

Supplementary Note to Chapter 7

Ratios: How many Patrons per Client Community? How many Client Communities per Patron? highly speculative, but perhaps of interest...

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There are good reasons to speculate about the number of client communities a senator or an equestrian or decurion might have had and, inversely, to calculate the number of patrons a community might have and how they (the patrons) were distributed by rank, origin and benefaction. The most important reason for doing so is that such estimates provide an indication of patronal activity and allow us to gain a better understanding of the extra-legal activities associated with that status.ⁱ We can understand why Pliny may have felt reluctant to increase his responsibilities by adding a new client and why Tifernum might coopt him as its patron before he became committed elsewhere (Ch. 4). Moreover, and however rough the calculations might be, they do suggest a context in which particular questions can be addressed. For example, what kinds of burdens and responsibilities did senators, equestrians and decurions have in terms of civic patronage, and what kind of protectors and benefactors did communities wish to have?

The *album Canusinum* of 223 (CIL 9, 338 = ILS.6121) offers a unique opportunity to examine the needs of one community in reference to civic patronage. The *album* itself is discussed more fully in the next chapter. The concern here is specifically with the distribution of patrons included thereon. The heading of the inscription specifically claims to list the names of all the decurions of the town. Column I lists all the patrons grouped by their status as senators or as equestrians.

As with many other discussions of institutions based on the epigraphic evidence, the following analysis is speculative. The reasons are well known. The search for general patterns of behavior based on the collection of individual cases is necessarily limited by the very small numbers of surviving inscriptions and by the fact that survival is not random. The *album Canusinum* is one of only two surviving lists of patrons; it records then the situation in one community at one point in time (the second *album*, of Timgad, dates to ca

A.D. 360 and is discussed briefly below). While some scholars may be reluctant to extend the evidence of the *album* too broadly, it does offer a unique opportunity to correct and/or supplement the data of the individual finds. For example: the evidence of individual inscriptions suggests that about one-third of all patrons were of senatorial status in the Principate; the two *alba* indicate that that the senatorial share of the total was closer to half, a figure that suggests that communities remained very interested in acquiring patrons of senatorial status and succeeded in doing so.

To anticipate what will be argued: If the Canusian distribution of patrons is assumed to be reasonably “standard” for the era, and were to be extended to include similar Italian communities, we would find the following pattern. In 223, there were about 9600 cases of municipal patronage in Italy (and at least as many, if not more, involving provincial communities). Of the 9600 Italian cases, about 6000 involved senators and 3600 equestrians and decurions. The range was, however, quite broad. Ostia and Tibur probably had as many if not more patrons than did Canusium; smaller and/or less important communities may have had fewer. Conversely, the average senator must have had about ten municipal clients (6000 cases/600 senators) in Italy alone. For equestrian and decurions, however, the evidence suggests that only one in ten ever became the patron of an Italian community (3600 cases/40000 decurions).

The basic figures for calculation are:

- 27 senatorial and 8 decurial patrons of Canusium in 223,ⁱⁱ
- about six hundred senators
- about 400 Italian communities

If Canusium has an average number of patrons in 223 than the total number of cases of senatorial patronage is 400 (Italian communities) x 27 = 10,800 and the average senator would have had (10,800/600 senators) = 18 clients.ⁱⁱⁱ For decurions, the figure would be 3200 (8 dec. patr x 400 communities). If these figures are distributed proportionately (1:2:8:7, see Table 7.3) the four periods, we could project that the average senator of the Augustan age had about two client communities in Italy (a figure that appears to be too low). During the Flavian period this would have risen to four, and during the Antonine period to sixteen.^{iv}

There is reason to believe that Canusium had a higher number of patrons than did most communities. Not only was it a much larger town than was Tifernum and many of the cities of Etruria, but also other indications confirm this hypothesis. Canusium without the *album* has six epigraphically attested patrons for the period 27 B.C. to A.D. 262. This places it among the highest seven percent of the 182 communities known to have had at least one patron. It suggests that it may have coopted more patrons than did most other communities. We can calculate roughly what the number of patrons might have been in other communities by extending the ratio of otherwise surviving patrons at Canusium to the total on the *album*(6:39) as n:x, where n = the number of surviving cases in any town for the whole time in question and x the number of patrons in 223.

Hence, 1 attested patron suggests a total number of patrons in 223 of 6; 2 surviving suggests 13, etc.

If we multiply the number of predicted patrons by the number of communities with those cases and combine the totals, we can project the number of senatorial patrons for 182 communities (the number of communities known to have at least one patron) to be about 2900.

A theoretical total of senatorial patrons can be calculated by extending the ratio of known communities (182) to total number of Italian communities (ca. 400) against the presumed number of senators in 223 (600) giving a total of about 6300 cases. This yields two reasonable averages for the year 223: Average number of Italian client communities per senatorial patron = ca. 10 (6300 / 600 senators); average number of senatorial patrons per Italian community = ca. 15 (6300 / 400)

For the number of decurions/equestrians as patrons, the calculations are somewhat different.

There are 400 towns, if each town has 100 decurions, then there are about 40,000 decurions in free population of 4 to 5 million or about 1% of free population. At Canusium, 8 of 100 decurions are patrons (for this analysis it is not important whether the decurions / equestrians are local or regional), hence .08 x 40,000 decurions = 3,200 decurial patrons. By

these calculations there are about 6000 cases of senatorial patronage and about 3,200 of decurial/equestrian. The record of single finds for the year 223 +/- 15 indicates a ratio closer to 5:4 (71 senators; 61 equestrian/decurions).

There is some additional confirmation for the conclusion that the senators continued to represent the single most important group of patrons. The only other document comparable to the *album Canusinum*, the *albus ordinis* of Timgad (ca. 360 CE), lists ten *clarissimi* (senators), five of whom are patrons (and one *sacerdos*-patron).^v Hence, the *alba*, the only complete lists of patrons of a single town at any one time, consistently indicate that patrons of senatorial status were important to communities. In this respect, they correct the impression left by the individual finds.

By contrast, and again to illustrate the speculative nature of the discussion, Duthoy, summarizing the data of individual finds in Italy, calculates the same ratio at 1:2 (senators to non-senators) for the whole 3rd century, but notes that the number of senatorial patrons in Italy remains at a constant 33% (senators to non-senators) of the total over three centuries (to Diocletian).^{vi} In this model, the interest in senatorial patron also remains constant, but at a generally lower level than indicated by the *alba*.

Claude Eilers has come to a different conclusion. He has created an index of patronage that is a function of the raw number of patrons per decade and the 'epigraphical habit' per decade. In this scheme, the relative incidence of *senatorial* patronage declines steadily over the first two centuries of the Principate (that is the senatorial share of the epigraphical total declines relatively even though the absolute number of cases might increase). Patronage continued to be practiced, he allows, but as neither members of the imperial family nor of the senatorial elite entered the relationship, there was an inevitable degradation in the prestige of the honor.^{vii} What to believe?

On the whole, more emphasis should be placed on the value of the *alba*, especially as they provide a consistent pattern indicating a strong preference for patrons of senatorial rank. The ideology of the governing elite (discussed in Ch. 4) provided the appropriate justification for both parties. In fact, it may well be the case that senators were important to the communities not because of any specific benefactions they might confer, but rather

because their inclusion enhanced the status of the honor and made it a more desirable honor for decurions and equestrians to pursue. The former lent their name, goodwill and stature; the latter provided material benefactions. This interpretation is not inconsistent with the conclusion of Eilers. For senators, the honor may indeed have been received so frequently that it did indeed become a largely meaningless addition to their imperial honors. Hence, a senator (or his heirs) may not have felt it important to provide a list of all client communities on the epitaph.

If senators were so important to communities, why do we find relatively fewer references among the individual finds erected at public expense? There is no obvious answer to this question. It may have been more typical to honor patrons with a *tabula aenea* commemorating the cooption (note the discussion of Silius Aviola below and also Chs. 5 and 6), monuments that were more vulnerable to be reused. So too it may be that the more spectacular monuments (statues, etc.) were decreed retrospectively and only after significant benefaction. If the senators were sought as patrons because their status lent dignity to the list of patrons (i.e., made it more desirable for decurions to pursue the honor), it have been sufficient for both parties simply to record the honor on the *album*, or, alternatively to record the name and status of the patron on the actual material benefactions.^{viii} When the patron was an outsider, his/her descendants may not have had any particular reason to maintain the relationship or to monitor honors long since decreed by the client community. Moreover, the latter may not have felt any compelling need to maintain expensive honors for patrons and their descendants who no longer had any interest in the community. In such cases the original monument may have been “re-cycled”. For the members of the decurial order, the significance of the honor was profound. It was the most important honor that could be acquired (the prominence of the word '*patronus*' on the *alba* makes this point clear; note also ILS 6110: the honor is reckoned ...*apud nos potissimus*...) and one that communities would have allocated only after careful consideration of benefactions actual or anticipated. Moreover, as the decurions tended to be locals and to have descendants in the community, it was hardly possible to remove or re-use statues without causing offense.

As argued above in Chapter 4, Pliny's letters (as well as the epigraphical evidence) indicate that senators tended to be coopted early in their careers, while equestrians and

decurions only in their mature years and when (presumably) they had already provided benefactions. This explanation suggests that there should be distinct pattern in the benefactions conferred by patrons of different status: we should expect to find little specific information about what senator conferred; we should expect to find more detail about the benefactions of decurial patrons.

For the provinces, there is no text comparable to the *album Canusinum* for this period but, because the collection of single finds in the provinces reveals characteristics similar to the distribution in Italy, we may with some confidence extend the Italian model. Specifically, the number of Italian cases outnumbers the provincial cases by a factor of 3:2 (478 and 314). Nonetheless, the ratio of senators to equestrians/decurions in the years 194-262 is 3:2 (180 to 117), very similar to the ratio estimated for Italy.

In the provinces, the range in the number of patrons a citizen community had at any time was probably greater than in Italy, but it is sufficient to indicate here that the nature of the original foundation and the importance of the town were factors in securing patrons. For example, colonies that began as settlements for veterans, like Thamugadi in Numidia, have more patrons than do colonies of natives who attained citizen status. The case of Lepcis Magna is a reminder that cities of regional importance, even if they do have a distinctly indigenous origin, could acquire a significant number of patrons. The more 'native' and smaller a town was, the less likely it was to have a number of formal patrons. It is not possible to speak of cause and effect; rather one can only speak of a mutually reinforcing relationship between origin, size, wealth, degree of Romanization, and the incidence of patronage. Indeed, the interconnection of these factors finds support in the fact that significant numbers of patrons of provincial communities date to a period when the status of the community has been enhanced.^{ix}

ⁱOn related activities, see Eck, Activity.

ⁱⁱThe number is actually 31, but includes also individuals (*praefecti*) who were not normally reckoned as senators. On the problem, see Ch. 8.

ⁱⁱⁱCan the distributions of patrons by rank as recorded on the album Canusium be considered 'normal'? Duthoy, *Profil*, 132, n.34, raises the question and observes that the distribution is not consistent with the pattern of the single finds, but does not attempt to answer the question, but see below.

^{iv}The significance of status is discussed more fully below.

^vA. Chastagnol, *L'album municipal de Timgad*, Bonn, 1978, 22ff.

^{vi}*Profil*, 132-3.

^{vii}The material is presented in Chapter 7 of his thesis. His calculations indicate a decline in the incidence of *epigraphically attested* senatorial patrons from a high of close to 50/decade in the time of Augustus to about 20/decade in the Flavian period and then to about 10/decade at the time of the Severans.

^{viii}Note again the case of Nonius Balbus: references to his benefactions do not mention his patronage, references to his patronage do not mention his benefactions.

^{ix} Discussed below; also R. Duncan-Jones, "Patronage and City Privileges -- The Case of Giufi" *ES* 9(1972) 12-16.