

FRIENDSHIP WITH AN EMPEROR - THE CRITERIA FOR THE PROMOTION OF AN
OFFICIAL IN ANCIENT ROME - OBSERVATIONS ON THE MARGINS OF ROMAN
PUBLIC LAW

Wojciech J. Kosior*

SUMMARY: 1. – Introduction; 2. – *Cursus honorum*; 3. - Offices and administration in the Roman Empire; 4. - *Amicitia* and *Amici Caesaris* in ancient Rome; 5. - The promotion of imperial friends in the analysis of ancient texts; 6. – Summary.

1. – Introduction.

The political and legal system of ancient Rome, regardless of era, always included a large structure of offices. This structure had developed not only in the vertical hierarchy, its complexity was caused by a huge empire in which a whole network of officials worked.

The functioning of such a large number of officials had to involve the determination and introduction of criteria for the promotion of individual candidates.

In my article, I want to present the importance of one of the most important criteria that decided the promotion of an official during the empire. Namely, this was the criterion of personal acquaintance and friendship with the emperor. As the analyzed sources show, this criterion was the most important for an official to be promoted. The purpose of this work is to show the importance of this extrajudicial criterion against the background of Roman public law. Typically, when one writes about officials in ancient Rome and the structure of the administrative apparatus, one is writing about the legislation then in force in the field of public law. Meanwhile - quite undeservedly - the most important criterion for promotion is omitted, which was the personal friendship with the emperor during the empire.

2. – *Cursus honorum*.

*Assistant professor (adiunkt), Department of Roman Law, Institute of Legal Sciences, University of Rzeszów. Former visiting professor at the University of Salerno.

During the period of the Roman Republic, the criteria for promotion were referred to as *cursus honorum*. The *cursus honorum* is a term that indicates the path of promotion in ancient Rome, that is, a set of rules that determine the order of taking on individual offices and functions, which were organized in the form of a kind of official career ladder. This term is mainly used in relation to Roman senators, whose career had been formalized¹. Usually, the term *cursus honorum* is equated to norms related to the age of the candidate for individual official positions. Much less often the career criteria of a civil servant are equated with the individual characteristics that a candidate for promotion should have.

The *cursus honorum* is a Latin term meaning "race for public office" and was the term used to describe the succession of elective public offices that a Roman citizen could hold during the Roman Republic². The *cursus honorum* began with the election of a quaestor, who was responsible for managing public finances. After holding this position for a year, the Roman citizen could apply for the position of aedile, who was responsible for organizing public events and maintaining the city. Subsequently, the Roman citizen could apply for the position of praetor, which was a judge or military magistrate. After having held the office of praetor, the Roman citizen could stand for the highest office, that of consul, which was the supreme office in the Roman Republic and which was elected every year. The *cursus honorum* was a gradual and prestigious path that required considerable experience and ability. Most successful Roman politicians would have followed this path to gain the support and trust of the Roman people and achieve political success.

¹ D. Okoń, *Senatorski cursus honorum w okresie republiki i wczesnego cesarstwa. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Poznań 2016, 5p.

² On the role of the *cursus honorum* in ancient Rome, see particularly: H. Beck, *Karriere und Hierarchie: Die römische Aristokratie und die Anfänge des cursus honorum in der mittleren Republik*, Berlin 2005, 408pp.; E. Tobalina Oraá, *El Cursus Honorum Senatorial Durante La Epoca Julio-Claudia*, Pamplona 2007, 522pp.; D. Wanitschek, *Der 'cursus honorum' der römischen Republik*, Berlin 2003, 13pp.; S. Wangelik, *Der Cursus honorum in der Kaiserzeit*, Berlin 2003, 10pp.; H. W. Böhme, *Römische Beamtenkarrieren: cursus honorum*, Stuttgart 1977, 80pp.; K. Kapłoniak, *Kuratela Tybru i prefektura miasta - najwyższe urzędy administracyjne stolicy Rzymu w 'cursus honorum' P. Corneliusa Anullinusa i L. Caeconiusa Lucillusa Macera Rufinianusa*, [in:] *Annales Academiae Paedagogicae 57: Studia Historyczne 7/2013*, 3-12p., K. Kapłoniak, *Urzędy kuratorskie administracji miejskiej Rzymu od Augusta do Dioklecjana. Ich miejsce i znaczenie w senatorskim 'cursus honorum'*, Kraków 2013, 342pp.; R. Kamińska, *Kontrowersje wokół urzędów i urzędników miasta Rzymu*, [in:] *Zeszyty Prawnicze UKSW 15.3/2015*, 197-217p.

In the era of the Republic, the career was defined by tradition and legal acts, with the advent of the empire, the will of the princeps also appeared³.

3. – Offices and administration in the Roman Empire.

In the Roman Empire, offices and administration were organized in a hierarchical and bureaucratic manner⁴. The emperor, as head of state, had the power to appoint and dismiss officials and administrative officials. The administrative system was divided into several regions, called provinces, each of which was headed by a governor, or praefectus. The governor was responsible for the justice, security and public order of the province, as well as for the collection of taxes. Some provinces were considered of particular importance, and were headed by a legatus Augusti pro praetore, a governor with extraordinary powers who answered directly to the emperor. Under the governor, there were other officials and officers, such as the quaestor, who dealt with the collection of taxes, the procurator, who administered the imperial assets, and the praeses, who had the task of administering justice. The emperor also had at his disposal a council of advisers, called the consilium principis, which assisted him in the management of the empire. The consilium principis consisted of experts in law, finance, religion and the military. The administration of the empire also required an efficient communication system. To this end, numerous roads, bridges and ports were built, allowing for the transport of goods and troops throughout the empire. Furthermore, a postal service was established, the cursus publicus, which allowed the transmission of messages and letters between the various parts of the empire. In summary, the administration of the Roman Empire was hierarchical and bureaucratic, with a strong centralization of power in the hands of the emperor. The management of the territory was entrusted to the governors of the provinces, assisted by officials and officers of various kinds, while the consilium principis provided advice to the emperor in the management of the empire. Communication was ensured by a network of roads, bridges, ports and by the postal service, the cursus publicus⁵.

³ D. Okoń...*op.cit.*, 5p.

⁴ A. A. Schiller, *Bureaucracy and the Roman law*, [in:] Seminar (Jurist) 7/1949, 26p.

⁵ Cf: L. Fascione, *Manuale di Diritto Pubblico Romano*, Torino 2013, 256pp.

After the fall of the Roman Republic, (starting from 27 B.C.), it is accepted to treat the system of ancient Rome as a principality⁶. A characteristic feature of the principality was the existence of a dual administration of the state. In addition to the old republican one, a new administration dependent on the emperor was established. The magistrate was still appointed, but the title of consul was often assumed by the emperor himself. At the same time, the princeps created his own administration, modeled on the military administration, so military terminology was often used in reference to the civil administration. Another specificity of this period was the creation of the imperial judiciary and the replacement of elected officials with appointed ones. During the period of the principate, most of the republican offices were held. The office of censor disappeared, a result of the assumption of its powers by the princeps. However, the offices of consul and praetor were retained and junior offices were abolished by lower officials. The rules of the *cursus honorum* were also modified, changing the order in which the individual offices were held. This period also saw far-reaching changes within individual Republican officials. During the principate, the imperial administration was not the work of an emperor, but the effect of the slow expansion carried out by individual rulers. The imperial administration included a large number of auxiliary officials, without whom it would be difficult to imagine the functioning of the administration. From the point of view of considerations, it should be noted that with the new order, princeps received a new right, namely that of nominating - *nominatio* - candidates for republican offices, who were then formally elected by the Senate⁷.

Diocletian finally broke with the principate system. He introduced a new political system: the *dominate*, in which the emperor acted openly as *dominus* towards all the inhabitants of the state, following the example of oriental monarchies. He was worshiped as the incarnation of a deity. The emperor was considered a ruler and a god - *dominus et deus*. At the emperor's side was an imperial council whose members were persons appointed by the emperor. During this period, the state administration was reformed and based on the principles of centralism and bureaucracy. The military administration was separate from the civilian one, however the civil administration was organized on a military model. The administration became increasingly

⁶ D. J. Svyantek, *Make haste slowly. Augustus Caesar transforms the Roman world*, [in:] *Journal of Management History* 5.6/1999, 292p.

⁷ E. Costa, *Storia del diritto Romano pubblico*, Firenze 1920, 304p.

bureaucratic, the skills of individual officials specialized. The officials were also court officials. Officials were divided into central and local, and the ranks of officials were introduced at the same time. High officials were appointed by the emperor⁸.

4. - *Amicitia* and *Amici Caesaris* in ancient Rome.

Amicitia and *Amici Caesaris* were important concepts in ancient Rome. *Amicitia* referred to the personal and close friendship between individuals, while *Amici Caesaris* denoted the intimate circle of friends and allies of the political or military leader of Imperial Rome. In the Roman Republic, friendship was a core value and an important source of power. Powerful and successful men sought to build friendships with other influential and respected individuals, in the hope of forging alliances that could support their political interests. These friendships often involved an exchange of favors and mutual support, and often resulted in political and military alliances. In the imperial era, personal friendship retained its importance, but attention also shifted to the intimate circle of friends and allies of the political or military leader of the empire. The members of this group, known as *Amici Caesaris*, were considered particularly close and loyal to the leader and could enjoy many privileges and benefits. These privileges included direct access to the leader and the opportunity to obtain positions of power and prestige within the government and military. Personal friendship and belonging to a political leader's intimate circle were considered very important in ancient Rome, and often influenced political choices and decisions. However, these relationships of friendship and alliance could also be a source of tension and conflict, as personal and political interests could conflict with those of the wider community.

Writing on friendship in ancient Rome, it will be natural to refer to Cicero, who dedicated his *De Amicitia* to this theme. According to Cicero it is difficult to reconcile friendship with high social and political position, because friendship itself presupposes equality, the well-being deriving from being together and doing good to each other, unlimited trust on both sides and joint effort to care for an exemplary life where one should be critical of the other:

Cic. Amic. 64: *itaque verae amicitiae difficillime reperiuntur in eis, qui in honoribus reque publica versantur. ubi enim istum invenias, qui honorem amici anteponat suo?*

⁸ B. Sitek, P. Krajewski, *Rzymskie prawo publiczne*, Olsztyn 2005, 58p.

quid? haec ut omittam, quam graves, quam difficiles plerisque videntur calamitatum societates, ad quas non est facile inventu qui descendant.

In republican Rome, friendship (*amicitia*) was a social relationship that formed the basis of life in the state. As Cicero wrote, friendship was possible only in the relationship between equals.

As ancient sources show, the problem of friendship with the rulers was often discussed. This is clearly indicated by the message of Pliny the Younger, who wrote about friendship with the emperor:

Plin. 85: *Iam etiam et in privatorum animis exoleverat priscum mortalium bonum, amicitia, cuius in locum migraverant assentationes, blanditiae, et peior odio amoris simulatio. Etenim in principum domo nomen tantum amicitiae, inane scilicet irrisumque, manebat. Nam quae poterat esse inter eos amicitia, quorum sibi alii domini, alii servi videbantur? Tu hanc pulsam et errantem reduxisti: habes amicos, quia amicus ipse es. Neque enim, ut alia subiectis, ita amor imperatur: neque est ullus affectus tam erectus, et liber, et dominationis impatiens, nec qui magis vices exigit. Potest fortasse princeps inique, potest tamen odio esse nonnullis, etiamsi ipse non oderit: amari, nisi ipse amet, non potest. Diligis ergo, quum diligaris, et in eo, quod utrinque honestissimum est, tota gloria tua est, qui superior factus, descendis in omnia familiaritatis officia, et in amicum ex imperatore submitteris; immo tunc maxime imperator, quum amicum ex imperatore agis. Etenim quum plurimis amicitiiis fortuna principum indigeat, praecipuum est principis opus, amicos parare. Placeat tibi semper haec secta, et cum alias virtutes tuas, tum hanc constantissime teneas: nec unquam persuadeatur, humile esse principi, nisi odisse. Lucundissimum est in rebus humanis amari, sed non minus amare: quorum utroque ita frueris, ut, quum ipse ardentissime diligas, adhuc tamen ardentius diligaris: primum, quia facilius est, unum amare, quam multos: deinde, quia tibi amicos tuos obligandi adest facultas tanta, ut nemo possit te, nisi ingratus, non magis amare.*

Similarly, wrote Tacitus, pointing out that devoted friends are the best support for the emperor's reign:

Tac. Hist. 4.7: (...) *nullum maius boni imperii instrumentum quam bonos amicos esse* (...).

According to A. Demandt ⁹, friendship with the emperor had two sides - business and personal. Business friendship was born out of a private relationship called *familiaritas*, a relationship in which there are rights and duties. The emperor's friends (*Amici Augusti* or *Amici Caesaris*) constituted a more or less defined hierarchical group (*cohors amicorum*).

5. - The promotion of imperial friends in the analysis of ancient texts.

Before presenting the source texts relating to the criteria which determine the promotion of an official at the time of the Empire, I must first mention the conditions for promotion in force at the time of the Republic. To this end, reference should be made to the study by D. Okoń¹⁰.

The criteria for promotion of a senator in ancient Rome of the republican era were the result of his personal skills and the support he had: family, relatives, friends and clients. No doubt such a career was expensive, but the benefits of such a career were worth the investment. Based on the analysis of the texts of Livy and Cicero, we can know the exact characteristics that determined the promotion of an official in the Roman Republic. Tito Livio wrote that the following factors determined the career and access to the highest offices: knowledge of the law, eloquence (public speaking skills) and the fame of military successes achieved¹¹. In a similar tone, the criteria for promotion were presented by Cicero in his speech on Sextius, emphasizing that work and virtue are the basis for promotion¹². A different view on the criteria for promotion in the Roman Republic was presented by the historian Sallust, who

⁹ A. Demandt, *Prywatne życie cesarzy rzymskich*, Gdynia 1997, 73p.

¹⁰ D. Okoń...*op.cit.*, 16-24p.

¹¹ Liv. 39 40, 5; (...) *ad summos honores alios scientia iuris, alios eloquentia, alios gloria militaris provexit* (...)

¹² Cic. Sest. 137; *haec est una via, mihi credite, et laudis et dignitatis et honoris, a bonis viris sapientibus et bene natura constitutis laudari et diligi; nosse discriptionem civitatis a maioribus nostris sapientissime constitutam; qui cum regum potestatem non tulissent, ita magistratus annuos creaverunt ut consilium senatus rei publicae praeponerent sempiternum, deligerentur autem in id consilium ab universo populo aditusque in illum summum ordinem omnium civium industriae ac virtuti pateret. senatum rei publicae custodem, praesidem, propugnatores conlocaverunt; huius ordinis auctoritate uti magistratus et quasi ministros gravissimi consilii esse voluerunt; senatum autem ipsum proximorum ordinum splendorem confirmare, plebis libertatem et commoda tueri atque augere voluerunt.*

wrote that it was not virtue that decided promotion and career, but covert deeds and intrigues replaced it¹³.

With the change of the political system from republican to imperial, there was a fundamental change in the functioning of the state apparatus, and above all in the promotion of officials.

As D. Okoń writes ¹⁴, the change of the system from a republic to an empire also brought about a change in the criteria for promotion. One of these manifestations was the performance of important judicial functions, which made it possible to obtain the status of *candidatus Augusti*, which became obligatory for the functions, for example, of *quaestor*, *tribune/edile* or *praetor*. This title was most often assigned to members of the imperial council (*consilium principis*).

The term *candidatus Augusti* derives from the procedure for selecting consuls during the reign of Tiberius when he presented candidates for dignity to the senate. This procedure was described by Tacitus:

Tac. Ann. 1.81; (...) *[Tiberius] modo subtractis candidatorum nominibus originem cuiusque et vitam et stipendia descripsit ut qui forent intellegeretur; aliquando ea quoque significatione subtracta candidatos hortatus ne ambitu comitia turbarent (...).*

As we read above, Tiberius described the candidates by presenting their background, life and military service/public contribution. According to Tacitus, there were three criteria for senatorial promotion. The first criterion is the *origo*, i.e. the origin, which should be related to the candidate's family and lineage (during the period of the republic Sallustio defined this criterion *nobilitas*). The second criterion was *life*, i.e. the candidate's life, including his personal achievements (which go beyond the framework of state service, including his education and his talents). Cicero called this criterion *industria et virtus*. It directly meant the candidate himself. The third criterion was *stipendia*, that is, successes and experiences in public service, including military, which Livy, referring to the times of the republic, defined

¹³ Sal. Jug. 4, 7; (...) *etiam homines novi, qui antea per virtutem soliti erant nobilitatem antevenire, furtim et per latrocinia potius quam bonis artibus ad imperia et honores nituntur (...)*

¹⁴ D. Okoń...*op.cit.*, 19-24p.

as *gloria militaris*. Although the term salary has military connotations, during the empire it covered all types of service, including the civil service¹⁵.

Elsewhere Tacitus also mentions the promotion criteria, which strongly refer to the republican criteria presented by Cicero, Sallust and Livy:

Tac. Ann. 4.6; (...) *mandabatque honores, nobilitatem maiorum, claritudinem militiae, inlustris domi artes spectando, ut satis constaret non alios potiores fuisse.*

The text specifies that nobility, military fame and the splendor of civic merit were taken into account when conferring offices. This time, according to Tacitus, career had to be decided by: social origin (*nobilitas*), war merits (*claritudo militiae*) and civic merits (*domi artes*).

It is worth paying special attention to the fact that in the quoted texts we will not find any mention of protection, intrigues and informal manipulations. This does not mean, of course, that with the advent of the empire they ceased to matter. Simply - as we learn from the first source - it was the princeps who presented the candidates, and it was logical for the emperor to omit these topics in his official speech before the senate (and it was even less appropriate for a historian to write about them in his works).

With the advent of empire, a new criterion emerged which began to dominate all others. This superior criterion was referred to as the *principium Amicitia*, or the friendship of the princeps, which can be understood as the emperor's personal sympathy for a given candidate. We learn about the role of this criterion from Tacitus' message:

Tac. Ann. 6.39; *Fine anni Poppaeus Sabinus concessit vita, modicus originis, principum amicitia consulatum ac triumphale decus adeptus maximisque provinciis per quattuor et viginti annos impositus, nullam ob eximiam artem (...).*

From the message we learn of Poppeo Sabino, who was of modest origins, but thanks to imperial friendship he reached the dignity of consul, triumphed and was governor of the major provinces for twenty-four years. Tacitus went on to add that he failed to achieve this because he had exceptional talents.

¹⁵ D. Okoń...*op.cit.*, 18-19s.

In a similar tone, Tacitus presents the power of imperial friendship for a career when he describes two characters: Epirus Marcellus and Quintus Vibius:

Tac. Dial. 8; (...) *sine commendatione natalium, sine substantia facultatum, neuter moribus egregius, alter habitu quoque corporis contemptus, per multos iam annos potentissimi sunt civitatis ac, donec libuit, principes fori, nunc principes in Caesaris amicitia agunt feruntque cuncta atque ab ipso principe cum quadam reverentia diliguntur (...).*

In the text we read that both were not of great importance, they did not have an economic base, they did not stand out in character, and one of them, furthermore, due to his physical appearance, did not arouse respect, yet for many years they were considered the most powerful citizens.

The explanation for this state of affairs, according to the author, is to be found in friendship with the emperor.

Perhaps the clearest example of promotion based on friendship with the emperor (or rather on the satisfaction of the emperor) comes from the analysis of Pliny's text:

Plin. Nat. 14.28.144: *gloriam hac virtute Parthi quaerunt, famam apud Graecos Alcibiades meruit, apud nos cognomen etiam Novellius Torquatus Mediolanensis, ad proconsulatum usque praeturae honoribus gestis, tribus congiis — unde et cognomen illi fuit — epotis uno impetu, spectante miraculi gratia Tiberio principe, in senecta iam severo atque etiam saevo alias.*

In the text we read of the career of a certain Novellio, who owed his promotion to prefect of the city to the fact that he drank alcohol with the emperor and showed off his drinking skills.

Cassius Dio quoted a fragment in which he described the fact that the emperor Nero rewarded and promoted whoever he wanted, and above all those who listened to his singing about him:

Cass. Dio 62, 15, 1-3: “ [1] οἱ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ ἄνθρωποι ἀκούσαντες ταῦτα, καίπερ ἀχθόμενοι, ἔχαιρον νομίζοντες αὐτὸν ἐκ τούτου γε πάντως ἀπολεῖσθαι. τῶν δὲ βουλευτῶν οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι πάντες προσεποιῶντο χαίρειν ἐπὶ τοῖς γεγονόσι, καὶ συνήδοντο δῆθεν τῷ Νέρωνι, καὶ ἐψηφίζοντο πολλὰ οἷς ᾤοντο αὐτῷ χαριεῖσθαι: ” “ [2] ὁ

Πούπλιος δὲ δὴ Θρασέας Παῖτος ἤλθε μὲν ἐς τὸ συνέδριον καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ἐπήκουσεν, ἀναγνωσθείσης δὲ αὐτῆς ἐξανέστη τε εὐθὺς πρὶν καὶ ὀτιοῦν ἀποφίνασθαι καὶ ἐξῆλθε, διότι ἂ μὲν ἤθελεν ” “ [3] εἶπεῖν οὐκ ἐδύνατο, ἂ δὲ ἐδύνατο 1 οὐκ ἤθελεν. ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα διῆγεν: ἔλεγε γὰρ ὅτι ‘εἰ μὲν ἐμὲ μόνον ὁ Νέρων φονεύσειν ἔμελλε, πολλὴν ἂν εἶχον τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπερκολακεύουσιν αὐτὸν 2 συγγνώμην: εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκείνων τῶν σφόδρα αὐτὸν ἐπαινούντων πολλοὺς τοὺς μὲν ἀνάλωκε τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἀπολέσει, τί χρὴ μάτην ἀσχημονοῦντα δουλοπρεπῶς φθαρῆναι, ἐξὸν ἐλευθερίως ’”

During the First Empire, not only the friendship of the princeps himself could ensure success in his career, but also good contacts with other influential people.

For example, such contacts during the reign of Emperor Tiberius included contacts with the prefect Sejanus:

Tac. Ann. 4.68; *Hunc Latinius Latiaris, Porcius Cato, Petilius Rufus, M. Opsius praetura functi adgrediuntur, cupidine consulatus ad quem non nisi per Seianum aditus (...).*

In this text we read that it was possible to reach the consulate only through Sejanus.

It is also worth mentioning that even in later times imperial favor was a guarantee of a career. Apuleius emphatically wrote about it, who pointed out that the emperor's favor leads to the consulship:

Apul. Flor., 9: *(...) favor Caesarum ad consulatum format (...).*

Based on the Historia Augusta we also learn other connections, which refer to the later period of the empire, but also point to the strong position of women from the immediate family of the emperor.

And so the help in her career could guarantee the favor of the Roman empress, as happened to Hadrian, who thanks to Pompeia Plotina (wife of the emperor Trajan) obtained the consulship for the second time:

SHA. Hadr. 4.4; *lapsis, secundo consul favore Plotinae factus totam.*

The situation was similar in the case of the care exercised by the imperial mother, which paved the way for direct contact with the emperor himself:

SHA. Did. Iul. 1, 3-6; *Educatus est apud Domitiam Lucillam, matrem Marci imperatoris. inter viginti viros lectus est suffragio matris Marci, quaestor ante annum quam legitima aetas sinebat designatus est. aedilitatem suffragio Marci consecutus est. praetor eiusdem suffragio fuit.*

In this text we read of Didius Julianus (a Roman emperor from 193), who was educated by the mother of the emperor Marcus Aurelius - Domitia Calvilla, thanks to whom he also obtained his first assignment in his official career, starting from the vigintivirate. Then, but thanks to the support of the emperor himself, he assumed successive positions.

ABSTRACT

Transparent promotion rules should apply in any hierarchical structure. It is most desirable in state administration and structures. It was no different in ancient Rome, where a complex and hierarchical apparatus of officials functioned.

From the point of view of Roman law, the promotion criteria were regulated by successive laws which led to the formation of the well-known *cursus honorum*¹⁶, that is, the entire description of the order of office holding in the Roman state, while indicating the criteria which a candidate for higher office should meet.

In the meantime, however, the analysis of the source texts leads to the conclusion that, apart from the formalized criteria, the informal criteria were decisive for the promotion of an official, and among these the most important was the friendship with the emperor himself or with another high-ranking member of the imperial family or the emperor's court.

Friendship with an emperor in ancient Rome could have a significant impact on the career of an official. In general, being close to the emperor was highly desirable, as it could lead to greater opportunities for advancement, wealth, and influence. For example, an official who

¹⁶ Cf. G. Rögler, *Die lex Villia annalis*, [in:] *Klio* 40.1/1962, 76-123p.; H. Chantraine, *Der cursus honorum des Marius und die lex villia annalis*, [in:] H. Chantraine (ed.), *Untersuchungen zur römischen Geschichte am Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Mainz 1955, 63-75p.; A. E. Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla*, Brussels 1958, 34-36p.

had the support of the emperor might be given prestigious positions, such as governor of a province or commander of an army. They might also be appointed to key administrative roles within the imperial court, giving them access to important decision-makers and potentially increasing their power and influence. In addition to these benefits, friendship with the emperor could also offer protection and security. In a highly competitive and often dangerous political environment, having a powerful ally could be crucial for an official's survival. However, it's worth noting that the relationship between an emperor and their friends was not always straightforward. Emperors could be capricious and unpredictable, and friendships could sour just as quickly as they were formed. Moreover, being associated with a particular emperor could also be a liability if that emperor fell out of favor with the ruling elite or was overthrown. Overall, while friendship with an emperor certainly had the potential to benefit an official's career in ancient Rome, it was by no means a guarantee of success or security.

Key words: Roman public law, Emperor, Office, Administrative structure, Promotion, Cursus honorum

SOMMARIO.

Come la relazione di amicizia con l'imperatore influenzasse, anche sul piano giuridico, la carriera degli ufficiali a Roma dipendeva da diversi fattori, tra cui la personalità dell'imperatore, la natura dell'amicizia e la posizione e il ruolo dell'ufficiale. In generale, avere un'amicizia con il principe poteva essere un vantaggio significativo per la carriera di un ufficiale romano. L'imperatore era la figura più potente dell'Impero e aveva il potere di nominare e destituire gli ufficiali a suo piacimento. Pertanto, se un ufficiale avesse goduto del suo sostegno, avrebbe potuto beneficiare di una maggiore protezione e maggiori opportunità di avanzamento di carriera rispetto ad altri ufficiali. Tuttavia, tale amicizia poteva anche essere un'arma a doppio taglio. Se l'imperatore fosse stato scontento dell'ufficiale o della sua condotta, l'amicizia avrebbe potuto rivelarsi insufficiente a proteggerlo. Inoltre, se essa fosse stata percepita come un tentativo di ottenere favoritismi, avrebbe potuto danneggiare la reputazione dell'ufficiale e ostacolare le sue possibilità di avanzamento. Inoltre, la natura di tale rapporto poteva essere importante. Se l'amicizia fosse stata basata sulla lealtà e sulla fiducia reciproca, l'ufficiale avrebbe potuto godere di maggiori benefici per la sua carriera. Se, invece, essa fosse stata basata esclusivamente sul desiderio di avanzare nella gerarchia imperiale, questo avrebbe potuto essere visto come una mossa opportunistica e danneggiare la reputazione del soggetto. In sintesi, l'eventuale vantaggio derivante da tale rapporto personale dipendeva da molteplici fattori, tra cui la personalità dell'imperatore, la natura dell'amicizia e la condotta e la reputazione dell'ufficiale.

Parole chiave: *Diritto pubblico romano, Imperatore, Ufficio, Struttura amministrativa, Promozione, Cursus honorum*