



The Army

In 31–30 B.C. and again in A.D. 68–69, civil wars produced Roman emperors. Soldiers turned Augustus and Vespasian into emperors, as Vespasian acknowledged in dating his reign from his 1 July A.D. 69 acclamation by the Alexandrian troops.¹ Did soldiers make the rest of the Julio-Claudians emperors or approve them, or did they just come to accept them? What concrete processes are attested? Was military power somehow subordinated to civil? What patterns of authority and communication existed between the army, the Senate, and the Roman people? Or is it misleading to conceive of soldiers making emperors? Could common soldiers render collective decisions? Or were armies instruments of commanders pursuing politics by different means?

An anecdote from Cassius Dio brings these questions into focus. Dio interrupts his narrative of C. Caesar's marching on Rome in 43 B.C. and giving a huge bounty to his troops, to recall the moment when, in A.D. 193, he himself watched Septimius Severus's Danubian legions burst into the Senate and demand the same sum (Dio 46.46.6–7).

Some men have misunderstood the matter and have thought it was compulsory that the 2,500 drachmas (10,000 sesterces) be given always to absolutely all the citizen legions that enter Rome under arms. For this reason, the followers of Severus who had entered the city to overthrow Julianus became most terrifying both to their leader himself and to us senators when they demanded this sum; and Severus won their favor with only 250 drachmas (1,000 sesterces) apiece, the other senators not even being aware of what the soldiers were demanding.

1. See A. Henrichs, "Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria," *ZPE* 3 (1968): 51–80.

These legionaries do not appear as devoted instruments of their commander. Nor, apparently, were they bought off or bribed by him with cash or a specific promise. The soldiers, it seems, were following assumptions rooted in a long historical memory—a memory stretching back to the origins of the Principate obscured in such official sources as Augustus’s *Res gestae*; a memory, if the last clause means what it seems to, longer than that of some senators. This historical dimension has led some scholars to declare the anecdote incredible.² How could soldiers born and permanently stationed in the provinces, as these likely were, know details of Roman history some two and a half centuries earlier? Rejecting the eyewitness anecdote, however, means remaining as baffled as Dio’s fellow senators. Accepting it means accepting the common soldier as a political actor. It means trying to see history from his point of view and trying to understand his political culture.

The term *political culture*, as used here, embraces formal political systems and the values, expectations, and dispositions the formal systems required and generated. This chapter begins by exploring the army’s internal culture and external relations. Then it traces army political culture through mutiny (A.D. 14), usurpation (Piso in A.D. 17–20, Lepidus and Gaetulicus in A.D. 39), and imperial succession (A.D. 41). The chapter is designed to extend a bridge over the inter-civil war period from Caesar and Augustus to Vespasian—or, looking at things differently, from Caesar’s *contio* at the Rubicon, when he charged Pompeius with violating tribunician rights in the manner of Sulla and heard his soldiers call out that they were ready to defend their imperator and the tribunes of the plebs (Caesar *B Civ.* 1.7–8.1), to the Upper German legions’ tumultuous *contiones* on 1 January A.D. 69, when they threw down Galba’s *imagines*, broke off their oath to him, and instead swore an oath to the Senate and Roman people, allowing them to choose a new emperor (“*arbitrium eligendi permittere*,” Tacitus *Hist.* 1.12, 55).

Army political culture was characterized by top-down command and discipline and cemented by the soldiers’ oath; but command was normally exercised through persuasive oratory, while commander and troops normally interacted in *contiones*. In the *contio*, soldiers heard battle exhortations and speeches explaining campaign strategy, were rewarded and punished, witnessed surrenders, were reviewed, acclaimed their commander imperator, and took oaths—or broke them off.³ Though it was often a listening assembly, the *contio* fostered

2. See von Domaszewski, “Der Truppensold der Kaiserzeit,” *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 10 (1900): 225–41, cited in G. R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 113, 198.

3. For references and intermittent discussion of the military *contio* see G. W. Botsford, *The Roman Assemblies* (New York: Cooper Square, 1909); chap. 7. On imperial adlocutiones see also J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 69–88.

in three significant ways a political culture that was participatory rather than passive.

First, in the *contio*, the soldiers' presence was often required to validate public acts. Roman citizenship, for example, was at first a military award, its spread a matter of thousands of concrete acts before assembled soldiers representing the *populus Romanus*.⁴ Cn. Pompeius Strabo (cos. 89 B.C.) bestowed the citizenship on Spanish cavalymen "virtutis causa" at the camp at Asculum before a *consilium* of fifty-nine named men (*ILS* 8888). Pompeius Magnus enfranchised Theophanes of Mytilene "in contione militum" (*Cicero Arch.* 24).

Now our own Magnus, who has always had luck proportionate to his courage, did he not give Theophanes, the chronicler of his deeds, the citizenship in an assembly of soldiers? And were our brave fighting men, though just simple soldiers, not moved by that special sweetness of glory, and did they not approve the gesture with a great shout, as if they, too, were being praised?

Second, in *contiones*, soldiers would of course respond to speeches informally, by murmuring, gesturing, or crying out, as they did at the Rubicon. As the Caesarian narratives also reveal, a commander could canvass the junior officers (*tribuni militum*, centurions) to whom soldiers were expected to offer their reactions after the *contio*. Consider the communication that occurred after Caesar encouraged the legions before marching against Ariovistus (*BG* 1.41.2–4; 58 B.C.).

First *legio X* expressed its gratitude to him through the *tribuni militum* for the high opinion he had of it, confirming that it was ready to fight. Then the other legions treated with the *tribuni militum* and with the centurions of the first ranks in order that they see that Caesar excuse them . . . Their explanations were accepted.

Consider, also, the communication that occurred when Caesar was preparing to besiege Avaricum (*BG* 7.17.4–8; 52 B.C.).

Caesar asked each of the legions separately whether if the privations were too hard, he should abandon the siege, and everyone asked him not to do it . . . They told the centurions and the *tribuni militum* the same thing, in order that through them the message could be passed on to Caesar.

4. See A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 306–11.

This regular pattern of upward communication, overlooked in handbooks, allowed the mass of the soldiery to treat diplomatically with individuals.⁵ The *tribuni militum* functioned analogously to *tribuni plebis*.⁶ In this respect, as in others, the army camp functioned like a community.

Third, *contiones* allowed soldiers power of formal collective expression. The crowning gesture was the imperial salutation. At the conclusion of an awards *contio*, a motion was put to the soldiers to salute the commander, and the soldiers responded with an acclamation and a stiff-armed salute. Imperial acclamations took a clear dynastic shape, pairing the young men with emperors, placing them in a tradition of great Roman *duces*, and setting them apart from other senators.

the elder Drusus: I, after 1 January 10 B.C., Germany; II, 10–9 B.C., Germany (to have been followed by a triumph)
 Tiberius: I, 10 B.C. (Syme) or 9 B.C. (Barnes), Germany (followed by *ovatio*); II, 8 B.C., Germany (triumph); III, A.D. 5 (Syme), Germany; IV, 7 August A.D. 8, Pannonia; V, A.D. 9?, Dalmatia; VI, A.D. 11?; VII, A.D. 12?, Germany
 Gaius: 9 September A.D. 3, Artagira in Armenia
 Germanicus: I, A.D. 9 (Barnes) or A.D. 13 (Syme); II, A.D. 15 (triumph in A.D. 17).⁷

The title *imperator* is sometimes misunderstood. It had not been attributed automatically to holders of imperium since the middle Republic.⁸ It must also be distinguished from the praenomen that C. Caesar arrogated to himself during the Triumvirate and that succeeding emperors normally assumed.⁹ The title *imperator* was the component of imperial titulature that came from the troops. In “Imp. Caesar Divi f. Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, imp(erator) XII, co(n)s(sul) XI, *trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIV*” (ILS 91; 9 B.C.), for example, *Augustus* was bestowed by the Senate, *pontifex maximus*, *consul*, and *tribunicia potestas* by the *populus Romanus*, and *imperator* by the armies—a tripartite polity of

5. For junior officers’ other responsibilities see, e.g., J. Suolahti, *The Junior Officers of the Roman Army in the Republican Period* (Helsinki, Annales academiae scientiarum fennicae: 1956), 43–51; B. Dobson, *Die Primipilares* (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1978), 3–161.

6. This connection is made explicitly by Isidorus of Seville (*Etym.* 9.3.29): “tribuni vocati, quod militibus sive plebibus iura tribuunt.”

7. See T. D. Barnes, “The Victories of Augustus,” *JRS* 64 (1974): 21–26; R. Syme, “Some Imperial Salutations” (1979), reprinted in *Roman Papers*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 1198–1219.

8. See T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 3d ed., vol. 1 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1887), 124.

9. See R. Syme, “Imperator Caesar: A Study in Nomenclature” (1958), reprinted in *Roman Papers*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 361–77, at 365–72.

Senate, people, and soldiers. The formality of actual motion and approval endured under the empire even when the salutation was considered obligatory, and when, in 9 B.C., the dying Drusus “ordered the legions to salute Tiberius emperor, he marched to the right side of the *praetorium* and declared that he wanted him to have both the consular and the imperial name.”¹⁰ In the same way, motion and approval were used in the imperial Senate and comitia and among the *Fratres Arvales*, even when no one would have contemplated dissenting.¹¹ The formality also continued after the emperor had come to decide whether a man could accept an imperial salutation, as when, in A.D. 22, Tiberius “allowed Blaesus to be saluted emperor by the legions” [*Blaeso tribuit, ut imperator a legionibus salutaretur*] (Tacitus *Ann.* 3.74). Thus, the assembled soldiers played a role in constructing the imperial image. Presumably, collective expression in the *contio* also lay behind honors described on tombstones as “a commilitio[n]ibus” (*ILS* 2531), “ab exerc(itu)” (*CIL* 6.3617), “suffragio legionis” (*ILS* 2313), and “a numer[is]” (*ILS* 2713).¹² Presumably, too, it lay behind descriptions of centurions as elected by their men (*ILS* 2658, add.: “factus ex suffragio leg(ionis)”). In having a collective procedure for honoring individuals, the camp again functioned like a community.

Army political culture was fundamentally altered by the Principate. The Principate changed the army’s disposition. The Augustan professionalization of service (13 B.C. saw sixteen-year legionary service with an unspecified cash bonus on discharge; A.D. 5, twenty-year service with a fixed bonus; A.D. 6, a bonus paid from the *aerarium militare*) and deployment of the legions in the field year round, coupled with the Tiberian halt to aggressive campaigning (completing a change already announced in Augustus’s testament and in Tiberian propaganda on the theme of *tranquillitas*), tended to make the legionary winter camps, or *hiberna*, permanent settlements.¹³

The Principate brought new awards scales. As V. A. Maxfield has shown, more awards were given, and they were given for merit and rank instead of merit alone, turning decorations into status symbols like those flourishing in Augustan Rome. The imperial family exclusively received the highest honors, the title *imperator* and the triumph (by decree of the Senate), a restriction paradoxically enabling troops to make unaffiliated commanders contenders

10. Valerius Maximus 5.5.3: “legiones . . . iussit, ut [Tiberius] imperator salutaretur. Praecepit etiam dextra in parte praetorium ei statui, et consulare et imperatorium optinere eum voluit.”

11. For the procedure of the *Fratres Arvales* see J. Scheid, *Romulus et ses frères* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1990), 196–242.

12. See V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army* (London: Batsford, 1981), 119–21.

13. For a critical examination of the sources for the “consilium coercendi intra terminos imperii” (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.11) see J. Ober, “Tiberius and the Political Testament of Augustus,” *Historia* 31 (1982): 306–28.

for the throne. The imperial house also became the exclusive source of awards—other than, as just noted, common soldiers. Thus, an officer decorated “suffragio legionis” was “honorably discharged by Pius, in keeping with Hadrian’s will” (*ILS* 2313).

The Principate changed the rules in the community of the camp in other ways. It introduced the regular deployment of imperial princes in the field, often in noncommand roles. It brought civic spectacles to the camps. In 25 B.C., Augustus sponsored spectacles in the Spanish legionary camps under Tiberius and Marcellus. In 8 B.C., he gave a donative to the Rhine legions, not as victors, but because Gaius was joining them in exercises for the first time. Gaius and Germanicus entered consulates “in absence” in Syria and Greece. In A.D. 11, on the Rhine, Tiberius and Germanicus did not fight any battles, conquer any foreign nations, or advance over the frontier, “for fear of falling into disaster”; but they did “celebrate birthday games for Augustus, in the course of which they produced a horse race through the agency of centurions” (Dio 56.25.3). The Principate brought diplomacy to the field. Where, during the Republic, the Senate and people had recognized foreign monarchs, the imperial house now crowned them, and in his *Res gestae*, Augustus cast the *domus Augusta* as a dynasty among dynasties.¹⁴ Augustus reports that Armenian kings were installed by “Tiberius, who was then my son-in-law,” or by “my son Gaius” (*Res gestae* 27.2) Sometimes the audience for diplomacy was civilian, as in the grand donations of kingdoms under Augustus, Caligula, and Nero in the Temple of Mars Ultor, the Roman Forum, and the gilded theater of Pompeius. Other times, the primary audience was military, as when Tiberius recovered Crassus’s standards and Germanicus recovered Varus’s, scenes reproduced on coins for a civilian audience. There is some evidence of the impression imperial diplomacy made. When Velleius Paterculus recalled seeing Gaius, whom he otherwise treated coolly, meet “with the king of the Parthians, a young man of the highest order, on an island in the middle of the Euphrates,” he could not hide his enthusiasm (2.101).

Utterly distinct and memorable, the spectacle of the two armies, Roman and Parthian, facing each other from opposite banks as the two most eminent chiefs of emperors and men met, took place before my eyes just after I began my career as a military tribune.

The Principate brought civic-style monuments and rituals to military settings, monuments like the elder Drusus’s cenotaph and Germanicus’s *iani*, rituals like the ones cataloged in the third-century *Feriale Duranum*, which included

14. See D. C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), chap. 1.

a *supplicatio* to Germanicus's memory on his birthday.¹⁵ Such permanent monuments and enduring rituals nourished soldiers' historical memories. Whether these manifold changes indicated a real power shift from Rome to the camp will be considered later in this chapter.

In any case, it is clear that soldiers' relations with the rest of Roman society were also affected by the transition from Republic to Principate. During the late Republic, as P. A. Brunt has shown, events on top can be seen as shaped by the desires of soldiers below.¹⁶ Starting from the observation that the legions were composed of Italian peasants, Brunt has produced a cogent synthesis of the fall of the Republic in which soldiers followed dynasts who provided land and opposed a Senate unable or unwilling to do the same. Brunt points out that recurrent mutinies and desertions reflect the shallowness of personal allegiance. He notes that soldiers preferred peace to civil wars arising from personal disputes. At Brundisium, soldiers sent ambassadors to reconcile C. Caesar and M. Antonius, and when the two embraced each other, "shouts went up from the soldiers and congratulations were offered to each of the generals, without intermission, through the entire day and night" (Appian *B Civ.* 5.64). Brunt also observes that soldiers' actions cannot be explained by material inducements alone, noting how often soldiers were the object of purely political appeals, such as the defense of tribunician rights at the Rubicon. Soldierly was not yet completely separate from citizenry. Even an army of Italians continued to behave like a citizen militia. Instead, soldiers were an interest group, or a constituency, within the citizenry—a counterpoise to the Senate, fighting for privileges within the system, not against it.

Following Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.2: "nulla iam publica arma") and Appian (*B Civ.* 5.17), Brunt would see the soldier-citizen disappearing after Philippi, where Brutus and Cassius were the last to direct political appeals to him. Surely this picture is too idealized and drastic. An absence of appeals to sentiments does not prove an absence of sentiments; soldiers' lingering attachment to the organs of the *res publica* is reflected, for example, in the oath the Rhine legions swore to the *senatus populusque Romanus* in A.D. 69. In fact, appeals to popular sentiments remained, cropping up in texts that the central state prepared for military contexts: "sub imperium p(opuli) R(omani)" in the Alpine Trophy of 7–6 B.C. (EJ 40), "exercitus p(opuli) R(omani)" on Germanicus's *iani* (*T.Siar.* fr. i, col. a, line 15). Later in this chapter, I will argue that such phrases were avoided in some documents, notably the proceedings against Piso. But in general, expressions of personal power joined, rather than

15. R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, Philological Monographs of the American Philological Association 26 (Cleveland, 1971), no. 117, col. ii, lines 12–13.

16. P. A. Brunt, "The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution," in *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 240–80, esp. 257–65.

replaced, expressions of popular power, as in the *titulus Tiburtinus*: “in pot[estatem Imp. Caesaris or Divi?] Augusti populique Romani” (*ILS* 918). Soldierly and citizenry grew apart, without divorcing entirely.

In part, initiative for separating soldiers from civilians came from above. Soldiers were kept in the field year-round. In Augustus’s and Tiberius’s wills, soldiers appear as distinct legatees alongside civilian *ordines*: the praetorian cohorts, legions, and cohorts of *cives Romani* beside the *populus Romanus* and the thirty-five tribes of the *plebs urbana* in Augustus’s will (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.8.3; Suetonius *Aug.* 101.2; Dio 56.32.2); *milites universi* beside the vestal virgins, *plebs Romana*, and *magistri vicorum* in Tiberius’s (Suetonius *Tib.* 76). Imperial legacies have recently been treated by E. Flaig in a discussion embodying the key themes of his thesis that legitimate monarchs and usurpers were alike from the perspective of Roman society.¹⁷ Following Veyne, Flaig sees legacies in the larger context of imperial gift exchange: legacies must be seen in the context of donatives for accessions, in the name of princes, after crises, and after campaigns; donatives to soldiers must be seen in the context of cash gifts to the plebs and senators. In Flaig’s view, an emperor was an emperor simply because he gave gifts to his subjects. According to Flaig, donatives were not bribes but symbols of the emperor-soldier relationship or even performatives that sealed the relationship during a ritual of acceptance or consensus. But Flaig’s analysis does not go far enough in contextualizing donatives. First, legacies and accession donatives were alike in that legacies were administered by successors and were payable on the succession being made good. There is a clear progression from Tiberius doubling Augustus’s legacy (Suetonius *Tib.* 48), to Caligula annulling Tiberius’s will but paying the soldiers twice what Tiberius had named (Dio 59.2.1), to Claudius paying the soldiers a donative without referring to Caligula’s will (discussed later in this chapter). Second, donatives must be contextualized more concretely. As the example of Severus earlier in this chapter has shown and as the example of Claudius later in the chapter will show, in soldiers’ *contiones*, accession donatives followed acclamations: they took place in different *contiones*. From the soldier’s perspective, not only were donatives not bribes, but acclamation marked not acceptance but empowerment. The donative was the expected reward for empowerment, and the expectation was part of soldiers’ evolving political culture.

Part of the initiative for separating soldiers from civilians came from the soldiers themselves. Soldiers’ initiative appears clearly in the context of funeral honors, for example, those for the elder Drusus (Suetonius *Claud.* 1.3).

17. E. Flaig, *Den Kaiser herausfordern: Die Usurpation in römischen Reich* (Frankfurt: Campus-Verlag, 1992); cf. the review by A. W. Lintott in *CR* 64 (1994): 130–32.

The army constructed an honorary tumulus for the elder Drusus, for the soldiers to run around [*decurreret*] on a fixed day each year ever since and for the communities of the Gauls to publicly supplicate.

This tumulus is probably the structure referred to in the Senate's funeral honors for Germanicus, "which to Drusus, brother of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, *princeps* [. . .], and was completed then with the permission of Divus Augustus" (*T.Siar.* fr. i, col. a, lines 26–28). Soldiers began work on the tumulus, sent an embassy to Augustus, received his permission, completed the tumulus, and founded their annual rite. It should be assumed, though it cannot be proven, that the honor had its origins in a *contio*. As imperial society has been seen to have taken shape throughout this study, a group sufficiently organized to initiate and report collective honors won recognition as a distinct entity. Here, the Rhine legions' initiative redounds to the credit of the *exercitus*.

In their relations with external society, soldiers continued to be told that they acted on behalf of the Roman people, and they continued to express ties to the Roman people. But soldiers were also told that they acted on behalf of the imperial house, to which they rendered the appropriate honors, and from which they received recognition and privilege as loyal subjects.

Army political culture can be traced through occasional disturbances to the Julio-Claudian calm. A great deal about political culture is revealed in mutinies. Grievances and demands show where soldiers saw themselves and where they thought they should be; settlements show where they really stood. The mutinies of A.D. 14 were seen by one observer, Velleius (who at the moment of the outbreak had just been destined for the praetorship), as a descent into anarchy. The soldiers "were seized by a sudden madness and a profound desire to throw everything into confusion" (2.125). They sought a new *dux*, a new status, and a new *res publica*. They tried to set their own pay and terms of service and to impose them on the Senate and the *princeps*. From a disinterested perspective, the same mutinies appear remarkable for their orderliness.¹⁸ Soldiers deliberated in assemblies, made moderate demands, and demonstrated a keen grasp of the political system to which they belonged.

Though marked by violence and superstition, the Pannonian and the Upper Rhine rebellions were born, developed, and died in *contiones*. In

18. G. Boissier (*L'opposition sous les Césars* [Paris: Hachette, 1990], 11) wrote, "Nous sommes fort étonnés de voir qu'on parlemente avec les révoltés, qu'on leur permette d'exposer leurs griefs et d'envoyer leurs délégués à l'empereur."

Pannonia, the *miles* Percennius, speaking “velut contionabundus,” put motions to the crowd, and the crowd debated combining the three legions (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.16–18). For the soldiers, combining meant creating a common assembly place. They gathered the three legionary eagles and the cohorts’ standards and began constructing a *tribunal*, which had reached breast-high when the legionary legate, Iunius Blaesus, mounted it. Blaesus asked the soldiers to select ambassadors and name their *mandata*. By acclamation, the soldiers selected Blaesus’s son, a military tribune, to be “orator publicae causae” [pleader of the public cause] (1.19.3). Thus, soldiers used the formal tools their political culture provided—oratory and response, collective decision, junior officers as representatives—and saw their cause as a public one.

After the dispatch of the embassy, affairs proceeded along the same lines. Soldiers hoisted the *miles* Vibulenus before the *tribunal* to question Blaesus (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.22); Drusus’s embassy arrived (1.25); Drusus read a letter from Tiberius to the soldiers, and the soldiers replied that the centurion Clemens was empowered to present their demands (“responsum est a contione mandata quae perferret,” 1.26); Drusus promised to write to Tiberius and the Senate to request that they welcome the soldiers’ *preces* (1.29.1–3); and a second embassy set out to present the soldiers’ *sententia*. So, too, in Germany, the assembled soldiers made their demands (1.31) and were eventually assuaged by Germanicus’s oratory (1.34, 39, 42). However much embellished or invented by Tacitus, Germanicus’s oratory was presented as a credible means for the state to regain control. In fact, Germanicus’s first speech closely resembles an actual document addressed to soldiers, the proceedings against Piso. It is built around the same themes: reverence for Augustus’s memory, Italian consensus, the tranquillity of the age. After the mutiny, Germanicus continued to hold *contiones* (Tacitus 1.44; Dio 57.5.7). A tribune presented each accused soldier (*reus*) to the crowd. If the crowd called out “Nocens!” the tribune threw the soldier down to the crowd. Then Germanicus reviewed the centurions. If the tribunes and assembled legions confirmed a centurion’s industry and innocence, the centurion retained his rank. If the consensus was against him, the centurion was discharged. The Senate charged Piso with giving summary justice. Led by their political culture, soldiers insisted on procedural rectitude. Commanders ignored this at their peril.

The soldiers’ demands appear well founded and reasonable. In responding, the state disingenuously exploited republican forms. In Pannonia, soldiers asked the state to stop settling veterans on swamps and barren slopes (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.17.5). In Germany, soldiers demanded and received Augustus’s

legacy to them (1.35.3). In both places, soldiers asked for sixteen-year service, a denarius a day, and bonuses before discharge (Dio 57.4.2). In other words, they asked the state to return to the arrangement of 13 B.C. By demanding the 13 B.C. terms, soldiers implicitly claimed the terms they had won by bringing Augustus to power. Or rather, they claimed them explicitly, for the soldiers' spokesman, Clemens, said that soldiers "had entered service under fixed terms" [*certis sub legibus militia iniretur*] (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.26.1), which the emperor had not honored. Tacitus has the dissolution of the Pannonian mutiny turn on the factitious ambiguity between the emperor and the *res publica*. Pay and bonuses came from the *aerarium* and the *aerarium militare*, both administered by magistrates of the *res publica*, and Drusus insisted that he had to defer to the "arbitrium senatus et patris" (1.26.1). The assembled soldiers asked Drusus whether the emperor referred only soldiers' benefits to the Senate, and Drusus asked the soldiers if they were going to take over the *imperium populi Romani* in place of Neron and Drusi (1.28.4). In the end, Drusus failed to bring the soldiers' demands before the Senate (1.46–47), and Tiberius published an edict ignoring the soldiers' *consulta* and confirming twenty-year service (1.78.2).

The mutineers did not lack evidence that a dynastic house, protected by soldiers, exercised power. Before he convened the Senate, Tiberius had sent letters to the armies "as one who had already obtained the principate" [*adepto principatu*] (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.7.5). As Tiberius had a guard in the Forum and the Curia, so Drusus came to Pannonia with two praetorian cohorts (1.24.1), while Germanicus brought his wife and infant son, Caligula, with him to Germany (1.41).

Over the long term, it was not the putative ambiguities of monarchy and *res publica* but the ambiguities of monarchy itself that produced military threats to the regime. Imperial family members fallen from favor retained a following among the troops. On Rhodes after 1 B.C., Tiberius still received all those coming east with *imperium* or a magistracy and allegedly issued *mandata* to centurions who had received his *beneficia* (promotions, decorations) and who came to him on furlough (Suetonius *Tib.* 12.2–3). The elder Julia and Agrippa Postumus were objects of a plot to kidnap them from exile and take them to the armies (Suetonius *Aug.* 19.2). Agrippina, so Tiberius alleged, planned to flee to the armies (Suetonius *Tib.* 53.2). Impostors, too, assembled forces. Clemens, the false Agrippa Postumus, gathered an army in Etruria (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.39–40; Suetonius *Tib.* 25.1; Dio 57.16.3–4). A man claiming to be Drusus, son of Germanicus, was heading toward Germanicus's armies in Syria and Egypt when he was arrested at Nicopolis (Tacitus *Ann.* 5.10; Dio 58.25.1). Unaffiliated usurpers led the armies that brought the Julio-Claudian dynasty down. Every instance of usurpation revealed the weakness of the

system, the arbitrariness of monarchy itself, an arbitrariness perfectly captured in Tiberius's exchange with Clemens: "How did you come to be Agrippa? 'In the same way you came to be Caesar'" (Dio 57.16.4). Thus, a localized threat could give rise to the most revealing imperial document of usurpation: the *s.c. de Pisone*.

The *s.c. de Pisone* is two things. It is a narrative detailing Piso's misdeeds—his insubordination as legate of Syria (lines 26–45), his abandonment of the province after Germanicus's death and unsuccessful attempt to retake it with irregulars (lines 45–57), and his improprieties along the way (lines 57–70)—for an audience comprising, among others, the legions Piso had commanded. It is also an instrument of imperial rule, a piece of rhetoric addressed to soldiers to secure their loyalty. As Brunt saw, political appeals directed to soldiers were a feature of Roman government. In the Piso affair, neither material inducements nor the threat of punishment are known to have been used to control the legions. The *s.c. de Pisone* embodies an imperial, rather than republican, political appeal to soldiers.

The Piso affair unfolded in the extremely complex world of the Julio-Claudian Near East. It was a world where power was exercised by friendly and foreign kings and Greek cities in addition to the Roman provincial command. Royal courts were critical to maintaining Roman hegemony, both real and symbolic. The Piso affair involved kings of Parthia, Armenia, and Nabataea; chiefs of the Albani, Heniochi, and Scythae (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.56–58, 68). "Reguli" of Rough Cilicia—apparently courts at Olba and Elaeusa, the seat of the coastal sliver that remained of the Cappadocian Empire—contributed to Piso's irregular force as he attempted to retake Syria through Flat Cilicia (2.78, 2.80.1).¹⁹ Free Greek cities, such as Athens (2.53.3, 2.55), Rhodes (2.69.2), Antioch (2.73.4), and Cos (2.75.2), provided the framework in which Rome operated. It was also a world where provincial government remained remarkably ad hoc. Three times under Augustus, Syria had been governed by a member of the imperial house holding superior *imperium* (Agrippa twice, Gaius once) and had apparently lacked a provincial legate.²⁰ For most of Tiberius's reign and several times thereafter, Syria was governed by one of the legionary legates.²¹ In A.D. 17–19, for the first time and for the last time until Corbulo in A.D. 63, Syria saw both a holder of *imperium maius* and a provincial legate.

19. For the coins of Olba and Elaeusa see *RPC* 1.560–66.

20. See E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. Eng. ed., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1973), 253–56; D. Potter, "Palmyra and Rome: Odaenathus' Titulature and the Use of *Imperium Maius*," *ZPE* 113 (1996): 271–85, esp. 274–81.

21. Seneca (*Ep.* 12.8) writes, "Pacuvius qui Syriam usu suam fecit" See R. Syme, "Governors Dying in Syria" (1981), reprinted in *Roman papers*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 1376–92.

In this confused world, a certain amount of power devolved on the regular soldier. At crucial points during the Piso affair, he exercised initiative. Just as centurions had come to Tiberius on Rhodes, centurions visited Piso on Cos (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.76.1).

Centurions were pouring in and advising him that he had the ready backing of the legions. He could retake the province, which had been illegally stolen from him and lay vacant.

Deserters from the legions prepared the way for Piso to retake Syria (2.78.2).

Piso put Domitius Celer on a trireme and ordered him to avoid the coast and to keep islands at a distance in making his way to Syria. He organized the deserters who were gathering together in maniples, armed the camp followers, and, his ships having reached the mainland, intercepted a detachment of recruits on their way to Syria.

Logically, therefore, the *s.c. de Pisone* was addressed to the soldier. Its closing lines appealed to the *animi* of the *milites* (lines 159–64).

Likewise, the Senate approves the loyalty of those soldiers whose hearts had been tempted in vain by the criminal intent of Cn. Piso senior; and as regards all who had been soldiers under the auspices and command of our *princeps*, (the Senate) hopes that they will forever demonstrate the loyalty and devotion they displayed to the Augustan house, since they know that the safety of our empire reposes in the guardianship of that house.

Strikingly, the decree addressed senior officers only indirectly, if at all. Lines 164–65 instructed soldiers to follow only loyal commanders.

The Senate believes that it should be part of their concern and duty that of those who at any time command them, the greatest authority should belong to those who have with the most devoted loyalty worshiped the name of the Caesars . . .

The two closest documentary parallels were also addressed to the simple soldier, not to officers. Hadrian's speeches at Lambaesis included a reference to "Cornelianus, praefectus ves[ter]" (*ILS* 2487, 9133–35). The same emperor's letter regarding soldiers' children was to be "made known to my soldiers and veterans" and was duly posted at the legionary winter quarters, like the proceedings against Piso (*FIRA* 1.78).

At one level, the message the central state (emperor and Senate, with the avowed backing of the *equester ordo* and the *plebs urbana*) addressed to the provincial soldier was crudely simple. The *s.c. de Pisone* told the soldier that his proper loyalty was to the *domus Augusta* alone.

... in every respect, Tiberius Caesar Augustus was to have greater imperium ... (lines 35–36)

... when through the divine will of Divus Augustus and the merits of Tiberius Caesar Augustus all the ills of civil war had long since been consigned to oblivion ... (lines 46–47)

... military discipline, established by Divus Augustus and maintained by Tiberius Caesar Augustus ... (lines 52–53)

This political appeal to the soldiery dispensed with the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and references to preimperial figures to concentrate instead on an imperial house that defined itself against unaffiliated individuals and their families and projected itself into the future.

But at another, less simple level, the *s.c. de Pisone* played on army political culture. It appealed to soldiers' values and ideals beyond simple loyalty: the constitutional definition of Germanicus's and Piso's status (the closest the decree comes to invoking popular sovereignty), diplomatic necessities in the East, and the soldier's abhorrence of civil war, by which "Roman soldiers were compelled to come into conflict with each other" (line 49). It also focused the soldiers' attention on Piso's alleged violations at the communal center of the legionary camp, the *tribunal*, with the shrine housing the legionary standards before it. It charged Piso with inflicting summary justice (lines 49–52).

His unparalleled savagery was thoroughly exposed when, without hearing the cases, without sounding out the opinion of his body of advisers, he inflicted the death penalty on a very large number of persons and crucified not merely foreigners but even a centurion, a Roman citizen.

It charged him with making improper awards (lines 52–57).

He corrupted the military discipline established by Divus Augustus and maintained by Tiberius Caesar Augustus, not only by allowing soldiers not to obey, as immemorial custom dictates, those who commanded them, but also by giving donatives in his own name from the *fiscus* of our *princeps*—a deed that he was pleased to see led to some soldiers being called "Pisonians," others "Caesarians"—and by going on to confer distinctions on

those who, after assuming [*post . . . usurpationem*] such a name, had shown him obedience.

It charged him with sacrilege (lines 68–70).

The Senate believes that the divinity of Divus Augustus was also violated by him by the withdrawal of every honor that was accorded either to his memory or to the portraits before they had been placed among the number of the gods.

Literally as well as figuratively, the *s.c. de Pisone* inscribed itself into the political culture of the legions, for “this decree of the Senate, inscribed on bronze, . . . [was to be] put up in the winter quarters of each legion, at the standards” (line 172). The decree’s efficacy cannot be judged, but that “the Syrian legions alone did not worship a statue of Seianus among their standards” [*solae nullam Seiani imaginem inter signa coluissent*] (Suetonius *Tib.* 48.2) is extremely suggestive.

The *s.c. de Pisone* shows how seriously the central state took soldiers and how it used rhetoric to control them. Under Caligula, another alleged usurpation would find the state employing new means of control and placing more value on soldiers’ loyalty than on senators’. The details of the inadequately known “conspiracy of Lepidus and Gaetulicus” are irrecoverable, but the contours of the affair emerge from a comparison with the Piso affair.²² As in the Piso affair, a concentration of force was commanded by someone who allegedly no longer answered to the emperor. Lentulus Gaetulicus, legate of Upper Germany since A.D. 29, was said to have offered Tiberius a pact whereby he would keep his province while the *princeps* ruled the rest of the empire (Tacitus *Ann* 6.30). As in the Piso affair, troubles stemmed partly from dynastic confusions. Gaetulicus had been favored by Caligula’s predecessor and had established an affine relation with Seianus. His alleged coconspirator, Lepidus, had been allowed to stand for office five years early, was married to Caligula’s sister, and, according to Dio, was Caligula’s declared successor until the sister died (Dio 59.22.6). Caligula’s two remaining sisters were sent into exile when Gaetulicus and Lepidus were executed. Like the Piso affair, the conspiracy of Lepidus and Gaetulicus was aired in a show trial, which involved charges of *nefaria consilia*, lax discipline, and security breaches; citation of documentary evidence (autograph letters of all involved); and loyal senators eager to “add to the penalty” even after the accused was dead (the

22. For recent discussions see C. J. Simpson, “The ‘Conspiracy’ of A.D. 39,” in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, ed. C. Deroux, collection *Latomus* 168 (1980): 347–66; A. A. Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (London: Batsford, 1989), chap. 6.

future emperor Vespasian produced extraordinary *ludi* and proposed leaving the conspirators' bodies unburied [Suetonius *Vesp.* 2].²³ As in the Piso affair, the trial of Lepidus and Gaetulicus and Caligula's sisters was written up and published. Caligula attached an explanatory *elogium* when he dedicated to Mars Ultor three daggers he said were meant for him and he sent the Senate a report (Dio 59.22.7–59.23.1).

But Piso had come to Rome to stand trial before the Senate. Lepidus and Caligula's sisters were brought to Upper Germany to be tried in front of the soldiers. Where soldiers had received a report on Piso's show trial, they now received the spectacle itself (Suetonius *Calig.* 43). The Senate became the secondary audience. It received the report, and its congratulatory delegation, led by Claudius, was humiliated (Suetonius *Claud.* 9; Dio 59.23.2–5). Caligula refused some envoys, treated the rest disrespectfully, and vetoed the praise and honors decreed to his relatives. The soldiers received a donative and imperially produced spectacles, were drilled, and were led on campaign (Dio 59.22.1). The difference between the two affairs marks the detachment of the emperor from Rome and the Senate. It also marks an important stage in the recognition of the army.

A new phase in history from a soldier's perspective would begin two years later, with Claudius's installation.²⁴ Its significance is simply that it made the fact of the soldier's power and initiative evident to all. It concluded the development of the new imperial order and opened a new phase, which was to last, in essence, for the rest of imperial history. In the confusion that followed the murders of Caligula, his wife, and his baby daughter on 24 January A.D. 41, the Senate and *populus Romanus* met, which in itself says a lot about Roman political culture. The emperor's death might have been greeted with anarchy—or indifference. But the *senatus populusque Romanus* were not the only actors. Joining them on the political stage was also a new player, unknown under the Republic: the civic garrison.²⁵ The Praetorian Guard also formed a *contio*, and the guard's decision to install Claudius was seconded by the urban cohorts as soon as they assembled. In other words, three different constituencies—the Senate, the people, and the army—struggled for initiative. Each followed a political culture formed during the Republic but modified under the Principate.

23. Cf. *s.c. de Pisone* line 73: "accordingly, [the Senate] adds to the punishments that he inflicted on himself."

24. For recent discussions see B. M. Levick, *Claudius* (London: Batsford, 1990); T. P. Wiseman, *Death of an Emperor* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1991), translating and commenting on Josephus *AJ* 19.1–273.

25. For the development of the Roman garrison see L. J. Keppie, "The Praetorian Guard before Sejanus," *Athenaeum* 84, no. 1 (1996): 101–24.

The Senate held its first session on the day of the murder (Josephus *AJ* 19.158ff.). Attendance was full; the site is not known. The consul Cn. Sentius Saturninus, who apparently called the session, spoke of liberty, concord, security, and glory. He spoke of having served as slaves to a tyrant and of returning to the old ways that had existed before Julius Caesar. But his only attested concrete motion was to honor the Senate's benefactors, the "tyrannicides." He and his colleague had issued an edict telling the people to go home and the soldiers to return to their barracks. Even when the consuls promised to address grievances and pay donatives, they were ignored. When the Senate heard that the praetorians were backing Claudius, it summoned Herod Agrippa, then sent him off with two tribunes of the plebs "in the hope of persuading Claudius to lay down his power" (19.229, 239, 245–46). Claudius ignored the Senate. At the end of the day, the consuls gave the watchword to Chaerea to pass on to the urban cohorts (19.188–89). But when the cohorts assembled en masse the next morning, they, too, ignored the Senate's representative (19.254). Their period of obedience to the consuls lasted one watch, less than half a day. Without an army, the Senate was impotent and isolated, essentially able only to orate, to send men on vain missions, and to pass honorific decrees. By the time the Senate held its second session, at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, most senators had fled for their villas (19.248ff.). Under pressure from people and soldiers surrounding the temple (Suetonius *Claud.* 10.4), the one hundred who remained considered other candidates briefly, and the consuls eventually turned on each other. As Dio cynically remarked, the Senate was reduced to voting Claudius such powers and titles as the soldiers had not granted (59.1.4; not literal). A sign of the new emperor's deference to the Senate was his petition to be allowed to have the praetorian prefects and tribunes accompany him whenever he attended its meetings.

The Roman people assembled in a *contio* in the Forum after the murder (Josephus *AJ* 19.158–59). They were addressed by D. Valerius Asiaticus, and they dispersed "in the belief that they had recovered their sovereignty and that no one stood over them" (19.189). But though the people remembered former sovereignty and had never lost the habit of assembling, it was, in the political culture of the Principate, formally powerless. Even the tribunes of the plebs were dispatched by the Senate, not the people. The people could only act informally, as subjects rather than citizens. Some individuals went to the praetorian barracks to pay respects to Claudius (19.263). Some surrounded the Senate and demanded "unus rector," naming Claudius (Suetonius *Claud.* 10.4). A month later, during the Parentalia, some displayed impotent independence by making offerings to Chaerea's memory (Josephus *AJ* 19.272).

Initiative and power belonged to the new actor. In parallel with the Senate

and people, the praetorians formed a *contio* where they weighed their options (Josephus *AJ* 19.162ff.):

The soldiers held a meeting and argued among themselves about what should be done. They could see that a republic would never be able to keep control of so great a state and that if it came into being, it would not govern in their interest. If, however, some individual should gain power, it would do them great harm not to have helped him to gain it. So the best thing was to choose an emperor themselves, while the situation was still fluid. Claudius was the man—he was the dead Gaius’s uncle and more illustrious than any of those gathered in the Senate house, whether in the distinction of his ancestors or in his own devotion to learning. Besides, if they made him emperor, he would probably honor them for it and reward them with handouts. That was the plan. It was carried out immediately, and Claudius was kidnapped by the soldiers.

At a second *contio* on the Palatine, the soldiers greeted Claudius and acclaimed him emperor (19.214ff.).

Calculation entered into it. The soldiers knew how grasping the most powerful men in the Senate were and how many things had gone wrong since the last time the Senate had been in power. A republic was unworkable, and if everything then changed back to the rule of one man, someone else’s seizure of power could be dangerous for them. But Claudius could take it with their favor and support and then, remembering his debt, pay them a reward appropriate to so great a gift. These were the points they discussed and reflected on individually. New contingents kept on arriving, who, when the issues were explained to them, enthusiastically endorsed the proclamation.

The praetorians and urban cohorts are represented as engaging in collective debate far more serious than what went on among the Senate or people, debate involving political assessments (a republic could not govern the empire and had the potential to deteriorate into monarchy), personal considerations (Claudius’s dynastic and, interestingly, literary prestige), collective interests (opposition to the Senate), and individual interests (the anticipation of reward). Soldiers now definitively saw their interests as distinct—they were a separate constituency, whose expectations were founded on the concrete precedents of accession donatives from previous emperors. Having achieved consensus, the soldiers moved to the barracks for a third *contio* (19.247).

Claudius then addressed the assembled troops and made them swear on oath that they would be loyal to him. In return, he gave the Praetorian Guard five thousand denarii per man, with proportionately more for the officers, and promised similar sums to all the other armies.

The order of events is important. First, the soldiers acclaimed Claudius on the Palatine. Then, at another *contio* in another place, they swore the oath. Then they received the promise of the donative. Suetonius, in his account (*Claud.* 10.4), names a different sum but preserves the order.

Claudius allowed [*passus est*] the armed soldiers in assembly to swear to his name and promised each fifteen-thousand sesterces, the first of the Caesars to receive the oath for a prize [*praemio pigneratus*].

It would be ingenuous to say that soldiers did not expect a prize. Their political culture told them what to expect. But they were not bribed in any literal sense. Nor did they “accept” Claudius. In point of fact, they made him emperor.

Soldiers had a participatory political culture centered on the *contio*. Under the Principate, their camps became like poleis—permanent, with their own status symbols, spectacles, spectacular displays of imperial power, monuments, and rituals. The soldiery also came to resemble an *ordo* in imperial society, with a distinct part in imperial ceremonial, special privileges, and forms of corporate expression. Soldiers’ historic opposition to the Senate and support for popular causes were joined by a new ideology of personal allegiance. This evolving political culture led them to demand privileges at Tiberius’s accession, reminding the emperor and the Roman political classes of their strength. Their enforced personal allegiance gave rise to threats of usurpation. To control the soldiers, the state used reward and punishment and also rhetoric and show trials, signaling an implicit recognition that soldiers were the most important constituency in the empire. Soldiers demonstrated their power during the A.D. 41 interregnum. While the Senate and people were powerless without the backing of the Praetorian Guard and the urban cohorts, the guard used the *contio* to weigh options, elevate Claudius, and receive its reward. Making clear that they knew how the Principate had come about (as they would do again in A.D. 193), the soldiers made Claudius emperor and demonstrated that subordination to civil power had been an illusion.