<sup>35</sup> Maroboduus was extremely popular for a number of years and long after he began to wield monarchical power (cf. *Ann.* 2.63.1; Vell. 2.109.2). When Velleius wrote that Maroboduus wielded *vim regiam* (above, note 29), he was thinking of the situation in 6 BC or shortly thereafter, after the Marcomannic migration (see Woodman on 2.108.2, p. 150; Dobiaš 156). The roots of the disenchantment with Maroboduus must be traced to the agreement with Rome in AD 6, as Arminius' words in Tacitus imply (*Ann.* 2.45.3), which Maroboduus perhaps regarded as the formalization of his position as king (cf. Dobiaš 160). Even then, it was not until AD 17 and his humiliating defeat at the hands of Arminius that Maroboduus' prestige was irrevocably lost (*ibid.* 165–66).

jects. Only in this way can the taunts that Arminius, the great Tacitean champion of German liberty, flings at Maroboduus as the *proditor patriae* and *satelles Caesaris* have any real substance (2.45.3).<sup>36</sup> These are the sort of typical reproaches one expects to find addressed to a client king in Tacitus.

In AD 18 a youthful insurgent named Catualda deposed Maroboduus. Maroboduus' final plea to Tiberius for refuge and Tiberius' response form the subject of 2.63. Again Tacitus fills out the Velleian version. Velleius had refused, "*quam illum ut honorate ita secure continet*," but Tacitus maintains that Tiberius had pledged a *sedes honorata* only on the condition that Maroboduus promise to remain in Italy, in other words, as a virtual hostage of Rome: thus would the king be contained *secure* (*Ann.* 2.63.2).<sup>37</sup> To the senate, Tacitus asserts, Tiberius magnified the extent of the danger and of his achievement—much as he is made to do at 2.26.3 in writing to Germanicus. At this point the reader is inclined to believe neither Tiberius nor Maroboduus when they boast here of the king's prestige and power, although in some respects they come closer to the truth than Tacitus would have us believe. Maroboduus' humiliation culminates in his being packed off to Ravenna where, we learn, he grew old, simply another failed client king, "*multum imminuta claritate ob nimiam vivendi cupidinem*" (2.63.4–5).

This whole final episode conceals a larger intent, however, for it is purposefully framed by two others involving client kings and Germanicus: the removal of Vonones I by Germanicus (2.58) and senatorial ratification of Germanicus' installation of Zeno (Artaxias III) on the throne of Armenia (2.64.1).<sup>38</sup> The former does not necessarily redound wholly to the credit of Germanicus (see n. 39), though it does show him dealing swiftly, decisively and at least honestly with this situation, in contrast to his uncle's handling of Maroboduus. As to the latter episode, Zeno proves, significantly, to be the only truly successful client king to be found in the *Annales*, yet he is appointed by Germanicus, not by Tiberius. Tacitus makes a point of telling us that Artaxias had not been raised at Rome and succeeded largely because he had cultivated Armenian ways, being quite fond of hunting and other barbarian pursuits (2.56.2). He is, then, the conspicuous antithesis of Vonones I, with whose installation Tacitus

<sup>36</sup> For much the same purposes Tacitus virtually ignores Arminius' earlier service to Rome and his Roman citizenship (only the former is briefly alluded to at *Ann.* 2.10.3). He had to, or else risk producing the impression of Arminius' being a traitor to Rome, such as we find in the more informative Velleius (2.118.2), and thereby undermining his vision of Arminius as a fervent patriot (cf. *Ann.* 2.10.1).

<sup>37</sup> Woodman believes that Tacitus and Velleius rely on a similar source, Tiberius himself (Velleius, from personal recollection of the speech; Tacitus, from a transcript found in the *acta*), hence the similar diction (on 2.129.3, p. 269; on 2.109.2, p. 152). It is not, however, beyond the realm of possibility that Tacitus at points directly echoes Velleius on Maroboduus and Tiberius. He certainly reacts against the Velleian view of the pair's dealings as a whole and not merely in this one passage.

<sup>38</sup> The observation made herein lends some support to the argument that 2.62–67 are misplaced, q.v. Goodyear on 2.62.1, pp. 393–96. That is, thematically, as well as chronologically, they make more sense coming directly after 2.58. Such framing appears to be a favored device (see below, notes 44 and 45).

opened this Book.<sup>39</sup> The three vignettes—Germanicus/Vonones, Tiberius/ Maroboduus, Germanicus/Zeno—all are contrived to draw attention once again to the differences between uncle and nephew, in this instance, specifically to their dealings with client kings.<sup>40</sup>

As if to make the point still more obvious, Tacitus manages to devise a link between the awarding of an ovation to Germanicus for his successes in Armenia and Tiberius' handling of the rebellious client king Rhescuporis. Tiberius, he muses, pleased that the difficulties in Armenia had been resolved through *sapientia* rather than war, decides to use a similar diplomatic approach in dealing with Rhescuporis (2.64.1). But there are some serious chronological difficulties with Tacitus' account that appear to derive from the fact that he has purposefully conflated the events of at least two years (and possibly more) into one and then placed them out of strict chronological sequence for thematic reasons. As at 2.3–4, Tacitus digresses on the Augustan settlement, in this instance in Thrace, through which Cotys and Rhescuporis had been set up as co-regents soon after Rhoemetalces' death ca. AD 12 (2.64.2).<sup>41</sup> Rhescuporis, however, dissatisfied with the arrangement, began to create disturbances soon

<sup>39</sup> Germanicus' motive in complying with Artabanus' request that Vonones not be held in Syria, so Tacitus states, was not so much to gratify the Parthian as to irk Piso, Vonones' friend and Germanicus' rival (2.58). In essence, then, Germanicus used Vonones I as well as Artabanus' goodwill toward his own ends, in much the same way as Antony behaved toward Artavasdes, as described at 2.3.1. In view of Tacitus' apparent efforts to establish a comparison between Germanicus and Antony (see McCulloch 83–86, 142–43), and the consistent failure of the Augustan nominees in Armenia detailed in 2.3–4 vs. Germanicus' success there in 2.64, these chapters (2.58–64) seem even more designed as some sort of culmination to the themes suggested at the beginning of the Book. Germanicus' candidate, Zeno or Artaxias III, may in fact have been a Roman citizen—though Tacitus does not tell us this—whose family owed their citizenship to Antony (see D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* [New York 1984] 41).

<sup>40</sup> Germanicus was apparently popular with the kings, who grieved at his death (2.72.2); Corbulo enjoyed a good rapport with them as well (13.8.2) and Tacitus uses him to make a similar point (see below, note 44). There is perhaps one other indication that the contrast is deliberately arranged. At the end of 2.63, Tacitus notes that Catualda soon suffered the same fate as his predecessor and was later settled together with his followers across the Danube, "dato rege Vannio gentis Quadorum." What Tacitus omits to mention here is that Drusus had made this arrangement, a detail excised perhaps to avoid detracting from Germanicus in the next chapter, but included at 12.29–30 when he returns to Vannius and his subsequent expulsion. In those chapters the point is another failure of the client-kings system and Tacitus wants to draw attention to the circumstances of Vannius' installation: "...Suebis a Druso Caesare impositus, pellitur regno, prima imperii aetate clarus acceptusque popularibus, mox diuturnitate in superbiam mutans et odio accolarum, simul domesticis discordiis circumventus" (12.29.1). Vannius too had sought refuge with Claudius, who had withheld assistance from his ally, as Tiberius had from Maroboduus (12.29.2; cf. 2.46.5).

<sup>41</sup> See Goodyear on 2.64.2, p. 400 on the death of Rhoemetalces; and on 2.62.1, p. 395 for possible chronological problems with Tacitus' account of Cotys and Rhescuporis. In his survey of Tiberius' accomplishments Velleius places this first, well before Maroboduus (2.129.1). Velleius marvels at the *prudentia* with which Tiberius handled the king, an assessment that Tacitus' version, like his account of Maroboduus, seems intended to controvert.

thereafter (*mox*)—more precisely, when he heard that Tiberius had succeeded Augustus (2.64.3). In other words, by Tacitus' own account, Rhescuporis has been causing trouble long before AD 19, the year in which Tacitus locates the event. Yet we are to believe that only now does Tiberius react, that is, only after having observed how well *sapientia* worked for Germanicus in the East does he decide to try the same approach with Rhescuporis.

Tiberius does not come off well in the event, and Tacitus traces the cause to the emperor's reluctance to depart from the Augustan arrangement. The historian implies that this arrangement was flawed from the outset,<sup>42</sup> but Tiberius was determined to abide by it: "nihil aeque Tiberium anxium habebat, quam ne composita turbarentur" (2.65.1). It is apparent from Tacitus' description of Rhescuporis' alarming behavior—he had put Cotys in chains and was preparing for war—that swift action was needed. Yet Tiberius responds *molliter* to the king's fraudulent letter, in which he complains that Cotys had plotted against him, and insists that justice will prevail. Tiberius' continued hesitation results in the murder of Cotys, though not even this event will move the unmovable emperor: "nec tamen Caesar placitas semel artes mutavit" (2.66.2). In the end, Rhescuporis is finally removed only after the Romans make a show of force. In short, arms rather than Tiberius' *sapientia* resolve the situation. Aside from countering once again the Velleian version (see n. 41), Tacitus' narrative is so structured, like the excursus on Vonones at the beginning of the Book, to direct the reader to a comparison between the emperor and Germanicus.

### III.

Tacitus rarely let pass an opportunity to expose the emperors' inadequate or occasionally fraudulent handling of client kings and would-be client kings. His material provided him with a variety of occasions to do so. Tiberius' duplicity, for instance, surfaces on several occasions, in his handling of Maroboduus, discussed above, in his shoddy treatment of Archelaus, the king of Cappadocia (2.42; cf. Dio 57.17.3–7), or in his bungled attempt to quell the rebellious Rhescuporis. Nero too deals deceitfully with Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, who mistakenly believed that the *obsequium* of naming the emperor as his heir would safeguard his rule. Instead, the king is bereft of his kingdom by the Romans, his household plundered, his family enslaved and his wife Boudicca flogged (14.31). Boudicca, of course, goes on to become one of the great defenders of *libertas* in Tacitus. Had Nero dealt fairly and sensibly with Prasutagus in the first place, the revolt of Boudicca never would have occurred, or so Tacitus implies.

Nero's ineptitude is most fully exposed in his handling of affairs in the East. Though Corbulo, the successful Eastern commander, had at last managed

<sup>42</sup> Augustus had divided Thrace between Rhescuporis and Cotys, the latter receiving "arva et urbes et vicina Graecis," the former, "incultum ferox adnexum hostibus" (2.64.2). This was hardly a formula for peace and harmony, given the character of Rhescuporis (2.64.2). Moreover, the tenuous arrangement depended on the character of Augustus: so long as Augustus lived, Rhescuporis feared swift reprisal should he step out of line, but the death of Augustus and the accession of Tiberius encouraged him to rebel (2.64.3).

in AD 62 to convince Vologaeses I to negotiate with Nero over Armenia, the emperor nevertheless determined to send Caesennius Paetus to the East with the intent of reducing Armenia to the status of a province, a course that Augustus had eschewed (*Mon. Anc.* 27). Paetus' boasts to Corbulo lay bare the new imperial policy: "se tributa ac leges et pro umbra regis (viz. Tiridates III) Romanum ius victis impositurum" (*Ann.* 15.6.4). Nothing, however, could have militated more severely against Roman interests or revealed more plainly Nero's ignorance of the situation. After Paetus' precipitous and disastrous campaigns, wild reports circulate about the *virtus regis* (i.e. Vologaeses I) and frequent desertions ensue. Paetus petitions the king, eventually obtaining a meeting with his emissary Vasaces. The former's ludicrous arguments reveal in miniature the official, erroneous view of Roman relations with Parthia (15.14.2; cf. 15.13.3); Vasaces, on the other hand, exposes the Roman sham: "...imaginem retinendi largiendive penes nos (sc. Romanos), vim penes Parthos memorat" (15.14.2).<sup>43</sup> Once again the blunt truth issues from a Parthian (cf. Vologaeses' pointed and honest letter to Nero at 15.24). Tacitus notes a final absurdity: though the situation remained unresolved, at Rome trophies and arches were erected to celebrate the victory over Parthia—"adspectui consulitur spreta conscientia" (15.18.1).<sup>44</sup>

Claudius' experiences with this sort of situation are equally unsatisfactory, especially this encounter with Mithridates. This Bosporan king had been deposed by the Romans and subsequently attempted, without success, to regain power by force (*Ann.* 12.15). An appeal to Eunones, chief of the Aorsi, resulted in a letter to the emperor on Mithridates' behalf. His magnanimous arguments, couched in somewhat telling terms ("populi Romani imperatoribus, magnarum nationum regibus primam ex similitudine fortunae amicitiam"), appeal in the end to the ingenuous and gullible Claudius (12.19).<sup>45</sup> *Beneficentia* obtains and

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tiridates' envoys to Corbulo at 13.37.4.

<sup>44</sup> See further Gilmartin 610–26. The scenes that follow again show Tacitus using Corbulo as a foil to Nero as he had used the Germanicus/Maroboduus-Tiberius scenes remarked above or the Claudius/Mithridates episode (q.v. note 45 below). We are first informed of Paetus' fate: Nero had forbidden him to be punished because he feared for his health (15.25.4). In the East, Corbulo, now invested with full command, manages to conclude the war peacefully and reach an agreement with Tiridates and Vologaeses. Tacitus credits him with a message to Tiridates remarkable for its perspicacity, balance and appreciation of the Parthian situation (15.27). Corbulo convinces Vologaeses I of the wisdom of Tiridates' acceptance of the *regnum* as a *donum* (15.27.2), though Vologaeses had originally been unwilling that his brother should possess Armenia as a *potentiae alienae donum* (13.34.2). Peace concluded, the meeting between Corbulo and Tiridates is a picture of harmony and respect (15.28). In short, Corbulo has succeeded where Nero had failed. Corbulo presided over the installation of a successful client king chosen from the ranks of the Parthians rather than a king *quem imperator delegisset*, as Paetus, articulating the Augustan policy, had observed to Vologaeses (15.13.3). Germanicus earlier realized the wisdom of such a course when he selected Artaxias to rule in Armenia (see above). Corbulo's exchange with Tiridates resembles two previous scenes where two similarly respected generals give reasoned advice to new client kings: L. Vitellius at 6.37.4 to Tiridates II and C. Cassius at 12.12.2 to Meherdates (q.v. Seif 240–41). They, like Corbulo, possess an understanding of Parthian ways that the emperors in Rome lack.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Caratacus' plea to Claudius at *Ann.* 12.37. As Keitel observes of Eunones' letter, "The equation of Roman *principes* with foreign kings (stressed by the

the rebellious king is merely incarcerated. But Tacitus ensures that Mithridates gets in the last gibe, quoting his insolent remark to the emperor: “non sum remissus ad te, sed reversus; vel, si non credis, dimitte et quaere” (12.21). Rather than cast Claudius in a sympathetic light (so Koestermann on 12.20.1), the incident is meant to disparage the emperor.

#### IV.

The relationship of the client king, whoever he might be, to the Julio-Claudian emperors clearly intrigued Tacitus for a variety of reasons. He accords closer attention, however, to those raised in Rome, over whom the emperor had the possibility of direct influence (e.g., Vonones I, Phraates V, Italicus or Meherdates). The potential harm of such a relationship is innocently hinted at by the Parthians sent to Claudius in AD 49, who explain the purpose of sending royal hostages to Rome: “ideo regum liberos obsides dari, ut, si domestici imperii taceat, sit regressus ad principem patresque, quorum moribus adsuefactus rex melior adscisceretur” (*Ann.* 12.10.2).<sup>46</sup> This high-sounding philosophy reflects precisely the Augustan ideal. The reality was something else again, for the Parthians do not state the underlying assumption, namely, that the emperor and senators *were* appropriate models for future rulers. The whole of the *Annales* eloquently and often acerbically testifies to the fact that they were not. Rather, if we follow Tacitus to the logical conclusion, what the client king would actually learn in Rome was abject servitude from the senate and overweening despotism from the emperor.<sup>47</sup> In brief, then, the Augustan system, as the Rhescuporis incident among others demonstrated (see above with n. 42), was overly dependent on the character of the individual emperor. The client-king system was not so much inherently flawed as the men who made and implemented it were unequal to the task.

Moreover, Tacitus was perhaps not wrong to deplore the potential ill-effects of extended residence in the city. Tiberius himself, as Tacitus pointedly records, had sent his own son Drusus away from the city, *urbano luxu lascivientem* (*Ann.* 2.44.1). For a young *obses*, the allurements of Rome must have often seemed irresistible. Josephus, speaking of Agrippa, gives a serviceable account of the various ways the city could corrupt a young prince (*AJ* 18.145–46,

parallel clauses) reflects poorly on the facade of democracy at home” (*Structure* 157). She further remarks that the scene is purposefully juxtaposed with the successful campaign of Julius Aquila (12.15–17); and that 12.12–19 as a whole, an excursus on events abroad, is in fact framed by two scenes illustrating Claudius’ mishandling of foreign monarchs, Meherdates (q.v. above) and Mithridates (*ibid.* 156). Cf. Seif 237–44.

<sup>46</sup> At *Ann.* 13.9.1, however, the giving of hostages is more plausibly explained as the expedient removal of potential threats to the king’s power (cf. *Jos. AJ* 18.41–42). See further on the Parthian embassy Keitel “Parthia and Armenia” 465–66; *Structure* 152–55.

<sup>47</sup> Tacitus frequently uses *servitium*, of course, to characterize the senate in its relations with the emperor (e.g. *Ann.* 3.65). See Vielberg (above, note 4) 127–28; Ginsburg 92–93.

163-65 and *passim*).<sup>48</sup> Juvenal complained of the presence of foreign hostages in the city and of the deleterious effects on their character, observing that here they abandoned their native habits only to return home thoroughly Romanized: "praetextatos referunt Artaxata mores" (*Sat.* 2.170). Thus the threat to the character or lifestyle of visiting royalty was indeed very real, and a threat which few emperors seem to have taken very seriously or even to have perceived.<sup>49</sup>

The *Annales*, however, were written almost entirely during the reign of Trajan, and, as Syme recognized (see note 3), comparison between his manner of dealing with foreign affairs and that of his predecessors would have been inevitable. Without entering into a discussion of the date of composition of the *Annales*, suffice it to say that the differences would have been immediately apparent to Tacitus.<sup>50</sup> Pliny's *Panegyricus*, delivered in AD 100 and published in 103,<sup>51</sup> attests that the Romans knew early in Trajan's reign that they had acquired an emperor whose success in foreign policy would stem from his own personal presence, energy and involvement.<sup>52</sup> These were qualities which Tacitus naturally admired. Indeed, Trajan already fulfilled at least one Tacitean requirement of a good emperor: "ducis boni imperatoriam virtutem esse" (*Ag.* 39.3). This was not, then, an emperor who was likely to remain in Rome while his confederates did his work for him. Rather, with Trajan the *inertia Caesarum*, of which Florus complained (*Epit.* 1, Praef. 8), would finally come to an end.

As the passage cited from the *Agricola* at the beginning indicates, Tacitus already possessed an unfavorable view of the use of client kings early in his literary career. In researching the *Annales* he would therefore have been particularly alert to such matters; the experience of Trajan simply reinforced what he knew already, that the Julio-Claudian policy with respect to client kings was ill-conceived and poorly executed. He traces its failure both to the characters and personalities of the emperors themselves as well as to their fundamental reluctance to depart significantly from the policies of their prototype. The consequence, in Tacitus' view, was decades of mismanagement abroad. In seeking to explain

<sup>48</sup> Josephus does not, however, indicate that this affected either his popularity or his ability to rule.

<sup>49</sup> See further Braund (above, note 39) 14-15, though it is worth noting that most of his examples are drawn from Tacitus.

<sup>50</sup> Sure knowledge that the account of Eastern affairs in Book 2 was written after Trajan's campaigns between 113-115 might heighten and expand the arguments made here—particularly in view of the criticism lodged primarily against the Julio-Claudians that in the East Roman emperors had been more often heard than seen (*Hist.* 2.6.1)—but it would of course not alter them. On the whole question see Goodyear on 2.61.2, pp. 387-93. There is no doubt in any case that Trajan came to the throne with very different ideas about how to deal with foreign affairs. In light of Tacitus' treatment of characters like Germanicus and Corbulo and, conversely, of emperors like Tiberius and Claudius, it is useful to consider what his friend Pliny wrote of Trajan in the *Panegyricus*: "cum puer admodum Parthica lauro gloriam patris augeres nomenque Germanici iam tum mererere, cum ferociam superbiamque Parthorum, ex proximo auditus, magno terrore cohiberes Rhenumque et Euphraten admirationis tuae societate coniungeres..." (*Pan.* 14.1).

<sup>51</sup> See J. Beaudeau, *Lustrum* 6 (1961) 290-91.

<sup>52</sup> One point is particularly pertinent: "accipimus obsides ergo, non emimus, nec ingentibus damnis immensisque muneribus paciscimur ut vicerimus" (*Pan.* 12.2).



such a state of affairs, Tacitus focuses on what he perceived to be a pattern of repeated errors and misjudgments. The result of that perception is a repeatedly rhetorical treatment of the client kings. It should be stressed that there is a conspicuous historical purpose behind that treatment, though inevitably some events are embellished, others repressed, the consequence being a one-sided, critical perspective on the client-king system. Such a treatment, Tacitus may have hoped, would point the way for more enlightened policies in the future. Again Pliny's *Panegyricus* pertains: "meminerint...sic maxime laudari incolumem imperatorem si priores secus meriti reprehendantur. Nam cum de malo principe posterius tacent, manifestum est eadem facere praesentem" (*Pan.* 53.6).