TIBERIUS
DIS MANIBUS

J. S.

C. H. S.

PARENTIUM CARISSIMORUM

J. G. N.

MAGISTRI PRIMI ET OPTIMI
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface to the Second Edition</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface to the First Edition</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Table</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stemma</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1 TIBERIUS’ CHILDHOOD: THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. THE END OF THE REPUBLIC</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. TIBERIUS’ BIRTH AND INFANCY: THE TRIUMVIRATE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE AUGUSTAN PRINCIPATE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2 TIBERIUS AND AUGUSTUS

| 1. TIBERIUS’ FIRST STEPS IN PUBLIC LIFE | 11 |
| 2. THE SUCCESSION: MARCELLUS AND THE SONS OF AGrippa | 14 |
3 THE NORTHERN FRONTIER: RHAETIA AND VINDELICIA 18
4 THE SUCCESSION: TIBERIUS’ MARRIAGE TO JULIA 19
5 THE NORTHERN FRONTIER: ILLYRICUM AND GERMANY 21
6 TIBERIUS’ RETIREMENT TO RHODES 23
7 TIBERIUS’ ADOPTION 29
8 THE NORTHERN FRONTIER: GERMANY AND PANNONIA 32
9 TIBERIUS THE SUCCESSOR OF AUGUSTUS 37

3 THE ACCESSION OF TIBERIUS 40
1 THE DEATH OF AUGUSTUS AND THE REMOVAL OF AGRIPPA POSTUMUS 40
2 THE INTERIM AND THE MEETING OF THE SENATE ON 17 SEPTEMBER 42

4 GERMANICUS AND DRUSUS 48
1 THE MUTINIES ON THE DANUBE AND THE RHINE 48
2 THE GERMAN CAMPAIGNS OF 15 61
3 THE GERMAN CAMPAIGN OF 16 68
4 THE TRIAL OF LIBO AND THE RISING OF CLEMENS 74
5 DRUSUS IN ILLYRICUM 77
6 GERMANICUS IN THE EAST 81
7 THE TRIAL OF PISO 94
8 THE SUCCESSION: DRUSUS AND THE SONS OF GERMANICUS 100

5 TIBERIUS AS PRINCEPS, AD 14–26 104
1 SENATE AND MAGISTRATES 104
2 THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER AND THE PEOPLE 115
3 HONOURS AND TITLES 119
4 RELIGION 120
5 THE LAW OF MAIESTAS 125
6 THE PROVINCES 138
7 TIBERIUS AND THE PRECEPTS OF AUGUSTUS 147
CONTENTS

6 SEIANUS 151
   1 THE RISE OF SEIANUS 151
   2 SEIANUS’ AMBITIONS 152
   3 SEIANUS AND THE DEATH OF DRUSUS 154
   4 FROM DRUSUS’ DEATH TO TIBERIUS’ WITHDRAWAL TO CAPREA 158
   5 THE SUPREMACY OF SEIANUS 171
   6 THE FALL OF SEIANUS 180

7 THE LAST YEARS 189
   1 TIBERIUS AND ROME AFTER SEIANUS’ FALL 189
   2 THE EASTERN FRONTIER 203
   3 THE SUCCESSION: GAIUS AND TIBERIUS GEMELLUS 205
   4 TIBERIUS’ DEATH 206

Conclusion 209

Afterword 213

The Sources 232
   Tacitus 233
   Suetonius 237
   Dio 239
   Velleius Paterculus 240

Notes 243

Bibliography 288

Additional Bibliography 294

Index 299
ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

1 Augustus 25
2 Livia 26
3 Agrippa 38
4 Silver cup from Boscoreale 78
5 The Grand Camée de France 80
6 Gilt bronze plaque from a sword-sheath 93
7 Tiberius portrayed with the corona civica 132
8 Germanicus 133
9 Agrippina 135
10 Drusus 136
11 The Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre 148
12 Coin of Smyrna celebrating the building of the temple to Tiberius (obverse) 186
13 Coin of Smyrna celebrating the building of the temple to Tiberius (reverse) 186
14 Coin celebrating the birth of Tiberius’ grandsons 187
15 Coin celebrating the restoration of the cities of Asia 187
16 Tiberius as an old man 200
ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

1 The Roman world under Tiberius  xx
2 Italy and its islands  xxi
3 The western provinces  xxii
4 The northern frontier  xxiii
5 Greece and the Aegean  xxiv
6 The eastern frontier  xxv
In the more than thirty years that have elapsed since the publication of the first edition of this book, much has happened to make a revision desirable. Tiberius and his reign have inevitably received a great deal of scholarly attention. Another major biography appeared, initially only a few years after my own: Barbara Levick’s *Tiberius the politician* (London, 1976; 21999). The principal sources have also been the subject of copious investigation. Books and articles on Tacitus proliferate, noteworthy among them the commentary of Tony Woodman and Ronald Martin on *Annals 3* (A. J. Woodman and R. H. Martin, *The Annals of Tacitus Book 3*, Cambridge, 1996). Velleius has been particularly well served, by Woodman’s editions of the Tiberian and Augustan chapters (A. J. Woodman, *Velleius Paterculus, The Tiberian Narrative* (2.94–131), Cambridge, 1977; *Velleius Paterculus, The Caesarian and Augustan Narrative* (2.41–93), Cambridge, 1983), and Maria Elefante’s new edition of the whole work (M. Elefante, *Velleius Paterculus: Ad M. Vinicium consulem libri duo*, Hildesheim, 1997).

Several major pieces of new evidence have also accrued. The *Tabula Larinas* sheds light on social legislation in the early years of the reign. The *Tabula Siarensis* yields much new information about funeral honours for Germanicus and the ways in which the prince’s death and his achievements were presented to the public, in Rome and throughout the empire.
Most important of all, the Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre tells us a great deal about Germanicus’ ill-fated mission to the East, his awkward relationship with the legate of Syria Cn. Piso, his death and Piso’s subsequent trial, while at the same time raising a number of new problems.

I am therefore grateful for the opportunity to present some new and second thoughts. The main body of the text remains unaltered, apart from the correction of misprints and the addition of a few source references. New evidence and recent modern scholarship are addressed in the Afterword, the subdivisions of which roughly follow the chapters and sections of the original text.

I am grateful for various forms of assistance and encouragement to Jane Bellemore, Bruce Gibson and Miriam Griffin. All those at Blackwells with whom it has been my pleasure to deal deserve thanks for their ready co-operation, while my editor Margaret Aherne has once again shown understanding, wit and patience to match her expertise.

Liverpool, March 2004

Robin Seager

           Liverpool, March 2004

Robin Seager
It is the aim of this book to give an account of Tiberius’ character and of his career that will be at the same time intelligible to the general reader and useful to scholars and students of the early principate. No serious book on Tiberius’ reign as a whole has appeared in English since that of Marsh in 1931. Since that time there have been many new discoveries in the fields of epigraphy and papyrology, as well as a steady stream of books and articles on various aspects of Tiberius’ life and work. Thus a new biography needs no justification, except perhaps against the charge that imperial biography as a genre is obsolete, if not actually pernicious. In reply it may fairly be said that under Tiberius the political and social development of the empire and the personal history of its ruler are more intricately and intimately dependent upon one another than at any other time, so that neither can be understood in isolation.

I am deeply indebted to my friends Ewen Bowie, Eric Marsden and Jeremy Paterson, all of whom read the entire book in manuscript and made many valuable criticisms and suggestions; they are not of course responsible for whatever faults remain. I should also like to express my gratitude to my publishers for a constant and ready co-operation that has made my task much lighter and pleasanter than it might have been.

Plymouth, April 1971

Robin Seager
### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

**Tiberius' Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Assassination of Caesar (March 15).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Octavian consul (August). Triumvirate formed (November).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Fall of Perusia (February). Pact of Brundisium (October).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Pact of Misenum (spring).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Birth of Drusus (January 14). Marriage of Octavian and Livia (January 17).</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Pact of Tarentum (spring).</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Death of Ti. Nero. ?Betrothal of Tiberius and Vipsania.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Actium (September).</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Octavian’s triumph (August 13–15).</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27 Tiberius in Spain as military tribune.
26 Marriage of Marcellus and Julia.
25 Tiberius quaestor, Marcellus aedile. Death of Marcellus.
24 Augustus resigns consulship, receives tribunician power. Tiberius praetor.
23 Tiberius prosecutes Fannius Caepio.
21 ?Birth of Drusus (October 7).
19 Birth of L. Caesar. Adoption of Gaius and Lucius.
18 Tiberius praetor.
17 Tiberius in Illyricum. Tiberius and Drusus receive *proconsular imperium*. Marriage of Tiberius and Julia.
16 Tiberius and Drusus in Rhaetia and Vindelicia. Birth of Germanicus (May 24).
15 Tiberius consul. Agrippa’s tribunician power renewed. Tiberius in Illyricum. Tiberius in Germany.
14 Tiberius consul ii. Tiberius’ triumph (January). Tiberius in Germany.
13 Divorce of Tiberius and Julia. Exile of Julia.
12 Tiberius in Illyricum. Son born to Tiberius and Julia.
10 Tiberius consul. Tiberius’ triumph (January). Tiberius in Germany.
9 Tiberius in Illyricum. Tiberius and Drusus receive *proconsular imperium*. Marriage of Tiberius and Julia.
8 Tiberius in Illyricum. Tiberius’ triumph (January). Tiberius in Germany.
7 Tiberius consul ii. Tiberius’ triumph (January). Tiberius in Germany.
6 Tiberius receives tribunician power, retires to Rhodes.
5 Gaius and Lucius *principes iuventutis*.
4 Tiberius in Germany.
3 Tiberius in Illyricum.
2 Divorce of Tiberius and Julia. Exile of Julia.
1 Gaius’ mission to the East.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tiberius returns to Rome. Death of Lucius (August 20).</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Death of Gaius (February 21). Tiberius receives tribunician power. Adoption of Germanicus by Tiberius. Adoption of Tiberius and Agrippa Postumus by Augustus (June 26). Tiberius to Germany.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tiberius in Germany.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pannonian revolt.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tiberius in Illyricum.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tiberius in Illyricum.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tiberius in Illyricum.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tiberius in Germany.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tiberius in Germany.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Germanicus consul. Birth of Gaius (August 31). Tiberius’ triumph (October 23).</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tiberius’ imperium made equal with that of Augustus and his tribunician power renewed.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Death of Augustus (August 19). Execution of Agrippa Postumus. Mutinies. Tiberius accepts principate (September 17). Germanicus in Germany. Death of Julia.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Drusus consul. Tiberius pontifex maximus (March 10). Germanicus in Germany. Seianus sole praetorian prefect. Death of a son of Drusus.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Germanicus in Germany. Trial of Libo (September). Clemens.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Tiberius consul III, Germanicus consul II. Fall of Maroboduus.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Death of Germanicus (October 10). Birth of Drusus’ twins.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Trial of Cn. Piso. Death of Vipsania.</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Tiberius consul IV, Drusus consul II. Tiberius in Campania. Trial of Clutorius Priscus. Revolt of Florus and Sacrovir.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Drusus receives tribunician power. Trial of C. Silanus.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Divorce of Seianus and Apicata. Death of Drusus (September 14). Death of Drusus’ son Germanicus.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24 Tiberius’ province renewed. Trial of C. Silius. Death of Tacfarinas.
26 Trial of Claudia Pulchra. Tiberius leaves Rome.
27 Tiberius retires to Capreae.
29 Death of Livia. Exile of Agrippina and Nero.
33 Tiberius’ province renewed. Suicide of Mam. Scaurus.
34 Suicide of Fulcinius Trio. L. Vitellius in the East.
35 Suicide of L. Arruntius. Death of Tiberius (March 16). Funeral of Tiberius (April 3).
ABBREVIATIONS

AC L’antiquité classique
AJAH American Journal of Ancient History
AJP American Journal of Philology
BSR Papers of the British School at Rome
CAH Cambridge Ancient History
CJ Classical Journal
CP Classical Philology
CQ Classical Quarterly
CR Classical Review
EJ V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, Documents illustrating the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius (Oxford, 1955)
GR Greece and Rome
HSCP Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
JRS Journal of Roman Studies
LCM Liverpool Classical Monthly
MH Museum Helveticum
PdP La parola del passato
REL Revue des études latines
RhM Rheinisches Museum
SCPP Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAPA</strong></td>
<td>Transactions of the American Philological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TL</strong></td>
<td>Tabula Larinas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TS</strong></td>
<td>Tabula Siarensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WS</strong></td>
<td>Wiener Studien</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YCS</strong></td>
<td>Yale Classical Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ZPE</strong></td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All other abbreviations and short titles used in the notes should be self-explanatory if reference is made to the bibliography.
THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS IN THE REIGNS OF AUGUSTUS AND TIBERIUS
The Roman world under Tiberius
MAP 2  Italy and its islands
MAP 3 The western provinces
MAP 4 The northern frontier
MAP 5  Greece and the Aegean
MAP 6  The eastern frontier
1

TIBERIUS’ CHILDHOOD:
THE POLITICAL
BACKGROUND

1 THE END OF THE REPUBLIC

For a man with political ambitions in the late republic the way to eminence in the state was the *cursus honorum*, the succession of magistracies that made up a career in public office. Beginning as quaestor at the age of thirty, he would find himself assigned as paymaster and general aide to a provincial governor or perhaps allotted a financial post at Rome. The next step up was the aedileship or the tribunate of the plebs. As aedile he would be in charge of markets and public buildings and would be expected to ensure his future progress by the giving of lavish games. As tribune he could play a more prominent part, with the power to initiate legislation himself and to hamper public business by his veto. Then came the praetorship, during which he would be engaged in the administration of the civil law or in presiding over one of the standing criminal courts, the *quaestiones*. After his year of office he could, if he chose, serve for a year or sometimes longer as proconsular governor of a province. Finally, at a minimum age of forty-three, he might attain the consulship. In the last decades of the republic a consul’s duties were few except in moments of crisis, usually involving nothing more arduous than presiding at the election of the consuls for the following year. To
follow his consulship he could again, if he wished, govern a province as proconsul.

The path was steep and narrowed as it climbed: twenty quaestors were elected each year, but only two consuls – it was not until the principate that it became a rare honour for a *consul ordinarius* to hold office for the whole of his year without giving way after a few months to a suffect. Hence many were bound to fall by the wayside. A man’s success depended on the influence he could bring to bear, and he stood or fell alone, for at Rome there were no groups that bore any resemblance to the modern political party. He could enhance his personal standing by acquiring military glory and distinction in the arts of peace, oratory and jurisprudence. But even more important was the position he inherited. Over the years every great Roman family built up an intricate nexus of relationships on which the power of its members was based: ties of friendship, marriage and adoption with other families, ties of patronage with individuals of lower rank, with cities, tribes and provinces all over the empire. For a ‘new man’, one who came of a family no member of which had previously held public office and so lacked these connections, there would normally be no hope of advancement beyond the praetorship, for the *nobiles*, descendants of men who had reached the consulate, jealously guarded the highest office for the scions of their own houses.

But once a man had attained the consulship, whether on merit or because his father had held it, he was at the centre of power, for the dominant force in Roman politics was the senate. All former magistrates were senators for life, but their seniority and long experience gave the opinion of the consulars a weight that would not often be challenged by the mass of senators or by individual magistrates. For although the senate was nominally an advisory body and its decrees had no binding legal force, its traditional authority was so great that for any magistrate to defy or ignore it was an act of rare temerity.

The power of the magistrates was limited in other ways. Their actions could be vetoed by a holder of equal or greater power and also by a tribune of the plebs, for the office of tribune had originally been conceived to protect the people against high-handed magistrates. Even a consul’s hands could be tied by his colleague or by a tribune. Moreover a magistrate held office for only a year. When his term was over and he became a private citizen again, he might find himself on trial for any illegal acts he had committed. Praetors, consuls and proconsuls, who might command