

THE QUAESTORSHIP OF TREBONIUS

C. Trebonius (cos. suff. 45) has almost always been assigned a quaestorship in 60, though the scholars so minded have usually been careful to note that the ancient sources do not establish this fact with certainty¹). But L. Lange dated the quaestorship of Trebonius precisely to 58, and Broughton, with his usual good instincts, ignores the consensus and now cautiously identifies Trebonius as "Quaestor 60 or 58"²). Since the quaestorship of Trebonius is mentioned in a passage of Cicero which refers rather vaguely to events of the past, its date can only be fixed by historical argument, but I think it can be shown that the received view is wrong and that the quaestorship of Trebonius belongs to 58.

Cicero recalls the quaestorship in a letter written to Trebonius late in 46: *cum quaestor in mea atque in publica causa consulum partis suscepisti, cum tribuno plebis quaestor non parvisti, cui tuus praesertim collega pareret* (Fam. 15.21.2). If the letter recounts events of 60, the tribune in question is undoubtedly C. Herennius, who attempted to transfer Clodius to the plebs; if events of 58 are at issue, the unnamed tribune must be Clodius himself. Shackleton Bailey and Beaujeu did not believe that this passage could refer to events of 58; if Trebonius had been active then, they maintained, Cicero would have thanked him in the speeches made upon his return in 57. Münzer on the other hand deemed the description of Trebonius in the letter an exaggeration, since Cicero does not mention Trebonius in two extant letters of 60 (Att. 1.18.4–5, 1.19.5) which refer to Herennius and Clodius. On Münzer's view, Cicero's silence about Trebonius in 57–56 does not indicate that he was quaestor in 60 (the date Münzer himself accepted), but proves that Cicero exaggerated his role when writing to him in 46. The context of the letter supports Münzer: this letter was the first one written by Cicero to Trebonius after reading the latter's *liber* (15.21.1), a collection of quotations from Cicero. There is therefore every reason to believe that Cicero in 46 magnified the importance of Trebonius' quaestorian activities³). And since Cicero in 56 did recall the service that Pompey had

1) P. Willems, *Le Sénat de la République romaine*, Louvain 1878, i.496: "questeur vers 60"; W. Drumann–P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms II*, Leipzig ²1902, 46; R. Y. Tyrrell and L. C. Purser, *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero IV*, Dublin/London ²1918, 348; F. Münzer, *RE VI A*, 1937, 2274: "Wenn auch die herrschende Ansicht nicht streng zu beweisen ist, so ist sie doch sehr annehmbar"; T. Robert S. Broughton, *MRR* 2.184, with a query entered Trebonius among the quaestors of 60; M. Deißmann-Merten, *Der Kleine Pauly* 5, 1975, 935: "Quaestor (60?)"; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero: Epistulae ad Familiares II*, Cambridge 1977, 367: the year 60 is "acceptable, though not strictly provable"; J. Beaujeu, *Cicéron, Correspondance VII* (Budé edition), Paris 1980, 296, on *Cic. Fam.* 15.21.2: "Unique témoignage . . . les allusions qu'il contient peuvent se rapporter à l'année 58 . . . mais conviennent mieux à l'année 60."

2) L. Lange, *Römische Alterthümer III*, Berlin ²1876, 338; Broughton, *MRR* 3.207.

3) It will not escape notice that Cicero is on record praising the quaestorship of Trebonius only after reading the *liber*, and even then praises the quaestor on the ground that he took certain actions favorable to himself. The whole passage tells us much more about the character of Cicero than it does about the quaestorship of Trebonius.

rendered him in 60 by opposing Clodius (Har. 45), it becomes clear that Cicero in the speeches after his restoration recalled the important services done him by others in connection with Clodius, those as early as 60 and those of 58–57. Accordingly, one cannot adduce Cicero's silence about Trebonius in his speeches of 57–56 as an argument against dating his quaestorship to 58. For the quaestorship of Trebonius the year 58 has as much a priori likelihood as the year 60.

The case in favor of 58 begins with the words *consulum partis suscepisti*. The translation or interpretation of these words has undergone a radical change, yet somehow the consensus in favor of 60 has not been weakened. At one time the phrase was taken to mean "you sided with the consuls"⁴). Such a translation forces us to date the quaestorship to 60, since Cicero would praise no one for siding with Gabinius and Piso, the consuls of 58. Of those who favor a date in 60, Tyrrell-Purser and Münzer clearly interpreted *consulum partis suscepisti* in this way⁵), and we can assume that Willems and Drumann-Groebe so understood the phrase. Shackleton Bailey took the phrase to mean that "Trebonius as quaestor took upon himself the duties of the consuls", and Beaujeu translates the clause "quand tu as assumé, comme questeur, le rôle des consuls dans une cause qui était à la fois la mienne et celle de l'État"⁶). Thus the passage, correctly interpreted, means exactly the opposite of what it was once thought to mean: the quaestor is now no longer a supporter of the consuls, but an opponent of them, who stepped in and fulfilled the rôle which they had abandoned⁷).

There can be no doubt that Cicero would praise a man who opposed the consuls of 58. We shall therefore have to date the quaestorship of Trebonius to 58 – unless we deem it possible for Cicero to praise a man who opposed the consuls of

4) W. G. Williams so translates in the Loeb edition, London/New York 1929.

5) Tyrrell and Purser, loc. cit.: "We gather from this passage that in the year 60 Trebonius was quaestor, and vigorously supported the consuls Afranius and Metellus Celer." Münzer, loc. cit.: "die herrschende Ansicht ... T(rebonius) war demnach städtischer Quaestor 694 = 60 unter dem Consulat des Q. Metellus Celer und L. Afranius; die gemeinsame Feindschaft ist die gegen P. Clodius gewesen."

6) Shackleton Bailey, loc. cit.; Beaujeu, loc. cit., notes that "*suscipere partes* signifie d'ordinaire 'se charger d'un rôle,'" and cites Cic. Verr. 2.4.81 as a parallel. Lange, loc. cit., must have understood the Latin similarly: he shows no awareness that the quaestorship of Trebonius would become problematic and does not discuss the matter at length; he merely cites Fam. 15.21.2 as proof that Trebonius "696/58 als Quaestor auf Seiten der Senatspartei gestanden hatte." It will be noted that, of those who understood the Latin correctly – Lange, Shackleton Bailey, Beaujeu – Lange alone dated the quaestorship to 58.

7) Shackleton Bailey, loc. cit., comments: "How Trebonius as quaestor took upon himself the duties of the consuls is beyond a guess." Beaujeu, loc. cit., must also be thinking of formal duties when he writes that *consulum partis suscepisti* "fait difficulté". Formal or legally prescribed duties of the consuls are not at issue: a quaestor could not simply assume such duties. What specific actions Trebonius took we do not know, but it seems likely to me that Cicero has provided us with a good general definition of *consulum partis*: a man could be said to take up the *consulum partis* whenever he took up *mea atque ... publica causa* (always confused in Cicero's mind). Thus Metellus Celer (cos. 60), for opposing Clodius in 60, is called *consul φιλοπατρις* (Cic. Att. 2.1.4). Of Afranius (cos. 60), who was either neutral toward or supportive of Clodius, Cicero says: *Auli filius vero ita se gerit ut eius consulatus non consulatus sit* (Cic. Att. 1.20.5).

60, Q. Caecilius Metellus Celer and L. Afranius. Insufficient attention has been paid to the plural *consulum* (for which there are no variant readings): it is easy to demonstrate Cicero's utter contempt for Afranius, but no extant passage reveals that Cicero had a negative opinion of Metellus Celer. As luck would have it, Cicero in three separate letters give his estimate of both consuls side by side (Att. 1.18.5, 1.19.4, 1.20.5); each passage speaks of Metellus in the most complimentary terms, and of Afranius in the most derogatory ones. Beaujeu deserves credit for noticing the plural *consulum*, but we cannot credit the special pleading to which he was forced by his attempt to retain a date of 60 for the quaestorship. Beaujeu tries hard to adduce reasons for Cicero to regard Metellus as an enemy; he tells us that Cicero had not forgotten that Metellus was married to Clodia, and that this relationship had obliged Metellus to promulgate the same law about Clodius which Herennius had proposed. Let us look at the passage in question, a letter of 20 January 60 B. C.: *Metellus est consul egregius et nos amat, sed imminuit auctoritatem suam quod habet dicis causa promulgatum illud idem de Clodio* (Att. 1.18.5). Beaujeu points to the words *imminuit auctoritatem suam*. This means nothing; we cannot seriously expect Cicero to rejoice at the *promulgatio*. But the passage is quite informative: at the very moment he describes Metellus' promulgation of a law ultimately directed against himself, Cicero attests his own high opinion of Metellus (*consul egregius*), and Metellus' great admiration for himself (*nos amat*). Beaujeu neglects two key words, *dicis causa*, "as a matter of form"; Cicero was not upset because he understood that Metellus was obligated to act as he did by virtue of his family relationship to Clodius. If any further proof is needed, we can find it in a letter written in May of 60: *Metellus tuus est egregius consul; unum reprehendo, quod otium (e) Gallia nuntiari non magno opere gaudet, cupit, credo, triumphare, hoc vellem mediocrius, cetera egregia* (Att. 1.20.5). In May, long after the *promulgatio*, Cicero could find only one fault with Metellus, his desire for a triumph; in all other respects he deemed the consulship of Metellus excellent (*cetera egregia*). Since Cicero was not upset by the *promulgatio* in January 60, we can hardly suppose that it rankled in 46.

Cicero was consistent in his approbation of Metellus Celer, and therefore could not have praised a quaestor for opposing him⁸). The plural *consulum* requires us to date the quaestorship of Trebonius to 58.

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8) Beaujeu, loc. cit., at times realized that Cicero's high regard for Metellus Celer is well established, but still did not desist from his attempt to keep the quaestorship of Trebonius in 60: "le pluriel *consulum* apparaît ainsi comme une exagération rhétorique".

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