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Fred K. Drogula
Providence College, fdrogula@providence.edu

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WHO WAS WATCHING WHOM? A REASSESSMENT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GERMANICUS AND PISO

FRED K. DROGULA

Abstract. Despite Tacitus' insinuations to the contrary, Cn. Calpurnius Piso (cos. 7 B.C.E.) was no friend and loyal supporter of Emperor Tiberius. The emperor offered Piso the command of Syria in an effort to win over the political support of this prestigious-but-recalcitrant senator. As a safeguard should Piso attempt something treacherous in this powerful command, Tiberius gave Piso the province at a time when Germanicus Caesar—the emperor's loyal adopted son and heir—would be in the East resolving a number of economic problems in the eastern provinces. Thus Piso was not sent to watch the prince, but to be watched by him.

OF ALL THE ROMAN SENATORS WHO HELD PROVINCIAL COMMANDS IN THE EARLY EMPIRE, few are more famous and better documented than Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso (cos. 7 B.C.E.), the proconsul of Syria who gained notoriety for his conflict with Germanicus Caesar, the nephew, adopted son, and heir-apparent of the reigning emperor Tiberius. Germanicus was holding supreme command over the Roman East with *imperium maius* from 17 to 19 C.E., but Piso was openly insubordinate and treated the prince with great disrespect. Although Germanicus endured this behavior for a while, he finally asserted his superior authority and humbled the proconsul, driving Piso to abandon his Syrian command altogether. When the prince died from illness shortly afterwards, Piso had the audacity to rejoice publicly at his death and tried to reclaim possession of Syria by force, raising a ragtag army and starting a civil war that was quickly crushed by the Roman legions under the command of Germanicus' lieutenants. Forced to return to Rome, Piso was accused of many crimes, including poisoning the prince, and he took his own life when his condemnation seemed certain. Tacitus reports this infamous conflict between the prince and Piso in his *Annales* (2.43.1–3.19.2), but the discovery of the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*—the official senatorial record of Piso's trial and punishment—has made Piso a particularly interesting subject of inquiry to historians because it provides both a corroboration of Taci-

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tus' account and new information not found there.[1] Because the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* (henceforth, *SCPP*) complements and expands upon Tacitus' description of Piso's trial and posthumous punishment, modern scholars have recently focused their research on what happened to Piso after he returned to Rome from his command in Syria.[2]

This article will address a different topic that is not well explained by the *SCPP*: why was Piso chosen for the Syrian command in the first place? At first glance, this question seems easily answered, since Tacitus clearly wishes his readers to believe that Tiberius chose Piso as an agent and co-conspirator in a plan to suppress Germanicus' popularity and ambitions, and perhaps even to kill the young prince (Tac. *Ann*. 2.43.2–6, 2.77.3, and 3.16.1). Although modern scholars generally dismiss part of Tacitus' conspiracy theory—the suggestion that Tiberius wished to harm his adopted son—it is still widely accepted that Piso was the trusted friend and agent of the emperor, and that Tiberius sent Piso to Syria to keep an eye on Germanicus and to prevent the prince from taking any rash action (such as invading Parthia).[3] Yet this position rests on startlingly weak evidence—mainly on Tacitus' inclusion of unfounded rumors and unsupported (and even misleading) innuendos in his work. The weakness of this evidence is disturbing, especially since—if one looks past these shadowy hints of conspiracy—there is a great deal of evidence in Tacitus' text that refutes the insinuation that Piso was a friend and agent of the emperor. Thus Tacitus presents his readers with a contradiction, since his innuendo that Piso was Tiberius' friend and agent seems disproven by his clear statements that Piso held the emperor in low regard and wanted nothing to do with the imperial house. Piso was so obviously a bad choice as governor of Syria that only a secret conspiracy can provide a plausible motive for Tiberius' choice, but Tacitus undermines even this possibility by giving ample evidence that Tiberius had no reason to trust Piso or choose him as a co-conspirator. Something in Tacitus' account of this affair is not right, and it centers on why Piso was selected for the governorship of Syria.

[1] On the discovery and text of the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*, see Eck et al. 1996. For additional commentary, including references to scholarly work since the 1996 publication by Eck et al., see Lott 2012, 254–311. For an English translation of the *senatus consultum*, see Meyer 1998.

[2] See recent work, including Griffin 1997; Richardson 1997; Barnes 1998; Cooley 1998; Flower 1998; Bodel 1999; Damon 1999; Flower 1999; González 1999; Lebek 1999; Potter 1999; Talbert 1999; Severy 2000; Eck 2002; MacKay 2003; Fishwick 2007.

[3] E.g., see Syme 1939, 424; 1986, 373; Shotter 1974, 231; Levick 1999, 154; Rapke 1982; Bird 1987; Wells 1992, 100; Shotter 2004, 27, 41–42; Seager 2005, 37–38; Robinson 2007, 70.

Tacitus demonstrates clearly that Piso was no loyal friend and supporter of the emperor, so another motive is needed to explain his appointment to the governorship of Syria. The evidence suggests a very good explanation: Tiberius hoped to win over Piso's political support by offering him the highly desirable, status-enhancing command of Syria. In doing this, Tiberius was following the example of Augustus, who had sought to win over the support of *nobiles* and to use their Republican names and *auctoritas* to unify the state and to adorn and legitimize his rule. Cn. Piso was a particularly prestigious *nobilis* with a solid Republican pedigree, but his support for Tiberius was tepid at best, and he had even criticized the emperor publicly before the senate. Since Tiberius was still new as emperor and had encountered difficulties upon his succession, winning over the influential Piso with the inducement of a desirable province was a shrewd political tactic. There was some risk in giving this unpredictable senator command over the powerful army in Syria, but Tiberius had a safeguard: his adopted son and heir Germanicus was to be given an extraordinary command in the East to deal with a range of important fiscal and administrative problems.[4] This would allow Piso to govern Syria with a free hand, but Germanicus would be close enough to observe the governor's actions and to intercede if he detected treachery. Despite Tacitus' efforts to portray Tiberius as jealous or fearful of his nephew, the emperor had no reason to doubt Germanicus' loyalty, and in fact he had good grounds to expect that the prince would defend the imperial house against any challenge by Piso. Although the personalities of the two men ultimately led to open conflict, it may nevertheless have been the case that Piso was sent to Syria not to watch Germanicus, but rather to be watched by the prince.

Piso is not merely interesting as a governor because his activities are so well documented; he is interesting because he was an incredibly bad choice for the governorship of Syria—probably the worst choice Tiberius ever made for a provincial command. His shortcomings became obvious immediately: en route to Syria, he denounced Germanicus in a

[4] A similar suggestion was first proposed by Beesly 1878, 125–26, and reiterated and expanded upon by Rapke 1982. In their view, the empress Livia Augusta—who was a good friend of Piso's wife Plancina—prevailed upon her son Tiberius to give Piso the Syrian command. This idea seems implausible, however, because Piso's disrespectful, insubordinate, and even hostile behavior towards members of the imperial house undermines the possibility that he recognized them as his patrons or benefactors. Not once did Piso act like a man who had received a favor from the emperor. Rather, he acted like a man who believed himself robbed of things due to him.

fiery speech to the Athenians, he was ungrateful when the prince saved his life during a storm at sea, he relaxed the discipline of the legions and tampered with their loyalty to the emperor, he ignored or disobeyed direct orders from Germanicus, he showed the prince open contempt and disrespect at public functions, and he even countermanded the orders given by the prince to the legions and cities in Syria (*SCPP* 38, 52–53; Tac. *Ann*. 2.53.3, 55.1–6, 57.1–4, 69.1). When Germanicus finally asserted his greater authority over the arrogant governor, Piso decided to abandon his province rather than fulfill his responsibilities as governor (Tac. *Ann*. 2.69.1–2).[5] When the prince grew ill and died a short time later, Piso rejoiced publicly at the news and tried to reclaim the governorship of Syria forcibly by starting a civil war against Germanicus' lieutenant Cn. Sentius Saturninus (*SCPP* 37, 45, 57–62; Tac. *Ann*. 2.69.1–2, 75.2, 78.1–81.3). When his insurrection was crushed and he returned to Rome, he held celebrations during a period of mourning for the emperor's son (Tac. *Ann*. 3.9.2–3). Even allowing for some exaggeration by Tacitus, Piso was clearly a terrible choice for the command of Syria, which begs the question of why such a disrespectful and insubordinate senator was selected for the command of Syria in the first place.

Tacitus had an answer to this conundrum: Piso was an agent of the emperor and in league with him against Germanicus. Of course, he avoids making this claim in his own voice. Whereas he freely records other of Tiberius' (alleged) crimes as simple facts,[6] Tacitus keeps his references to this supposed plot between Tiberius and Piso vague and equivocal, and relies almost entirely upon hearsay and rumors to convince his readers. He writes, for example, that Piso "had no doubt" that he had been given

[5]Tacitus reports a rumor (*Ann*. 2.70.2–3) that Germanicus ordered Piso out of the province, but this is contradicted by the *SCPP* (28–29, 47–49), by Suetonius (*Cal*. 3.3), and by Tacitus himself (*Ann*. 2.69.1). The *SCPP* in particular blames Piso for abandoning his province, which suggests that Piso was unable to offer any justification for this action, such as having been ordered out of the province by Germanicus. Goodyear 1981, 2.407–8, 427, believes that Germanicus probably dismissed Piso, since otherwise Germanicus' lieutenants would not have been able legally to prevent Piso from returning to Syria after the prince's death, but this assumes Germanicus' friends acted in accordance with the letter of the law. Since Germanicus' friends had long hated Piso (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.2), and they may have believed that Piso had poisoned the prince (Tac. *Ann*. 2.71.1), it would be unsurprising if they ignored Piso's legal claim to the province.

[6]Cf. Tacitus' clear and straightforward report of Tiberius' complicity in the death of Postumus Agrippa (*Ann*. 1.6.1–3): "The first act of the new principate was the slaughter of Postumus Agrippa . . . [Tiberius] was pretending there were orders from his father . . . [Tiberius and Livia] had speeded the slaughter of a suspected and resented young man." I use Woodman's translation of Tacitus throughout this article.

Syria in order to frustrate Germanicus' ambitions, and that "certain people believed" the emperor had given Piso secret instructions to work against the prince, and that "without doubt" the empress Livia (Tiberius' mother) had instructed Piso's wife Plancina to attack Germanicus' wife Agrippina "in womanly rivalry."[7] Tacitus also makes Piso's friend Domitius Celer claim in a private conversation that Piso had the support and complicity of Tiberius and Livia, and Tacitus later reports that older generations spoke of a document in Piso's possession proving that Piso was following the emperor's orders, although he pointedly declines to assert the veracity of this rumor himself (*Ann*. 2.77.3, 3.16.1; see Suet. *Tib.* 52.3). While this repetition of rumor and hearsay seems substantial, none of it amounts to reliable evidence on the nature of Piso's assignment; rumor was a common literary device in ancient authors, and many scholars have written on Tacitus' use of rumor and innuendo to guide or manipulate his reader's understanding of events, including his use of rumors to create impressions or provide unverifiable evidence.[8] Thus Tacitus reports (*Ann*. 3.2.3, 11.2) that the nameless mob suspected Tiberius' guilt in the death of Germanicus, but this tells us nothing except that a particular rumor—which may or may not have been accurate—may have been floating around a city that was full of rumors. This environment of rumor and uncertainty gives us a good impression of what life in imperial Rome may have been like, but on their own such rumors cannot be taken as convincing evidence of Tiberius' guilt. Our hesitance to accept such flimsy evidence should be increased by our knowledge that Tacitus was not a neutral reporter; it is well known that he disliked Tiberius and sought to vilify him using unsubstantiated rumors and innuendos, and in particular that he intentionally contrasted the older emperor with the youthful,

[7] *Ann*. 2.43.4–6: *nec dubium habebat se delectum qui Syriae imponeretur ad spes Germanici coercendas. Credidere quidam data et a Tiberio occulta mandata; et Plancinam haud dubie Augusta monuit aemulatione muliebri Agrippinam insectandi* ("nor did he have any doubt that he had been selected for installation in Syria to curb Germanicus' hopes. Certain people believed that secret instructions had been given to him by Tiberius; and without doubt Augusta warned Plancina in womanly rivalry to assail Agrippina."). See Goodyear 1981, 2.324.

[8] Hardie 2012, 284–313, *passim* gives a good and recent discussion of rumor as a literary device in ancient writers, including a discussion of Tacitus' use of rumor. On his use of rumor and innuendo to guide or manipulate his reader's perception of events, see: Ryberg 1942; Mierow 1943, 153–55; Shatzman 1974; Sullivan 1975–6; Whitehead 1979; Develin 1983; Gibson 1998. Goodyear 1981, 2.325, simply dismisses most of Tacitus' innuendos, and Woodman and Martin 1996, 117, discuss how Tacitus obfuscates information that appears clear in *SCPP*.

energetic, and popular Germanicus.[9] Although he did not suppress the prince's shortcomings, Tacitus went to great lengths to portray Tiberius as jealous and fearful of his dynamic and well-loved stepson, so it is to be expected that Tacitus would strive to link the emperor to the man accused of the prince's death.[10] Whether or not Piso was actually guilty of murder, his villainy had been pronounced by the senate and publicized throughout the empire by the *SCPP*. Linking Tiberius in friendship and in conspiracy to the disgraced and hated Piso was one more way for Tacitus to attack the character of the emperor, but his dependence upon rumor and innuendo to insinuate this link indicates that no better evidence existed. There is, therefore, little reason to believe Tacitus' insinuation of a conspiracy in the first place, and further examination reveals good grounds for rejecting the idea.

Beyond the heavy use of rumor and hearsay, the impression that Piso was an agent of the emperor, and that he had been selected because he could oppose Germanicus, emerges primarily from the way Tacitus describes the provincial commands assigned to Germanicus and Piso in 17 C.E. (*Ann*. 2.42.2–43.6). In Tacitus' presentation of the events, a number of serious organizational and economic problems in the East required the attention of a member of the imperial house, so—at Tiberius' request—the senate assigned to Germanicus a broad command that comprised all the provinces "across the sea" (that is, east of the Adriatic) and greater *imperium* than any other commander except the emperor, whose *imperium* remained the greatest.[11] This special assignment for a member of the imperial family was not unusual; Augustus had frequently sent men

[9] *Ann*. 1.33.1–3, where Tiberius is shown in a very negative light when compared to Germanicus, and 1.62.2, where Tacitus suggests that Tiberius may have interpreted everything Germanicus did—no matter how noble—in a negative light.

[10] Germanicus is portrayed as having great difficulty restoring the discipline in rebellious legions in 14 C.E. (*Ann*. 1.34.1–52.3), and the description of his German campaigns the following year does not hide his tactical mistakes (1.55.2–71.3). The legions try to make Germanicus emperor (1.31.1, 35.3); Germanicus was the greatest threat to Tiberius' accession (1.7.6–7); Tiberius was afraid of Germanicus (1.52.1). Kelly 2010, 231, gives a good summary of modern views about Tacitus' representation of Germanicus in the *Annales*.

[11] *Ann*. 2.42.2–43.1; *SCPP* 31–36. The kingdom of Cappadocia had just been incorporated into the Roman Empire and needed to be organized and subjected to a new tax; the kings of Commagene and Cilicia had died and there was uncertainty about how their kingdoms should be governed in the future (most of the inhabitants wanted Roman rule); and the provinces of Judaea and Syria were economically distressed and asking for tax relief. For a discussion of Germanicus' command, see Koestermann 1958.

in his family to important commands throughout the empire.[12] Immediately after reporting Germanicus' command, Tacitus next describes Piso's assignment to the province of Syria in a way that compels the reader to interpret his appointment as a direct consequence of Germanicus' assignment to the East: "But Tiberius had removed from Syria Creticus Silanus, who was connected with Germanicus by marriage (Silanus' daughter had been betrothed to Nero, the eldest of his children), and had placed in charge Cn. Piso, temperamentally violent and a stranger to compliance, with the innate defiance of his father . . . he scarcely yielded to Tiberius and looked down on the man's children as greatly beneath him."[13] These words are intended to make the reader assume that Piso's assignment was subsequent to—and motivated by—Germanicus' new command; not only is the emperor's choice of Piso for Syria described immediately after the senate's conferral of the eastern command on the prince, but Tacitus also describes Silanus and Piso primarily by their respective relationships with Germanicus: Silanus is identified as a relation (and therefore a probable supporter) of the young prince, whereas Piso is specifically described as looking down on Germanicus. By describing these men here only by their relationship to Germanicus, Tacitus creates the unavoidable impression that Silanus was removed *because* he was a relation and ally of the prince, whereas Piso was appointed as his successor *because* he loathed the prince and was certain to be rude and uncooperative. No other provincial appointments are described here, so Tacitus makes this passage focus on friends and enemies of Germanicus, rather than on the distribution of provincial commands. Told in this way, Tacitus practically compels his reader to understand that the change in the Syrian governorship was a direct consequence of Germanicus' eastern command, and that it was done because the emperor wanted the prince's enemy—rather than a

[12] Gaius Caesar was sent to hold command of the Danube in 1 B.C.E. (Dio 55.10.17), but Augustus soon decided to send him to the East instead, where he died while holding a wide-ranging command similar to that given to Germanicus (Vell. 2.102.2–3; Tac. *Ann*. 1.3.3; Dio 55.10.18). Lucius Caesar was en route to take up a special command in Spain when he died in 4 C.E. (Vell. 2.102.3; Dio 55.10a.9). Tiberius commanded Rome's army in Armenia in 20 B.C.E. (Suet. *Aug*. 21.3; *Tib*. 9.1) and its northern armies from 12 to 7 B.C.E., and from 4 to 12 C.E. (Vell. 2.104.3–4; Dio 54.31.3–4, 55.28.5). For discussion, see Seager 2005, 21–37.

[13] Tac. *Ann.* 2.43.2–3: *tunc decreto patrum permissae Germanico provinciae quae mari dividuntur, maiusque imperium, quoquo adisset, quam iis qui sorte aut missu principis obtinerent. Sed Tiberius demoverat Syria Creticum Silanum, per adfinitatem conexum Germanico, quia Silani filia Neroni vetustissimo liberorum eius pacta erat, praefeceratque Cn. Pisonem, ingenio violentum et obsequii ignarum . . . vix Tiberio concedere, liberos eius ut multum infra despectare.*

friend—in command of Syria. Thus the reader is left with no alternative explanation for Piso's appointment[14] and, therefore, with little choice but to imagine that Tiberius and Piso were in league together to make things very difficult for Germanicus in the East, a conception that Tacitus reinforces with rumors and innuendo.

A closer look at this passage reveals Tacitus' efforts to plant ideas of conspiracy in his readers' minds. In particular, he has manipulated the sequence of events in this passage to arouse suspicion and imply that Piso was chosen to oppose the prince. Although Tacitus presents the appointment of Piso as a direct consequence of Germanicus' receipt of his eastern command, his use of the pluperfect when describing Piso's succession to Silanus demonstrates that Piso had already been assigned to Syria by the time Tiberius went before the senate to request an extraordinary command for the prince ("Germanicus was entrusted with the provinces that are separated by the sea . . . but Tiberius had removed from Syria Creticus Silanus").[15] Thus Tacitus has reversed the sequence in which Germanicus and Piso received their provincial commands in his narrative, no doubt to create a false impression of the motive behind the choice of Piso. If Tacitus had described the events in their proper chronological order, with Piso's assignment to Syria having been made public before Tiberius asked the senate for a special command for Germanicus, the reader would receive a very different impression of what had actually happened. Instead of taking on the appearance of a conspiracy, the two provincial assignments would barely seem connected: Piso had been made governor of Syria, and sometime later the prince was sent to resolve a number of economic problems in various eastern provinces—most of which had nothing to do with Syria. Whereas Tacitus' telling of the event creates confusion and a suspicion of conspiracy ("why did the emperor

[14]Thus Seager 2005, 82: "[Silanus'] daughter was betrothed to Germanicus' eldest son Nero, and this connection was the only explanation men could find for his supersession at precisely this time." Goodyear 1981, 2.324, summarizes it: Silanus "could respectably be replaced."

[15] Rapke 1982, 61, argues to the contrary that it is impossible to determine the order of the provincial assignments. Goodyear 1981, 2.324, does not remark on Tacitus' use of the pluperfect, but Koestermann 1958, 335–36, seems to accept that Piso's assignment to Syria was subsequent to the senate's conferral of a special eastern command on Germanicus. McCulloch 1984, 76, observes the use of the pluperfect in this passage and suggests that it reflects "Tiberius' careful planning." This is undoubtedly correct, but McCulloch does not address why Tacitus distorted the chronology of the provincial assignments in this section, or the effect this distortion has on the reader's understanding of the motive behind Piso's assignment to Syria.

send the clearly inappropriate Piso unless there was a plot against the prince"), the appointment of Germanicus *after* Piso creates no confusion at all: there were extraordinary problems in the East that required a member of the imperial house, so the emperor sent his adopted son and heir with sufficient authority to resolve those problems. In this case, Silanus' connection to Germanicus is not even relevant, since his return to Rome had been ordered before Tiberius requested a special command for the prince. Silanus had been the governor of Syria for at least six years when he was recalled to Rome, and after this long term in command, the appointment of a successor would not have appeared noteworthy, except that Tacitus manipulated his account of it to make it seem that Silanus was removed because of his relationship to the prince.[16] Naturally, it must be assumed that Tiberius took the governorship of Syria into consideration when contemplating Germanicus' eastern command; he may even have decided upon the two appointments at the same time, but announced them separately. Yet by presenting Piso's appointment as a direct consequence of the prince's extraordinary command, Tacitus gives the reader the distinct impression that a conspiracy existed against the prince.

Tacitus tries to deepen his insinuation of a conspiracy by suggesting as a motive that Tiberius was jealous and fearful of Germanicus, and, therefore, the emperor needed Piso to control and possibly kill the prince, but this too is baseless. Tiberius had no obvious motive for distrusting or conspiring against his stepson.[17] It is true that Germanicus had represented the greatest potential threat to Tiberius' succession upon Augustus' death, but the prince had dispelled all suspicion by making a powerful and public show of loyalty to his uncle. When the legions in Germany offered to make Germanicus emperor following Augustus' death, the prince adamantly defended his uncle's rights, bound his supporters in an oath to support the emperor, and successfully brought the loyalty of the legions back to Tiberius (Tac. *Ann*. 1.31.1, 34.1–35.4, and 42.1–4).

[16] Dabrowa 1998, 17–30, points out that Silanus' immediate predecessors had only served two or three years as governor.

[17] Martin 1981, 141, points out, "There is no indication in Tacitus or anywhere else that Tiberius' behaviour was motivated by regard or fear of either Germanicus or Drusus," and Goodyear 1981 states clearly about Tiberius' decision to send Piso as the governor of Syria under Germanicus: "there is no reason to see anything sinister here, and much of T.'s innuendo can be stripped away forthwith." See also Mierow 1943, who argues that Tacitus deliberately misrepresented Tiberius as being hostile to Germanicus, and Seager 2005, 82–83, who argues that Tiberius wanted to honor Augustus' wish that Germanicus should be seen as Tiberius' heir.

Furthermore, Germanicus had sacrificed his own desire for personal glory in a significant demonstration of his loyalty to Tiberius; although he very much wanted to continue his German campaigns, he abandoned them and returned to Rome in obedience to his uncle's summons (Tac. *Ann*. 2.26.1–5). Tiberius' confidence in his stepson was demonstrated by the many honors he showered on the prince: he gave Germanicus a triumph for his campaigns over the Germans, he gave the urban population a large donative in the prince's name, he designated Germanicus to be his consular colleague in the next year, and he requested an extraordinary eastern command for the prince (Tac. *Ann*. 2.41.2–43.1).[18] The *SCPP* not only stresses the emperor's affection for the prince but also portrays these two men as united against the arrogant insubordination of Piso.[19] Although Germanicus would later offend Tiberius by entering Egypt without the emperor's permission, the emperor's castigation of him for this was surprisingly mild considering the seriousness of the offense (Egypt was strictly forbidden to all of Rome's senatorial aristocracy, Tac. *Ann*. 2.59.1–3).[20] Nor was Germanicus' military glory and popularity with the legions a source of concern to Tiberius, who had himself been the hero of those legions when he had served as Augustus' leading general on the German frontier (Suet. *Tib*. 9.1–2, 16.1–19.1; Tac. *Ann*. 2.26.3). Tiberius had been Augustus' loyal lieutenant and heir, and he knew the value of a reliable relative like Germanicus who was content to wait for his turn to rule. Thus there is little reason to suspect that the emperor was jealous or fearful of his adopted son, which further undermines Tacitus' innuendo that Piso was selected to thwart Germanicus.

While modern scholars generally disregard Tacitus' suggestion that Tiberius wanted to have Germanicus killed, it is widely accepted—despite

[18] Goodyear 1981, 2.325, and Seager 2005, 82–84, suggest that Tiberius may have feared that the eastern legions would become too loyal to the charismatic young prince, but Germanicus was not being sent to conduct military operations; he was, rather, to oversee economic and governmental reforms, so the time he would spend with the army was intended to be minimal (as actually was the case). On Germanicus' activities, see Koestermann 1958.

[19] *SCPP* 29–32, 38–39, 123–27. See also Eck et al. 1996, 166, 181–82, 250; Griffin 1997, 260.

[20] Tiberius rebuked Germanicus for his entry into Egypt but took no stronger measures to punish his adopted son for what was really a very serious violation. Of course, we cannot know what would have happened had Germanicus lived to return to Rome. *Contra* Koestermann 1958, 350–53, who sees Germanicus' trip to Egypt as a sign that conflict was growing between the prince and his adopted father. Goodyear 1981, 2.378–79, agrees that Germanicus' action seems like willful disobedience. For a discussion of the imperial policy of forbidding senators to enter Egypt without the emperor's permission, see Drogula 2011.

the meager evidence—that Piso was sent to Syria in order to keep an eye on the prince and to prevent him from doing anything rash. This view is based upon the assumption that Piso was a trusted supporter of the emperor, and that his loyalty and self-importance made him the ideal man to have in direct command of the Syrian legions, which Germanicus would need for any major military operation. Syme's assessment is typical:

> The task demanded a man who, even without benefit of active warfare, had at least held one of the military provinces. Moreover, not to be overawed by any prince . . . Tiberius looked for a resolute character and unswerving loyalty. The old friend was the answer . . . Piso understood the policy of the ruler and no doubt shared his distrust of Germanicus Caesar. Piso was appointed to act as an "*adiutor*" to the prince (Tiberius used that word). In truth to curb rather than to counsel. Men spoke of "*secreta mandata.*" They were right. The function of Caesar's confidant and mandatory was to avert embroilment with the Parthians, counter intrigue with Roman vassals, take a firm grip on the legions in Syria.[21]

This view represents a partial acceptance of Tacitus' conspiracy theory: it accepts that Tiberius and Piso were in cahoots to restrain the actions of Germanicus in the East, but it stops short of Tacitus' insistence that the conspiracy was intended to harm the prince. There are, however, serious problems with accepting even this modified reading: problems of logic and reason, problems regarding the nature of the relationship between Piso and Tiberius, and problems in the history of the relationship between Piso and Tiberius. In the first place, if Tacitus is correct that Piso was a man who was "temperamentally violent and a stranger to compliance, with the innate defiance of his father . . . fired by the nobility and wealth of his wife too . . . he scarcely yielded to Tiberius and looked down on the man's children as greatly beneath him" (*Ann.* 2.43.2–4), it seems contrary to reason that the emperor would have sent such a man on a mission that required diplomacy, restraint, and judgment. Piso's

[21] Syme 1986, 373. See also Goodyear 1981, 2.325, who calls Piso "a man the *princeps* could hold as a personal friend of firm loyalty"; Shotter 1974, 235, cf. 1968, 205, noted that "Piso will have seemed an ideal replacement [for Silanus in Syria]; close to Tiberius, experienced, and not likely to be overawed by Germanicus' authority"; Levick 1999, 154, writes of Piso that "his abilities may have been mediocre, and his temper ungovernable, but that fact was outweighed by his closeness to Tiberius and by his seniority. There is no need to doubt that he was sent to Syria to head Germanicus off from adventures that would not profit the Empire"; and González 1999, 130, suggests that "Tiberius chose his friend Piso to accompany Germanicus because, being a man of independent character, he would not easily submit to the decisions of Germanicus." See also n. 3 above.

arrogance and cruelty were well known: Seneca (*De ira* 1.18.3–6) records an episode in which Piso had three obviously innocent Roman soldiers executed simply to satisfy his own pride. Tiberius had had several prior opportunities to assess Piso's character (see below), and it is difficult to believe that the emperor—who was an experienced commander and was surely concerned for the stability of his empire—would knowingly have selected such a disruptive and self-centered senator to act as a discreet and responsible check on Germanicus.[22] Not just the emperor, but any informed senator would have known that Piso was the wrong man for the job.

Second, Piso's actions in Syria demonstrate very clearly that he was no friend and ally to the emperor. Upon taking up his command, Piso began tampering with the loyalty of the legions by relaxing military discipline, removing strict officers, promoting those loyal to him, giving donatives in his own name, allowing soldiers to call him the "parent of the legions," and calling some soldiers "Pisonians" and others "Caesarians" (*SCPP* 45–49, 54–56; Tac. *Ann*. 2.55.5–6, 3.13.2).[23] None of this could have been pleasing to Tiberius, and it even seems treasonous. Piso then magnified his disservice to Tiberius by resorting to civil war in his efforts to reclaim Syria from Germanicus' lieutenants. Although Piso probably believed it was within his rights to reclaim his command by force, he must have known that starting a civil war was contrary to Tiberius' wishes and best interests, and this was indeed one of the most serious crimes with which he was subsequently charged (*SCPP* 45–48). Tacitus portrays Piso as solely concerned with his own self-interest in his efforts to recover the province, and the *SCPP* says that he believed that his *arbitrium* and *potestas* should direct all affairs in Syria (*SCPP* 36–37; Tac. *Ann*. 2.70.1–2, 80.2). Tacitus' innuendo that Tiberius and Piso were friends is directly contradicted by his depiction of Piso as giving remarkably little thought to protecting or promoting the interests of the emperor; Piso is portrayed as entirely self-motivated, he abandons Syria rather than stay

[22] Seager 2005, 83–84, remarks that it was "a situation in which trouble was virtually bound to arise." There is no indication that Tiberius was careless in his appointment of legates; although he is said (Suet. *Tib*. 42.1) to have appointed Pomponius Flaccus to be the governor of Syria after a two-day drinking party, Flaccus was an old and trusted friend of the emperor and an experienced commander, and so—if this story is true—it shows Tiberius selecting a seasoned, reliable, and capable commander for the important province of Syria.

[23] Goodyear 1981, 2.363, points out that the honor of "parent of the legion" was generally reserved for the emperor at this time, and that Piso was "rash to have acquired [the title] at all." See also Lott 2012, 277–79: "these titles [Pisonians and Caesarians] were evocative of civil war."

and attempt to influence the prince, and he takes actions that he surely knows will be displeasing to the imperial house.[24] That Tiberius made no effort to defend or protect Piso in subsequent prosecution back in Rome is clear: Tacitus writes of the trial that Tiberius was implacable because of the civil war Piso had caused, and that the emperor had completely shut himself off to any possibility of appeal from his legate (Tac. *Ann*. 3.14.3 and 15.2). While it is possible that Tiberius "abandoned" his loyal friend to the anger of the senate and people of Rome, the evidence more strongly suggests that there was no deep friendship between the two to start with, and that the emperor was enraged at Piso's actions and was quite content for the senate to carry out its prosecution.

Third, it is not at all clear how Piso could have restrained Germanicus, who was a popular imperial prince, the great-nephew of Augustus, a two-time consul, a *triumphator* who had been sent to the East with *imperium maius* and a vast *provincia* that included Syria, and was accompanied by loyal friends who supported his wishes and obeyed his commands even after his death. On what grounds, or with what authority, could Piso legally or even effectively prevent any action that Germanicus decided to pursue?[25] Is it believable that—in any circumstance—the legions would have chosen to support the proconsul Piso over the imperial prince Germanicus Caesar, who was invested with *imperium maius* and was the heir-apparent of the emperor? Not at all: Piso did everything in his power to win the affection and loyalty of the Syrian legions, but when he sought to reclaim the province by force, those legions remained loyal to Germanicus' lieutenant rather than side with their governor. In fact, Piso did not restrain or prevent any of Germanicus' actions—he was a great annoyance, but he proved entirely incapable of hindering the prince in any way. Although on one occasion Piso did refuse to obey Germanicus' instruction that he should send a detachment of soldiers to Armenia (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.1), this defiance crumbled when the prince confronted the governor in person, and Piso quit his province rather than continue as an underling now proven to be impotent. Simply put: Tiberius had not given his Syrian governor the power to hinder the prince in any way. Perhaps the emperor imagined that Piso would guide Germanicus'

[24] Syme 1986, 373, calls Piso's decision to leave Syria in the first place a dereliction of duty. For a recent discussion of the specific charges made against Piso in his trial, see Lott 2012, 268–82.

[25] Since Piso had no authority at all beyond Syria (Goodyear 1981, 2.323), it is difficult to imagine how he could have exerted any influence on Germanicus, whose command encompassed the entire East, including Syria. Hurlet 1997, 195–97, even argues that Germanicus' *imperium maius* marked him as a co-regent with the emperor.

actions through wise counsel, but if so, Piso was very obviously the wrong choice for this assignment, and Tiberius would have known this given Piso's previous behavior (see below). Thus if Piso was sent to restrain Germanicus' actions and ambitions, he was woefully ill-equipped for the task, having absolutely no way to complete this objective.

Thus Piso lacked both the temperament to guide the prince by advice and the power to control him through force, which seriously undercuts the notion that he had been sent by the emperor to act as a check or monitor on Germanicus. The only remaining reason for suspecting that Piso was an agent of the emperor is the widespread belief that the two men were close friends (not just shallow, potential allies) and that Tiberius would not have assigned his proud friend the humiliating task of governing Syria as a subordinate to Germanicus' *imperium maius* unless there had been a hidden agenda to control the prince. In other words, the assumption of a close friendship between governor and emperor makes one look for a deeper motive for Piso's provincial assignment. As we shall see, however, the evidence that Piso enjoyed a real friendship with Tiberius is very meager, whereas there is extensive evidence showing that Piso was unfriendly and even antagonistic towards the emperor.

Not even Tacitus can bring himself to claim that Tiberius and Piso were close friends, although doing so would have advanced his efforts to implicate the emperor in Piso's crimes. In Tiberius' address to the senate at the opening of Piso's trial, Tacitus has the emperor refer to Piso as "his father's legate and friend [who] had been given by himself, on the senate's authority, to Germanicus as his helper in the administration of affairs in the East" (*patris sui legatum atque amicum Pisonem fuisse adiutoremque Germanico datum a se, auctore senatu, rebus apud Orientem administrandis*, *Ann*. 3.12.1). Thus while Tiberius describes Piso as Augustus' *amicus* and Germanicus' *adiutor*, he makes no particular claim of friendship with Piso for himself. This silence is striking: why does the emperor acknowledge Piso's friendship with Augustus and not with himself (if such a friendship existed)? Furthermore, the statement that Piso and Augustus were friends is itself questionable, or at least should not be taken as signifying a particularly close bond: Shotter has pointed out that Piso's proconsulship of a senatorial province came at the usual time in his career (that is, no special consideration was given), and that there was a hiatus of over a decade before he was offered command of an imperial province.[26] In other words, Piso received no obvious benefit

[26] Shotter 1974, 231. Syme 1986, 369, points out that Piso does not seem to have reached the consulship when first eligible, but had to wait a few years. Piso had been proconsul of

from his supposed friendship with Augustus, which is surprising since one can imagine that Augustus would have advertised and promoted his friendship with a *nobilis* and scion of the Republic like Piso. Furthermore, Crook and Winterling have both argued that anyone given regular admittance to the imperial *salutationes* could be counted among the emperor's *amici*, and Suetonius (*Aug*. 53.2–3, 74.1) says that Augustus welcomed all senators to his *salutationes*.[27] Taken together, this indicates that practically any senator could have been called an *amicus* of Augustus, causing Crook (1975, 25) to caution that: "merely to have shown that a man was an *amicus* is not to have discovered in him a counsellor of the emperor." Saller (1982, 11–15, 61) also emphasizes that the terms *amicus* and *amicitia* encompassed a very broad range of social relationships, and that most *amici* of the emperor probably saw him only at morning *salutationes* and at dinner parties. Thus Tiberius' description of Piso as Augustus' *amicus* does not mean much by itself, and his failure to follow this up with a statement of his own friendship for Piso contradicts the assumption that they were true friends.

Similarly, one should not make much of Tiberius' statement that he would reject Piso and bar him from the imperial house if he had betrayed his duties and had rejoiced at the prince's death (Tac. *Ann*. 3.12.2). While this may appear to suggest that Piso previously had enjoyed privileged access to the emperor, this was not the case. Suetonius (above) has shown that all senators generally had access to the emperor's house under Augustus, and there is no indication that Tiberius immediately deviated from his stepfather's practices. Access to the emperor, therefore, was not the same thing as friendship with the emperor. Since all senators were received at the imperial house at the time, it was far more significant to be banned from the imperial presence than it was to have access to him. This is demonstrated by Tacitus' report (*Ann*. 2.70.2) that Germanicus on his deathbed renounced his friendship with Piso: no one can possibly imagine that they had been close friends previously, so Germanicus' renunciation of their friendship was simply a statement of official displeasure.[28]

Africa sometime between his consulship in 7 B.C.E. and the death of Lucius Caesar in 2 C.E. (*PIR*² C 287; Sen. *De ira* 1.18.3–6). He was a *legatus* in Nearer Spain towards the end of Augustus' reign (Tac. *Ann*. 3.13.1).

[27] Crook 1975, 21–30; Winterling 1999, 161–94. See also Syme 1956; Hellegouarc'h 1963, 41–51.

[28] Rogers 1959, demonstrates that the renunciation of friendship (*amicitiam renuntiare*) was a public statement of displeasure and a suspension of friendly intercourse, but it did not necessarily mean that the two individuals involved had previously enjoyed a close friend-

Of course, in Tacitus' version of Piso's suicide note (*Ann*. 3.16.3–4), Piso calls himself Tiberius' friend and claims that he had been given the honor of holding the consulship of 7 B.C.E. with Tiberius because Augustus had approved of him, but this is highly dubious evidence. Not only does Tacitus confess that his text of Piso's letter only "roughly" (*ferme*) followed the original, but the main purpose of Piso's note was to implore clemency for his son, so it should not be surprising that Piso tried to solicit the emperor's sympathy by claiming greater friendship and loyalty than was actually the case.[29]

Furthermore, the mere fact that Piso and Tiberius were colleagues in the consulship does not demonstrate any friendship between them. It would have been Augustus (not Tiberius) who recommended Piso for the consulship, so any gratitude Piso felt (if there was any) would have been directed towards the man who arranged the honor, rather than towards the colleague who shared the honor. There is no reason to think that Piso and Tiberius were made consular colleagues because they were friends; political motives generally lay at the heart of consular assignments. In fact, Piso may not have appreciated being forced to share the consulship with a man who was (at the time) a lesser member of the imperial house.[30] In 7 B.C.E. Tiberius was (at best) third in line of succession to Augustus and was notoriously on bad terms with the emperor, so the honor of holding the consulship with him was not nearly as great as sharing office with the emperor or his appointed heir. Indeed, the self-important Piso may even have been insulted and angered by having to share his consulship with Tiberius, since the glory and attention Piso received as consul were probably much less than that given to his better-connected colleague. To someone like Piso, who was so proud of his own lineage that he "scarcely yielded" to the emperor (Tac. *Ann*. 2.43.3–4), sharing a consulship with an imperial prince may have been an unattractive "honor" because it meant being overshadowed during the pinnacle of his career.

Finally, although Syme (quoted above) draws attention to the fact that Piso is called the "helper" (*adiutor*) of Germanicus (*SCPP* 29; Tac.

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ship. He gives (227) a particularly good example (Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.79): "Gaius Proculeius, brother-in-law of Maecenas, forbade his home to Cassius Severus, the acid-tongued orator; Severus made public reply, 'I never go there anyway, do I?'" See also Lott 2012, 266.

[29] Even Bird 1987, 74—who accepts that Piso and Tiberius were friends—points out that the *amicitia* referred to in Piso's letter may have been only a political alliance and not a true affectionate friendship.

[30] Rapke 1982, 62, looks at several examples and argues: "sharing a consulship with a son (or stepson in the case of Tiberius and Piso) of the Princeps conferred no special distinction or promise of favour or advancement."

Ann. 3.12.1), this in itself says nothing about the nature of Piso's relationship with Tiberius, nor does it demonstrate that Piso was sent to Syria as a special advisor to the prince. The word *adiutor* is provocative because it was occasionally used to describe the emperor's most senior allies and lieutenants (such as Agrippa, Statilius Taurus, and Sejanus), but this circle of men was exceedingly small, and nothing we know about Piso places him within this most-elite circle (he is not described as the emperor's *adiutor*, merely the prince's).[31] In the late Republic, the term *adiutor* had conveyed the simple concept of "helper," and it eventually came to signify a range of lesser offices in Rome's bureaucracy, so the word does not in itself demonstrate that Piso was a trusted friend and agent of the emperor.[32] While it is true that Augustus had occasionally assigned senior and experienced men as advisors to accompany young princes on special commands, such men were generally called *rectores*, not *adiutores*.[33] Piso cannot have been such a *rector*—or any other type of advisor—because he was assigned to a different province from Germanicus and therefore was rarely present to give advice. Moreover, Germanicus was a much more experienced commander than Piso, and he was accompanied by his own council of advisors, so it seems impossible that Piso had any official role in Germanicus' command.[34] Thus Syme's emphasis on the

[31] Velleius Paterculus refers to M. Vipsanius Agrippa and Statilius Taurus as *adiutores* to Augustus (Vell. 2.127.1); Velleius and Tacitus both refer to L. Aelius Sejanus as an *adiutor* to Tiberius (Tac. *Ann*. 4.7.1; Vell. 2.127.3).

[32] Hellegouarc'h 1963, 88–89, and *TLL* 1.715.5ff. discuss the many different uses of the term *adiutor*. Regarding Tacitus' use of the term at 3.12.1, Woodman and Martin 1996, 141, suggest that *adiutor* was an official term, but regarding the appearance of the word in the *SCPP*, Eck et al. 1996, 157–58, argue "*Adiutor* bezeichnete eine nicht präzis definierbare Stellung." Lott 2012, 272, also points out "there was no regular position of *adiutor*." The word conveyed the abstract meaning of "helper" in the late Republic (Cic. *Fam*. 1.9.19; Caes. *BC* 3.62), and it may have meant nothing more than this here. See also Koestermann 1958, 337; Woodman 1977, 253–54; Goodyear 1981, 2.325; Hurlet 1997, 380–413.

[33] When Gaius Caesar had been given a special command in the East in 1 B.C.E., M. Lollius was assigned to advise him as *comes et rector* (Suet. *Tib*. 12.2) and as *moderator* (Vell. 2.102.1), and in 2 C.E. he was replaced as *rector* by Sulpicius Quirinus (Tac. *Ann*. 3.48.1). Goodyear 1981, 2.325, seems to conflate the *adiutor* with the titles *comes*, *rector*, and *moderator*, but he also points out that "Germanicus, of whose *sapientia* we have just heard, was no callow youth, like Gaius."

[34] Although Tacitus makes Tiberius refer to Piso as Germanicus' "helper in the administration of affairs in the East" ([*adiutor*] *rebus apud Orientem administrandis*, Tac. *Ann*. 3.12.1), this is probably a misleading statement. Piso was not an *adiutor* assigned to the prince's *concilium*, but rather a *legatus Augusti* assigned to the province of Syria. Piso travelled to the East separately from Germanicus, and once he arrived he is not found in the company of the prince except when Germanicus entered Syria. Thus Piso had nothing

description of Piso as *adiutor* to the prince seems to make too much of the term. If anything, the word was probably invoked by Tacitus and the *SCPP* to intensify the appearance of Piso's guilt: he had been expected to "help" Germanicus, but instead worked against the prince and rejoiced at his death.

While there is no good evidence that Piso was a close friend and agent of the emperor, or that *amicus* and *adiutor* were meant to express such a relationship, there is substantial evidence to suggest that he was actually antagonistic towards the imperial regime, and to Tiberius in particular. In the first place, Piso was not merely a senator of consular status; he belonged to one of Rome's most prestigious surviving clans and was immensely proud of his glittering Republican heritage. In the aftermath of the civil wars that had exterminated so many aristocratic clans, the Calpurnii Pisones stood out as being one of the oldest and most "Republican" families that survived.[35] A common trait of this family seems to have been its resistance to dynasts: Piso's grandfather and great-uncle had both been fierce opponents of Caesar and Pompey, and his father had been a strong supporter of Brutus and Cassius.[36] As Cooley (1998, 203) has pointed out: "the immediate family of Piso *pater* had a history of causing trouble for the powers at Rome." Piso's father had returned to Rome after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius and the collapse of the Republican cause, but he shunned the dynasts and rebuffed overtures from Augustus until long after the Battle of Actium. This Piso relented only eight years later, eventually accepting Augustus' invitation that they hold the consulship jointly in 23 B.C.E. (Tac. *Ann*. 2.43.2). Syme is surely right that this Piso only accepted the emperor's offer because it served

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to do with Germanicus' eastern command except that he—like all eastern provincial governors—was expected to obey the prince's *imperium maius* if it was imposed upon him (see Eck et al. 1996, 157).

[35] For a history of the Calpurnii Pisones, see Earl 1960; Forsythe 1994, 1–24; Hofmann-Löbl 1996.

[36] Piso's great-uncle (C. Calpurnius Piso, cos. 67 B.C.E.) strongly opposed the *lex Gabinia* and refused to allow Pompey to recruit men and resources in Piso's province of Cisalpine Gaul, despite the fact that the *lex Gabinia* specifically authorized Pompey to do so (Dio 36.24.3, 37.2; Plut. *Pomp*. 25.4, 27.2). Furthermore, in the debate over the Catilinarian conspirators in 63 B.C.E., this Piso was said to have begged Cicero to implicate Caesar (falsely) in the conspiracy (Sall. *Cat*. 49.2; Plut. *Caes*. 7.3). Gruen 1974, 60, 66, 80, 286, discusses this Piso's opposition to Pompey and Caesar. Cn. Piso's grandfather went to Spain in 65 B.C.E. as quaestor *pro praetore* to reduce the influence of Pompey in that province (Sall. *Cat*. 19.1–5; *CIL* 1^2 2.749 = *ILS* 875; see Seager 2002, 65–66). Cn. Piso's father chose the side of Brutus and Cassius over Caesar (Tac. *Ann*. 2.43.2).

his own ends: after his long retirement and refusal to cooperate with the imperial regime, he accepted a joint consulship with the emperor in order to refurbish the *dignitas* of his family and secure consulships for his two sons.[37] The promotion of the *gens Calpurnia* from plebeian to patrician status may have been part of the price the emperor paid to acquire this Piso's public support.[38] Augustus wanted to heal a state that had long been fractured by civil war, but he also needed the senatorial elite—and most particularly the surviving *nobiles*—to accept and support his regime, and he could use his extensive resources to induce these important men to join him. As Syme notes (1939, 368): "the master of patronage could attach to his cause even the most recalcitrant of the *nobiles*." A personal offer from the emperor to share the consulship of 23 B.C.E. enabled Piso's father to renew and increase the prestige and importance of his family, but this need not indicate that he felt any friendship or loyalty towards the imperial house, nor does it necessitate that his son would have felt any gratitude or friendship towards Augustus' stepson Tiberius.

Piso (cos. 7 B.C.E.) seems to have inherited his family's fierce Republicanism and hostility towards the imperial regime. Not only does Tacitus describe him as "temperamentally violent and a stranger to compliance, with the innate defiance of his father" (*Ann*. 2.43.2–3), but also he records Piso's challenging Tiberius publicly on several occasions, demonstrating little regard or gratitude for Augustus' promotion of his father. Furthermore, Piso undermined the emperor with this defiance at a time when Tiberius was new to imperial rule and needed to consolidate his position. In 15 C.E., when Tiberius was incensed at the allegation that Granius Marcellus had (among other things) removed Augustus' head from statues and replaced it with an image of Tiberius, the emperor declared that he would express his own opinion openly and on oath, knowing that this would compel the other senators to agree with him and convict Marcellus (*Ann*. 1.74.1–6). In response, Piso embarrassed the emperor by objecting that his tremendous influence over the cowed senators would prevent them from voting freely, a clear statement that the emperor's participation would subvert justice. Tacitus calls Piso's defiance a reminder of dying liberty (*vestigia morientis libertatis*) and says that Tiberius, shaken (*permotus*) by the challenge, allowed Marcellus to be acquitted of the charge of treason (although he still had to answer a

[37] Syme 1984, 368. Syme elsewhere (1939, 368) suggests that Piso may have accepted out of "disinterested patriotism."

[38] Syme 1939, 382, n. 9.

charge of extortion).[39] For Piso to rebuff the emperor in this way, publicly before the senate, and to prevent him from speaking when he clearly wanted to, does not seem the act of a friend and ally.

Piso openly challenged the emperor a second time the following year (16 C.E.) when he pushed the senate to reject Tiberius' wish that all citizens practicing astrology should be exiled from the city (Dio 57.15.7–9). In direct opposition to Tiberius and Drusus, Piso urged the senate to protect these citizens, and his motion carried the day against the emperor until a tribune interposed his veto to prevent any interference with Tiberius' wishes. Piso's defiant opposition surprised Dio, who called this challenge to imperial authority a particularly good demonstration of democratic government (τὸ τῆς δημοκρατίας σχῆμα).[40] In that same year, Piso showed his disregard for Tiberius a third time. When the emperor announced that he would be absent from the senate for a period in the near future, Piso insisted that public business in the senate should continue in spite of Tiberius' absence, and argued against those who believed the emperor's presence was necessary for the senate's distinction and dignity (Tac. *Ann*. 2.35.1–2). Tacitus thought that this public show of scorn for the emperor was striking, and he referred to it as an unusual example of free speech under the imperial regime (*species libertatis*).[41] While any one of these public challenges to the emperor might be explained away,[42] three such challenges in rapid succession do not seem the work of a friend and ally.

[39] Because Shotter 1974, 233, accepts that Tiberius and Piso were friends, he dismisses this as an unimportant event and believes the emperor was neither angry nor resentful, but this seems difficult to accept given the public nature of the rebuke, and given that it came so early in Tiberius' reign when he was particularly vulnerable to criticism.

[40] Bird 1987, 73, seems to agree that Tiberius was displeased with the decisive independence of the senate in this matter, although he cautions that the emperor would have been displeased with more senators than just Piso on this occasion.

[41] To reconcile this episode with his assumption that Piso and Tiberius were friends, Shotter 1974, 233, suggests that Piso was actually championing Tiberius' own feelings that the senate should not adjourn in his absence, in which case it seems strange that Tiberius—who was present during the debate—did not indicate this preference that would have given honor to the senate as an independent body. Bird 1987, 73, suggests Tiberius did not speak because he was new as emperor and wanted free debate in the senate, which is possible (if based upon a guess at what Tiberius was thinking) but does not diminish the fact that Piso was openly arguing for the emperor's insignificance to senatorial activity.

[42] Shotter 1974, 234, tries to explain Piso's actions differently, seeing him "as a frank and firm senator, whose standing with Tiberius was such that he could speak up without incurring wrath," but this depends entirely upon the tenuous assumption that the two men were actually close enough as friends that the emperor could forgive such public affronts. As argued above, however, there is no good evidence for their friendship, and Piso's actions seem quite antagonistic: he had repeatedly challenged Tiberius in public before the senate,

Tiberius, therefore, cannot have been under the illusion that Piso was his friend and supporter. Just one year before Piso was assigned to Syria, his brother L. Calpurnius Piso "Augur" (cos. 1 B.C.E.) had publicly condemned the state of public affairs and tried to quit the senate in disgust, forcing the still-new emperor Tiberius to entreat the prestigious *nobilis* not to abandon the government altogether (Tac. *Ann*. 2.34.1).[43] Smarting from this embarrassment, the emperor could not reasonably expect that L. Calpurnius Piso's brother was a loyal friend to the imperial regime. Not only had Cn. Piso insulted Tiberius before the senate; his first recorded action after accepting the governorship of Syria was to undermine the authority of the imperial regime by scolding Germanicus before the Athenians, and he later berated the Nabataeans for presenting Germanicus with regal honors by complaining that the prince was "the son of the Roman *princeps*, not that of the Parthian king" (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.4).[44] Taken altogether, there seems to be ample evidence that Piso was no loyal friend and supporter of the emperor, and the only suggestion to the contrary appears in the unverifiable rumors that Tacitus puts into the mouths of others. Given the clear evidence of Piso's resentment and opposition to Tiberius, it seems unsound to accept Tacitus' innuendo that the two men were friends and allies; the unfriendliness that Tacitus reports as fact should be given more credence than the friendship that is only reported through rumor and inference. If anything, Piso was ideologically opposed to the imperial regime and deeply resentful that an aristocrat of his lineage and prestige had to show deference to men like Tiberius and Germanicus. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Tiberius would have been so foolish as to think he could trust Piso, especially with the command of heavily armed Syria and the extremely sensitive task of watching and restraining Germanicus.

This brings us back to the original conundrum: since Piso was neither a friend nor an agent of the emperor, and since he could not have acted as a restraining force on Germanicus even if this task had been assigned to him, why was he entrusted with the prestigious and strategically critical province of Syria? If we remove the misdirection caused by Tacitus' innuendo of a conspiracy, a more likely explanation

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and he had done so in the early years of Tiberius' reign when it was essential for the new emperor to consolidate his position and gather support and receive deference in the senate.

[43] Allen 1948 points out a tradition among the Calpurnii Pisones of retreating from public service when confronted with a tyrannical government.

[44] Goodyear 1981, 2.370, calls Piso's outburst "anachronistic . . . as well as grossly offensive."

is at hand that fits our evidence better: Tiberius may have offered Piso the Syrian command as part of a political deal to win over the support of the troublesome senator. Tiberius had good reasons to do this: he was still relatively new to imperial rule at the time and faced the challenge of being the first person to "inherit" the principate (his mother Livia had been sufficiently worried about his succession that she had suppressed news of Augustus' death and posted guard detachments), he was less popular than his predecessor, the northern legions had revolted upon his accession, several senators had questioned the handling of his succession, and aristocratic sentiment remained bad enough that in 16 C.E., L. Calpurnius Piso "Augur" (Cn. Piso's brother) attempted to abandon public life altogether in protest of the poor state of public affairs, which forced the emperor to take the embarrassing step of beseeching L. Piso to remain in Rome and continue to attend senate meetings, lest the retirement of so prestigious an aristocrat be taken as a rebuke of the emperor's rule.[45] Tiberius, therefore, had good reasons to shore up his support among Rome's aristocracy, and winning over Cn. Piso with a considerable *beneficium* such as command of the province of Syria was a shrewd idea. Piso was a blueblood from the Republic, and his *dignitas* and ancestral heritage made him a most desirable ally for the new emperor, especially if it meant silencing Piso's defiant comments in the senate. In doing this, Tiberius was adopting Augustus' tactic of incorporating recalcitrant senators, especially from the among the Calpurnii Pisones: not only had Augustus convinced Piso's father to share the consulship with him in 23 B.C.E., but much more recently—perhaps only a few years before his death in 14 C.E.—he had persuaded L. Calpurnius Piso "Pontifex" to lend his famous name and ancestral *dignitas* to the imperial regime in exchange for considerable inducements.[46] This had been a significant coup for Augustus, who thereafter paraded the prestigious *nobilis* as a prominent ornament of his regime.[47] Tiberius understood very well the value of the Calpurnii Pisones to the regime, which is why he had gone to great lengths to prevent the senator L. Piso "Augur" from carrying out his threat to abandon public life. Indeed, this process of winning back

[45] Tac. *Ann*. 1.5.3–4 (Livia), 1.31.1 (revolt), 1.12.1–13.6 (senators), and see above on L. Calpurnius Piso "Augur."

[46] Syme 1939, 373.

[47] In particular, Augustus appointed L. Piso urban prefect (*praefectus urbi*), a Republican office that Augustus had revived periodically during his rule, but one that became permanent with L. Piso's appointment at an unknown date (Tac. *Ann*. 6.11.3). See Syme 1939, 403–4.

one brother (L. Piso) may have given Tiberius the idea to offer the other brother (Cn. Piso) a great province in the hopes of binding him to the imperial house, or Piso "Augur" may have requested a great command for his brother as part of his agreement to remain in public life.[48] Tiberius had still other reasons for thinking that Cn. Piso was a good choice for recruitment: his kinsman L. Calpurnius Piso "Pontifex" still served as urban prefect and was a loyal supporter of the regime (and a particular friend of Tiberius), and Cn. Piso's wife Plancina was a close friend of Tiberius' mother, the empress Livia. All these factors, therefore, probably convinced Tiberius that it was worth his time to try and win over Piso with the offer of a great command, since doing so could silence his most pernicious critic and add a prestigious *nobilis* to his list of supporters.

The offer of Syria was quite an inducement, since most Roman senators would hope in vain for such a province. Perhaps the greatest command in the empire, the governor of Syria commanded a huge army of four legions—twice the size of the normal consular army in the Republic—and it offered the real possibility of winning military glory if the Parthians attacked. Furthermore, this command was in the Greek East, a favorite locale among Rome's aristocracy for its many historic and luxurious cities. In addition, Syria was far away and communication between Rome and Antioch was difficult and dependent upon sailing conditions, which ensured that the commander of Syria could expect to enjoy considerable independence. Because of its many military resources and advantages, Syria was rarely entrusted to any senator of great lineage and *auctoritas* unless the emperor had a compelling reason for doing so.[49] In fact, the only two great *nobiles* known to have held command of Syria had linked themselves with the imperial house: the urban prefect L. Calpurnius Piso "Pontifex" and Germanicus' in-law Q. Metellus Creticus Silanus.[50] Whereas these two *nobiles* were known to be loyal supporters

[48] Saller 1982, 74–78, demonstrated the tendency of emperors in the early empire to allow their supporters to "broker" imperial *beneficia* to further increase their support among the aristocracy. Thus an emperor might bind an ally more tightly to himself by allowing that ally to suggest other ways the emperor might hand out *beneficia*.

[49] Augustus had normally employed "new men" or men from lesser senatorial families as legates for Syria because they lacked the requisite *dignitas* and *auctoritas* to challenge his preeminence in Rome and his hold over the legions, as Dabrowa 1998, 17–32, points out: L. Licinius Varro (gov. ca. 25–23 B.C.E.); M. Titius (gov. ca. 13. 10 B.C.E.); C. Sentius Saturninus (gov. ca. 10. 7 B.C.E.); Quinctilius Varus (gov. ca. 7. 4 B.C.E.); L. Volusius Saturninus (gov. ca. 4–6 C.E.); and P. Sulpicius Quirinius (gov. ca. 6 C.E.).

[50] L. Calpurnius Piso's governorship of Syria is disputed but likely (see Syme 1986, 337–41).

of the imperial house, Tacitus makes it very clear that Cn. Piso was no friend of the emperor before his appointment to Syria. If anything, Piso had been one of the emperor's most outspoken critics in the early years of his rule, so Tiberius' decision to appoint him to Syria must mean that the two men came to some understanding about Piso's future support for the regime, or at least the emperor believed they had come to such an understanding. Although no source confirms that this was the emperor's intention, there is much to recommend this reconstruction, whereas Tacitus' innuendo that Tiberius and Piso were close friends and were united in a conspiracy against the popular young prince is easily disproven by Tacitus' own narrative.

If there was indeed a secret plan between Tiberius and Piso, therefore, it probably had nothing to do with Germanicus, but rather was an agreement that—in exchange for the command of Syria—Piso would cease from public criticism of the emperor. Despite his previous hostility towards the imperial house, there were several reasons why Piso would accept this deal. First, since command of Syria was rarely given to a great *nobilis*, receiving this province would enhance Piso's status and *dignitas* even higher above his senatorial rivals. Second, since Syria was far off in the East, Piso would substantially be his own master once he assumed command in the province. Since Syria was an imperial province, Piso would technically be a lieutenant of the emperor (a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*) rather than an independent governor of a public province (a proconsul), but this distinction waned in light of the great power and prestige that came from holding Syria. Third, Tiberius took the strange and apparently unique step of increasing the honor and prestige of Piso's commission by having it confirmed by the Senate (Tac. *Ann*. 3.12.1).[51] The emperor certainly did not need the approval of the senate to appoint legates to his provinces, so he probably intended to give Piso the satisfaction of receiving his command from the senate, which might have soothed any discomfort the proud senator had about being a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* instead of a proper proconsul.[52] Indeed, the highly unusual senatorial confirmation may have been intended to obfuscate the

[51] Woodman and Martin 1996, 141, point out that this is the only occasion in Tacitus' *Annals* where an emperor seeks a senatorial decree appointing an imperial legate, although it cannot be known whether Tacitus was following an official report (such as the *SCPP*) or whether he added the phrase on his own. They note that the phrase may be intended to imply that the senate shared responsibility for the debacle that resulted from Piso's governorship.

[52] Augustus used lieutenants (*legati*) with the title *pro praetore* to govern imperial provinces, whereas the senate appointed proconsuls (ex-praetors and ex-consuls acting *pro consule*) to command the public provinces (Suet. *Aug*. 47.1; Strabo 17.3.25; Dio 53.12.4–5).

line between legate and proconsul. Finally, if Piso were even considering the possibility, Syria offered the best opportunity and resources to raise a revolt against Tiberius and his regime.

This last possibility may have been in Tiberius' mind as well. The chance of gaining the support of a *nobilis* like Piso was a tempting prize for Tiberius, but it was also a risk to give such a powerful province to a prestigious senator whose loyalty to Tiberius was uncertain. A man of Piso's lineage and *auctoritas* might win over the support of Syria's legions and start a revolt, especially since Tiberius was a new emperor, was far away, and was not as well known to the eastern legions as he was to those stationed in Germany.[53] Piso was an asset worth acquiring, and his many connections with the imperial family surely gave Tiberius hope that the recalcitrant senator could (like other members of his clan) be brought around to supporting the regime. Even so, the cautious Tiberius probably would not have taken the risk of giving Piso unrestrained access to Syria's four legions had not administrative problems in several eastern provinces presented him with a safeguard. According to Tacitus (*Ann*. 2.42.4–43.1), a number of high-level problems in the East required the presence of a member of the imperial house: Cappadocia needed to be converted into a Roman province; the deaths of the kings of Commagene and Cilicia had created local disputes over whether the regions should remain independent kingdoms or should be incorporated into the Roman Empire as provinces; Syria and Judaea were asking for tax relief; and the unstable political situation in Armenia needed to be monitored and evaluated. Tiberius, therefore, had the senate give Germanicus an extraordinary command over the East with *imperium maius* to deal with these problems, which was in keeping with precedents established by Augustus. In one aspect, however, Tiberius departed from Augustan policy: he kept Piso as his legate in Syria. When Augustus had given Agrippa (and later, Gaius) extraordinary eastern commands, he had not appointed a legate to Syria.[54] Presumably, immediate supervision and command of Syria was part of the *provincia* assigned to Agrippa (and Gaius), which makes sense given that Syria was the most powerful province in the Roman East. Tiberius broke with this practice by having Piso as his legate in Syria at the same

[53] Tiberius is not known to have exercised personal command over the eastern legions for thirty-six years, since his Armenian campaign in 20 B.C.E. (Suet. *Aug*. 21.3; *Tib*. 9.1). Cooley 1998, 203, suggests that Piso may indeed have secretly hoped to seize power at Rome.

[54] See Rowe 2002, 165. Agrippa was sent to the East in 23 and 16 B.C.E. (Jos. *Ant*. 15.10.2, 16.2.1–5; Dio 53.32.1), and Gaius Caesar in 1 B.C.E. (Plin. *HN* 6.141; Suet. *Tib*. 12.2; Dio 55.10.18–19).

time that Germanicus was holding an extraordinary eastern command. Rowe (2002, 165) points out that this was the first and last time until 63 C.E. that an emperor appointed a legate to Syria while an extraordinary commander was holding the entire East with *imperium maius*. It is possible that—because Piso had already received his appointment by the time that Germanicus was assigned to the East—Tiberius did not want to insult Piso by withdrawing or postponing his Syrian command, but if this was the case, then the overlap of Piso and Germanicus in the East was simply an accidental occurrence, which does not seem likely given the importance of the two commands (and the two commanders). Tiberius (a very experienced commander) certainly took both provincial assignments into consideration, so his departure from Augustan practice must have been intentional; he wanted Germanicus and Piso to be in the East at the same time.

The traditional view would say Tiberius sent both men to the East because he wanted Piso to control and limit Germanicus' ambitions, but as the preceding pages have shown, the evidence clearly demonstrates that Piso was no friend and ally to the emperor, that he had no authority or ability to control the prince, and that he consistently acted contrary to the emperor's best interests. In this light, Tiberius must have sent both men to the East because he wanted Germanicus to keep an eye on Piso. The evidence supports this reconstruction well, in particular the nature of their assignments. Although Germanicus was given a command that encompassed all eastern provinces, the specific problems he was sent to resolve were almost entirely outside of Syria, meaning he was expected to spend most of his time away from Syria and from Piso. Furthermore, since Germanicus' responsibilities were mainly financial and organizational, there was little reason to suspect that he would have to interfere in Piso's command of Syria's legions (although he had the authority to do so). This separation in their assignments is telling: Piso could not possibly have interfered in Germanicus' exercise of authority, since the prince had *imperium maius* and Piso had no authority outside of Syria. On the other hand, Germanicus could easily intervene into Piso's administration of Syria and his command of the Syrian legions, both because he had *imperium maius*, and because his *provincia* included Syria. Thus Germanicus was expected to spend most of his time outside of Syria (allowing Piso autonomy of command), but he was well placed (and authorized) to intervene in Syria, whereas Piso had little ability to have an influence on the prince's command. This was an elegant solution for Tiberius: he could honor Piso with an important command, send Germanicus to resolve important problems throughout the East, and—if Piso's

activities turned seditious—the emperor could count on his adopted son and heir to defend the imperial house (and his own future empire) from any threat. This is indeed what happened: Germanicus endured Piso's rude behavior so long as it posed no real threat to the imperial house, but the prince did not hesitate to step in when Piso's activities became potentially treacherous.[55] With a loyal relative and heir in command of the East to keep an eye on things, Tiberius could safely offer Piso the large and prestigious military command of Syria in hopes of winning the support of this persistent critic.

The importance and prestige of Syria, and the honor of receiving the imperial province with senatorial confirmation, induced Piso to accept the command, but the subsequent news that Germanicus would receive an extraordinary command over the East must have come as a bitter pill. Piso probably consoled himself that Germanicus' mission was primarily financial and would force the prince to spend almost all of his time reviewing tax systems and administrative structures in provinces other than Syria, but the legate was no doubt angry at this development and soon began lashing out against the prince. There is no evidence that Germanicus was expected to assume command of Syria's legions for military activities, and Piso may have expected the prince to spend his leisure time touring the luxurious cities throughout the East (as he in fact did).[56] Thus Piso probably hoped (or even expected) to be left alone in his command of Syria, and planned to ignore Germanicus' presence in the East as much as possible. Of course, his hope of having a free rein was later crushed when the prince did indeed appear in the province, and Piso's anger over the development led him to be more and more insubordinate, throwing fuel on his already-strained relationship with Germanicus.

Sending Germanicus to keep an eye on Piso was a good idea, but events proved that the two men were incapable of working together, and their differences became insurmountable. Tacitus portrays this as being entirely Piso's fault: the Syrian governor had always resented the young prince, and this resentment turned into the open hostility and gross insubordination discussed above. On the other hand, it is also likely that Germanicus did not tread as carefully as he might have done

[55] Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.3, 2.69.1. Goodyear 1981, 2.367, notes that Germanicus' mild reply to Piso at their first unfriendly encounter (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.2) may indicate that the prince was uncertain about how the emperor wished the legate treated.

[56] Germanicus did indeed spend much time touring Asia and Egypt (Tac. *Ann*. 2.54.1–55.3). Mierow 1943, 146, points out that Germanicus was expected to spend most of his time in Armenia.

to protect Piso's honor and *dignitas*. Although Germanicus was loyal to the emperor, he was probably unwilling or unable to tolerate Piso's arrogant behavior, and he did not allow Piso unimpeded exercise of authority in Syria, either because the prince's official duties necessitated that he operate to some degree in that province, or because he wished to humble the haughty governor. Still, Germanicus was surprisingly tolerant of Piso's outbursts, perhaps because he was aware of Tiberius' motive for assigning Piso to Syria and, therefore, did his best to tolerate Piso's insults in the knowledge that doing so helped his adoptive father gain the support of an important *nobilis*.[57] Germanicus' friends were outraged by Piso's disrespectful and insubordinate behavior and sought to have him humbled, but the prince refrained from doing so for a long period, which suggests that he was deliberately showing Piso more indulgence than could normally be expected for one who treated an imperial prince so insolently (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.4). At some point, however, Germanicus ran out of patience, perhaps because Piso's insubordination had expanded to countermanding Germanicus' instructions to the legions and to urban governments in the East.[58] These acts may have smacked far more of treason than of mere personal enmity to Germanicus, who thereupon took immediate steps to intervene in Piso's administration and to take greater control of affairs in Syria.

According to Tacitus (*Ann*. 2.57.3–58.2, 69.1), Germanicus intruded into Piso's dealings with foreign kingdoms (especially Armenia), and began intervening in the military and civilian affairs throughout Syria. From Piso's perspective, these actions were a humiliation that amounted to being stripped of his command by a young man many years his junior—a man whom Piso rated as having less *dignitas* than he.[59] When Germanicus' intrusions proved too much for Piso to bear, he left his province in protest, no doubt believing that Germanicus had deprived him of his command

[57]The *SCPP* (26–27) praises Germanicus' patience in the face of Piso's hostility and insubordination.

[58]There were two occasions when Piso clearly and specifically refused to obey Germanicus or countermanded his orders: in 18 C.E., Piso refused to bring units of the Syrian legions to Germanicus in Armenia (Tac. *Ann*. 2.57.1); and in 19 C.E., Piso reversed all of Germanicus' *acta* in Syria while the prince was away in Egypt (Tac. *Ann*. 2.69.1).

[59]As Seager 2005, 88, points out, Piso's insubordinate action "is comprehensible—it was after all Piso's army and Piso's province—yet pointlessly provocative, since when Germanicus returned to Syria he could once more overrule Piso, whose chief purpose was probably just to restore his self-esteem."

(Tac. *Ann*. 2.69.2, 70.2).[60] Tacitus obfuscates this detail by including an otherwise unsubstantiated report that Germanicus ordered Piso out of the province, but this is contradicted by the *SCPP*, which specifically blames Piso for leaving his province (*SCPP* 48–49; *Ann*. 2.70.2). The very fact that Piso abandoned his province to Germanicus is ample evidence that his primary concern was not to counsel or restrain the prince, but rather to serve his own interests, which did not necessarily mirror the interests of the emperor. Indeed, Tacitus may have included the erroneous report that Piso was ordered out of the province to provide an alternate explanation for Piso's departure, one that did not undermine Tacitus' insinuation that Piso was supposed to be the friend and agent of the emperor.

Germanicus' sudden and unexpected death was the catalyst that turned a bad situation into a debacle, since it induced Piso to start a civil war in his effort to reclaim command of Syria. This disaster seems to have shaken Tiberius and changed his policies regarding provincial commands; whereas he had originally been willing to follow Augustan practice of winning over *nobiles* like Piso with important commands, henceforth a certain degree of paranoia entered his provincial policy. For example, the next legate Tiberius appointed to Syria was Aelius Lamia (in 21/22 C.E.), but the emperor did not permit Aelius to leave Rome and take up his command in person. For ten years, Aelius remained the governor of Syria, but he commanded the province from Rome through legates.[61] L. Arruntius was likewise compelled to govern Spain from Rome through legates for ten years, perhaps because of the large army of three legions stationed in Spain. Thus Piso's behavior in Syria had convinced Tiberius to be far more cautious in assigning military commands, and he adopted a policy of leaving trusted men in their provinces for long periods, abandoning his early attempt to use provincial commands to win over new supporters. Yet the situation might have been far worse if Germanicus and his loyal lieutenants had not been present in the East to intervene when Piso's activities began to seem treacherous. If we set aside the bias and innuendo

[60] Goodyear 1981, 2.362–63, makes the unsupported but intriguing suggestion that Piso may have suffered a mental breakdown. Although there is no evidence for this, it would certainly help demonstrate the seriousness of Piso's expectations and his horror at having those expectations ruined by the interference of Germanicus. It is not difficult to imagine that Piso's self-importance made him unable to cope with playing second fiddle to the young prince. On the other hand, Shotter 2004, 44, suggests that Piso may simply have been unintelligent.

[61] Tac. *Ann*. 6.27.2–3 (cf. *Hist*. 2.65.1–2). For further discussion, see Drogula 2011 (esp. 251–52).

in Tacitus' account, it does not seem possible that Piso was a loyal supporter, lieutenant, and co-conspirator of the emperor. If Tiberius trusted anyone in the East, it was Germanicus, whose extraordinary command may well have included keeping an eye on Piso.

Syme (1986, 341) once noted that Syria was not only a provincial command of "signal importance," but further that, "if a prince of the dynasty went to the eastern lands, the selection of the legate became a delicate matter." If Piso was not a loyal supporter of the emperor, and was not sent to check the ambitions of Germanicus as Tacitus implies, then why was such an arrogant *nobilis* and outspoken critic of the imperial regime given the outstanding privilege of holding one of the greatest military commands in the Roman Empire? The evidence suggests a very plausible answer: Tiberius hoped to "purchase" Piso's loyalty and support by giving him the province of Syria. To minimize the risk, Tiberius gave Piso the province at a time when his trusted and capable adopted son Germanicus would be holding an extraordinary command in the East with *imperium maius*. The prince was sent to the East to resolve a number of major financial and organizational problems, but his proximity to Syria provided a safeguard against the possibility of insurrection. The emperor's plan to win over the support of Piso failed, but Piso's effort to retake Syria by force after Germanicus' death may indicate that he did indeed harbor rebellious thoughts, and that the prince had been right to intervene. In short, Germanicus may have done exactly what Tiberius expected him to do: keep an eye on Piso and intervene, if necessary, to protect the security of the Julio-Claudian regime.[62]

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE
e-mail: fdrogula@providence.edu

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