

In a letter that Cicero writes to Caesar in April 54 (*Fam.* 7.5), he recommends C. Trebatius for service on Caesar's staff and points out that a recent fortuitous event – a letter from Caesar – benefits his recommendation. Cicero quotes the end of Caesar's letter: '*M. Titius, quem mihi commendas, vel regem Galliae faciam, vel hunc Leptae delega, si vis. Tu ad me alium mitte quem ornem.*' This paper offers an extensive analysis of Caesar's letter, with particular focus upon the roles of *rex Galliae* and Lepta. Fuller understanding of these elements of the letter leads to a reconsideration of the identification of *M. Titius* and greater appreciation of the witty repartee between Caesar and Cicero. A number of Cicero's letters acknowledge that Caesar and Cicero were on good terms in 54 (e.g., *Q. fr.* 2.14). *Fam.* 7.5 highlights this newfound relationship. The letter is playful and owes its tone to the friendship and the sophisticated humor of both men. Part of the letter's fun, however, has not been fully appreciated.

Caesar's letter requests that Cicero send someone to replace a man whom Caesar is either going to make *rex Galliae* or have Cicero pass along to Lepta. Although commentaries (e.g., Shackleton Bailey, Stockton, How, Tyrrell and Purser) pass over *rex Galliae* without specific comment, it is highly unusual. There were certainly still kings of tribal nations in Gaul at the time (S. James, *The World of the Celts* 1993, 118) and Caesar himself had helped to establish Commius as king of the Atrebatas in 57 (*BG* 4.21), but there is no evidence that anyone ever actually assumed the title of *rex Galliae*. In fact, only Caesar uses the phrase, when he claims that Vercingetorix and his father (*BG* 7.4 and 20) sought the title in 52. Even if there were such a position, Caesar would never have filled it with a Roman. Thus, Caesar is informing Cicero with lighthearted hyperbole that the fellow Cicero recommended to him was a disappointment.

Once we understand this we need to revisit the issue of Lepta (SB [1.330]: "... we cannot tell why Caesar mentioned him"). Q. Lepta served as *praefectus fabrum* under Cicero in Cilicia in 51-50 (*Fam.* 3.7), and the two were good friends (*Fam.* 6.18). Scholars often claim that Lepta was on Caesar's staff in 54 (How, SB, T-P, Gruen 1974, 117). T-P even translate *vel hunc Leptae delega* as "do you hand him over to Lepta (your friend, who is with me)." No reference to Lepta serving in this capacity, however, has been preserved (*RE* 2070-72, *MRR* passim). It is therefore not certain that Lepta was with Caesar. (If he were, Wieland's suggestion of *delegabo* for *delega* might make sense.) Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that Caesar did not even like Lepta: Lepta supported Pompey, not Caesar, during the civil war; Cicero later stresses the futility of a request by Lepta for a favor from Caesar (*Fam.* 6.19). A hostile relationship between the two correlates well with Caesar's comment about *rex Galliae*. If Caesar likes Lepta, why should he hand over a disappointment to him? If Lepta is on Caesar's staff, there is even less reason to pass the failure his way.

The identity of the disparaged *M. Titius* remains unknown, but we can at least discount some suggestions. *M. Curti filius* (strongly supported by SB), *M. Titinius* and *M. Fufitius* (both considered possible by How and Stockton) are all unlikely, given their connections with Caesar. The person that we must search for was a man of no use to Caesar. Nevertheless, his forgettable appointment does provide an opportunity for playful banter (cf. *Q. fr.* 2.11) between Cicero and Caesar. To Caesar's humorous letter of complaint, Cicero delightfully responds, *Sustulimus manus et ego et Balbus. Tanta fuit opportunitas, ut illud nescio quid non fortuitum, sed divinum videretur. Mitto igitur ad te Trebatium atque ita mitto ut initio mea sponte, post autem invitatu tuo mittendum duxerim.* "Hooray! Aren't we lucky that I sent such a dud!"