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Rome, the Greek World,
and the East

VOLUME 2

*Government, Society, and Culture
in the Roman Empire*

Fergus Millar

Edited by Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers

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Preface

Fergus Millar, Camden Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford emeritus, is one of the most influential ancient historians of the twentieth century. Since the publication of *A Study of Cassius Dio* by Oxford University Press in 1964, Millar has published eight books, including two monumental studies, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Duckworth, 1977) and *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Harvard, 1993). These books have transformed the study of ancient history.

In his study of the role of the emperor in the Roman world Millar argued that the reign of Augustus inaugurated almost three centuries of relatively passive and inert government, in which the central power pursued few policies and was largely content to respond to pressures and demands from below. After more than twenty years of scholarly reaction, *The Emperor in the Roman World* is now the dominant scholarly model of how the Roman Empire worked in practice.

Reviewers immediately hailed Millar's magisterial study of the Roman Near East as a "grand book on a grand topic" (*TLS*, 15 April 1994). In this grand book, displaying an unrivaled mastery of ancient literary, epigraphic, papyrological, and archaeological sources in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, and other Semitic languages, Millar made the indigenous peoples of the Roman Near East, especially the Jews, central to our understanding of how and why the three great religions of the book, Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, evolved in a cultural context that was neither "eastern" nor "western." There can be no doubt that *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* will be the standard work on the subject for a long time to come.

More recently, Millar has published two books, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Michigan, 1998) and *The Roman Republic in Political Thought* (New England, 2002), on the politics of the Roman Republic and how those politics have been understood or misunderstood by political thinkers from the ancient world to the present. These books have challenged widely held

notions about the supposed oligarchic political character of the Roman Republic. In the future Millar intends to return to the Roman Near East for a study to be entitled *Society and Religion in the Roman Near East from Constantine to Mahomet*. In this study Millar will bring the story of Greco-Roman culture in the Near East from the early fourth century up to the Islamic invasions of the seventh century A.D.

During the same period when he has produced these ground-breaking books, Millar also has published over seventy essays on aspects of Greco-Roman history, from the Hellenistic period until the middle of the fifth century A.D. These essays have laid the foundations for or supplemented the ideas and arguments presented in Millar's very well known books. Some of these essays, such as "The Emperor, the Senate and the Provinces" (*Journal of Roman Studies* 56 [1966]: 156–66), or "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C.–A.D. 378" (*Britannia* 13 [1982]: 1–23), have appeared in hitherto accessible journals and are widely regarded as classics of scholarship. But other outstanding essays, such as Millar's study, "Polybius between Greece and Rome" (published in *Greek Connections: Essays on Culture and Diplomacy* [1987], 1–18), have been more difficult to locate, even for professional historians doing research in the field.

Therefore, the primary goal of our collection, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, is to bring together into three volumes the most significant of Millar's essays published since 1961 for the widest audience possible. The collection includes many articles that clearly will be of great intellectual interest and pedagogical use to scholars doing research and teaching in the different fields of the volume headings: Volume 1, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*; Volume 2, *Government, Society, and Culture in the Roman Empire*; and Volume 3, *The Greek World, the Jews, and the East*.

At the same time, we have conceived and organized the three volumes of *Rome, the Greek World, and the East* especially in order to make Millar's most significant articles readily available to a new generation of students, who increasingly may not have access to the specialty journals or edited volumes in which many of Millar's more recent articles have appeared.

The principle of arrangement of the essays in each of the three volumes is broadly chronological by subject matter treated within the ancient world. We believe that this chronological arrangement of essays (rather than by publication date of the essays) gives intellectual coherence to each volume on its own and to the collection as a whole. Overall, as Millar himself has defined it, the subject of this collection is "the communal culture and civil government of the Graeco-Roman world, essentially from the Hellenistic period to the fifth century A.D." ("Author's Prologue," volume 1, p. 11).

Publication of a three-volume collection of essays, drawn from a wide variety of journals and edited volumes, over nearly four decades of scholarly production, presents editors with some major stylistic challenges. Our collection contains more than fifty essays. Most of these essays originally were published in learned journals or books, each of which had its own house style. Some learned journals also have changed their house styles over the time when Millar has published in them. For these reasons we have not attempted to bring all of the citations in the texts or notes of the articles in the collection into perfect stylistic conformity. Conformity for the sake of conformity makes no sense; moreover, to achieve such conformity would delay publication of the collection for years.

Rather, the stylistic goal of our collection has been to inform readers clearly and consistently where they can find the sources cited by Millar in his essays. To help achieve that goal we have included a list of frequently cited works (with abbreviations for those works) at the beginning of each volume. Thus, in the text or notes of the essays, readers will find abbreviations for frequently cited journals or books, which are fully cited in our lists at the beginning of each volume. For example, references in the notes to the abbreviation *JRS* refer to the *Journal of Roman Studies*. For the abbreviations themselves we have relied upon the standard list provided in *L'Année Philologique*. In certain cases, where there have been individual citations in the original texts or notes to more obscure collections of inscriptions or papyri, we have expanded the citations themselves in situ, rather than endlessly expanding our list of frequently cited works.

In accordance with Fergus Millar's wishes, for the sake of readers who do not know Latin or Greek, we have provided English translations of most of the extended Greek and Latin passages and some of the technical terms cited by Millar in the text and notes of the original essays. In doing so, we have followed the practice Fergus Millar himself adopted in *The Emperor in the Roman World* in 1977. We believe that providing these translations will help to make Millar's essays more widely accessible, which is the essential goal of the collection. Readers who wish to consult the original Greek and Latin passages or technical terms that we have translated in the collection can look up those passages or technical terms in the original, published versions of the essays.

The editors would like to thank the many friends and colleagues who have helped us in the process of collecting these essays and preparing them for publication. We are indebted first of all to Lewis Bateman, formerly senior editor at the University of North Carolina Press, who suggested the basic arrangement of the essays into three volumes. We are also grateful to David Perry, editor-in-chief, and Pamela Upton, assistant managing editor at the

University of North Carolina Press, for their flexibility, advice, and support of the project.

Gabriela Sara, Ori Shapir, Amir Marmor, and Andrea Rothstein in Israel and Dr. Nancy Thompson of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York provided editorial assistance. Our thanks also to Mark Rogers for his help with the maps. We continue to owe a great debt to Priscilla Lange for her helpfulness and kindness to us in Oxford. We also would like to express our gratitude to the Fellows of Brasenose College Oxford and All Souls College Oxford for their hospitality while we were working on this project.

Above all, however, the editors would like to thank Fergus Millar, for his scholarship, his generosity, and his friendship over more than two decades.

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Introduction

Those who study and teach the history of the ancient world suffer from a great disadvantage, which we find difficult to admit even to ourselves: in a perfectly literal sense we do not know what we are talking about. Of course, we can dispose of a vast range of accumulated knowledge *about* what we are talking about. We can compile lists of office-holders in the Roman Empire, without our evidence revealing how government worked or even whether it made any impact at all on the ordinary person; we can discuss the statuses of cities and look at the archaeological remains of some of them (or rather some parts of some of them) without having any notion of their social and economic functions, or of whether it made any real difference whether an inhabitant of the Roman provinces lived in a small city or a large village. We can study the remains of temples, the iconography of gods and goddesses, the nature of myth, ritual and sacrifice; but how and in what way did all this provide an important or intelligible context for a peasant in the fields? In the case of religion in particular our attention turns persistently to the exceptional rather than the ordinary, to those aspects which were novel, imported, mystical, or the subject of philosophical speculation.

—Fergus Millar, “The World of the *Golden Ass*”

So begins one of the articles in this volume, setting out the preoccupation of a lifetime—How did it really work? What did it feel like to be an inhabitant of a Roman province?—and at the same time revealing Fergus Millar’s keen awareness of the limits of our knowledge and perception. This declaration of ignorance and *aporia* should not deceive us, nor give us any comfort; it is based on enormous familiarity with the ancient sources and the vast modern commentary on them. Each and every article in the present collection is a variation on the theme of “how did it work and what did it feel like?”—the stubborn and relentless struggle to find out the truth, not to fall into familiar

traps, to reread the old texts with a fresh eye and force out something new, informative, and meaningful.

The new reading of the familiar ancient sources was masterfully deployed in the two parts of the first volume (*Rome, the Greek World, and the East: Volume 1, The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*) in order to vindicate the application of the term “democracy” to the Republic, and “monarchy” to the principate right from its inception. The present volume goes one step further in relying heavily on the direct and fresh evidence of documentary texts, inscriptions and papyri, rather than losing itself in the barren study of the Rome-centered ancient texts. The change of emphasis was dictated by the change of subject, as already observed at the end of chapter 11 of the first volume, “The Emperor, the Senate, and the Provinces”—a study of the provincial system that foreshadows some of the issues presented in the present volume:

The Republic, it may be, can be seen from Rome outwards. To take this standpoint for the Empire is to lose contact with reality. Not only the pattern of the literary evidence, or the existence of an immense mass of local documents, but the very nature of the Empire itself, means that it can only be understood by starting from the provinces and looking inward. (p. 291)

Indeed, the city of Rome, the protagonist of the republican part of the first volume and of Millar’s recent book *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*,¹ gradually recedes from our horizon in this volume, to make room for the provinces and the provincials. The two focal points of the present volume are the Empire as a system of government (even if the word “government” suffers from anachronistic overtones), which is the subject of the first part, and the culture and society of the Empire, to which the second part is devoted.

The first part includes papers exploring (and expanding) some of the themes of Millar’s monumental *The Emperor in the Roman World* (31 B.C.–A.D. 337),² whose chronological scope corresponds roughly to that of the present volume, the first three centuries A.D. under the Empire, when relative stability allows one to speak of a system of government. Other papers in the first part were written after the publication of that book, covering new ground, but using the same model of the working of imperial government.

The main theme of the first chapter, “Emperors at Work” (1967), rightly

1. Jerome Lectures, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Autumn 1993, and American Academy in Rome, 1994. Michigan University Press, 1998.

2. Duckworth and Cornell University Press, 1977; 2nd ed. with Afterword, 1992.

described as a “true classic,” lies at the very heart of *The Emperor in the Roman World* and was in fact the most complete statement of Millar’s new interpretation of the nature of imperial rule before the book’s publication. Its cogent, and at times belligerent, tone is to be explained by the fact that “the hardest thing is precisely to drop anachronistic presuppositions and believe what one reads.”³ On a much smaller scale than *The Emperor in the Roman World*, “Emperors at Work” describes and interprets the role of the emperor in the Roman world through “words issued by, or in the name of, the Emperor, in response to words addressed to him by others.”⁴ Its message could be summed up in what is often regarded as Millar’s personal *credo*: “The emperor was what the emperor did,”⁵ that is, the impact of imperial rule was felt to the extent that it was exercised, and “its essential passivity” meant that it was exercised “in response to an initiative from below.”⁶ The clue to what the emperor did lies first and foremost in the imperial correspondence whose characteristics are best illustrated in the Younger Pliny’s correspondence with the emperor Trajan, the subject of chapter 2: “Trajan: Government by Correspondence” (1998).

The fact that Rome remained a republic in theory, and sovereignty was retained by the Senate and People of Rome (*senatus populusque Romanus*), meant that the public treasury, the *aerarium*, like other republican institutions, continued to operate as before (chapter 4: “The Aerarium and Its Officials under the Empire,” 1964) alongside the imperial private treasury (better called “estate”), the *fiscus*, which slowly and gradually came to absorb the main functions of the former, thereby losing its private character (chapter 3: “The Fiscus in the First Two Centuries,” 1963). Millar’s later discussion of the imperial financial and monetary system, chapter 5: “Cash Distributions in Rome and Imperial Minting” (translated here from the French “Les congiaires à Rome et la monnaie,” 1991), is perhaps the best example of what I referred to before as Millar’s *aporia*: in no other article do we encounter so many unanswered questions, but the sheer value of posing them cannot be overestimated.

We are told in the postscript of chapter 6, “Epictetus and the Imperial Court” (1965), that its genesis lay in “the collection of material for a book on the imperial court from Augustus to Constantine,” but its unique theme, a

3. “Emperors at Work,” text following n. 6.

4. Afterword, *ERW*², 637.

5. *ERW*, 6.

6. This last quotation is taken from chapter 11, “The Emperor, the Senate, and the Provinces,” in Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East I: The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, ed. H. M. Cotton and G. M. Rogers (North Carolina, 2002), 291.

counterpoint to “the values of status and ambition” on which the imperial court and imperial society as a whole were based, was not in fact integrated into *The Emperor in the Roman World*.

The gruesome subject of penal punishment in the Roman Empire is fully explored by Millar for the first time in chapter 7: “Condemnation to Hard Labour in the Roman Empire, from the Julio-Claudians to Constantine” (1984). The dual-penalty system introduced into the Roman legal system in the second century A.D. meant that the various forms of physical punishment, incarceration and hard labour, meticulously described here, were reserved for “lower-class” persons—and also for Christians.

Another classic piece is “The Equestrian Career under the Empire” (chapter 8), which contains the first part of Millar’s review from 1963 of H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain I–III* (Paris, 1960–61), and also takes on board Pflaum’s *Procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris, 1950). For Millar Pflaum’s reconstruction of the equestrian career not only antedates the evolution of a fully fledged equestrian civil service with a highly regulated career, with rules of promotion and fixed grades of pay. Like other interpretations that rest largely on prosopographical data, it does not pay enough attention to the broader picture, to the sociopolitical and cultural framework which clearly resisted such a development.

Triggered off by E. N. Luttwak’s *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore and London, 1976), chapter 9, “Emperors, Frontiers, and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C.–A.D. 378” (1982), analyzes “the conditions under which the external policy of the Empire was formulated and put into effect.”⁷ It explores the interplay between the emperor as the commander in chief and the restraining factors of time, distance, and availability of information in shaping foreign policy and expansion. In modern perception diplomatic activity is characteristic of relations with foreign powers beyond the borders of the state. This view proves itself inadequate in the case of the Roman Empire, where the very concept of borders did not exist. Here “most of the evidence for exchanges which have the *form* of diplomatic dealings in fact comes from . . . dealings with cities and communities unambiguously subject to the Roman Empire, which paid tribute to it, and which were in every sense within its borders,” as demonstrated in chapter 10: “Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the First Three Centuries” (1988). The same is true of relations with the so-called client kings whose ambiguous status within the Roman world is revealed in

7. Text following n. 12.

chapter 11: “Emperors, Kings, and Subjects: The Politics of Two-Level Sovereignty” (1996).

The second part of this volume opens with an essay on the survival of local cultures under Roman aegis in a single province (chapter 12). At the time of its first publication “Local Cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic, and Latin in Roman Africa” (1968) was a pioneer study in the true sense of the word. Millar’s warning at the opening that the results and conclusions reached in such studies “may be falsified by new evidence” should not blind us to the enduring value of the methods employed and the questions asked here for the first time in dealing with the intricate and complex issue of “survival.” This is the first expression in print of what became one of Millar’s main preoccupations, explored in many of the articles to be included in volume 3 of *Rome, the Greek World, and the East: The Greek World, the Jews, and the East* and in *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337*.⁸

Survival is also the subject of chapter 13, “P. Herennius Dexippus: The Greek World and the Third-Century Invasions” (1969), which takes its cue from the resistance put up by the Athenians headed by the historian Dexippus in the face of the Herulian invasion and sack of Athens in 267/8 A.D. This is Fergus Millar at his best, with complete mastery of the ancient sources, the documentary evidence, and the prosopographical data—a lesson indeed in how to use prosopography profitably. There is enough material here for the writing of a new “War and Peace” aiming to explain, in the words of the last paragraph, why “the Byzantine world survived against repeated attack in a way that the Latin world did not; and that a profound attachment to the classical Greek past remained fundamental to Byzantine culture. . . . what we find in the third century is not merely that fuller literary evidence happens to reveal more about popular resistance in the Greek East; but rather that the Greek society of the Empire gained self-confidence and coherence precisely from its vigorous literary and intellectual tradition, and its intimate connection with a heroic past.”

The role of the imperial cult in the various phases of the persecution of the Christians is an occasion to explore and nuance the nature of the cult itself in chapter 14 (“The Imperial Cult and the Persecutions,” 1973). The racy style of chapter 15, “The World of the *Golden Ass*” (1981), turning Apuleius’ fiction into a treasure trove for the depiction of real life in the Roman provincial countryside, gives way to the slowly mounting tension between imperial government and the self-governing cities of the empire

8. Carl Newell Jackson Lectures, Harvard, 1987. Harvard University Press, 1993; paperback 1995.

in chapter 16: “Empire and City, Augustus to Julian: Obligations, Excuses, and Status” (1983). The vitality of city life was sapped by the multiplication of exemptions and immunities from performing municipal duties granted as rewards for employment in the growing imperial civil service. The interplay between private initiative and imperial helplessness or inconsistency encouraged the emergence of status distinctions, which left their mark on the honorific language of the inscriptions even before they received legal sanction. The process by which Italy, which until Domitian had occupied an abnormal status in the framework of the Empire, was provincialized is the subject of chapter 17: “Italy and the Roman Empire: Augustus to Constantine” (1986).

Chapter 18, “Style Abides” (1981), should be read together with the more personal notes about Millar’s teacher (and an earlier holder of the Camden chair), the late Sir Ronald Syme, in the prologue to volume 1 (pp. 12–16). Both statements contain important insights into Syme’s work, interests, intentions, and personality. No less, however, do they reveal to us by comparison Millar’s own road as a historian of Rome. Millar certainly shared Syme’s impatience with the German constitutional school. In speaking about Syme he is clearly expressing his own feeling, familiar to all of us who were his students and who found the temptation of exploring such notions as “The imperium of Augustus” irresistible; whereas for Millar Syme’s “Imperator Caesar: A Study in Nomenclature”⁹ represents “his finest single article” — precisely because the elucidation of the title is taken from the political reality of the time rather than from the Roman law books.

Not that Millar is oblivious to the enormous value of the writings of the Roman jurists for imperial history, as is made abundantly clear in the two chapters that conclude this volume (chapter 19: “A New Approach to the Roman Jurists,” 1986; and chapter 20: “The Greek East and Roman Law: The Dossier of M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus,” 1999). Lamentably, the juristic texts have not received “the textual attention almost guaranteed to anyone who had the sense to write in verse,” and their invaluable contribution to our understanding of “the complex cultural landscape of the Empire” has been sorely missed. The career of the Greek jurist M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus takes us back some thirty-five years to *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford, 1964),¹⁰ where for the first time Millar analyzes “the complex, and in historical terms extremely important, process by which the upper classes of the Greek East ‘became Roman’ while ‘staying Greek.’”

9. *Historia* 7 (1958): 172–88 (= *Roman Papers* I, ed. E. Badian [Oxford, 1979], 361–77).

10. The role of Greeks in the development of Roman law intrigued Millar already then; see *A Study of Cassius Dio*, 188–89.

The Greek historian, Cassius Dio, and the Greek jurist, M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus, embody that process in their careers in the service of the Roman emperors as well as in their writings. Both represent “the fusion of Greek civilization and Roman government”; for both “to be a Roman . . . was to have a certain attitude to history, to identify oneself with an historical tradition going back to the Republic and beyond, and to look at history from Rome outwards . . . while retaining unimpaired the cultural outlook of the Greek world in which [they] were born.” Both — but also P. Herennius Dexippus — could be regarded as “a symbol of the process that brought about a Roman Empire ruled from Byzantium, which survived for a thousand years after the western part had passed away” (*A Study of Cassius Dio*, 191–92).

Hannah M. Cotton
Jerusalem
11 December 2002

CHAPTER NINE

*Emperors, Frontiers, and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C. to A.D. 378**

Introduction

“Severus . . . was in the habit of saying that he had gained a large additional territory and made it a bulwark for Syria. But the facts themselves show that it is a source of continual wars for us, and of great expenses. For it provides very little revenue and involves very great expenditure; and having extended our frontiers to the neighbours of the Medes and Parthians, we are constantly so to speak at war in their defence.” So writes Cassius Dio about the extension of the eastern frontier in the 190s and the creation of the provinces of Mesopotamia and Osrhoene.¹ The significance of the passage however, extends beyond the question of the eastern frontier itself at that moment. Written by an ex-consul, and former adviser of Severus, it reveals two types of justification for conquest uttered by the Emperor himself—one straightforwardly imperialistic, the other strategic; and a critique of this from two points of view, the balance of income and expenditure, and the wider strategic commitments incurred. Whether Dio had formulated such views already in Severus’ reign we cannot know; this section of his History will have been written at the earliest towards 220, and probably later.² If he had, we have no reason to think that he expressed them to Severus. If he did, it can only have been after the event, for his own narrative at this point makes clear that

*First published in *Britannia* 13 (1982): 1–23. Earlier versions of this chapter were given at the universities of Berlin, Bielefeld, Bochum, and Cologne in July 1979 and at Miss J. M. Reynolds’s and Mr. M. H. Crawford’s seminar in Cambridge in October 1979. I am grateful for comments and suggestions to Sir Ronald Syme, Professor A. L. F. Rivet, and Professor J. J. Wilkes.

1. Dio 75, 3, 2–3 (Boissevain III, 340).

2. For an early chronology—probably too early—of the composition of the *Roman History*, see F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964), chap. 2 and pp. 193–94.

the new province of Mesopotamia was entrusted to an equestrian, and an “honour” (the status of *colonia*) given to Nisibis, either after the campaign of 195, or (less probably) after that of 198, in neither of which Dio himself took part.³ None the less, the fact that the passage retails both the authentic views of an emperor and a critique of them by an ex-consul may encourage us to ask some general questions: how, by whom, and within what conceptual frameworks were the foreign and frontier “policies” of the Empire formulated?

We need not doubt the importance of such problems. On the one hand the results of these policies had fundamental effects on the political, social, and cultural contexts within which millions of people lived, from the lamp-lighters of Oxyrhynchus taking their oath by “Caesar” in 30/29 B.C.;⁴ to the people of Dura who found Roman troops established in their city in the late second century and then saw it destroyed by the Persians in the 250s; or (in Ammianus’ marvellous description) the inhabitants of Nisibis evacuating the city in 363 under the terms of Jovian’s treaty with Shapur II.⁵ On the other hand the problems involve the extent of the geographical and ethnographical knowledge available to the emperors and their advisers; the nature of the conceptual framework which they could apply to this knowledge; and their conception of the Empire itself—either (to put it at its simplest) as an offensive system designed for further conquests, or as an essentially static defensive system. Then there are more specific and concrete but equally fundamental questions. Was (for instance) a map of the German or Tripolitanian frontier, or of northern Britain, available in Rome, or wherever the emperor was? In either case how, with what delays, and in what form did short-term information reach the emperor or whoever made decisions on frontier questions? Who indeed was involved in such decisions, and what difference did it make whether at the relevant moment the emperor was in Rome, in a province, or on campaign elsewhere?

These questions are, of course, prompted by E. N. Luttwak’s excellent *Grand Strategy*,⁶ whose approach is to analyse the actual dispositions of troops

3. Dio (n. 1); Nisibis as a *colonia*: Dio 36, 6, 2. For the background, see M. G. Angeli Bertinelli, “I Romani oltre l’Eufrate nel II secolo d. C (le province di Assiria, di Mesopotamia e di Osrhoene),” *ANRW* II.9.1 (1976), 3; cf. D. L. Kennedy, “Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila, ‘First Prefect of Mesopotamia,’” *ZPE* 36 (1979): 255. The exact date of the creation of the two provinces cannot be determined.

4. *P. Oxy.* 1453 = *Sel. Pap.* II, no. 327.

5. Ammianus 25, 9.

6. E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (1976).

and frontier installations at successive periods, and to deduce from them the nature and intentions of the current imperial strategy. It remains possible, however, to doubt whether all the successive phases actually answer to Luttwak's analyses, and to wonder whether indeed there was a "grand strategy" rather than a series of positions arrived at by ad hoc decisions.⁷ It is therefore all the more important to ask whether we can know how the emperors or others could or did acquire information, form views, and formulate decisions in these areas. It may be, of course, that we cannot. As Dio himself observed in a famous passage, under the Empire decisions were taken in secret, and what was given out was often untrue, or at least unverifiable.⁸ But imperial *civil* decisions did at least produce a vast series of written pronouncements, letters, and verdicts, preserved in literary and legal sources and on papyri and inscriptions, which are not merely products of the imperial entourage, but which cannot be falsified (unless proved to be inauthentic) because they are performative utterances which embody rather than report imperial actions. By contrast, whereas we know that there was correspondence between emperors and the governors of imperial provinces on matters of frontier policy, no texts of such letters survive. There were also letters between emperors and foreign kings, but our only texts of these are offered by literary sources of the fourth century (the letter of Constantine to Shapur II, and Shapur's exchange of letters with Constantius in 358), and are of uncertain authenticity.⁹ Comparable problems arise with imperial pronouncements which are certainly authentic, the *Res Gestae* of Augustus or Julian's *Letter to the Athenians*,¹⁰ but which contain retrospective reports, justifications or celebrations of military or diplomatic policy. Like the victory titles of emperors, or their coins, columns, or arches, these pronouncements will tell us what was claimed, while leaving us without even the certainty that the claim was not justified. The difficulty in knowing simply "what happened" is illustrated dramatically, for instance, by the total contradiction between Graeco-Roman narrative sources on the death of Gordian III and the ending of the Persian campaigns under Philip, and our only external document

7. So J. C. Mann, "Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire," *JRS* 69 (1979): 175. Note also Mann, "The Frontiers of the Principate," *ANRW* II.1 (1974), 508.

8. Dio 53, 19.

9. Constantine: Eusebius, *VC* 4, 9–13. Eusebius (4, 8) attests the preservation of a copy of the Latin original in Constantine's own hand, which he reproduces in Greek. See H. Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins* (1954), 48–49, 125–27. Shapur and Constantius: Ammianus 17, 5.

10. Julian 268A–287D.

on imperial campaigns, the so-called *Res Gestae* of Shapur I from Naqsh-e Rostam.¹¹ None the less, even the most blatant of propaganda will tell us what someone wished to be believed and will by implication reveal something of the values, objectives, and presuppositions both of its author and of its intended audience. As the passage of Dio shows, it does not follow that contemporary observers assented to the claims made in propaganda. But the overall pattern of propaganda must still tell us something of the conceptual framework within which policy was formulated.

The same applies to what must, for lack of anything better, remain our main source of evidence, the historical narratives, letters, and biographies of the period. Some of these at least—for instance, the works of the two Plinies, Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio, and Ammianus—come from precisely the class of men who were called to the emperor's *consilium*, acted as his secretaries, or served on his staff. Have we any reason to suppose that even those emperors (remarkably few) who were brought up and trained as such could have acquired a conception of frontier or foreign policy which was significantly different from theirs? Even if that could be shown, many of the emperors who played the most important parts in military history—for instance, Vespasian, Trajan, Septimius Severus, Aurelian, Diocletian, and Valentinian—came to the throne in middle life, from the Senate or from equestrian posts. Chance or circumstance could have brought Tacitus, Dio, or Ammianus to the throne just as well as Trajan, Severus, or Valentinian. We would be quite wrong to *assume* that imperial policy was informed by reasoning which was superior or different in kind from that of those who recorded it in historical narratives.

A superiority of immediate concrete information—in the form of messages from the frontiers—on the emperor's part might well be supposed. But even here his dependence on his social and cultural environment is manifest, for new information could come to him from three main sources: missions sent by him across the frontiers to explore and report back; reports from governors (men, once again, like Tacitus, Agricola, Pliny the Younger, or Dio); or the arrival of foreign envoys. In all these cases his perceptions of the situation must have been profoundly affected by the conceptions and interests of those presenting the information.

11. See A. Maricq, "Res Gestae Divi Saporis," *Syria* 35 (1958): 295. This episode is described in ll. 6–9; Shapur claims that he killed Gordian in battle and that Philip then made peace on payment of a large sum. Zosimus 1, 18–19, reports that Gordian won a victory and was then killed by the troops, instigated by Philip; cf. Eutropius 9, 2, 2–3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 27, 8.

What follows is offered as no more than a few tentative steps towards analysing the conditions under which the external policy of the Empire was formulated and put into effect in the four centuries between Actium and Hadrianople. The need for such an approach is widely recognised,¹² and the theme is of considerable relevance to our understanding of the nature of the Empire. The discussion will be based on literary and documentary evidence, will have to be highly selective, and will do no justice to the complexities of particular campaigns or the archaeology of individual frontiers. But it may serve to raise some questions, and to emphasize the limits imposed on policy and its execution by Graeco-Roman culture, the structure of government, time, distance, and the conventions of diplomacy. No apology is made for the use of arguments from silence. We must as a first step listen to what our sources explicitly tell us and refrain from making assumptions as to what they do not tell us. If we then wish to claim (for instance) that the emperors systematically gathered and stored information from traders and others, at least we shall know that this is a hypothesis.

The Agents of Decision

No one will argue that the popular assemblies in Rome still played any part in the declaration of war or the making of treaties. Nor is there any reason to think that the Senate acted as a genuine vehicle of decision in military or foreign policy matters, in the sense of being a forum of debate where contrary opinions were expressed and votes taken. That said, however, the evidence shows that up to the mid-second century it could and often did play at least a formal role in matters affecting wars, "client" kings, and foreign relations. It seems indeed to have lost this role at roughly the same time as it ceased to receive embassies from provincial communities, a process which of course always retained the formal character of diplomatic traffic.¹³

In the early Empire the Senate might be the scene of the trials of "client"

12. For discussions of these and comparable problems, see for instance B. H. Warmington, "Frontier Studies and the History of the Roman Empire—Some Desiderata," *Actes du IX^e Congrès international d'études sur les frontières romaines, 1972* (1974), 291; A. R. Birley, "Roman Frontiers and Roman Frontier Policy: Some Reflections on Roman Imperialism," *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* 3 (1974), 13; G. D. B. Jones, "Concept and Development in Roman Frontiers," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 61 (1978): 115. See also Mann (n. 7), the essays in D. H. Miller and J. D. Steffen, eds., *The Frontier: Comparative Studies* (1978), and G. W. Bowersock, "The Emperor's Burden," *Class. Philol.* 73 (1978): 346.

13. F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977; 2nd ed., 1992), 343 (henceforth *ERW*).

kings,¹⁴ though it was a sign of the future that, when in 23 B.C. Augustus brought Tiridates in person to appear against an embassy from Phraates in the Senate, the latter referred the matter back to him.¹⁵ Under Tiberius the Senate was supposed to receive reports from imperial governors and was consulted on the recruitment and discharge of soldiers, the disposition of the legions and the non-citizens auxiliaries, and on replies to kings.¹⁶ If we may believe Strabo's contemporary account, the decision to make Cappadocia a province in A.D. 17 was taken jointly by Emperor and Senate.¹⁷ In 19 Tiberius addressed the Senate after granting refuge to Maroboduus, arguing that the king had been a greater threat than Pyrrhus or Antiochus III.¹⁸ Gaius had the Senate vote on the grant of various client kingdoms in 38,¹⁹ and under Claudius it voted that treaties made by the Emperor or his *legati* should be valid as if passed by Senate and People.²⁰ In 49 Parthian ambassadors appeared in the Senate and were answered by a speech from Claudius;²¹ Trajan in 102 sent ambassadors from Decebalus to speak in the Senate and have the peace treaty confirmed, and when the king was reported to have broken it the Senate declared him an enemy.²² Under Hadrian embassies from Vologaeses of Parthia and the Iazyges appeared in the Senate,²³ while Marcus Aurelius formally asked the Senate to vote funds for the war of 178—but, as Dio makes clear, solely as a deliberate gesture to constitutional theory.²⁴ When Dio suggests in the "speech of Maecenas" that embassies from hostile and allied kings or nations should be brought before the Senate, this clearly no longer corresponded to the reality of the early third century: "[F]or, other questions apart, it is appropriate and impressive if the Senate seems to have full powers."²⁵ However, even in this period, as they had done from the beginning, the emperors would write reports to the Senate on their military

14. E.g., Antiochus of Commagene, Dio 52, 43; Archelaus of Cappadocia, Dio 57, 17, 3–6; Rhescuporis of Thrace, Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 67.

15. Dio 53, 33, 1–2.

16. Suetonius, *Tib.* 30; 32.

17. *Geog.* 12, 1, 4 (534).

18. Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 63.

19. Dio 59, 12, 2.

20. Dio 60, 23, 6. See P. A. Brunt, "Lex de Imperio Vespasiani," *JRS* 67 (1977): 95, on p. 103.

21. Tacitus, *Ann.* 12, 10–11.

22. Dio 68, 9, 7–10, 1; 10, 3–4.

23. Dio 69, 15, 2.

24. Dio 72, 33, 2.

25. Dio 52, 31, 1.

and diplomatic dealings.²⁶ In the 160s, when for the first time there were two Augusti, Lucius Verus' letter of report from Parthia was read in the Senate and accompanied by a speech from Marcus Aurelius.²⁷

These procedures cannot be regarded as having been vehicles of debate or decision, but like the related process of voting military honours for emperors and others,²⁸ they were by no means irrelevant to the issues discussed here. Even these formal votes, and the orations which accompanied them, will have served to formulate the prevailing notions of what constituted success in military and diplomatic policy, and hence to form those presuppositions which would lie behind future objectives.

The question of such a slowly evolving consensus is all the more vital because, as is beyond question, external policy was in fact created throughout the period within the framework provided by the emperor, his senatorial and equestrian friends, and his "secretarial" staff. It hardly needs stating once again that our evidence provides no hint of any ministries, headquarters, or general staffs established in Rome, or in the Tetrarchic or fourth-century "capitals," and functioning independently of the emperor. It was only in the late fourth century, and in the West, that *magistri militum* (masters of soldiers) attained a real military independence of the emperors.²⁹

If we look first at the bureaucratic or "secretarial" entourage, as opposed to friends (*amici*) or officers, all our evidence combines to suggest its essentially civilian character. It is not only that there is, for instance, very little trace of *commentarii* (imperial records) or other records relating to military or diplomatic matters, to match those concerned with imperial legal decisions, the foundation of colonies, or the granting of the citizenship or other *beneficia* (favours).³⁰ It is rather that the "secretarial" entourage of the emperors visibly developed to serve civilian purposes: the hearing of embassies and legal cases, replying to *libelli* (petitions), writing letters in Latin and Greek. There was later an *a memoria*, or later still *magister memoriae*, of uncertain function—but never, surprisingly enough, any official concerned with

26. See, e.g., Dio 54, 9, 1 (Augustus to the Senate on foreign policy issues, 20 B.C.); Suetonius, *Calig.* 44; Dio 68, 29, 1–3 (Trajan from Parthia); 77, 12, 3 (Caracalla); 73, 27, 3 (Macrinus, 218).

27. Fronto, *Ad Verum Imp.* 2, 1, 3–4.

28. To take only two examples, note the *triumphalia ornamenta* voted by the Senate to Agricola (Tacitus, *Agric.* 40), and the three statues voted to M. Bassaeus Rufus on the motion of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, *ILS* 1326.

29. See, e.g., Jones, *LRE*, 174–78.

30. See *ERW*, 259–72. Augustus' *breviarium*, or summary report (Suetonius, *Aug.* 101), did contain details of how many soldiers were under arms.

edicts.³¹ The standard assumptions about the functions of the imperial entourage are clearly expressed by Dio in the "speech of Maecenas": "Moreover, as regards legal cases, letters, and decrees of the cities, petitions of individuals, and whatever else concerns the administration of the Empire, you should have helpers and assistants from among the equestrians."³² There is no trace here—or elsewhere—of imperial "secretaries" specifically concerned with military matters or foreign affairs. The pattern persists through the period, and beyond. The *Notitia Dignitatum* (List of Offices) lists the four established *magistri* (ministers): of the *memoria*, the *epistolae* (correspondence), the *libelli* (petitions), and the *epistolae graecae* (the Greek correspondence).³³

Any "secretarial" functions in relation to military matters or foreign affairs must then have been performed by these primarily civilian officials. Since, as we shall see, the emperors conducted an extensive exchange of letters and embassies with foreign rulers, it is natural to think first of the *ab epistulis/magister epistolarum* (i.e., the officials in charge of the imperial correspondence), and the (much less often attested) *a legationibus* (in charge of embassies). But, in fact, the little evidence which we have for their role concerns not the reception of embassies or the preparation of letters at court, but the despatch of occasional "secretarial" officials on foreign missions. For instance, it was evidently while he was on such a mission in about 173 that Marcus Aurelius' *ab epistulis Latinis* (in charge of the Latin correspondence), Tarutienus Paternus, was held and ill-treated by the Cotini, who had promised military collaboration against the Marcomanni.³⁴ Then, at the end of the third century, we find Sicorius Probus, the *magister memoriae*, being sent from Nisibis by Diocletian and Galerius as ambassador to Narses, and making a speech before him with proposals for the regulation of the Tigris frontier.³⁵ The detailed accounts in Ammianus of the reception by the emperor of embassies and letters from foreign rulers, and the despatch of others, show important roles as ambassadors being entrusted to court officials (*praefecti praetorio, comites, tribuni et notarii*), or high-ranking officers (*magistri militum* or *duces*),³⁶ and in one case to a philosopher, Eustathius. As both Ammianus and Libanius make clear, he was selected personally for his oratorical powers,

31. *ERW*, 252–59.

32. Dio 52, 33, 5.

33. *Not. Dig., Or.* 19; *Occ.* 17 (minus the *epistolae graecae*).

34. Dio 71, 12, 3. The *Tabula Banasitana* attests this form of his name, see *JRS* 63 (1973): 86.

35. Petrus Patricius, fr. 14 (*FHG* IV, p. 189).

36. Ammianus 17, 5 and 14; 18, 2, 2 (*tribunus*); 19, 11, 5 (two *tribuni* with interpreters); 25, 7, 7 (praetorian prefect and, probably, *comes rei militaris*); 27, 5, 1 (*magister equitum*); 5 (*magistri*?); 31, 7, 1 (*magister equitum*).

and Eunapius gives a highly coloured account of his success with Shapur II.³⁷ These narratives never show any specific role being performed by the "secretarial" *magistri*, though we do find some Alamannic ambassadors in 364 or 365 being rudely treated by Ursacius, the *magister officiorum* (the master of the offices).³⁸ The reason why court officials play so small a part in the accounts of the reception of embassies is quite simply that the emperors conducted all such negotiations in person through public verbal exchanges which naturally lent themselves to narrative presentation.³⁹ This highly personal and dramatic element was an essential feature of imperial foreign relations, and it was appropriate that Eunapius, in describing negotiations between Julian and the king of the Chamavi, made an explicit comparison with a scene on the stage.⁴⁰

If the emperor possessed any secretarial staff specifically for the conduct of frontier policy or diplomacy, all trace of it has disappeared. As regards advisers whom he could consult, it was normal from the beginning for one praetorian prefect or both to be in attendance on the emperor,⁴¹ as will have been the tribunes of any praetorian cohorts which were accompanying him. When an emperor was on campaign he could naturally consult the consular or praetorian *legati* of any legions which were in his vicinity, or the equestrian commanders of auxiliary units. Beyond that, in the first three centuries, if he was in Rome, he would consult whichever friends of senatorial or equestrian rank he chose to summon to him; if he was travelling in Italy or the provinces or was on campaign, the choice was inevitably restricted to those whom he had already selected to take with him as his *comites* (travelling companions). Thus, as regards Rome, Tacitus shows that Nero in 63, after receiving some Parthian ambassadors bringing a letter from Vologases, and interrogating the centurion who had accompanied them, consulted "among the *principes civitatis*" (the foremost people in the state) as to whether there should be peace or war.⁴² The same procedure is implied in Juvenal's *Fourth Satire*, 144-49, with Domitian's *amici* hurrying to the Arx Albana "as if he were about to speak about the Chatti or the wild Sygambri, and as if from distant parts of the earth an urgent letter had come on headlong wing."

37. Ammianus 17, 5, 15: *Ut opifex suadendi* (as a master of persuasion); Libanius, *Ep.* 331; Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 365 (also noting that high military or civilian officials were normally sent on embassies).

38. Ammianus 26, 5, 7.

39. See further text to nn. 100-101.

40. Eunapius, *Fr.* 12 (*FHG* IV, pp. 17-19).

41. *ERW*, 127.

42. *Ann.* 15, 24-25.

Outside Rome, we see for instance Otho's advisers debating the prospects of the civil war of 69: five persons give their opinions, including his brother and his praetorian prefect, and the prime role is played by Suetonius Paulinus, on the basis of his established reputation as a military man.⁴³ The advisers whom Marcus Aurelius would consult on both military and civil matters⁴⁴ were with him and Commodus when he died (at Sirmium or Vindobona) in 180. Both Dio and Herodian report that it was against their advice that the young Commodus made peace, abandoned the Marcomannic war, and returned to Rome.⁴⁵ This is a cardinal instance of the essential weakness of the position of the *amici* or *comites*. It lay solely with the emperor whether to have them with him, to consult them on any particular issue, or to take their advice. They had no power base, were nobody's delegates or representatives, and could not compel him even if they were unanimous.

The other essential feature of the institution of the *consilium* in the early Empire was the absence of any distinction of function (juridical, administrative, political, or military) between its members. In this respect the structural developments of the third and fourth centuries brought some changes, not easily defined. In the century from 250 to 350 the few brief accounts we have of discussions between the emperor and advisers tend to single out persons holding specific military ranks, *praefecti*, *tribuni*, or *duces*;⁴⁶ we have no evidence to indicate whether the *magistri militum* created by Constantine began at once to act as military advisers to the emperor. When Ammianus' narrative is available, for the years from 353 onwards, we have various descriptions of councils of war: before Ctesiphon in 363; when Valentinian was hesitating in 364 between repelling the Alamannic invasion of Gaul and confronting the still vaguely reported coup of Procopius in the East; and later when he was dissuaded by his advisers from marching from Rhine to Danube against the Quadi until he had made peace with the Alamanni and had waited for the spring of 375.⁴⁷ But unfortunately only the account of the council of war held by Valens before Hadrianople in 378 gives any indication of the ranks or offices of the persons consulted: the persons of "various ranks" (*potestates variae*) included Sebastianus, the *magister peditum* (the master of the infantry) who was in favour of immediate action, and Victor, the *magister equitum* (the

43. Tacitus, *Hist.* 2, 31-33.

44. *HA*, v. *M. Ant.* 22. 3.

45. Dio 73, 1, 2; Herodian I, 6. For the treaty negotiations, see text to n. 101.

46. *ERW*, 125-22.

47. Ammianus 24, 7, 1; 26, 5, 8-13; 30, 3; (see further below). Note also Eunapius, *Fr.* 42 (*FHG* IV, pp. 31-33) on the discussion of the Goths' request to be allowed across the Danube.

master of the cavalry), who vainly advised awaiting Gratian and his forces.⁴⁸ The specific accounts of strategic or tactical debates within the imperial entourage are thus both rather deficient in indications of the composition of the entourage (Ammianus notes a few paragraphs later that the praetorian prefect and the *consistoriani* [members of the *consistorium*, which replaced the earlier *consilium*] were at Hadrianople)⁴⁹ and not very clear as to who was actually consulted. A much clearer impression of the military character of the entourage in the fourth century is given by Ammianus' accounts of those moments, in 363 and 364, when the death of an emperor left it with the task of selecting his successor and proclaiming him first to the army on the spot and then to the Empire.⁵⁰ Here too, as in the events leading to Hadrianople, when Gratian's only means of attempting to intervene was a letter carried from Sirmium by the *comes domesticorum* (commander of the household troops), Richomer,⁵¹ we see the fundamental limitations placed by time, space, and delays of communication on the ways in which the Empire could function as a system.

Communication and Responsibility

It is thus clear enough, firstly, that immediate tactical, strategic, and diplomatic decisions by the emperor could only be taken on the spot wherever he and his entourage were; and, secondly, that, whatever advice he received, these decisions were taken by the emperor in person. That still leaves open the question of responsibility and decision making in relation to military or diplomatic operations conducted in the absence of the emperor. To illustrate the nature of the problem we may take two well-known instances from the first century. The first is the record of his governorship of Moesia in about 60–67 from the inscription of Tiberius Plautius Silvanus Aelianus on his family tomb at Tibur, listing the following activities:⁵²

1. More than 100,000 "Transdanubians" brought across with their wives and children and chiefs or kings (and settled) "so that they paid tribute."
2. A Sarmatian threat repressed, though part of his army had been withdrawn for operations in Armenia.

48. Ammianus 31, 12, 5–7. For Sebastianus' rank, *PLRE* I, Sebastianus 2.

49. 31, 12, 10.

50. 25, 5 (Jovian), see 8, 8–11 (communications to the West); 26, 1–2 (Valentinian).

51. 31, 12, 4.

52. *ILS* 986.

3. Previously unknown or hostile kings brought to the bank of the Danube to do reverence to the Roman standards.
4. The return to the kings of the Bastarnae and Roxolani of their sons, and (probably) to the king of the Dacians of his brother(s), whom he had captured or taken from their enemies.
5. The acceptance from some of these kings of hostages, by which the peace of the province was confirmed and extended.
6. The deterrence (by military or diplomatic means?) of the king of the Scythians from the siege of Chersonesus, "which lies beyond the Borysthenes."
7. The despatch of corn to Rome.

The record shows features which characterized Roman frontier operations, in this area above all, throughout the period: the combined employment of force and diplomacy; the steady absorption of barbarians, whether as settlers or soldiers or both;⁵³ and the assumption implicit in the language of the inscription that the Danube and its banks constituted the frontier of the Empire. The inscription reflects and expresses a common stock of conceptions about frontier objectives, not all of which will have needed to be expressed in formal instructions from the emperor. We know, of course, that governors of all types received *mandata* (instructions) from the emperor, covering administrative, legal, and military matters, at least in the sense of the disposition and discipline of troops. The evidence implies, however, that by the end of the second century the *mandata* had ossified into a code which was not specific to particular provinces or circumstances.⁵⁴ There seems, however, to be no evidence as to whether the *mandata* included instructions of a strategic or diplomatic nature, whether related to the particular time and place or of a general character.⁵⁵ If such instructions were not provided, then we must either accept that there actually was no "imperial" policy for Moesia in this period, or suppose either that Nero wrote subsequently to Aelianus on specific points or that Aelianus will have consulted him before taking major steps. At least one such letter of instruction must have reached Aelianus, on

53. I am very grateful to Dr. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix for letting me see in advance app. III. of *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981), which contains the most complete collection of the evidence on barbarian settlement.

54. *ERW*, 314–17, corrected as regards proconsuls by G. P. Burton, "The Issuing of *Mandata* to Proconsuls and a New Inscription from Cos," *ZPE* 21 (1976): 63.

55. Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 77, implies that the *mandata* given to the *legatus* of Syria concerned his military role, but says nothing of their contents.

the detachment of some of his troops (the legion V Macedonica) for the Armenian campaign. From parallel cases it is clear that there could have been other letters of instruction, though the inscription, put up under Vespasian, would not emphasize either that or consultation of Nero. For instance, Josephus records that Tiberius wrote to L. Vitellius as governor of Syria, probably in 35, to give him detailed instructions on the resumption of diplomatic relations with Artabanus of Parthia.⁵⁶ Subsequently, Herod Antipas wrote from Galilee to make accusations against Aretas of Nabataea, and Tiberius wrote to Vitellius instructing him to take his army against Aretas. When Vitellius had reached Jerusalem, news came of the death of Tiberius, and he returned to Syria, "no longer being empowered as before since control of affairs had passed to Gaius."⁵⁷

Precisely the same questions arise with the second instance, the governorship of Agricola in Britain in 78–84. Nothing is said by Tacitus about *mandata* from Vespasian, or about subsequent instructions from him, Titus, or Domitian, or about consultation of them by Agricola. But the statement that he did not enshrine the report of his containment of the Ordovices in a laurelled letter (18) surely implies at least that end-of-campaign reports were normal. Such reports are not mentioned again, however, until after the victory at Mons Graupius, when they were followed by the vote of *triumphalia ornamenta* (triumphal distinctions) and of a statue by the Senate—and a letter of recall from Domitian (39–40). But if there is any truth in Dio's confused report that Titus had gained an imperial acclamation as a result of Agricola's successes in Britain, there must have been reports to him too.⁵⁸ Tacitus' account however provides no positive reason to believe that the consolidation of northern Wales, the advance into southern Scotland and up the east coast, the battle of Mons Graupius or, on the diplomatic side, the reception of a fugitive chief from Ireland (24) or the demand for hostages from tribes in Scotland (38) followed any specific imperial plan or instructions. It is a reasonable speculation, but only a speculation, that *Agricola* 23 might reflect a decision by Titus that Agricola should halt on the Forth-Clyde line, then reversed by Domitian.⁵⁹ The recall of Agricola, combined with the very clear archaeological evidence for the establishment of the legionary fortress

56. Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 4, 4 (96). For the date, see Tacitus, *Ann.* 6, 31–37, and Dio 58, 26.

57. Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 5, 1 (115); 5, 3 (120–24).

58. Dio 66, 20, under A.D. 79, and mentioning the fifteenth acclamation, correctly dated to that year, together with the circumnavigation of Britain, which happened in Agricola's sixth year (83).

59. For this view, S. S. Frere, *Britannia*² (1978), 126–28.

at Inchtuthil, perhaps in 84, and its systematic dismantlement in about 87, along with the withdrawal of the *legio II Adiutrix* perhaps in the same year, and its transference to Moesia,⁶⁰ might suggest that imperial "policy" could often consist of allowing imperial governors to follow their own presumptions until external factors, a major crisis or their own excessive activity, compelled intervention. Alternatively, intervention might follow more quickly, as we see in the case of Corbulo as *legatus* of the lower Rhine army in 47. The Chauci stirred, and Corbulo moved against them, apparently reporting his action to Rome. While he was building a camp in enemy territory, a letter arrived from Claudius ordering an end to operations and a withdrawal back across the Rhine.⁶¹ If the governor did not write to the Emperor, the equestrian procurator might, as we see in the well-known case of Classicianus' report to Nero from Britain, and the mission of Polyclitus (*Ann.* 14, 38–39).

Alternatively, a governor might write to the emperor to request his instructions before taking action. So, for instance, Domitius Marsianus, the *legatus* of Syria, wrote to Claudius to report that Agrippa I was strengthening the walls of Jerusalem, and evoked a letter from the Emperor to the king telling him to stop.⁶² Similarly, Caesennius Paetus, as a *legatus* of Syria in about 72, reported to Vespasian that Antiochus of Commagene was conspiring with Vologaeses of Parthia and received instructions to invade the kingdom and bring royal rule to an end.⁶³

It is easy to take such correspondence for granted, as we do the communications between Pliny in Bithynia and Trajan in Rome. But it is essential to emphasize its limitations as a decision-making procedure. First, there were the delays in time. There is no evidence that the Empire possessed any signalling procedure capable of transmitting complex messages (or indeed any long-distance signalling procedure at all). If, in fact, Augustus ever established relays of runners for carrying messages (which would have been prohibitively expensive in manpower if widely used), this procedure was quickly replaced by a system whereby messengers travelled the entire distance, and could be questioned for further information on arrival.⁶⁴ The system relied on the use of *diplomata* (permits) to requisition horses or *vehicula* (carriages), and later on the relays of horses available at the posting stations (*mansiones*). Since everything depended on the urgency of the situation and

60. See Frere (n. 59), 136–38.

61. Tacitus, *Ann.* 11, 19–20; Dio 61, 30, 4–5 (4).

62. Josephus, *Ant.* 19, 7, 2 (326–27).

63. Josephus, *BJ* 7, 7, 1–3 (219–43).

64. Suetonius, *Aug.* 49.

the physical resilience of the messengers (not to speak of the efficiency and co-operativeness of the persons supplying horses or vehicles), all that is really certain is that reports of exceptionally fast journeys over a few days by highly motivated individuals can be no guide to normal speeds; and that the speeds actually achieved must have dropped in proportion to the length of the journeys undertaken. For the relatively urgent messages with which we are concerned, the truth should lie somewhere between the 50 Roman miles per day estimated by Ramsay as typical⁶⁵ and Procopius' assumption, relating to the developed system of the late Empire, that a messenger could cover ten times the normal daily distance for a traveller in a day, that is, about 200 miles.⁶⁶ On that basis messengers going by land from Antioch to Rome, about 3,000 miles, are not likely to have taken less than a month, with a similar period for the return journey. Much faster journeys were possible by sea, of course—for instance, nine days from Puteoli to Alexandria.⁶⁷ But even where sea communications were relevant, as between Rome and Syria, they were acutely unreliable: the messengers bringing a threatening letter from Gaius to Petronius, a *legatus* of Syria, were storm-bound for three months, and arrived twenty-seven days after later messengers carrying the news of Gaius' death.⁶⁸ Moreover sea travel by official passengers or groups (like the escort which took a whole winter to bring Paul and other prisoners from Judaea to Rome) depended on the availability of trading ships. Even emperors occasionally travelled on merchant ships, and there is no clear evidence of the regular use of the imperial navy for transporting messengers.⁶⁹ In this connection we may note the evidence of *Dig.* 45, 1, 122, 1, of a nautical loan contract which allowed 200 days for a round trip from Berytus to Brundisium and back.

Thus, with the partial exception of the Rome–Alexandria voyage, the Mediterranean did not provide a medium of speedy and reliable internal communications for the Empire; the official voyages envisaged in the *Imperatoris Augusti Itinerarium Maritimum*⁷⁰ were coastal or went from island to

65. For discussions of the imperial communication system, see W. Riepl, *Das Nachrichtenwesen des Altertums mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Römer* (1913), 123–240; W. M. Ramsay, "The Speed of the Roman Imperial Post," *JRS* 15 (1925): 60; M. Amit, "Les moyens de communication et la défense de l'Empire romain," *Parola del Passato* 20 (1965): 207.

66. Procopius, *Hist. Arc.* 30, cited by Riepl. (n. 65), 186.

67. Pliny, *NH* 19, 3.

68. Josephus, *BJ* 2, 10, 5 (203); *Ant.* 18, 8, 9 (305).

69. C. G. Starr, *The Roman Imperial Navy* (1941), 177–78. See now W. Eck, "Tacitus, *Ann.* 4, 27, 1 und der *cursus publicus* auf der Adria," *SCI* 13 (1994): 60.

70. [See O. Cuntz, *Itineraria Romana* I (1929).]

island. So the communications with which we are concerned depended on the use of animal power on land, and all the more so after it became clear that the three key frontiers were those of the Euphrates, Danube, and Rhine. The mere fact of delay, in any case common to the Empire and its neighbours, and inbuilt into the economic and social fabric of the ancient world, did not of course prohibit consultation on military matters, any more than it prevented the constant resort of provincial embassies to the emperor, or correspondence on other matters between emperors and officials, in which intervals of several months between the composition of an imperial letter or edict and its receipt or promulgation were common.⁷¹ Indeed it is clear that in diplomatic traffic at least it was possible to tolerate delays far greater than those strictly imposed by the conditions of travel: in 356 Constantius and Julian wrote to the praetorian prefect to say that no Roman emissary on his way to Axum or the Homeritae should remain in Alexandria for more than a year or draw rations there after that time.⁷² Nor would the slowness of travel, especially by large bodies of men, affect those operations where the initiative lay in Roman hands. Thus for the invasion of Britain in 43 it was possible to concentrate not only three legions from the Rhine but one from Pannonia, which must have involved a march of two to three months to the Channel.⁷³ But the effect of distance and delay must either have been to allow considerable latitude to local commanders at least in the medium term, or alternatively to paralyse significant initiatives or responses while the lengthy process of consultation was carried out. This fact could on occasion be put to good effect, as in the anecdote recorded by Petrus Patricius of a governor of Moesia Inferior under Gordian III telling a delegation of Carpi that he would consult the emperor about their demands for a subvention, and that they should return after four months to hear the answer.⁷⁴

The Concentration of Strategic Decision Making

In a different political system the effect of these irremovable limitations on communication might have been a diffusion of political and military power

71. *ERW* 39, 254.

72. *CTh* 12, 12, 2. Note that Flavius Abinnacus spent three years escorting back *refugae* or *legati* of the Blemyes (*P. Abinn.* 1).

73. The camp of the *legio IX Hispana* in Pannonia is not known. The march must have meant going either through Noricum and Raetia or through northern Italy and across the Alps.

74. Petrus Patricius, fr. 8 (*FGHIV*, pp. 186–87). For the governor, Iulius (?) Menophilus, see Barbieri, *Albo senatorio*, no. 1071.

and hence of strategic and diplomatic initiative and responsibility. But in fact, as is clear, the opposite development occurred, and the emperors tended to concentrate the direction of military affairs more and more definitely in their own hands. In the 370s, for instance, we find the *duces* on the Danube telling the Goths that they cannot let them cross the Danube without the Emperor's permission.⁷⁵ Valens himself, on receiving the news of the threat to Thrace, sent emissaries to settle the Armenian question and hastened back from the Persian front to meet his death at Hadrianople.⁷⁶

From the very beginning, from Augustus' wars in Spain in 27-4 B.C. onwards, the notion that direct military command was an essential imperial function was present and was of great importance. But in the first century it was still possible, as the operations of Corbulo in Armenia show, for major campaigning to be conducted in the absence of the emperor. Subsequently that ceased to be so, in either offensive or defensive warfare, and the consequences were of the greatest importance for the evolving structure of imperial rule. Why this evolution took place is not a question which allows any simple answer. But some factors are clear. The first is that the fact that the Empire was a monarchy was immediately noticed and acted upon by foreign kings and rulers, some of them at immense distances. There thus began at once that traffic in embassies, fugitive princes, hostages, letters, gifts, and (from the emperor) the bestowal of crowns, which was one of the embodiments of the emperor's supremacy and was to be one of the most important functions of the Byzantine emperors.⁷⁷ It is necessary to stress that this very personal and monarchical element is strongly emphasized in the actual sentence structures of the relevant part of Augustus' *Res Gestae*: "To me from India . . . asking for our friendship . . . to me as supplicants these fled . . . to me the King of the Parthians . . . from me . . . the peoples of the Parthians and of the Medes" (*Ad me ex India . . . nostram amicitiam appetiverunt . . . ad me supplices confugerunt . . . ad me rex Parthorum . . . a me gentes Parthorum et Medorum*) (31-33). Several passages in Strabo's *Geography* offer confirmation of Augustus' claims, for instance that on the British chiefs who had gained the friendship of the emperor by embassies and diplomacy and had made offerings on the Capitol,⁷⁸ or the embassy from a king in India which (as Strabo describes) Nicolaus of Damascus encountered in Antioch on its way to Augustus. The three

75. Eunapius, *Fr.* 42 (FGH IV, p. 31); cf. Zosimus IV, 20, 6.

76. Ammianus 31, 7, 1; 11, 1-2; 12, 1-4; Zosimus IV, 21.

77. See J. Gag , "L'empereur romain et les rois: politique et protocole," *Rev. Hist.* 221 (1959): 22.

78. *Geog.* 4, 5, 3 (200).

ambassadors who had survived the journey were carrying a letter in Greek in which Poros described himself as king over 600 other kings and offered any collaboration which Augustus required: with the letter came gifts, borne by eight slaves, naked except for scented loincloths, namely, a freak, some large snakes, a serpent ten cubits in length, a turtle three cubits long, and a partridge larger than a vulture.⁷⁹ This embassy in fact reached Augustus in Samos in the winter of 20/19 B.C.;⁸⁰ and it had been there also, in the previous winter, that an Ethiopian embassy had appeared before him. The circumstances, again described by Strabo, are of considerable significance. When in 24-22 B.C. Ethiopian forces attacked the fort of Primis (Qa r Ibr m), the prefect of Egypt, Petronius, reinforced it in time, and when an Ethiopian embassy arrived told them to go to Augustus.⁸¹

When they said that they did not know who Caesar was or how they were to reach him, he provided them with an escort. They travelled to Samos where Caesar was, as he intended to go on to Syria and to send Tiberius into Armenia. They gained everything for which they asked, and he released them also from the tributes which he had imposed.

The diplomatic and military role in the East delegated by Augustus to Tiberius in person was in fact highly significant for the future. None the less, it is conceivable that if the Empire could have achieved overall the secure dominance momentarily demonstrated on both the eastern and Nubian fronts in the late 20s B.C., its frontier and diplomatic policy might indeed have been directed from Rome or wherever in the Mediterranean the emperor happened to be. Such a state of affairs was almost secured in the middle of the second century, when Appian gives his eye-witness report of the conduct of diplomacy by Antoninus Pius:⁸²

The emperors, in addition to the original provinces, have added some further areas to their rule and have suppressed some which broke away. In general, possessing by good government the most important parts of land and sea, they prefer to preserve their empire rather than extend it indefinitely to poor and profitless barbarian peoples. I have seen embassies from some of these in Rome offering themselves as subjects, and the Emperor refusing them, on the grounds that they would be of no use to him. For other peoples, limitless in number, the emperors

79. *Geog.* 15, 1, 73 (719) = Jacoby, *FGrH* 90, F. 100.

80. Dio 54, 9, 8-10.

81. *Geog.* 17, 1, 54 (820-21); cf. *JRS* 69 (1979): 127.

82. Appian, *Praef.* 7/25-28.

appoint the kings, not requiring them for the Empire. On some of the provinces they spend more than they receive, thinking it shameful to give them up even though they are loss-making. They surround the empire with a circle of great camps and guard so great an area of land and sea like an estate.

It was of Antoninus Pius also that Fronto, in the course of a speech of congratulation on the completion of a war in Britain "declared that although he had committed the conduct of the campaign to others, while sitting at home himself in the Palace in Rome, yet like the helmsman at the tiller of a ship of war, the glory of the whole navigation and voyage belonged to him."⁸³ Although the theme of Pius' control by correspondence from the centre reappears both in Aristides' *Roman Oration* (31–33) and in the *Historia Augusta*,⁸⁴ the element of special pleading on Fronto's part is evident. Even in the first century it had been only those emperors, such as Tiberius or Vespasian, who enjoyed an already established military reputation, who could afford to lead no war of conquest. It does not need demonstration that Claudius' invasion of Britain, lavishly celebrated in Rome and throughout the Empire, arose at least in part from the opposite case; and the fact that Pliny in his *Panegyric* can refer to no significant military achievements of Trajan before his accession surely has some relevance to the Dacian and Parthian wars which he led. Then, after the lull of Hadrian's and Antoninus Pius' reigns, we find that it is assumed that all major wars, whether defensive or offensive, are implicitly held to require the presence of the—or an—emperor. Though the gradually growing predominance of defensive warfare is undeniable, the ideal of conquest was not wholly abandoned. We need not disbelieve the *Historia Augusta's* claim that Marcus eventually intended to create two new provinces, Marcomannia and Sarmatia, beyond the Danube;⁸⁵ according to Herodian Severus spontaneously chose to undertake the British expedition of 208–11, as a training for Caracalla and Geta;⁸⁶ and above all the extension of provincial territory to the Tigris, and at times beyond, meant—as Dio saw—a wholly new strategic commitment whose consequences for the Empire were incalculable. Whether or not the overthrow of the Parthian Empire

83. *Pan. Lat.* VIII (Galletier IV), 14, 2, Loeb trans. from *Correspondence of M. Cornelius Fronto* II, 251 (see C. E. V. Nixon and B. S. Rogers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors* [1994]: 132–33).

84. *HA, v. Ant. Pii* 7, 11–12.

85. *HA, v. M. Ant.* 24, 5; cf. 27, 10. See A. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius* (1966), 205–6, and Birley (n. 12), 20–21; cf. A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia* (1974), 183–86, 193.

86. Herodian 3, 14, 1–2.

by the new Persian dynasty of the Sassanids was one of those consequences, Herodian's account (6, 2–3) of Roman reactions in the 220s and 230s shows very clearly how rigid were the assumptions which now prevailed as to the need for the imperial presence on all major campaigns. Letters came from the governors of Syria and Mesopotamia to say that Artaxerxes (Ardashir) was threatening the whole eastern empire. Severus Alexander consulted with his *amici* and sent an embassy with a letter warning Artaxerxes off; when this was ineffective, and the governors of the eastern provinces "were calling for him," Alexander marched via the Danubian provinces to Antioch. After further diplomatic exchanges, he mounted a triple invasion of Armenia and Mesopotamia. He was back in Antioch, probably over the winter of 232/3, when messengers brought news of German invasions across the Rhine and Danube, which demanded the presence of Alexander and the troops which he had taken east with him. The force of these reports was intensified by the reactions of those soldiers who had been transferred from the Danubian provinces. Herodian continues:⁸⁷

Alexander and the advisers who accompanied him were by this time even concerned about Italy, rating the German menace as very different from the Persians. The inhabitants of the eastern territories, separated as they are by a wide stretch of land and sea, hardly hear about Italy. But the Illyrian provinces are a narrow stretch of land that do not occupy much of Roman territory. This makes the Germans practically adjacent neighbours of the Italians. Reluctantly and sadly (through sheer necessity) Alexander issued the proclamation of an expedition.

However vague and confused Herodian may be, it is a fact that in this situation Alexander felt himself compelled to undertake a march of more than 2,000 miles, which cannot have taken less than about five months. By 234 he was on the Rhine frontier, where he was murdered at Moguntiacum in 235. He had ruled as sole emperor; but one direct consequence of the assumption that emperors would conduct major campaigns in person was the multiplication of emperors. This is already clear, for instance, in 260: when Valerian was captured by Shapur I in Mesopotamia, his son Gallienus, as joint *Augustus*, was conducting campaigns in northern Italy, and his grandson Saloninus, with the title of "Caesar," was commanding the Rhine frontier from Cologne. Precisely such necessities led to the formation of the Tetrarchy and then to the successive semi-dynastic combinations of emperors which characterized the fourth century. According to Zosimus, for instance, it was the

87. 6, 7, 4–5.

existence of simultaneous threats to the Empire on several fronts which induced Constantius to appoint his cousin Julian as *Caesar* in 355 and send him to Gaul.⁸⁸

It had already been established long before that an emperor, once in command on a particular front, took direct tactical and strategic command of it, fighting battles and determining the geographical and physical character of frontier installations. For instance, we owe our only precise literary reference to the pushing forward of the German frontier in 83 to Frontinus:⁸⁹

Imperator Caesar Domitianus Augustus—when the Germans, in accordance with their usual custom, kept emerging from woodland pastures and unsuspected hiding places to attack our men and then finding a safe refuge in the depths of the forest—by (constructing) *limites* along a stretch of one hundred twenty miles, not only changed the nature of the war, but brought his enemies beneath his sway, by uncovering their hiding places.

The question of whether he means to say that Domitian drove roads directly into enemy territory⁹⁰ or constructed *limites* (roads) laterally over a distance of 120 miles⁹¹ is not as significant for present purposes as the fact that Frontinus represents this as a strategic choice made by the Emperor in person. He similarly attributes to Domitian choices of other sorts: the ruse by which he set out from Rome on the pretence of conducting a census in Gaul; a tactical device used in battle against the Chatti; and the payment of compensation for land on which *castella* (forts) were built during the war.⁹² Again, to give only isolated examples, the *Historia Augusta* attributes to the moment of Hadrian's visit to Britain in 121/2 his building of the Wall "to separate the barbarians and the Romans."⁹³ Dio describes Caracalla seeing to the siting of forts and settlements on his German campaign of 213,⁹⁴ while Ammianus mentions the fortification of Circesium by Diocletian and details the major programme of military construction along the Rhine undertaken by Valentinian in 369 onwards.⁹⁵ J. J. Wilkes has drawn attention to the fact that inscriptions in-

88. Zosimus 3, 1.

89. *Strat.* 1, 3, 10.

90. So R. Syme, *CAH XI* (1936), 162–63.

91. So H. Schoenberger, *JRS* 59 (1969): 159.

92. *Strat.* 1, 1, 8; 2, 3, 23; 2, 11, 7.

93. *V. Had.* 11, 2.

94. 77, 13, 4 (388–89).

95. Circesium: Ammianus 22, 5, 2. Rhine: 28, 2, 1–6, cf. 30, 7, 6. See H. Schoenberger, *JRS* 69 (1969): 182–86.

creasingly advertise the responsibility of emperors for the construction of defensive works along or near the frontiers: "[F]ollowing the subjugation and control of the Franks through the excellence of Constantine, the *castrum* (fort) of the *Divitenses* was constructed in their territory in the presence of the Emperor himself."⁹⁶

Direct tactical command necessarily brought with it the direct management of diplomatic contacts, which would otherwise have been handled, at least in the first instance, by provincial governors, or later *duces*, *comites*, or *magistri*. Contacts with the Parthian and, later, Persian kings were always conducted by emissaries, who would speak before the emperor or king in person; Augustus' grandson Gaius might meet the king of the Parthians on the Euphrates,⁹⁷ but the only occasion on which emperor and king came face to face was the capture of Valerian. With lesser peoples the emperor might actually confront their kings in person, as Trajan did with a succession of kings and dynasts on his Parthian campaigns.⁹⁸ So too Ammianus offers a remarkable description of Valentinian negotiating from a boat on the Rhine with Macrianus, the king of the Alamanni, who was standing on the bank.⁹⁹

Thus when Commodus rejected the advice of his *comites* to continue the Marcomannic war in 180 the mechanism of decision was that he received an embassy from the Marcomanni and Quadi and made peace with them on the following terms: the return of prisoners and deserters; the provision of a fixed quantity of corn each year; the supplying of weapons and of 13,000 soldiers from the Quadi and less from the Marcomanni; the restriction of their assemblies to once a month, in the presence of a Roman centurion; and no attacks on the Iazyges, Buri, or Vandals. In return he withdrew the forts placed in their territory. Comparable terms were granted to an embassy from the Buri on the borders of Dacia, with the additional provision that they should leave an uninhabited zone forty stades wide along the frontier.¹⁰⁰

The close combination of military and diplomatic functions, and the personal management of both by the emperor, appear even more clearly in Dexippus' notable description of Aurelian's negotiations with the Juthungi in Pannonia in 270 or 271. He had defeated them and driven them back to the Danube and now proposed to receive an embassy. To instil the due measure of fear (which seemed to be lacking), he received them dressed in his

96. *CIL XIII*, 8502 = *ILS* 8937; see J. J. Wilkes, "British Anonymity in the Roman Empire," in D. E. Johnston, ed., *The Saxon Shore* (1977), 76.

97. Velleius 2, 101.

98. Dio 68, 18–19; 21 (Abgar of Osrochene, cf. Arrian, *Parth.*, fr. 46*).

99. 30, 3, 4–5.

100. Dio 72, 1–3 (282–84).

purple cloak, seated on a tribunal, with his officers on horseback about him and the army on parade. When given permission to speak, the ambassadors addressed him through an interpreter and represented themselves as willing to make peace from a position of strength. The Emperor made a speech in reply, contemptuously rejecting their demands.¹⁰¹

Information and Conceptual Frameworks

Within the few years before his death in 275 Aurelian had marched east and in two campaigns destroyed the brief "empire" of Palmyra, and then west and brought to an end the Imperium Galliarum. The Empire was thus substantially restored, but without the territories beyond the upper Rhine, and without Dacia, definitely abandoned perhaps in 271. Aurelian thus represents one of the extreme examples of the direct control of military operations by emperors and of the sheer extent of the marches undertaken by those of the third and fourth centuries—and the last example of one who carried this burden without at least one co-emperor. But his strategic choices may also, as we shall see below, reflect one set of presuppositions on the part of educated inhabitants of the Empire as to the shape and strategic character of the Roman world.

These general presuppositions—not necessarily unanimous, as Dio's criticism of Severus shows—are of crucial importance precisely because of what seems on our evidence to have been the relative lack of short- or medium-term information on peoples and geographical features beyond the Empire. Three interlinked factors are involved here: the means by which information could be obtained; the forms in which it could be presented; and the conceptual frameworks within which it could be used to produce decisions about frontier policy. It will be obvious that these are immense topics, as to which only a few suggestions and items of evidence can be presented here.

First, then, there seem to be relatively few cases, all in the early empire, and all concerned with prospective Roman expeditions, where long-distance missions were sent to explore enemy territory for military purposes. Augustus despatched Dionysius of Charax to the East "to write an account of everything" (*ad commentanda omnia*) in advance of Gaius Caesar's expedition.¹⁰² More detail is reported of the party of praetorians under a tribune which was sent by Nero to Ethiopia with a view to an expedition there. Their re-

101. Jacoby, *FGrH* 100, F. 6; see F. Millar, "P. Herennius Dexippus," *JRS* 59 (1969): 12, on p. 25 (= chapter 13 in this volume).

102. Pliny, *NH* 6, 141.

port described the flora and fauna of the region, the political structure of the kingdom, and the size of the army. More specifically, they gave the total distance between Syene and Meroe and the length of the stages from town to town.¹⁰³

This last was of course a crucial question, whether it related to bodies of troops marching by land or to fleets moving along a coastline. Information on these points is a conspicuous feature of the *Periplus of the Euxine* (*The Voyage round the Black Sea*) sent to Hadrian by Arrian while he was governor of Cappadocia in 131/2.¹⁰⁴ Only the first part (chaps. 1–11) describes an actual voyage by Arrian as governor, from Trapezus to Sebastopolis, the last auxiliary post on the east coast of the Euxine. He then adds a detailed guide to the coasting voyage from Byzantium to Trapezus, thus outside his province (12–16). At this point (17) Arrian writes: "Since I have heard of the death of Cotys, king of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, I have taken the trouble to describe to you the voyage as far as the Bosphorus, so that if you are considering matters relating to the Bosphorus you may be in a position to do so without being ignorant of the voyage there." The work is therefore completed (18–25) with a full description of the voyage round the north and west coasts from Sebastopolis to Byzantium, with indications of distances and the capacity of the harbours.

This is not, of course, an example of an exploratory expedition. But the information is offered for the same purpose as that gained by the first-century expeditions, as a guide to movement in an area where intervention might be required. The particular feature of the core of information provided—the names of stopping places and the distances between them—was that it could either be presented in literary form or be tabulated in the form of lists following particular routes or represented schematically on a map which did not have to be in proper topographical scale or proportion. So, for instance, a large number of the major sea and land routes could be tabulated verbally in the *Itinerarium Antonini*. One section (123, 8–147. I) lists the stages of the key route from Rome to Antioch via the Balkans and Asia Minor, endlessly traversed by emperors, and another (217, 5–231, 3) gives what may have been Caracalla's route along the Danube in 214. The listing of the legions in their

103. Pliny, *NH* 6, 181–86; 12, 18–19; Seneca, *NQ* 6, 8, 3–5. See J. Desanges, *Recherches sur l'activité des Méditerranéens aux confins de l'Afrique* (1978), 323–25.

104. See the edition by G. Marengi, *Arriano, Periplo del Ponto Eusino* (1958). Note also H. F. Pelham, "Arrian as Legate of Cappadocia," in *Essays* (1911), 212, and P. A. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (1980), 32–41. An English translation and discussion of this extremely important text for frontier studies would be of great value.

long-established camps on the Danube may suggest a military purpose, as does the connection, proposed by D. van Berchem, with the *Historia Augusta's* report of Severus Alexander's procedure for announcing in advance his route from Rome "to the barbarian frontiers" (*ad fines barbaricos*).¹⁰⁵

Such tabulations, essential for any movements within the Empire, whether of troops, the imperial entourage, or both, could also be extended outside the Empire if the relevant information was available. We can see an example in the *Parthian Stations* of Isidorus of Charax, which describes the major routes through the Parthian Empire as far as Arachosia.¹⁰⁶ In the second century the *Geographia* of Ptolemy, extending as far as India, grouped place-names by areas and located them by latitude and longitude. The absence of any sequential listing by routes must indicate that it could not have been intended for practical purposes, military or otherwise. Nor is it certain whether actual maps accompanied the text.¹⁰⁷ For a schematic map incorporating practical information we must of course look to the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, generally accepted as going back to a map of the late Roman period (and emphasizing Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch), which may hypothetically derive in part from earlier models, even from the map of Agrippa.¹⁰⁸ The original was designed functionally in two senses: to be used in roll form, and to indicate land routes (but not sea routes) schematically over the area from the Atlantic to Central Asia, marking distances, basic geographical features, towns, and types of accommodation. There is nothing strictly to prove the official character of the original, and nothing even to suggest a military function. But a fragment of a comparable map—offering a schematic representation of a route round the Euxine—was found on the cover of a soldier's shield from Dura-Europos. This too gives essentially a sequence of places and distances;

105. *HA, v. Sev. Alex.* 45, 2. See D. van Berchem, "L'annone militaire dans l'Empire romain du III^e siècle," *Mém. Soc. Nat. Ant. Fr.*, 8^e ser., 10 (1937): 117–201; cf. *ERW*, 31–33. For all questions relating to *itineraria* and maps, note the invaluable discussions in A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (1979); for the *Itin. Ant.*, pp. 150–54.

106. For the text, see *Geog. Gr. Min.*, 1, 244–55. See A. S. Nodelman, "A Preliminary History of Characene," *Berytus* 13 (1960): 83, on pp. 107–8, arguing against a possible identification with Dionysius of Charax, and suggesting a date in the later first century.

107. See *RE Supp. X* (1965), cols. 680–833, s.v. "Klaudios Ptolemaios"; Rivet and Smith (n. 105), 103–31.

108. See the invaluable facsimile edition, with accompanying volume of discussion and commentary, by E. Weber, *Tabula Peutingeriana: Codex Vindobonensis 324. Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat I–II* (1976). For the functional character of the map, see esp. A. Levi and M. Levi, *Itineraria Picta: contributo allo studio della Tabula Peutingeriana* (1967).

if conceived of as giving a visual impression of the actual topographical relationships of the places, it would be wholly misleading.¹⁰⁹

We need not doubt that itineraries, whether in the form of sequential lists of places or of schematic maps, could be used for military movements within the Empire and (where towns, roads, and information about them existed) outside it. Vegetius indeed advises that itineraries should be issued for all troop movements showing distances, types of roads, short-cuts, stopping places, mountains, and rivers. But, writing in an era of defensive warfare (probably under Theodosius I), he assumes that such movements will have taken place through existing Roman provinces—"so much so that the more careful generals are claimed to have had the *itineraria* of provinces where they needed to operate not merely listed but also pictured."¹¹⁰

Visual representation thus seems to have been secondary to schematic, or even purely verbal, tabulation of towns and stages. We cannot, unfortunately, form any clear conception of the map (?)—*geographia*—in the form of a tablet (*pinakion*) and containing *diagrammata* (plans?), for which Julian wrote to thank Alypius, who may then have been *vicarius* of the provinces of Britain.¹¹¹ That suggests the possibility that office-holders could use visual means to inform emperors—though the vicariate was a civil, not a military, office, and we do not know what region the map represented. But it still leaves a more fundamental question: if the Roman maps of which we can form any clear conception did not provide a realistic projection of land-masses (or still less of seas or the mutual relations of islands in seas), was it in principle possible for an emperor, or anyone else, to conceive of the overall military situation in global strategic terms, or to consider for instance whether a frontier on the Elbe might have provided shorter lines of communication than one on the Rhine?¹¹² All that can be said is that our explicit evidence does not seem to provide any clear instances of the use of maps in strategic or

109. F. Cumont, "Fragment de bouclier portant une liste d'étapes," *Syria* 6 (1925): 1; *Fouilles de Dura-Europos* (1926), 323–24.

110. Vegetius, *Epit. rei mil.* 3, 6. See T. D. Barnes, "The Date of Vegetius," *Phoenix* 33 (1979): 254. The remarkable description of the arrangements for the march of an army unit in Ambrose, *In Psalmum CXVIII*, Sermo 5, 2 (Migne, *PL* 15, 1250–51), also refers to movements through provincial territory. I owe this reference to G. M. Koepffel, "A Military *Itinerarium* on the Column of Trajan: Scene L," *Röm. Mitt.* 87 (1980): 302, on p. 305, n. 24.

111. Julian, *Ep.* 30 Hertlein; 10 Bidez-Cumont; 7. See Rivet and Smith (n. 105), 71.

112. This is, as need hardly be said, the theory put forward in the classic chapter of R. Syme, "The Northern Frontiers under Augustus," *CAH X*, 340–81, esp. 353–54. For a different view, P. A. Brunt, *JRS* 53 (1963): 172–73.

tactical planning as opposed to subsequent representations of the terrain of campaigns.¹¹³

The clearest example of the latter is provided by the *situs depicti* (maps?) which Corbulo sent back from the Caucasus, and which according to Pliny the Elder misdescribed the Caucasian Gates (the Pass of Dariel) as the "Caspian Gates."¹¹⁴ Pliny's *Natural History* indeed lists a number of occasions on which increased geographical knowledge had resulted from rather than preceded military operations. Thus Aelius Gallus' Arabian expedition—precisely a case where routes and distances had *not* been explored in advance—produced a report on the population and economy of Arabia Felix (6, 160–61); the Baltic was first explored by a Roman fleet under Augustus (2, 167); Suetonius Paulinus reported on the Atlas region and beyond after his operations in 41/2 (5, 11–15); and Corbulo and Licinius Mucianus managed to produce divergent views on the source of the Euphrates (5, 83).

Of course we have a number of geographical and ethnographical descriptions of large areas beyond the Empire, for instance, Strabo on Germany,¹¹⁵ Pliny the Elder on the Parthian Empire,¹¹⁶ Ammianus on the Persian Empire¹¹⁷ or, perhaps the most significant of all, Tacitus' *Germania*. Its importance for us lies in the combination of its relevance to military relations between the Empire and the German tribes ("so long is the conquest of Germania taking," 37, 2) with its dependence on earlier literary sources, only occasionally supplemented by contemporary episodes (8: Velede; 29: the *agri decumates*; 33: massacre of Bructeri; 37: recent campaigns). Indeed all the writers mentioned depended on literary sources of varying dates: Pliny finds it necessary to explain that what he says on central Asia will differ from what has been said by earlier writers, since he has gained information "from the recent operations conducted by Domitius Corbulo and from kings sent thence as suppliants or royal children as hostages."¹¹⁸

In default of any formal archives relating to external policy, for which we have no specific evidence at all, or of an active pursuit of intelligence,

113. This conclusion seems to me to emerge from the survey by R. K. Sherk, "Roman Geographical Exploration and Military Maps," *ANRW* 1.1 (1974), 534. Note also the suggestion by Rivet and Smith (n. 105), 196–97, that for North Britain the Ravenna Cosmographer was using a map with ethnic and place names revised as a result of Severus' campaigns of 208–11.

114. Pliny, *NH* 6, 40.

115. *Geog.* 7, 1, 2–3, 1 (290–95).

116. *NH* 6, 112–41.

117. 23, 6.

118. *NH* 6, 23.

which seems to have been operated only (at best) when a Roman expedition was in prospect, any supplementation of the common stock of notions about the world beyond the frontiers would thus tend to come either in the wake of military operations or as a product of the ceaseless diplomatic traffic of suppliants, hostages, and embassies. Thus under Claudius an embassy came from a king in Ceylon and delivered information about the location, geography, and topography of the island.¹¹⁹ Round the fringes of the Empire itself such diplomatic traffic was intense, and its scale and importance cannot be explored here. Apart from examples already given,¹²⁰ one of the papyri from Dura-Europos (*P. Dura* 60B) happens to reveal a Parthian envoy on his way to (or from) Severus and Caracalla in about 208. Similarly Pliny sent on to Trajan in Rome a letter carrier (*tabellarius*) from king Sauromates of the Bosphorus, giving him a *diploma* (a permit to requisition transport) on the grounds that the king had written to say that the information which the man carried was urgent. An embassy from the Bosphorus, en route simultaneously, was pursuing a more leisurely course.¹²¹ It is important to stress that the requests, accusations, self-justifications, or reports which flowed into the emperor through such diplomatic traffic all emanated from interested parties attempting to gain the help or protection of the emperor. The more quickly the emperor felt obliged to act, the more limited would be the choices open to him. In the early Empire a full examination of rights and wrongs might involve the conflicting parties, or their emissaries, travelling to appear before the emperor in Rome. So for instance the complex issues and mutual accusations as between Herod of Judaea and Aretas of Nabataea, in which either or both kings might have been deposed, were finally resolved in a hearing before Augustus in about 8–7 B.C. at which Nicolaus of Damascus spoke.¹²² By the fourth century the more characteristic pattern was the direct control of military and diplomatic affairs by the emperor in the field, which has already been discussed.

Thus the burden of proof must rest on those who would claim that emperors both could and did draw on systematic sources of up-to-date information from beyond the frontiers. Caracalla could write to the Senate in about 215 to say that strife between the two claimants to the Parthian throne was of great advantage to the Roman state;¹²³ but neither he nor his successors, Elagabal and Severus Alexander, had any means of anticipating that the

119. *NH* 6, 84–88.

120. See the second and the immediately preceding sections above.

121. Pliny, *Ep.* 10, 63–64, 67.

122. Josephus, *Ant.* 16, 10, 8–9 (335–55).

123. Dio 77, 12, 2a–3 (387).

Parthian Empire was about to collapse and that a new Persian dynasty would arise which would fundamentally alter the level of conflict on the eastern frontier. Similarly, Julian brushed aside the suggestion made in 362 by his advisers, that he should attack the Goths, saying that he sought "better enemies" (the Persians). It was perhaps at the same moment that he contemptuously told an embassy of Goths to look to arms if they wished to alter the terms of their treaty.¹²⁴ If he in fact anticipated a serious movement on their part, as Eunapius alleges,¹²⁵ he did not act on it, preferring the supposed greater glory of a Persian war. There was no mechanism for securing advance warning of the movements of the Huns in the following years or of their impact on the Goths, until the latter and other peoples living north of the Danube sent embassies in the mid-370s asking to be allowed to cross the river and settle in Roman territory.¹²⁶ The vivid excursus on the Huns with which Ammianus introduces this major event is the first significant account of them in Graeco-Roman literature¹²⁷ and was of course written at least a decade after the disaster of Hadrianople.

Thus what A. Alföldi once called "the moral barrier on Rhine and Danube"¹²⁸ seems to have been an information barrier also. But it was so partly because of one element in the conceptual framework within which the educated inhabitants of the Empire saw their world. There is ample evidence to suggest that after the great expansion of the Augustan period people regarded the Empire as a coherent geographical and strategic entity bounded by the three great rivers: Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates.¹²⁹ A conflict thus arose between that conception and the long tradition and ideology of continuing conquest.¹³⁰ When in Fronto's words "the *imperium* of the Roman People was extended by the emperor Trajan beyond the hostile rivers,"¹³¹ Florus could rejoice that the Empire had found its youth again, and Tacitus

124. Ammianus 22, 7, 8; Libanius, *Or.* 12, 78.

125. Eunapius, *Fr.* 22, 1 (*FHG* IV, p. 23).

126. Ammianus 31, 1-4; Eunapius, *Fr.* 42 (*FHG* IV, pp. 31-33).

127. 31, 2: cf. Eunapius, *Fr.* 45 (*FHG* IV, p. 30); Zosimus 4, 20.

128. *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, 1949*, ed. E. Birley (1952), 1.

129. See, e.g., Josephus, *BJ* 2, 16, 4 (363; 377); Statius, *Silv.* 5, 1, 89-90; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1, 9, 4, 5. For the function of the Euphrates as a symbolic frontier, see, e.g., Strabo 16, 1, 28 (748); Velleius 2, 101; Suetonius, *Cal.* 14; Josephus, *BJ* 7, 5, 2 (105); *Ant.* 18, 4, 5, (101-2); Dio 59, 27, 3. For the Danube, see text to nn. 52-55 above.

130. For a good collection of the evidence, see P. A. Brunt, "Laus Imperii," in P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, eds., *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (1978), 159, reprinted in *Roman Imperial Themes* (1990), 288.

131. Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 4.

could complain of the inertia of earlier emperors in terms which strikingly recall the content of the poem on the Dacian war which Pliny's friend Caninius Rebilus composed in Comum.¹³² Yet the three new provinces beyond the Euphrates could be given up by Hadrian with only relatively mild hostile comment from our sources: according to the *Historia Augusta* he justified this step by quoting the Elder Cato on the difficulty of holding Macedonia as a province.¹³³ It could even be reported that he had also thought of giving up Dacia beyond the Danube and been restrained by his *amici*, who urged him not to betray the Roman citizens who had immigrated to it.¹³⁴

When Appian began writing his *Roman History* under Antoninus Pius, he still thought of the boundaries as Euphrates, Danube and Rhine, with the Upper German territories beyond the Rhine and Dacia as mere additions: "[B]ut going beyond these rivers in places they rule some of the Celts over the Rhine, and the Getae over the Danube, whom they call Dacians."¹³⁵ The concept of the Empire as a stable defensive system based on an outer ring of fixed camps is clearly present in Aristides' *Roman Oration* (80-84) and persists in Herodian, writing a century later, when it was rapidly ceasing to be appropriate: "Augustus . . . fortified the Empire by hedging it around with major obstacles, rivers and trenches and mountains and deserted areas which were difficult to traverse."¹³⁶

This concept became out of date in two ways. Dacia had been taken by Trajan, and involvement beyond the Euphrates was resumed, with uncertain results, under Marcus and Verus, and reached a decisive stage under Severus. The subsequent fates of these two areas form an instructive contrast. Dacia was finally abandoned in the early 270s, but our sources barely notice the fact.¹³⁷ Moreover, writers of the later third and fourth centuries again tend to treat the Danube as the established frontier of the Empire, with no hint that there had once been a substantial provincial area beyond it.¹³⁸ Not only

132. Florus, *Epit. praef.*; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4, 32; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 8, 4.

133. Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 10; Eutropius 7, 6, 2; Festus, *Brev.* 14, 20; *v. Had.* 5, 3.

134. Eutropius 7, 6, 2. Fronto (*Princ. Hist.* 10) claims that Hadrian actually gave up Dacia.

135. Appian, *Praef.* 4/14-15. Cf. Pausanias 1, 9, 5, for very similar conceptions.

136. Herodian 2, 11, 5.

137. The few lines of Eutropius 9, 55, 1 represent the fullest account of the abandonment, and the creation of Dacia Ripensis south of the river. Repeated in *HA, v. Aurel.* 39, 7. Cf. Festus, *Brev.* 8. See H. Veters, *Dacia Ripensis* (1950).

138. Cf. text to n. 75 (crossing by Goths); *Pan. Lat.* X (Galletier II), 2, 6; XI (Galletier III), 6, 6. Note *Pan. Lat.* VIII (Galletier IV), 3, 3: *Dacia restituta*, referring to Dacia Ripensis. When Anon. Vales. 1, 135/13 gives the origin of Licinius as "ex nova Dacia," this is an implicit allusion to the old province.

that, but historians of the fourth century and after—including Eutropius, who had actually recorded the abandonment of Dacia—describe the treaty by which Jovian gave up Nisibis, Singara, and five districts across the Tigris as a disgrace which had never occurred before in the history of Rome.¹³⁹ The pre-eminence of eastern wars was deeply rooted in Graeco-Roman culture and was concretely embodied in the strategic priorities chosen by emperors. There, but not elsewhere, the view of Septimius Severus had long triumphed over that of Dio.

Conclusion

This sketch of some issues relating to the way frontier and foreign policy was conducted by the imperial monarchy cannot by its nature even suggest firm conclusions. Given the haphazard nature of our literary evidence, arguments from silence must always be fragile. They may, none the less, serve the purpose of preventing the interpretation of archaeological evidence in the light of naive assumptions as to information, communication, and responsibility. Even where archaeological evidence of the alignment of frontiers, the siting of camps, or the building of roads seems clearly to demonstrate the operation of coherent plans based on good geographical knowledge, we must still ask whose knowledge, and whose plans. What this chapter can do, therefore, is to focus attention on some issues and to put forward some tentative propositions which, if they prove on further examination to be valid, will have some relevance to how we understand the Empire as a system, and the choices made within it in relation to other peoples.

1. These choices have to be seen in the light of the culture (in both the broad and the more specific sense) of the Graeco-Roman world, whether this be in the use of historical precedents and models, in the types of training for warfare which the upper class received, or in contrasting attitudes to the northern barbarians and to Parthia or Persia. For what it is worth, it may be noted that the explicitly military literature of the Empire is either concerned to deploy precedents from existing narrative histories, or is tactical rather than strategic in character, or both.¹⁴⁰ The surviving literature from

139. Eutropius 9, 17, 1–2; Festus, *Brev.* 29; Ammianus 25, 7; Zosimus 3, 31–32.

140. E.g., Onasander, *Strategemata*; Frontinus, *Strategemata*; for Arrian, *Techne Taktike*, see F. Kiechle, “Die ‘Taktik’ des Flavius Arrianus,” 45. *Ber. Röm-Germ. Kom.* 1964 (1965), 87; for Arrian, *Ektaxis*, see A. B. Bosworth, “Arrian and the Alani,” *HSCPh* 81 (1977): 217, esp. 232–55, and cf. P. A. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (1980), 41–49; Polyaeus, *Strategemata* (addressed to Marcus Aurelius and Verus). The anonymous *de rebus bellicis* (see the new text and dis-

the first four centuries of the Empire provides nothing remotely comparable with the strategic-diplomatic manual which Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote for his son in about 950.¹⁴¹

2. The types of decision which could be made must have been limited by the character of the information available, both on a longer- and short-term basis. It is perhaps significant that one subject on which our literary sources, at least those of the early Empire, provide relatively clear and concrete information is the number and positioning of the legions (and, to a much lesser extent, the auxiliaries). The transfer of legions from province to province and the raising of new ones were clearly essential elements in the types of strategic decision making open to emperors.¹⁴²

3. The character of the bulk of the short-term information reaching the emperor must have depended on the interests and objectives of persons (mainly individual rulers, or would-be rulers) beyond the Empire, or on the presumptions of governors or military commanders on the frontiers.

4. How the Empire *could* respond to any perceived necessity on the frontiers will have been determined first by the degree of initiative allowed to commanders in the area, and the extent to which they operated within the explicit terms or unspoken general assumptions of any imperial “grand strategy.”

5. In so far as decisions were held to be required at the centre, that is, by the emperor, it is essential to remember the crude fact that the emperor could be aware of nothing beyond the reach of his own eyes except what someone wished or felt obliged to tell him. With all communications made to him we have to recall constantly the controlling factors of space and time, that is, the delays of up to some two months before a messenger could reach him, and up to a further two months for the return journey to the area concerned; and

cussions, edited by M. W. C. Hassall and R. I. Ireland, *BAR Int. Ser.* 63, 1979) is of course more original, being concerned with practical measures for the defence of a static frontier.

141. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *de Administrando*, ed., trans., and com. G. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, I–II (1949–62). For its importance as a source of ethnographical information on the area north of the Black Sea, see D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (1971), esp. 24–25.

142. See Josephus, *BJ* II, 16, 4 (345–401), the speech of Agrippa II; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 8; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4, 5; *Hist.* 1, 8–11; 2, 81. Note esp. Dio 55, 23–24, on the positioning of those legions which had existed under Augustus and were still in service, and those raised by successive later emperors. It will be recalled that according to Suetonius, *Tib.* 30, Tiberius used to consult the Senate “de legendo vel exauctorando milite ac legionum et auxiliorum discriptione” (see translation in text to n. 16).

the much longer delays certainly involved in the journeys of ambassadors from beyond the Empire.

6. Even more important, it is essential to envisage the military-diplomatic relations of the Empire not so much in geographical or even ethnographical terms but as networks of relationships partly created by symbolic acts (the sending of hostages, exchanges of gifts, the grant of crowns) and by verbal exchanges, conducted on the Roman side by governors and local commanders, but above all by the emperor in person. It may be worth noting that Gaius gives as the prime example of an obligation valid for a *peregrinus* (non-citizen) the occasion when our emperor (*imperator noster*) formally asks the *princeps* of some foreign people, "do you solemnly promise that there will be peace"? (*pacem futuram spondes?*)¹⁴³

7. In accordance with the long-established traditions of Roman public life the position of emperor was from the beginning both civil and military. It is also clear that those emperors of the first century and a half who had no established military reputation actively sought major campaigns while they were on the throne. Yet a qualitative change seems to occur in the middle of the second century, in terms of which, from then until the end of the fourth, it is assumed that all major campaigns, defensive or offensive, require direct command by the (or an) emperor in person.

8. This assumption led directly to the need for a multiplication of emperors, and thus to the Tetrarchy, the complex co-emperorships of *Augusti* and *Caesares* in the fourth century, and ultimately to the division of the Empire in the fifth.

9. It cannot be specifically proved—and therefore should not be assumed—that an emperor, whether receiving embassies in Rome or replying to messages from provincial governors, or (progressively) taking command in the field himself and confronting barbarian chiefs or delegations or Persian emissaries while on campaign, had access to privileged archives of information in strategic matters, or that he had any advice on which to draw except that provided by the *amici*, *comites*, or *consistoriani* whom he consulted, but by whom he could not be bound.

10. For these reasons the emperor's strategic choices and orders and the replies which he made in formal verbal exchanges with foreign embassies could only be determined by the general values of Graeco-Roman culture, of which he himself was a product. When that culture changed, as with the victory of Christianity, so did some of the values which informed foreign relations; Constantine's letter to Shapur II is perhaps the first symbol of that.

143. Gaius, *Inst.* 3, 94.

11. Of all the fundamental choices made, the most significant was the occupation of Mesopotamia and the readiness to fight repeated wars for it. Trajan's brief conquest marked not an end but a beginning, and it was here that the ethos of imperialism had its most lasting effects. Plotinus may have been quite misguided (or is it we?) in thinking that if he joined Gordian III's Persian expedition he might make contact with the philosophers not only of Persia but of India.¹⁴⁴ But most emperors also implicitly agreed with Julian that the Persians were the "better enemies."

To illustrate the concrete conditions of imperial rule to which these developments led—and to exhibit the counter-example of an Emperor who did *not* prefer the eastern front—it may be useful in conclusion to sketch the movements and military preoccupations of Valentinian I as portrayed in Ammianus' narrative. He came to the throne in 364 by the choice of the imperial entourage on the march through Bithynia and, once he had reached Constantinople, appointed his brother Valens as joint *Augustus*. The brothers marched west, and at Naissus divided their accompanying *comites* and *magistri*, and then, after moving on to Sirmium, separated, Valentinian going to Milan and Valens back to Constantinople. In Gaul later in the year Valentinian hesitated between staying to confront an Alamannic invasion and returning to protect Pannonia against the pretender Procopius; he finally followed the view of the majority of his advisers and the pleas of embassies from the Gallic cities and stayed in Gaul (26, 9–13). There he remained for nearly a decade, repeatedly engaged in campaigns on the Rhine, mainly against the Alamanni, writing to the kings of the Burgundii to evoke their aid (28, 5, 10) and making the last crossing of the Rhine by a Roman emperor (29, 4, 1–6). He was building a fort near Basel in 374 when a letter arrived from Petronius Probus, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, reporting raids by the Quadi and Sarmatians on Pannonia. The *notarius* (secretary) Paternianus was sent to investigate and sent back reports to confirm. Valentinian was eager to set out at once on the considerable march to Pannonia (Ammianus elsewhere shows Constantius II at Sirmium as being forty stages' march from Argentorate).¹⁴⁵ But his advisers persuaded him to wait for the spring, when supplies would be available, and to make peace with the Alamanni first. As we saw before (text to nn. 98–99 above), he did so by negotiating from a boat in the Rhine with King Macrianus standing on the bank, and then returned to Trier. In the spring of 375 he marched from Trier to Carnuntum, and then after three

144. Porphyry, *v. Plot.* 3.

145. 16, 12, 70.

months moved to Aquincum, finally settling for the winter at Brigetio (30, 5). There ambassadors from the Quadi appeared and were granted a treaty. But when admitted into the *consistorium*, they were too ready to excuse their previous conduct. The Emperor was enraged, suffered a fit of apoplexy, and died shortly after (30, 6).

The story exemplifies perfectly the constraining factors of time, distance, and information within which an emperor, like anyone else, had to operate. Its ending also illustrates the irreducibly personal character of the combined management of war and diplomacy. We are still a long way from explaining why these responsibilities pressed over more heavily on the emperor in person. But granted the fact of that development over the previous four centuries—the opposite of what we might have presumed in an immense, relatively stable and highly civilized Empire—Valentinian's apoplexy at least is wholly intelligible.

CHAPTER TEN

Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the First Three Centuries*

The diplomacy of the Roman Empire in the period of its greatest extent and stability, let us say until towards the middle of the third century A.D., has received very little attention. A recent collection of studies on ancient diplomacy ignores it altogether.¹ It is true that in this period the Empire faced no major external threat, and remarkably few significant internal revolts. The great Jewish revolt of A.D. 66, culminating in the siege of Jerusalem in 70, which absorbed almost one-seventh of the entire Roman army, offers a clear indication of how much the Empire owed to the absence of national identities within its borders.² The period of stability ended precisely with the overthrow in the 220s of the relatively weak Parthian Empire, centred on Babylonia, and the rise of what was to become a serious external threat, the new Persian dynasty, the Sassanians or Sassanids. Observers in the Roman Empire were immediately conscious of how much had changed. Near the end of his great *Roman History* in eighty books, which began with the arrival of Aeneas in Italy and concluded with his own second consulship in 229, Cassius Dio writes (80, 3, 1–4):

But the situation in Mesopotamia became still more alarming and inspired a more genuine fear in all, not merely the people in Rome, but the rest of mankind as well. For Artaxerxes, a Persian, after conquering

*First published in *International History Review* 10 (1988): 345–77.

1. E. Olshausen and H. Biller, eds., *Antike Diplomatie* (Darmstadt, 1979).

2. For revolts, or their absence, and national identities and their general absence, see, e.g., S. L. Dyson, "Native Revolt Patterns in the Roman Empire," in *ANRW* II.3 (1975), 138–75; M. Goodman, *The Upper Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt of A.D. 66* (Cambridge, 1987); F. Millar, "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987): 143–64.

the Parthians in three battles and killing their king, Artabanus, made a campaign against Hatra, in the endeavour to capture it as a base for attacking the Romans. . . . He accordingly became a source of fear to us; for he was encamped with a large army so as to threaten not only Mesopotamia but also Syria, and he boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient Persians had once held, as far as the Grecian Sea, claiming that all this was his rightful inheritance from his forefathers.

The Persians never did reach the Aegean, though four centuries later their invasion and brief conquest of Syria and Palestine, and Heraclius' great counter-invasion, were to form the background to the sudden and wholly unexpected conquests of Islam. Long before that, however, the imperialist self-image of the new dynasty had produced, in the form of the great inscription of Shapur I at Naqsh-e-Rustam in Iran, the first documentary representation which we have of the external relations of the Roman Empire as seen from outside:

When at first we had become established in the empire, Gordian Caesar raised in all of the Roman Empire a force from the Goth and German realms and marched on Babylonia [Assyria] (Asuristan) against the Empire of Iran and against us. On the border of Babylonia at Misikhe, a great "frontal" battle occurred. Gordian Caesar was killed and the Roman force was destroyed. And the Romans made Philip Caesar. Then Philip Caesar came to us for terms, and to ransom their lives, gave us 500,000 *denarii*, and became tributary to us. And for this reason we have renamed Misikhe Peroz-Shapur.

And Caesar lied again and did wrong to Armenia. Then we attacked the Roman Empire and annihilated at Barbalissos a Roman force of 60,000 and Syria and the environs of Syria we burned, ruined and pillaged all. In this one campaign we conquered of the Roman Empire fortresses and towns: the town of Sura, Barbalissos . . . a total of 37 towns with surroundings.

In the third campaign, when we attacked Carrhae and Urhai [Edessa] and were besieging Carrhae and Edessa Valerian Caesar marched against us. He had with him a force of 70,000 from Germany, Raetia, Noricum. . . . And beyond Carrhae and Edessa we had a great battle with Valerian Caesar. We made prisoner ourselves with our own hands Valerian Caesar and others, chiefs of that army, the praetorian prefect, senators; we made all prisoners and deported them to Persis.

And Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia we burned, ruined and pillaged. In that campaign we conquered of the Roman Empire the town of

Samosata, Alexandria on the Issus . . . all these cities with their surroundings.³

This passage begins with Shapur's accession in 240-41, and culminates with the capture of Valerian in 260, the first and only occasion on which a Roman emperor was captured alive. As such, it represents very accurately the drastic nature of the third-century crisis of the Empire. While the crisis was overcome, and the Empire in A.D. 400 still ruled a larger area than it had in A.D. 40, its strategic centre of gravity had shifted irreversibly eastwards, with consequences too obvious to need spelling out here.

Essentially, therefore, Cassius Dio's report, and Shapur's triumphant proclamation, put up in three languages far away in Iran, reflect a fundamentally new phase in the history of the Empire. In this phase an emperor may be captured in person in the field, be killed in battle (as Shapur alleges of Gordian III, in fact, perhaps killed by his own men), have to treat for terms, or pay his enemy money to obtain peace. Gordian III is also described as bringing against Persia forces which include contingents of Goths and Germans. If that claim is based on fact, it represents one of our earliest items of evidence of Gothic forces serving under Roman command and suggests their arrival on the shores of the Black Sea some time in the later second century; other documentary evidence shows that units of Goths had been enrolled in the Roman army by the early third century.⁴ Goths, too, were to have an important role in the later history of the Empire. The first Roman emperor certainly to die in battle was Decius, killed by the Goths in 251; the second was Valens, when his forces were crushed by the Goths at Hadrianople (Edirne in European Turkey), deep in the Roman provinces, in 378.

As we shall see, and as the enrolment of Goths considerably earlier than previously attested itself illustrates, many features of the Roman state during the crisis of the Empire have their origin in the earlier period of general stability and security. None the less, there are features which make the period before the rise of Sassanid Persia distinctive, and which raise particular problems as to the nature and conduct of Roman diplomacy as it then was. Although the subject has attracted relatively little attention, it was not unimportant. For, even given a remarkable degree of external security and the absence of major external threats, the frontiers of the Empire, stretching over several thousand miles, inevitably brought it into contact with a large variety of peoples, speaking different languages and at very different stages

3. The inscription, in Parthian, Middle Persian, and Greek, is quoted from the translation by R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich, 1984), 371-73.

4. See M. Speidel, "The Roman Army in Arabia," *Roman Army Studies* 1 (1984): 254-58.

of development. Whether we think of purely local contact, aimed at solving disputes or controlling the movements of traders and pastoralists, or of important negotiations conducted centrally, some means for the adjustment of relations clearly had to exist, and did.

Still, it is easy to see why the subject has not occupied a central place in our conception of the early Empire as a political system—the bibliography of this topic is by no means extensive⁵—for it is marked by striking anomalies and contradictions. First, whose Empire was it? What body or person was the sovereign? In fact, as we shall see, the public official discourse of the early imperial period was unambiguous in representing the Empire as that of the *populus Romanus*, the Roman People as a collectivity.⁶ But whatever functions the assemblies of the Roman people still fulfilled, the conduct of foreign relations was not one of them. Indeed, even in the Republic, it had been one of the features distinguishing the city-state of Rome from a typical Greek democracy, that ambassadors from foreign powers never came before the assemblies of the people. The people had once voted on declarations of war and the making of peace treaties, but that function too disappeared in the later Republic.⁷

Embassies from foreign powers had in fact always appeared before the Senate: as Polybius rightly noted in the course of his well-known analysis of the Roman constitution, the reception of embassies was one of the Senate's most important functions, and also one which tended to give foreigners the (false) impression (shared however by many moderns) that the Senate could be regarded unambiguously as the "government" of Rome (Polybius 6, 13, 7–8). This central role of the Senate was remembered, and still claimed,

5. The major background survey of the evidence is C. Phillipson, *The International Law and Custom of Ancient Greece and Rome I–II* (London, 1911); for the Roman Empire the most important discussions are J. Gagé, "L'Empereur romain et les rois," *Revue Historique* 221 (1959): 221–60; and M. Lemosse, *Le régime des relations internationales dans le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris, 1967). The present chapter also draws on some aspects of F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," *Britannia* 13 (1982): 1–23 (chapter 9 in this volume).

6. For this theme, see F. Millar, "Imperial Ideology in the Tabula Siarensis," in J. González, ed., *Estudios sobre la Tabula Siarensis* (Madrid, 1988). Add a typical example not used there: Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 3, 136, quotes the inscription from the triumphal monument set up to commemorate Augustus' subjection of a long list of Alpine peoples: "[B]ecause under his command and auspices all the Alpine *gentes* [peoples] . . . have been brought under the imperium of the *populus Romanus*."

7. See J. W. Rich, *Declaring War in the Roman Republic in the Period of Transmarine Expansion* (Brussels, 1976).

throughout the period of the Empire with which we are concerned. Our clearest indication of the importance attached to it is in the fictitious speech which Cassius Dio, in his *Roman History*, puts into the mouth of Maecenas, supposedly addressing Augustus (53, 31, 1):

Moreover, as regards other matters, you would seem to me to be arranging things for the best, if as regards embassies both from enemies and from allies, whether kings or peoples, you were to bring them first before the Senate. For, other considerations apart, it is both appropriate and impressive for the Senate to give the appearance of being sovereign in all things, and that there should be a plurality of people to appear as adversaries in the case of those of them [foreign envoys] who are contumacious.

Though the narrative setting of the speech is the reign of Augustus, its contents were undoubtedly intended to refer to Dio's own time. The words were perhaps written about A.D. 230; in which case, they carry a particularly appropriate message. For, on our evidence (see further below), precisely during the course of the second century had embassies from both outside and inside the Empire ceased to appear before the Senate, and come instead to be directed solely to the emperor in person.⁸

The relationship between the emperor and the Senate thus points towards two further elements of ambiguity in the character of the Empire as a sovereign state. In spite of the formal emphasis on the sovereignty of the Roman people, a wide range of evidence illustrates the fact that from the beginning of the reign of Augustus, diplomatic traffic from outside the Empire tended markedly to direct itself to the emperor in person, wherever he happened to be, as to the effective head of government. Yet for at least a century and a half after the battle of Actium in 31 B.C., which ensured the sole rule of the future Augustus, embassies and allied kings from outside the Empire might also appear to speak before the Senate in Rome. The legacy of the origins of the monarchy from within a republic was thus to be remarkably durable. Nothing shows more clearly than the words which Dio puts into the mouth of Maecenas that this role of the Senate was no ornament but a valued function which was to be recalled decades after it had apparently lapsed into disuse.

However, valued as it clearly was, the diplomatic and foreign-relations role of the Senate had been overshadowed from the reign of Augustus by that of the emperor. This aspect of his function plays an important part in the *Res Gestae*, the record of his achievements, which Augustus composed

8. See R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), esp. 425–30.

himself, and left behind on his death, to be inscribed on two bronze tablets which flanked the entrance to his massive Mausoleum on the Campus Martius in Rome (chap. 35):

To me there were often sent embassies from kings in India, never previously witnessed before any *dux* [general] of the Romans. The Bastarnae and the Scythians sought our *amicitia* [friendship] by embassies, as did kings of the Sarmatae living on this side and the other side of the river Tanais [the Don], and the king of the Albani, the Hiberi, and the Medes. To me there fled suppliant kings of the Parthians . . . [and other peoples]. To me the king of the Parthians, Phraates, son of Orodes, sent all his sons and grandsons to Italy as hostages, not after defeat in war but seeking our *amicitia* by the use of his children as pledges. Several other *gentes* tried the faith [*fides*] of the *populus Romanus* while I was *princeps*, who had never previously had any exchange of embassies and *amicitia* with the *populus Romanus*.

Contemporary evidence confirms that such embassies did reach Augustus, from both West and East.

The geographer Strabo describes how British kings had gained the friendship of Augustus by sending embassies, and paying court, and had made offerings on the Capitol in Rome (*Geography* 4, 5, 3, 200). The latter point again illustrates the ambiguity of sovereignty in the early Empire, for by a long-established tradition of the Republic, which persisted into the Empire, foreign peoples and rulers symbolised their acceptance of Roman hegemony by offering sacrifices or making permanent dedications on the Capitol, therefore in or near the ancient temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus; it was there too that copies of treaties had long been deposited.⁹ That same ambiguity appears in the inscription from Apamea in Syria recording a local dynast from this region in the time of Augustus, called Dexandros, “[who] by the decree of the deified Augustus, because of his friendship and loyalty to the Roman People, was inscribed as friend and ally on bronze tablets on the Capitol.”¹⁰ But this inscription introduces yet another form of ambiguity to which we shall return.

As regards embassies from far beyond the Empire, to the East, our best evidence comes again from Strabo, who quotes the account of an Indian embassy on its way to meet Augustus given by another contemporary, Nicolaus of Damascus (Strabo, *Geography* 15, 1, 73, 719):

9. R. Mellor, “The Dedications on the Capitoline Hill,” *Chiron* 8 (1978): 319–30.

10. *Année Épigraphique* 1976, no. 678.

He says that at Antioch, near Daphnê, he chanced to meet the Indian ambassadors who had been despatched to Caesar Augustus; that the letter plainly indicated more than three ambassadors, but that only three had survived (whom he says he saw), but the rest, mostly by reason of the long journeys, had died; and that the letter was written in Greek on a skin; and that it plainly showed that Porus was the writer, and that, although he was ruler of six hundred kings, still he was anxious to be a friend to Caesar, and was ready, not only to allow him a passage through his country, wherever he wished to go, but also to cooperate with him in anything that was honourable. Nicolaus says that this was the content of the letter to Caesar, and that the gifts carried to Caesar were presented by eight naked servants, who were clad only in loin-cloths besprinkled with sweet-smelling odours; and that the gifts consisted of the Hermes, a man who was born without arms, whom I myself have seen, and large vipers, and a serpent ten cubits in length, and a river tortoise three cubits in length, and a partridge larger than a vulture.

We happen to know from Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* that this embassy, or what was left of it, appeared before Augustus when he was spending the winter of 20–19 B.C. on Samos (54, 9, 8–10). Augustus had also spent the previous winter on Samos, and there an Ethiopian embassy had reached him, sent on by the prefect of Egypt. Strabo again gives a very illuminating account of the reaction of this Ethiopian embassy, originally sent by Queen Candace, when the prefect told the embassy that they must go on from him to the Emperor (*Geography*, 17, 1, 54, 820–21):

Meantime Candace marched against the garrison with many thousands of men, but Petronius set out to its assistance and arrived at the fortress first; and when he had made the place thoroughly secure by sundry devices, ambassadors came, but he bade them go to Caesar; and when they asserted that they did not know who Caesar was or where they should have to go to find him, he gave them escorts; and they went to Samos, since Caesar was there and intended to proceed to Syria from there, after despatching Tiberius to Armenia. And when the ambassadors had obtained everything they pled for, he even remitted the tributes which he had imposed.

The ambassadors’ reaction introduces, very early in the history of the Empire, a question to become of ever increasing relevance, especially from the middle of the second century onwards. If it were necessary to appear before

the emperor, as it often was, where was he to be found? The remarkable mobility of emperors, whose journeys are the subject of a valuable recent study,¹¹ is a crucial and underestimated aspect of the Empire as a political system.

But, wherever the emperor happened to be, the leaders of most groups from beyond the borders of the Empire understood from the beginning that it was to him in person that they should go on diplomatic business. At this point we encounter further ambiguities. It is by no means clear that any concept of the borders of the Empire prevailed, or that there would have been any agreement about which regions or peoples lay within the Empire, and which outside it. Fixed and visible frontier installations (walls, pallisades, lines of forts) were created in some areas in the course of the imperial period, for instance in the form of Hadrian's Wall, or the defences of southern Germany. But it is not certain even that these were regarded as marking legal borders between Roman and non-Roman territory. They were in any case an exception. In many areas there will have been no definable moment when the traveller will have known that he was entering or leaving the Roman Empire. Moreover, the Empire, especially as it was under Augustus, incorporated a large number of regions ruled by allied kings (the so-called client kings), for instance, in the Alps, Thrace, Eastern Anatolia, the Syrian region, Arabia, and Mauretania.¹² There is no unambiguous way of saying whether such regions formed part of the Roman Empire or not. In some sense they clearly did. Strabo, bringing his *Geography* to a close with a description of the division of the provinces between the Roman people and the Emperor (i.e., those provinces whose governors he appointed), ends by saying categorically "kings and dynasts and tetrarchies belong to his part, and always have done so" (18, 3, 25, 840). But if the criterion of belonging to the Empire were taken as the payment of tribute, then these "client" kingdoms did not belong to it. As a subject of the tetrarch Herodes Antipas, and living in Galilee, Jesus paid no tribute to Rome. The issue of whether or not tribute should be paid by Jews arose, as the Synoptic Gospels agree (Mark 12:13-17; Matt. 22:17-22; Luke 20:21-26), when Jesus visited Jerusalem, now under direct Roman rule. But it would be an over-simplification to say that Jesus was not a subject of the Empire.

None the less, the step-by-step absorption of the "client" kingdoms was a significant, if protracted, process. Not until A.D. 46 could anyone have walked

11. H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1986).

12. On these kings, see D. C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of Client Kingship* (London, 1984).

round the shores of the Mediterranean while remaining all the time either in Italy or provinces paying tribute to Rome. And not until the second century did the Empire acquire a strategic shape and character such that its defence need not depend to any significant degree on "client" kingdoms.¹³

If our concern is with the nature of the Empire as a diplomatic system, however, the mere fact of the extension of provincialisation will not remove—indeed, rather accentuates—the ambiguities with which we are faced. For quite apart from those unsubdued tribal peoples who remained within the bounds of the Empire, many provinces, especially in the Greek East, contained "free" cities which governors were not supposed to visit, and which lay outside their jurisdiction. One of these, Aphrodisias in Caria, took the precaution early in the third century of inscribing on the wall of its theatre a long series of imperial letters confirming its privileged status. The publication of this archive in 1982 provided a rich store of illustration of the diplomatic practices governing exchanges between such a city and the emperor.¹⁴ In particular, when a new emperor came to the throne, the city council would pass a decree expressing the city's joy at his accession, and ambassadors would be sent who would hand over the decree, accompanying it with a brief speech, heard by the emperor in person. He then addressed to the city a letter in Greek, which was brought back to their homeland by the ambassadors. The custom continued at least until the middle of the third century. The latest document added to the archive wall at Aphrodisias is a reply from the Emperor Decius and his son Herennius, dated to A.D. 250 (no. 25, trans. Reynolds):

Imperator Caesar C. Messius Q. Traianus Decius, Pius, Felix, Augustus, holding tribunician power for the third time, consul for the second time, designated for the third, father of his country, proconsul, and Q. Herennius Etruscus Messius Decius, Pontifex Maximus, holding the tribunician power for the first time, consul designate, to the Magistrates, Council and People of the Aphrodisians, greetings. It was to be expected, both because of the goddess for whom your city is named and because of your relationship with the Romans and loyalty to them, that you rejoiced at the establishment of our kingship and made the proper sacrifice and prayers. We preserve your existing freedom and all the other rights which you have received from the emperors who

13. For this theme, note the very stimulating analysis by E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore and London, 1976).

14. J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (London, 1982).

preceded us, being willing also to give fulfilment to your hopes for the future. Aurelius Theodorus and Aurelius Onesimus carried out the duties of ambassadors. Farewell.

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that the elaborate diplomatic protocol which characterizes this letter is a function specifically of Aphrodisias' status as a free city, or, as other documents in the archive put it, "removed from the *formula* [*typos*] of the province." For what is distinctive about the archive is not that, but lies in the clear indication it gives of the particular privileges such a "free and immune" city enjoyed: for instance, non-payment of Roman taxes, exemption from visits by the proconsul of Asia, and even exemption from claims on the services of its citizens made by other cities in the province or by the provincial council. Precisely because these privileges were exceptional, repeated "diplomatic" activity was required to ensure their protection and preservation.

Such activity, directed to the emperor, did not in itself mark Aphrodisias as a "free" city, nor ought it to lead us to characterize Aphrodisias as a place which belonged notionally, though of course not geographically, beyond the borders of the Empire. The truth is exactly the opposite, that most of the evidence for exchanges which have the *form* of diplomatic dealings between the emperor and a foreign sovereign power in fact comes from his dealings with cities and communities unambiguously subject to the Roman Empire, which paid tribute to it, and which were in every sense within its borders.¹⁵

Our extensive knowledge of the form and nature of these exchanges is largely, but not wholly, a function of a feature of Graeco-Roman culture which Ramsey MacMullen aptly nicknamed "the epigraphic habit":¹⁶ that is to say, the custom illustrated above of inscribing in public, on stone or bronze, documents which were felt for various reasons (glory, status, preservation of privileges) to be worth publicizing in permanent form. The mass of our evidence for "diplomatic" exchanges with the emperor comes from cities like Aphrodisias, in the Greek-speaking part of the Empire. It is impossible to tell for certain whether the much smaller number of such documents from the Latin-speaking West is a product of the lesser involvement of communities from this region in such diplomatic traffic, or their less-developed attachment to the epigraphic habit, or (as is quite likely) both.

We may be certain, at any rate, firstly, that long before the establishment of monarchic rule by Augustus, embassies from provincial and allied com-

15. For this topic, see *ERW*, esp. chap. VII.

16. R. MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982): 233-46.

munities had addressed themselves not only to the Senate in Rome but to individual Roman commanders in the field; and, secondly, that immediately after the battle of Actium in 31 B.C., such communities were aware that the source of authority had been decisively concentrated in one man and acted accordingly. We may take as a clear example the reply which Octavian, the future Augustus, wrote from Ephesus to the small Syrian city of Rhosus, some time between the battle on 31 September and the end of the year. It was addressed in formal style to "the magistrates, council, and people of the sacred, inviolate, and autonomous city of the Rhosians," and began with the standard greeting:

If you are well, it is well; I too, with my army, am well. The ambassadors sent by you . . . having come to me at Ephesus, addressed me on the matters on which they had instructions. On receiving them I found them to be patriotic and good men, and accepted the honours and the gold crown. When I come to those parts I will do my best to be of service to you and to preserve the privileges of the city.

Once again we owe our knowledge of this exchange entirely to the fact that the city decided to have this and other related documents inscribed publicly.¹⁷ It would be possible to cite comparable examples from the following centuries but is surely unnecessary. Such exchanges can be shown to have been initiated by all types of cities or self-governing communities. The composition of decrees, the sending of embassies, the reception of these embassies at a formal session by the emperor, the delivery of the written decrees to the accompaniment of a brief oration, and the bringing back of a reply: such formal exchanges were common both to places which stood in some legalistic sense "outside" the imperial system, and to ones which might be presumed to have been far inside it, to have been in a real sense part of the Roman *res publica* itself—by that I mean regular *coloniae* (colonies), formally established by the *populus Romanus* "of which those colonies can be regarded as being miniature effigies and as it were representations," as Aulus Gellius put it in the second century (*Noctes Atticae* 16, 13). But such colonies, whether situated in Italy, all of whose inhabitants were Roman citizens, or in the provinces, in which case the status of colonies itself automatically conferred the Roman citizenship, none the less addressed themselves to the emperor, and were addressed by him, in precisely the "diplomatic" manner, more suggestive of equal sovereign states, described above. The same is also true of

17. R. K. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the Greek East (Senatus Consulta and Epistulae to the Age of Augustus)* (Baltimore, 1969), no. 58, III.

tribute-paying communities, enjoying no specific Roman status, situated in the Latin-speaking western provinces. So, for instance, we find Vespasian in the 70s replying to an embassy from a totally obscure community in northern Corsica. Once again our knowledge of the exchange is owed entirely to the inscription which the community later put up:

Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus to the magistrates and senators of the Vanacini, greeting.

I am pleased to learn that Otacilius Sagitta, my friend and procurator, exercised his authority over you in such a way as to earn your commendation. On the controversy which you are engaged in with the Mariani . . . The business was conducted by the ambassadors Lasemus son of Leucanus, priest of Augustus, and Eunus son of Tomasus, priest of Augustus.¹⁸

In this case the real subordination of the community to imperial control is made perfectly explicit, while the conventional diplomatic form is maintained.

We are not, however, entirely dependent for our knowledge of the nature of these exchanges on the determination of provincial towns to immortalize in public form the answers they received from emperors. While diplomatic (or other) archives, in the sense familiar from more recent periods of history, are unknown, a scattering of comparable texts exists preserved on perishable materials, notably private copies found on papyri from Roman Egypt. One striking example, almost (in a weak sense) deserving the term "archive," is provided by a group of papyri showing exactly comparable embassies, with replies in letter form, being directed to emperors from Claudius in the mid-first century to Severus Alexander in the early third, by the world-wide association (literally "oecumenical synod") of Greek actors, that is, professionals who performed at the major festivals.¹⁹

The reception of such embassies was a regular public occasion for the emperors, and hence for that reason a fruitful source of anecdotes illustrating their notoriously wide range of personal peculiarities. It is significant that while jurisdiction, another role performed by emperors in person, was often delegated, especially from the early third century on, the hearing of embassies almost never was. The sole exception is provided by Augustus, in advanced old age.²⁰

18. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X, no. 8038.

19. *ERW*, 460-61.

20. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 54, 33, 5; 56, 25, 7.

It would be to diverge too far from the purpose of this chapter to ask how far the maintenance (on the part of provincial governors as well as of the emperor himself) of a sort of universal fiction of local sovereignty and entitlement on the part of provincial cities to conduct diplomatic-style relations in the manner of an independent state contributed to the stability of the Empire, and the acceptance of it, or at least absence of consistent opposition to it, among the ruling classes of the provinces. The diplomatic system of the Empire, as sketched above, did, however, implicitly remember and recognise the fact that the vast majority of the locally self-governing cities and communities of the provinces had once been genuinely independent, and had come within the orbit of Roman provincial government and of the payment of tribute to Rome, in a complex variety of ways, from alliance to outright conquest.

In the Roman Empire, therefore, even in Italy itself (most of whose cities were also not creations of Rome and had once been independent), diplomatic forms more suggestive at first sight of foreign relations were carefully preserved. Moreover, it is highly significant that the structure of the imperial court, or entourage, was clearly marked by the need to be able to make the necessary replies in appropriate form. In the speech which Cassius Dio in his *Roman History* puts into the mouth of Maecenas, addressing Augustus, he interestingly suggests restricting embassies from provincial cities to matters requiring a decision (*diagnōsis*) from the emperor, that is, to disputes between at least two cities; other requests should be sent on by the local provincial governor (52, 30, 9). So ingrained was the conception that disputes between city embassies ought to be heard by the emperor, that even Dio, whose attitudes were strongly hierarchical, could not envisage the ending of this imperial role. More pertinent here, however, at a later point in the speech Maecenas is even made to envisage all the chief functionaries at the emperor's side, other than the praetorian prefects, and officials concerned with finance, being employed to answer, in various forms, the addresses and petitions made by both cities and individuals (52, 33, 5): "Moreover, as regards judicial hearings and letters, the decrees of the cities, and the petitions of individuals, and whatever else is relevant to the government of the Empire, take aides and assistants from the equestrian order."

A wider and much-disputed issue is being touched on here, namely the extent to which the imperial system was primarily passive, directed to a significant degree to answering requests or solving disputes emanating from below. It may suffice to say here that the (admittedly unsatisfactory) evidence does indeed reveal imperial secretaries with functions of the sort suggested by Dio through "Maecenas": men with titles such as a *cognitionibus* (to do with

judicial cases), *ab epistulis* (to do with letters), and *a libellis* (to do with petitions). But, in a way which remains very puzzling, the evidence reveals no imperial "secretaries" whose titles suggest responsibility for the positive or general forms of instruction which emperors did indeed issue: the *mandata*, or codes of instruction given to provincial governors and other officials; or imperial *edicta*, general pronouncements which were not (in principle) addressed to any one community or individual. It remains quite unclear which "secretaries," if any, were concerned in the composition of the sometimes extensive, detailed, and declamatory imperial *edicta*.

The fact that our evidence does not even record the titles of any officials concerned with these two important types of imperial pronouncement merely accentuates a more general and profound problem, firstly, as to the working of the imperial court as a whole as a bureaucratic or governmental system and, secondly, as to the specific role of the emperor in deciding the content of imperial replies, or even, perhaps, in the actual composition of the relevant texts. The problem is not decided by the mere fact that our sources invariably talk *as if* all forms of imperial pronouncement came from the emperor himself. None the less, two considerations serve to establish a framework for the question. Firstly, there is nothing in our entire evidence to suggest that any form of imperial pronouncement could be issued in his name, or as from him, by any imperial agency functioning from a place from which the emperor himself was absent—for instance from Rome, if the Emperor were currently at an imperial villa elsewhere in Italy, or in the provinces, or on campaign. All imperial pronouncements emanated at least from the immediate vicinity, or entourage, of the emperor.

Secondly, it would be reasonable, and in accordance with the basic character both of Roman political life and of Roman law, to see verbal, or oral, pronouncements as primary, and their written manifestations as secondary. Roman law depended fundamentally on verbal statements made by parties to legal transactions, rather than on written documents: it is striking that the legal writer Gaius, of the middle of the second century A.D., imagines the emperor requiring the *princeps* of a foreign *populus* to make a verbal promise to keep the peace—"pacem futuram spondes?" (*Inst.* 3, 94). Equally, for instance, an *edictum* had originally been literally that, a pronouncement "spoken out" to the people by a magistrate, normally from the Rostra, the speaker's platform in the Forum in Rome.

It is important to stress that the role of issuing verbal pronouncements or decisions remained an essential element in the functions of the emperor. He delivered *orationes* (speeches) to the Senate (though these could be read in his absence by his quaestor, the *quaestor Caesaris*); he also made *orationes* on occa-

sion to the people, and *orationes* or *allocutiones* to the soldiers in Rome or the army in the field. Both coins and the representations of the imperial military role on the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius give particular prominence to this latter role. The emperor also, as mentioned above, gave jurisdiction; as with any other person giving jurisdiction, the verdict (*decretum* or *sententia*) had to be read out by him, often from a written text so as to ensure complete accuracy. Finally, as noted earlier, the emperor heard embassies from provincial communities in person and had to make at least a provisional response verbally at the time, even though the definitive reply was invariably embodied subsequently in a letter.

It was precisely such letters, as we have seen, which formed the type of imperial pronouncement most frequently enshrined by these provincial communities in permanent inscriptions; hence they are among the documents whose formal character is best known to us. That still leaves open, however, the question of by whom they were in reality composed. Somewhat similar problems arise with imperial answers to *libelli*, or written petitions from individuals. These were, originally at least, handed to the emperor in person; and the replies, referred to in the second century as *subscriptiones*, were in principle literally "written under" the petitions themselves, and given back. There is no need here to go into the complex question of the evolution of the *libellus* system, except to say that it does bear in an important way on major questions in Roman law, for imperial replies to *libelli* from private persons make up almost the whole of the *Codex Justinianus* and are extensively quoted in the *Digest*, in other legal sources from Gaius onwards, and on inscriptions and papyri. They appear in large numbers in the *Codex* and *Digest* precisely because they are being quoted as sources of law. Current arguments have not yet established whether we should see this branch of law-making as a function of the emperors themselves, or allow it to be reclaimed for the jurists, including major ones such as Papinian, who successively occupied the secretarial post at the emperor's side called *a libellis* (to do with *libelli*), or later *magister libellorum*. It might well be necessary here, too, to distinguish clearly between responsibility for the essential content of such a reply (which might often be of a yes-no form) and the composition of a text expressing the answer in appropriate legal language, with explanation and justification where required.²¹

21. For the complex issues relating to *libelli* presented to the emperor, and to the composition of the replies, see T. Honoré, *Emperors and Lawyers* (London, 1981); F. Millar, "A New Approach to the Roman Jurists," *JRS* 76 (1986): 272–80 (chapter 19 in this volume), and "L'Empereur romain comme décideur," in C. Nicolet, ed., *Du pouvoir dans l'antiquité: mots et réalités* (Paris, 1990), 207–20.

By the second century, it was possible for such *libelli* to be forwarded to the emperor by provincial governors, accompanied by a covering letter, both carried by messengers. Such an exchange, which took place in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, provides one of the very few glimpses we ever get of the archives of the emperors and how they were managed. Once again, however, the glimpse is indirect. The source is again an inscription, a bronze tablet discovered at Banasa (Morocco), and evidently put up by the beneficiaries of the imperial grants in question. The two imperial letters quoted are in response to letters from two successive governors of the Roman province of Mauretania Tingitana, each forwarding a *libellus* asking for the Roman citizenship for a chief of a tribal people in that region, the Zegrenses, or for members of his family:

[c. A.D. 168] Copy of a letter of our Emperors Antoninus and Verus, Augusti, to Coiiedius Maximus: we have read the *libellus* [petition] of Julianus the Zegrenian attached to your letter, and although the Roman citizenship is not normally granted by imperial *indulgentia* to those tribesmen unless earned by the highest deserts, yet since you affirm that he is among the most prominent among those peoples of his and most loyal in his prompt obedience in our interests (and we do not think that many households from among the Zegrenses will be able to claim the same of their services) and since [?] we wish as many as possible to be aroused by the honour conferred by us on that house to emulate Julianus, we do not hesitate to give the Roman citizenship, without prejudice to the law of the tribe, to him, his wife Ziddina, and their children Julianus, Maximus, Maximinus, Diogenianus.

[A.D. 177] Copy of a letter of the Emperors Antoninus and Commodus, Augusti, to Vallius Maximianus: we have read the *libellus* of the chief of the tribes of the Zegrenses and have noted the favour with which he is regarded by your predecessor Epidius Quadratus, and also moved by the latter's testimonies, and the services and evidence of his conduct which he himself puts forward, have given to his wife and children the Roman citizenship, without prejudice to the law of the tribe. In order that this may be recorded in our *commentarii* [records] find out what the age of each is and write to us.

Copied down and checked from the record [*commentarius*] of those given the Roman citizenship by the Divine Augustus [names of preceding emperors] . . . which the freedman Asclepiodotus produced, as it is written below:

In the consulship of Emperor Caesar L. Aurelius Commodus Aug. and M. Plautius Quintilius, on the day before the nones of July, at Rome [6 July 177]

Faggura, wife of Julianus, princeps of the tribe of the Zegrenians, age 22, Juliana, age 8, Maxima, age 4, Julianus, age 3, Diogenia, age 2, children of Julianus mentioned above:

At the request per libellum of Aurelius Julianus, princeps of the Zegrenians supported by Vallius Maximianus by letter [*suffragante* . . . *per epistulam*], to these we have given the Roman citizenship, without prejudice to the law of the tribe, and without diminution of the *tributa* and *vectigalia* of the *populus* and the *fiscus*.

Carried out on the same day in the same place under the same consuls. Asclepiodotus, freedman: I have checked it:

Witnesses:

M. Gavius Squilla Gallicanus	[consul, 150]
M. Acilius Glabrio	[consul, 152]
T. Sextius Lateranus	[consul, 154]
C. Septimius Severus	[consul, 160]
P. Juilius Scapula Tertullus	[consul, 160-6]
T. Varius Clemens	[<i>ex-ab epistulis</i>]
M. Bassaeus Rufus	[<i>ex-praetorian prefect</i>]
P. Taruttienus Paternus	[<i>praetorian prefect</i> by 179]
Sex [Tigidius Peren]nis	[<i>probably praetorian prefect</i>]
Q. Cervidius Scaevola	[<i>lawyer, prefect of Vigiles (fire brigade), 175</i>]
Q. Larcus Euripianus	
T. Flavius Piso	[<i>prefect of the corn supply, 179</i>] ²²

What is relevant in this context is, firstly, the unexpected revelation of a continuous system of recording the names of persons granted the Roman citizenship, going all the way back to the first emperor, Augustus, who had died more than a century and a half earlier. It must remind us that we *may* seriously underestimate the sophistication of an imperial archival system to which we have no direct access; and it must at least raise the question of whether any comparable archival system recorded diplomatic and foreign relations be-

22. M. Euzennat, J. Marion, and J. Gasco, *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc II: Inscriptions latines* (Paris, 1982), no. 94.

yond the imperial frontier. Secondly, once again, it may remind us that "the imperial frontier" itself is not an unambiguous concept. Roman dealings with the unsubdued tribal peoples of western Mauretania had themselves in part the character of foreign, or diplomatic, relations. In this instance, Roman citizenship is being sought by someone who clearly lay at best on the margins of the urban, literate world of Graeco-Roman culture. The document also touches on another ambiguity characteristic of what we might otherwise want to call Roman "foreign" policy. Like the Herodian kings who ruled one area or another in the Palestine region in the first century, or the kings of the Bosporean kingdom (the eastern Crimea and western Tuman peninsula across the straits) throughout the whole period with which we are concerned, this family of Moroccan tribal chiefs was henceforth to hold Roman citizenship. The citizenship was another respect in which the nature of a strict "frontier" between Roman and non-Roman does not apply. Finally, it is striking that even at this late stage there is a reflection of the ambiguous sovereignty prevailing in the Roman state itself. The taxes and duties which the beneficiaries will still have to pay are due both to the imperial *fiscus* (treasury) and to the *populus*.

If we come back to the governmental and bureaucratic practice of the imperial court, Cassius Dio, it will be recalled, had specified letters as one area where the emperor would certainly need an aide of equestrian rank (52, 33, 5, cited above). It is noticeable, however, that here, in clear contrast with the passage where he speaks of the reception of foreign embassies by the Senate (53, 31, 1, cited above), he is thinking of the internal working of the Empire. Some of this imperial correspondence was addressed, invariably in Latin, to officials, in particular provincial governors; Pliny the Younger's correspondence with Trajan from the province of Pontus and Bithynia is only the best-known example of a standard form of exchange, which represents a central element in how the Empire was governed. Two specimens are, of course, incorporated into the document from Banasa just quoted. Equally, imperial letters to cities in the Latin-speaking part of the Empire, of which only a rather modest number is preserved, were also naturally written in Latin.

But very different considerations applied to cities and provincial councils in the Greek-speaking half of the Empire. Here, all the letters from emperors and from governors, which inscriptions put up by these cities reveal, are written in Greek. The suspicion that the original letters might have been translated from Latin in the city concerned, in order to make them more readily intelligible to passers-by who stopped—as they might when entering the theatre of Aphrodisias—to read the inscribed documents, is natural, but in fact not justified. For those inscribed archives, or perhaps pseudo-archives,

which also incorporate letters between officials, which were originally written in Latin, leave the texts in Latin and do not translate them.²³

It thus seems highly probable that the Greek cities of the eastern part of the Empire were paid the compliment, in yet another and very precise respect, of having letters addressed to them which had been written in Greek, or translated into Greek, at the imperial court itself. In this sense too, therefore, they were treated as foreign powers, to whom a diplomatic form of address was appropriate. The probability that this was so becomes a certainty when we consider the relatively well-known history of the office of *ab epistulis* (to do with letters).²⁴ This office existed in some form from the beginning of the Empire and comes more clearly into view in the middle of the first century A.D., when it was primarily occupied by freed slaves from the imperial household. Precisely this aspect served to give it and comparable offices some prominence in historical and biographical sources such as Tacitus and Suetonius; for it was generally felt, looking back some decades later, that in the middle of the Julio-Claudian period, and in particular in the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54), imperial freedmen serving in close proximity to the emperor had exercised an excessive, damaging, and corrupting influence. In the course of the following period, positions such as *ab epistulis*, *a libellis*, and *a rationibus* (to do with accounts) began to pass instead into the hands of men of free birth belonging to the rank immediately below the Senate, the equestrian order—a process complete by the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117–38), when one of the *ab epistulis* was the biographer Suetonius. At the same time, however, we find the emergence of a separate post defined as *ab epistulis Graecis* (to do with letters in Greek). Such a post, or one defined in closely comparable terms, had been attested on some occasions in the middle of the first century. Indeed it is striking that these posts are the earliest "secretarial" posts alongside the emperor to appear on public inscriptions as being held by men who are not freed slaves but Roman citizens of equestrian rank. Both the known examples from this period are in fact Roman citizens of Greek origin. Tiberius Claudius Balbillus appears in a Latin inscription from Ephesos as *ad legationes* (to do with embassies) *et res[pon]sa Graeca?* (and replies in Greek?)—it is typical that the text should be broken at the crucial point. This problem at least does not appear in the Greek inscription from Cos,

23. For a prime case, see the exchanges relating to the temple of Zeus at Aezani in the province of Asia: U. Laffi, "I terreni del tempio di Zeus ad Aizanoi," *Athenaeum* 49 (1971): 3–53.

24. For this office, or evolving separate offices, see *ERW*, esp. chap. III, pts. 5–6, and V, pt. 2.

his native city, honouring Claudius' doctor, C. Stertinius Xenophon, who is also described as holding the post of *epi tōn Ellēnikōn apokrimatōn* (to do with pronouncements, or replies, in Greek). How exactly we should translate *apokrima* is not clear, but hardly matters in this context, as the sphere of activity is clear enough. It is equally so in the entry in a Byzantine lexicon which describes another Greek, of the second half of the first century, Dionysius of Alexandria, as "in charge of the *epistolai* and *presbeiai* [embassies] and *apokrimata*." From the reign of Hadrian onwards, the role is well attested, and in particular it is known to have been held by a number of the fashionable and famous Greek orators celebrated in the *Lives of the Sophists* of Philostratus, written in the first half of the third century. That fact alone would tend to suggest that their role related to the formulation of imperial letters in correct Greek style. And, in fact, this function is made quite explicit in what Philostratus says of one of these men, Aspasius, who held office in the early third century. The other Philostratus mentioned was the writer's nephew (*Vit. Soph.* 2, 33):

The epistle composed by Philostratus called *How to Write Letters* is aimed at Aspasius, who on being appointed imperial secretary wrote certain letters in a style more controversial than is suitable; and others he wrote in obscure language, though neither of these qualities is becoming to an emperor. For an emperor when he writes a letter ought not to use rhetorical syllogisms or trains of reasoning, but ought to express only his own will; nor again should he be obscure, since he is the voice of the law, and lucidity is the interpreter of the law.

In the course of the second century, the division of functions naturally led to the other secretary concerned with letters being described as *ab epistulis Latinis*. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that their respective functions were already not very different from those later described in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (List of Offices) of around A.D. 400:

Magister epistolarum: deals with embassies from cities, *consultationes* [enquiries by letter from officials] and *preces* [petitions].

Magister epistolarum graecarum: those letters which are customarily issued [*emitti*] in Greek he either dictates himself or if dictated in Latin translates into Greek.

Thus, in evidence from various periods, while a clear functional connection is made between incoming embassies and the letters which needed to be

written in reply to them, the latter role tends to be the more prominent, and to determine the titlature of the officials concerned. Far more important for our purposes, however, is the contrast between the very clear effect on the structure and functioning of the imperial entourage of the respect paid to the Greek cities of the Empire on the one hand, and the total absence on the other of any precise apparatus to handle diplomatic relations beyond the frontier.

As regards a large proportion of the areas with which the Empire was in some permanent or repeatedly renewed relationship, we could simply suppose that the same apparatus designed for "internal" exchanges of a diplomatic type could be applied without difficulty—indeed, in the case of "client" kings without any clear distinction—to relations which might be regarded as "external." It can, for instance, be assumed without question that Greek was the diplomatic language of all letters to and from kings on the eastern perimeter of the Empire, from the Bosporan kingdom on the north coast of the Black Sea to Armenia, Commagene (finally absorbed in about A.D. 72), Osrhoene on the other side of the Euphrates, absorbed in A.D. 213–14, Nabatea (Arabia), absorbed in A.D. 106, and even Parthia itself, as well as its Persian successor empire of the 220s onwards. We have in the case of the Parthian Empire a precise parallel in the respect shown to the "Greekness" of the Greek cities within its borders. For the only documentary example which we have of a letter written by a Parthian king is one written in A.D. 21 by Artabanus III to the city of Seleucia on the Eulaeus, the ancient Susa in present-day Iran.²⁵ As with the numerous letters of Roman emperors to Greek cities, of which some examples are mentioned above, we owe our knowledge of this letter to the fact that the city concerned had it publicly inscribed. It follows, however, and could not be doubted on more general grounds, that the Parthians will always have had the capacity to conduct diplomatic relations with the Roman Empire, or specifically with the emperor, in Greek. This will have remained true even in the later period, when it is generally thought that, in broader cultural terms, the long-lasting influence of the Greek culture imported into the Middle East by Alexander had begun perceptibly to decline. So, for instance, there is the evidence of a wonderful new discovery, a bronze statue of the Greek hero Herakles, captured by the Parthian king Vologaeses in A.D. 150 in the course of his conquest of the little kingdom of Mesene, at the head of the Persian Gulf, and dedicated by him in the temple

25. C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (New Haven and London, 1934), no. 75.

of Apollo situated in another Greek city, Seleucia on the Tigris. The fact is recorded on a bilingual inscription, in Greek and Parthian (the latter written in Aramaic letters) on the statue itself.²⁶

We can thus assume without difficulty that when the emperor Macrinus, who seized power after the murder of Caracalla in Mesopotamia in 217, sent "friendly messages, and returned captives" to the Parthian king Artabanus, the letter and any accompanying exchanges were in Greek (Cassius Dio 79, 29, 2). Greek was to remain one of the royal languages of the new Persian Empire, as is illustrated most clearly by the great inscription of Shapur I from Naqsh-e-Rustam (text to n. 3 above), set up in three languages, Greek, Middle Persian, and Parthian.

The same predominance of Greek as an international language can be assumed for all the kingdoms, of varying size and stability, which were to be found in the broad zone between the Red Sea and the Black Sea. An inscription from the city of Priene in Asia Minor happens to allude quite casually to the fact that as early as 129 B.C. an ambassador had gone "to Petra of Arabia," the Nabatean capital, for what purpose is not known.²⁷ We can be certain that the ambassador from this Greek city did not devote himself to studying the Nabatean language (a dialect of Aramaic) before he set off. The Nabateans' official use of Greek is shown not only on their coinage of the Hellenistic period but also, for instance, in dedications which one of their kings, Rabel, like other kings, placed on the Capitol in Rome. In fact, it was made for him by his ambassadors, described in Greek as *presbantai*.²⁸ The same will, beyond question, apply to the dynasty of the kings of the Bosphorus, since the language of the kingdom and the cities within it was entirely Greek. In the correspondence between Pliny the Younger, as governor of Pontus and Bithynia, and Trajan, we happen to catch a glimpse of a letter being transmitted by Sauromates I (A.D. 93/4–123/4) to Trajan. Indeed, we find a complex set of exchanges proceeding simultaneously. A messenger (*tabellarius*) from the king arrives in Bithynia carrying a letter to Trajan, and also one to Pliny himself, urging him to send the messenger onwards with all speed, as the letter to the Emperor contains things he urgently needs to know. At the same time an embassy from the Bosphorus, or more precisely from the king, is pur-

26. Published in *The Land between Two Rivers: Twenty Years of Italian Archaeology in the Middle East* (Turin, 1985), 423–25, no. 231.

27. See G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 22.

28. A. Degrassi, "Le dediche di popoli e re asiatici al popolo romano e a Giove Capitolino," *Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* 74 (1952): 19–47, on p. 34, no. 20 = *Scritti vari di Antichità I* (Rome, 1962), 415–44.

suing a more leisurely journey through Bithynia on its way to Rome (Pliny, *Letters* 10, 63; 64; 67).

The embassy was probably intending to present itself before Trajan, but it could still have been brought by him before the Senate. For the latest definite evidence which we have for such an appearance relates to the following reign, that of Hadrian (A.D. 117–38). The kings of the Bosphorus were the most stable and long-lasting of all the "client" dynasties of Rome, and the only one which minted (or was allowed by Rome to mint?) gold coins. The coins invariably portrayed both King and Emperor. But the titulature of the kings implicitly expressed a dual loyalty, which reflected the dual sovereignty inherent in the Empire itself: *philokaisar* and *philorōmaios*. What that meant is spelled out in a Latin inscription in honour of Sauromates I, put up in Panticapaeum in the Crimea by the *colonia* of Sinope on the opposite coast of the Black Sea: "King Ti[berius] Iul[ius] Sauromates, an outstanding friend of the Emperor and of the *populus R[omanus]*."²⁹

If this dual sovereignty was more important, and was reflected in our sources for a longer period than has been realized, it is still the case that actual communications with foreign powers, and even "client" kings, were always conducted by the emperor. If he chose also to bring foreign rulers, and embassies from them, before the Senate, that was at all times a gesture which did not affect the realities of decision making. It is worth noting the elaborate form which this gesture took on the latest occasion of its use, so far as our narrative sources indicate, that is, in the reign of Hadrian. This is how Cassius Dio, writing a century later, records the relevant episode (69, 15, 2):

When ambassadors were sent by Vologaeses [king of Parthia] bringing charges against Pharasmanes [king of Iberia in the Caucasus] and by the Iazyges, who wished to have peace confirmed, he introduced them into them into the Senate; and being commissioned to prepare the answers, he composed them himself and read them to them.

By "them" Dio seems to mean not the Senate collectively (which he refers to in the singular) but the ambassadors. Whether or not Dio is right in his clear implication that Hadrian wrote the letters himself, what he says raises acute problems about the nature of Roman diplomacy in this period, some of which have already been adumbrated.

Firstly, the practice of bringing foreign embassies before the Senate may have continued longer than has been previously supposed, and indeed into the lifetime of Cassius Dio. For a very fragmentary Latin papyrus, recently

29. I. Struve, *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* (Moscow, 1965), no. 46.

discussed for the first time as a historical source, is certainly an extract from the *acta* (proceedings) of the Senate, dates to the reign of Commodus (A.D. 180–92), and seems to show exchanges with an embassy (*[l]legatio*) which may be one from the central European tribe known as the Buri; at any rate, in a typically frustrating way, the word Bu[ri?] can be read in the papyrus. It was already known from Cassius Dio (72, 3, 1–2) that Commodus had “granted peace” to this Germanic people early in his reign.³⁰

Secondly, there are questions of procedure. In its dealings with foreign peoples, the Senate had always used, for the reception of embassies, a minimally adjusted version of its standard proceedings. It functioned essentially by the presentation of the relevant subject matter by the presiding magistrate, usually a consul or praetor, the giving of opinions by the more senior senators in order of precedence, and where necessary a vote by division. Embassies, whether appearing singly or in competition or dispute with each other, were simply heard after being introduced by the presiding magistrate, and the rest of the procedure continued as normal. As with the emperor, one could say that diplomacy was simply “embedded” in a more general framework of government, in which verbal exchanges and pronouncements played a predominant part. Like the emperor, the Senate had at its disposal no specific agency for the bureaucratic or professional management of foreign relations, or for the preparation of missives to foreign powers. It was, however, normal for inscribed texts of treaties to be put up on the Capitol (texts to nn. 9–10 above).

In the Republic, the Senate had also performed the diplomatic function of sending embassies from within its own ranks to negotiate with foreign powers. Once again, the function was embedded in the more general exercise of a public political role, and no core of specialist diplomats existed. In the Empire, however, no trace of this function can be found at all. By an odd paradox, the only embassies which the Senate now sent were ones with the function of addressing the emperor himself or members of his family.

The active conduct of foreign relations therefore rested entirely with the emperor, his advisers, and his entourage. But various problems suggested by Dio’s account of Hadrian’s dealings with the embassies from Vologaeses and the Iazyges still present themselves. We can be sure, as mentioned above, that letters from and to Vologaeses will have been in Greek, just as the Parthian ambassadors may well have spoken in the Senate in Greek. Whoever was “in charge of Greek letters” and perhaps simultaneously responsible for receiving

30. R. J. A. Talbert, “Commodus as Diplomat in an Extract from the *Acta Senatus*,” *ZPE* 71 (1988): 137–47.

embassies could have dealt with Parthia exactly as he dealt with a Greek city within the Empire.

But if the rules and the language of diplomatic contact presented no problems as between a Roman emperor and a Greek-speaking, or Greek-using, kingdom, what of the Iazyges, a people of Iranian origin inhabiting the territory between Roman Dacia and the lower course of the Danube before it reaches the Black Sea? It is striking how our sources repeatedly describe verbal contacts with the barbarian peoples of Europe, as of Africa, while only rarely making the slightest allusion to the mechanics of how these exchanges were conducted.

The first thing that has to be made clear is that there is no sign of anything that could be described as permanent diplomatic representation on either side. The Romans maintained no resident ambassadors or legations either in “client” kingdoms or among any other peoples with whom they had diplomatic or military contacts. The nearest to a Roman representative that our sources offer would be the officers of military units, which are occasionally found stationed in allied kingdoms. Even this is not common; but we do find some Roman forces stationed in the kingdom of the Bosphorus, mentioned above; Roman forces were supporting a Roman nominee to the throne there in A.D. 51 (Tacitus, *Annals* 12, 15); and Josephus records that there were as many as 3,000 Roman troops in this general area in A.D. 66 (*Jewish War* 2, 16, 4, 366). Others are also attested from time to time in the Caucasus. A famous Greek inscription from Harmozica (Tiflis) of A.D. 75 also shows Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian having fortifications built “for King Mithridates of the Hiberi, son of King Pharasmanes and Iamaspos [?] his son, *philokaisar* and *philorōmaios*, and for the people of the Hiberi.”³¹ This almost certainly means that Roman forces were present. They are more clearly attested in a Latin inscription put up by a *legatus* of the *legio XII Fulminata*, from near Baku on the Caspian Sea under Domitian (A.D. 81–96)—notable as the easternmost Latin inscription so far known (*Ann. Épig.* 1951, no. 263).

However, neither permanent military occupation by Roman forces nor any other standing Roman presence should be assumed as the norm for any of the “client” or allied states on Rome’s borders. Indeed, as regards military relations, the current went the other way. It was extremely common for barbarian or semi-barbarian peoples on Rome’s borders to provide auxiliary units for the Roman army. This is an important topic which cannot be pursued here, though we may note that such units included Bosphorani, and

31. OGIS 379 = M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors* (Cambridge, 1961), no. 237.

that Arminius, the victor of the famous defeat of the Roman *legatus*, Quinctilius Varus, in the battle of the Teutoburger Forest in A.D. 9, had not only led Cheruscan forces in Roman service, but was himself a Roman citizen, and even had the status of *eques* (Velleius Paterculus 2, 118, 2). It is more important to stress that the provision of military contingents for service with Rome is well attested as a specific provision of peace treaties concluding hostilities; one example will be given below.

If there was no permanent Roman diplomatic representation among allied peoples, the same is also true in the reverse direction. The notion of established representation at the political centres of foreign peoples, whether monarchies or not, was unknown in antiquity. The only representatives of foreign powers who might be living in Rome were of a different sort, namely hostages. A considerable volume of literary and inscriptional evidence illustrates the presence in Rome of hostages from a variety of regions beyond the Empire. They could indeed be regarded, as by Pliny the Elder, supplementing his knowledge of the Caucasus region, as sources of geographical information (*Nat. Hist.* 6, 23), or of course as Roman nominees in disputes over the occupancy of thrones in "client" kingdoms. There is only a narrow line between these and the children whom "client" kings often sent to Rome to be educated, as Herod the Great did with two of his sons. When Roman coinage claimed, as it on occasion did, that a king had been "given" (*datus*) to a people beyond the borders, it was often a hostage or royal child, already available, and suitably Romanized, who was sent out in this role.³²

It is only, however, in a very loose sense that such hostages or members of royal families, more or less voluntarily resident in Rome, could be considered as diplomatic representatives. To make such a claim would be on the contrary to miss the essential point that all diplomatic transactions were conducted ad hoc either by the dispatch of ambassadors to the seat of power, or on occasion by face-to-face negotiations conducted in person by the emperor, or a member of his family, with a foreign king.

The latter is more fully attested in the following period, the "crisis" of the third century, and increasingly so in the fourth century, where a detailed narrative is available from Ammianus Marcellinus. But diplomacy at a distance, as conducted by Rome, is not so easy to grasp. As we have seen in sufficient detail already, the opposite process, the arrival of foreign ambassadors in Roman territory, is frequently described. For instance, the documents from the famous archaeological site of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates show a Parthian ambassador on his way to appear before Septimius Severus and

32. See Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (n. 12), 9ff.

Caracalla. The governor of Syria Coele gives instructions that he is to be offered upkeep in the normal manner:

Marius Maximus to the *tribuni* and *praefecti* and *praepositi numerorum*, greeting:

I have attached a copy of the letter which I have written to Minicius Martialis, *procurator* of our *Augusti*, so that you may take note of it. Take care that the quartermaster's offices of the units [*numeri*] through which Goces, an ambassador of the Parthians, sent to our Lords the most valiant Emperors, is in transit. Offer him upkeep according to the normal form. Report to me whatever is spent in each unit.³³

The document shows quite clearly that, as with the Bosphoran embassy on its way through Bithynia which Pliny sent on, the movement of ambassadors sent to appear before emperors far away in Rome or elsewhere was a routine matter. If, as seems likely, the document from Dura dates to A.D. 208, the ambassador may in the end have had rather a long way to go, for in that year Severus, with his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, set off to campaign in Britain, where he died at York in 211. If Goces did only encounter Severus on campaign, facilities were still likely to have been available for his reception. A writer of the second century, Hyginus, describing a model military camp in which the imperial entourage was present, mentions the *quaestorium*, which housed ambassadors of the enemy and hostages, and in which booty, if any, was stored.³⁴

We shall come later to some evidence which does clearly illustrate the reception by the emperor of barbarian embassies while on campaign. But the problem still remains of what procedures were used by the emperors in communicating with foreign powers. The notion of letters from the emperor to kings is clearly attested. For instance, Suetonius happens to mention that Tiberius did not use the name "Augustus" except in letters to kings and dynasts (*Tib.* 26). The fact that he also used it in letters to cities does not entirely invalidate the notion that writing letters to kings and dynasts was a specific imperial function, in which the emperor needed to emphasize his superior status. However, such letters, like those to cities discussed above, might in many cases have been carried back by ambassadors who had appeared before the emperor. In consequence, no procedure was required

33. Recently discussed by M. L. Chaumont, "Un document méconnu concernant l'envoi d'un ambassadeur parthe vers Septime Sévère (P. Dura 60B)," *Historia* 36 (1987): 422-47.

34. Hyginus, *de munitioibus castrorum* 18, ed. and trans. M. Lenoir, *Pseudo-Hygin des fortifications du camp* (Paris, 1979).

beyond the writing of the letter itself. But suppose no foreign embassy were to hand, and it was necessary to communicate spontaneously with a foreign power, or to conduct negotiations beyond the frontier? In the case of a king whose loyalty to the Empire was beyond question, it might have been feasible for a mere messenger to carry a letter, the counterpart of the *tabellarius* of Sauromates I on his way to deliver a letter to Trajan (Pliny, *Ep.* 10, 63, 64, 67). Such a procedure seems, however, not to be concretely attested, though it may have been employed. For any delicate situation, it is much more probable that a high-status emissary will have gone. But here too the evidence is remarkably sparse. A modest Greek historian of the mid-third century, Herodian, does however record something of the sort, in typically vague terms. In describing the exchanges after the rise of the new Persian Empire in the 220s, he relates that Severus Alexander sent Artaxerxes/Ardashir an embassy (*presbeia*) with a letter warning him of the dangers of serious conflict with Rome (6, 2, 3–4). But he says nothing of the rank or function of the person, or persons, who constituted the embassy. Then, when Alexander had reached Antioch on his way to the eastern frontier, he sent another *presbeia*. Artaxerxes sent the ambassadors back empty-handed, soon followed by 400 Persian cavalry as a diplomatically veiled threat; they were however promptly disarmed and settled in Asia Minor (6, 4, 4–6). How far Herodian's representation of these events is more than fanciful is in any case an open question.

What seems to be the only evidence from the whole of this period for an emissary of high rank conducting negotiations beyond the frontier is contained in a report by Cassius Dio of how in about 170 the Cotini, living somewhere north of the middle Danube, were able to capture and maltreat Taruttienus Paternus, the *ab epistulis Latinis* of Marcus Aurelius, on the pretext that they were going to join in combined operations against the Marcomani (71, 12, 3). It seems evident from this brief report that Paternus had been sent to them to negotiate and was thus exposed to capture. If so, it is another clear indication of the use for external purposes of a court functionary whose role, at least as far as we can grasp it, was normally related to internal correspondence (with officials or Latin-speaking communities in the Empire). It is furthermore not unlikely that, like his Greek equivalent (above), the *ab epistulis Latinis* may normally have had some role in the reception of embassies from Latin-speaking communities. By extension, therefore, he may have been a natural choice to negotiate beyond the frontier.

That serves, however, merely to raise a further problem: in what language did one conduct negotiations with the Cotini, or with any other un-subdued people beyond the frontier? The notion that high-status Romans

ever learned to speak any of the Germanic, Celtic, Thracian, or Iranian languages used beyond the frontier in the Eurasian land-mass can be safely dismissed, as can any similar notion relating to the languages of North Africa. The one possible exception here is Punic, attested as a spoken and written language throughout the period concerned.³⁵ But there is nothing to show that it actually was employed as a vehicle of diplomatic communication, spoken or written. In Mauretania, at least, it is certain, as a whole series of (Latin) inscriptions from Volubilis attests, that third-century governors held repeated negotiations (*colloquia*) with chiefs of the Baquates. One such inscription which dates from A.D. 245 records that a procurator of Mauretania Tingitana had conducted a *conloquium* with Septemazinis, chief (*princeps*) of the *gens* (tribe) of the Baquates "for the sake of establishing peace."³⁶ Nothing is said about the language of the "colloquium"; we can however safely assume either that an interpreter was employed or that, like the *princeps* of the Zegrenses some decades earlier, Septemazinis had moved into the orbit of the Latin-using Mediterranean world.

Something comparable is clearly attested on the Rhine frontier in the early first century A.D.; chiefs of Cherusci, and indeed an ordinary rank-and-file soldier, are described as having learnt Latin as a result of military service with Rome (Tacitus, *Annals* 2, 9–10; 13). Although it is difficult to imagine that some mechanisms for mutual linguistic understanding were not employed along Rome's frontiers, the available evidence is extraordinarily slight: a soldier of *legio I Adiutrix* at Brigetio in the early third century, described as *interpres Dacorum*, "interpreter of [with?] the Dacians" (*Ann. Épig.* 1947, no. 35); or an "interpreter of [for?]" the procurators in the bilingual (Greek and Aramaic, or even Arabic) region south of Damascus on the edge of the Syrian desert.³⁷ Such very enigmatic fragments of documentary evidence may be compared with the "chief-interpreter of [with?] the Alani" attested in the Bosporean kingdom,³⁸ without giving us any clear notion of how significant a function interpretation, on the Roman side, was conceived to be. It would be a relatively safe assumption that the entire Roman system relied on the cultural dominance of the Graeco-Roman world to ensure that words addressed to Roman rulers or governors were in Latin or, failing that, in Greek. In the elaborately staged scene in A.D. 66 when Tiridates, a member of the

35. F. Millar, "Local Cultures in the Roman Empire: Latin, Libyan and Punic in Roman Africa," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 126–51 (chapter 12 in this volume).

36. *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc* II, no. 359.

37. R. Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes* III (Paris, 1896), no. 1191.

38. Struve, *Corpus Inscriptionum*, no. 1053.

Parthian royal house, came to Rome to receive the crown (diadem) of Armenia from the hands of Nero, seated on a tribunal in the Forum at Rome, an interpreter was employed to translate his words of supplication for the benefit of the crowd (Suetonius, *Nero* 13). But, as we have seen above, it is at least as likely that Tiridates was speaking Greek as Parthian; and in the latter case it would have been unlikely that any qualified interpreter could have been found. It is significant that the person who acted as interpreter on this occasion is described as being of ex-praetor status, that is, a relatively senior senator. Among persons of that class a fluent Greek speaker could easily be found.

Such an event, stage-managed at the centre of the Empire, leaves us entirely in the dark about the normal conduct of low-level exchanges between governors and military personnel on the one side and leaders of unsubdued peoples on the fringes of the Empire on the other. The subject obviously deserves more detailed examination, however fragmentary and enigmatic the evidence would prove. What is rather better known are certain episodes requiring major negotiations involving leading senators, members of the imperial family, or (increasingly) emperors in person. It will be worthwhile, in conclusion, to look at a few of these.

Major negotiations, or campaigns, conducted by senators who were not members of the imperial dynasties hardly outlasted the first century A.D. The tendency to concentrate all major external functions in the hands of the emperor in person is one of the most marked, and most significant, developments in imperial history. However, at the end of Tiberius' reign, for instance, the governor of Syria, Lucius Vitellius, was commissioned to meet King Artabanus of Parthia on the Euphrates to conclude an agreement. The parties are stated to have met in the middle of a bridge over the river, each with an armed escort. Afterwards Herodes Antipas, the tetrarch (effectively a minor king) of Galilee, gave a dinner in a pavilion also constructed in mid-stream. The proceedings concluded with the dispatch to Tiberius of Artabanus' son Darius as a hostage, accompanied by gifts including a freak, a Jew seven cubits tall (the presentation of freaks and curiosities to the Emperor would be an interesting sidelight on imperial history, worth exploring for itself; compare those sent by an Indian king to Augustus in Strabo, *Geography* 15, 1, 73, 719, cited above).³⁹ Vitellius then duly sent a report to Tiberius, only to find that Herodes had anticipated him.

Suetonius gives a rather different account of the same episode, stressing that Artabanus crossed to the Roman side of the river and did formal obeisance to the Roman standards and the *imagines* (images) of the emperor. This

39. For a collection of some of the evidence, see *ERW*, 139–40.

symbolic procedure, for which, interestingly, the actual presence of the emperor was more and more to substitute itself, is indeed attested on various occasions in the first century.⁴⁰

The last major eastern campaign to be conducted by senators from outside the imperial house belongs to the reign of Nero (54–68). As regards the conduct of diplomacy, we find two senatorial governors in the East in 54 simultaneously sending “messengers” (*nuntii*) to warn Vologaeses of Parthia to keep the peace, provide hostages, and observe the previous *reverentia* of Parthian kings towards the *populus Romanus*. The messengers were in each case military officers, a prefect of a cohort and a centurion (Tacitus, *Annals* 12, 9). Once again the absorption of diplomatic functions within a more general framework is made clear.

Some years later, in 62, when the Parthians launched an invasion of Armenia, where the Romans had installed their nominee as king, we again find the governor of Syria, Domitius Corbulo, sending a centurion as ambassador to upbraid the Parthian king for attacking a king allied to Rome and the Roman auxiliary units which had been sent to support him. Vologaeses replied that he would send ambassadors to Nero: these later returned empty-handed (Tac., *Ann.* 14, 5–7). When a Roman army was then forced to sue for terms, the emissary sent by its commander was again an auxiliary officer (15, 15). The retreat of the Roman forces from Armenia was followed by a Parthian embassy to Nero in Rome, bringing a letter from Vologaeses, ironically stating that his own nominee for the throne of Armenia would be prepared to come to Rome to receive the diadem, but that religious prescriptions prevented him (15, 24). Yet the great campaign into Armenia which Corbulo was then ordered to conduct very rapidly ended in formal negotiations between Corbulo and Vologaeses, conducted by emissaries (again centurions on the Roman side), followed by a formal ceremony at which Tiridates, as the Parthian nominee for the throne of Armenia, laid down his diadem before an *imago* of Nero (15, 24–30), to receive it back in Rome three years later, at the great ceremony already mentioned.

No similar delegation of the conduct of a major campaign occurred later. When relations with Parthia broke down again under Trajan, the Emperor himself went to the East, and our narratives show a number of minor kings from within the Parthian Empire presenting themselves before him in person. Then after two reigns, those of Hadrian (117–38) and Antoninus Pius

40. Suetonius, *Cal.* 14. For the use of the imperial image as the object of obeisance by foreign rulers or emissaries, see T. Pekáry, *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1985), 54–55.

(138–61), not marked by major wars, we reach the decisive turning point after which all major wars were conducted by the, or an, emperor; first Marcus Aurelius' co-emperor Lucius Verus, against the Parthians in 162–66, and then Marcus himself, almost continuously on the Danube frontier between the late 160s and his death there in 180. The characteristic shape of foreign relations, as they were to remain to the end of the fourth century, is already visible in Dio's description of Marcus, in his first years in Pannonia, dealing in person with delegations of barbarians from beyond the Danube (71, 11, 1–4):

Marcus Antoninus remained in Pannonia in order to give audience to the embassies of the barbarians; for many came to him at this time also. Some of them, under the leadership of Battarius, a boy twelve years old, promised an alliance; these received a gift of money and succeeded in restraining Tarbus, a neighbouring chieftain, who had come into Dacia and was demanding money and threatening to make war if he should fail to get it. Others, like the Quadi, asked for peace, which was granted them, both in the hope that they might be detached from the Marcomani, and also because they gave him many horses and cattle and promised to surrender all the deserters and the captives, besides—thirteen thousand at first, and later all the others as well. The right to attend the markets, however, was not granted to them, for fear that the Iazyges and the Marcomani, whom they had sworn not to receive nor to allow to pass through their country, should mingle with them, and passing themselves off for Quadi, should reconnoitre the Roman positions and purchase provisions. Besides these that came to Marcus, many others sent envoys, some by tribes and some by nations, and offered to surrender. Some of them were sent on campaigns elsewhere, as were also the captives and deserters who were fit for service; others received land in Dacia, Pannonia, Moesia, the province of Germany, and in Italy itself.

Very similar descriptions are given by Dio of Commodus' dealings with the barbarian peoples beyond the Danube, when Aurelius' death left him as the emperor in 180. Among them are the Buri, whose representations may later have appeared before the Senate (text to n. 30 above). Dio writes as follows (73, 2–3):

The Marcomani by reason of the multitude of their people that were perishing and the constant ravaging of their lands no longer had an

abundance of either food or men. At any rate they sent only two of their chief men and two others of inferior rank as envoys to sue for peace. And, although Commodus might easily have destroyed them, yet he made terms with them; for he hated all exertion and was eager for the comforts of the city. In addition to the conditions that his father had imposed upon them, he also demanded that they restore to him the deserters and the captives that they had taken in the meantime, and that they furnish annually a stipulated amount of grain—a demand from which he subsequently released them. Moreover, he obtained some arms from them and soldiers as well, thirteen thousand from the Quadi and a smaller number from the Marcomani; and in return for these he relieved them of the requirement of an annual levy.

Commodus granted peace to the Buri when they sent envoys. Previously he had declined to do so, in spite of their frequent requests, because they were strong, and because it was not peace that they wanted, but the securing of a respite to enable them to make further preparations; but now that they were exhausted he made peace with them, receiving hostages and getting back many captives from the Buri themselves as well as fifteen thousand from the others.

Perhaps equally significant, the image of the emperor receiving the submission of conquered barbarians has an established place in the repertoire of Roman narrative art, as represented above all on the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius.⁴¹

Comparable scenes illustrating the personal role of the emperors in negotiating with barbarians or receiving their submission appear repeatedly in our narrative sources, right up to the moment in 375 when Valentinian, spending the winter at Brigetio in Pannonia, died of apoplexy on receiving an insolent answer from an embassy from the Quadi (Ammianus Marcellinus 30, 6). So far as the major issues at least were concerned, the conduct of diplomacy, at all times embedded within the successive political structures of the Roman state, had long since been absorbed by the emperors in person, who themselves had come to function more and more as commanders in the field. This apparent distortion of the nature of government seems wholly irrational, given what we should suppose to have been the needs of a civilian population of some 50 million people. Yet immediately after Hono-

41. For this point, see J. F. Matthews in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum X* (Stuttgart, 1978), col. 660, art. "Gesandtschaft." See also N. Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy* (Aarhus, 1986), 160–61, 231.

rius and Arcadius, coming to the throne in 395, suddenly abandoned the role of commander in chief in the field, the Empire entered a period of military crisis from which the western part of it never recovered. Mysterious as it is, diplomacy, or its absence, is not the most mysterious feature of the Roman Empire.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

*Emperors, Kings, and Subjects:
The Politics of Two-Level Sovereignty**

No one would deny that the Roman Empire was a complex system, incorporating many different geographical zones, ethnic groups, and political formations, or that much of what we might at first want to describe as the "government" of the Empire really involved diplomacy and political relations. But perhaps not enough stress has been laid on one very important aspect of the political structure of the Empire, especially in the earlier period, namely the presence of what one might call a two-level monarchy, in which quite large populations were subject both to local kings and, indirectly, to a distant superior monarch in Rome, the emperor. This chapter is concerned to explore briefly some aspects of the complex diplomatic and symbolic relationships which this structure brought into being. One effect of it was that the public life of the dependent kingdoms was marked by a symbolic language which clearly reflected this dual sovereignty—the power and status of the local king, combined with, and overshadowed by, the unseen presence of the distant emperor. In many very visible respects, the public status of the one would depend on his symbolic association with the other.

This chapter was originally given as a lecture at the conference of the Fédération Internationale des Études Classiques in Québec in August 1994, which was the last occasion on which I had the pleasure of seeing Addi Wasserstein, and when I heard his stimulating paper on non-Hellenised Jews.¹ It was already sadly evident then that his strength was failing. I offer this article now as a small and inadequate tribute to a true scholar. Few people

*First published in *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (*Studies in Memory of Abraham Wasserstein* I, 1996): 159–73.

1. A. Wasserstein, "Non-Hellenised Jews in the Semi-Hellenised East," *SCI* 14 (1995): 111–37.

have more fully lived up to the old-fashioned English description of “a scholar and a gentleman.”

Dependent Kingdoms in the Early Roman Empire

We will begin with three well-known passages. Firstly, the last sentence of Strabo's *Geography*: “Moreover, kings and dynasts and *dekarchiai* belong to his (the emperor's) portion, and always have done.” Strabo is of course referring to the division of the Roman provinces between those of the emperor and those of the Roman people, which he has just described.² I hope that it is no longer necessary to point out that the expression “senatorial provinces” is not merely a *mistake* but misconstrues the entire constitution of the early Empire.³ There is, incidentally, a puzzle here. It is clear enough that Strabo is asserting that kings (*basileis*) and dynasts (*dynastai*—minor rulers without the title of king) belong in the emperor's sphere. A couple of paragraphs earlier he had said that part of Roman territory “is ruled by kings [*basileutai*].” Apart from provincial territory proper, he goes on to say, there are free cities, and “there are also dynasts and tribal heads [*phylarchoi*] and priests [*hieris*] [who are] under them [the Romans].”⁴ But what does Strabo mean by *dekarchiai* (δεκαρχίαι)? The text must surely be wrong, for the word itself is very rarely attested, and in any case Strabo should have been speaking of a type of *person*, not of an institution described by an abstract noun. What Strabo actually wrote was surely *tetrarchai* (τετράρχαι). He himself had also referred earlier to the fact that, after the deposition and exile of Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, his two brothers (Herodes Antipas and Philip) had succeeded, by much cultivation (*therapeia*) of the emperors, in retaining the tetrarchies earlier given to them.⁵

Strabo's allusions to dependent kingdoms and other less prestigious forms of local monarchy are enough to remind us that, if we think of the fully provincial territory of the Roman Empire as it was to be a century later, a very large proportion of it, perhaps 10 per cent, had been, in the early first century, under the rule of subordinate, or intermediate, monarchs. We are dealing with quite a significant aspect of the history of governmental institutions in antiquity.

2. Strabo, *Geography* 17, 3, 25 (840).

3. F. Millar, “‘Senatorial’ Provinces: An Institutionalised Ghost,” *Ancient World* 20 (1989): 93–97 (= F. Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East I: The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, chap. 13, 314–20).

4. *Geography* 17, 3, 24 (859).

5. *Geography* 16, 2, 46 (765).

The second quotation comes from Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*, and still looks at the kings from the point of view of Rome:⁶ “As regards the kingdoms of which he [Augustus] gained control by right of war, he returned them, apart from a few, to the same kings from whom he had taken them, or to external ones. . . . Nor did he treat any of them [the kings] other than as members and parts of the Empire.” It is thus assumed by Suetonius, as it had been by Strabo, that from the moment of Actium onwards the disposition of the title of king was in the hands of the emperor. It is this same assumption which lies behind my third quotation, which comes from the Gospel of Luke:⁷ “A certain nobleman journeyed to a distant country to get himself a kingdom [*basileia*], and return. . . . But his fellow citizens [*politai*] hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying ‘We do not wish this man to be king over us.’” Although no names are used, and no context is given, the reference is unmistakable. It is to Archelaus, the son of Herod, going to Rome after his father's death, and to the embassy from the Jewish people which followed him, to demand (unsuccessfully at this moment) the ending of Herodian rule, and the attachment of Judaea to provincial territory.⁸

This parable reflects an awareness not only of the power of decision on the part of the distant emperor but of the relation of the Herodian dynasty to the people whom it ruled. Or rather, in this case, different peoples. For in fact it was not only a *Jewish* delegation which followed Archelaus—one which Josephus describes as made up of fifty men, sent “with the consent of the nation”⁹—but also, as we know from Nicolaus, separate embassies from the Greek cities.¹⁰ These too were seeking exclusion from the Herodian kingdom, just as representatives of Gadara had done, unsuccessfully, before Augustus sixteen years before.¹¹ Two of these Greek cities, Gaza and Hippos, were now, after Herod's death, successful in separating themselves from the kingdom, and were attached to the province of Syria.¹² The subjects of a dependent king could envisage an alternative political situation, *and* knew how to seek it.

6. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 48.

7. Luke 19:12–14.

8. See E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* I, ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar (1973), 330–35. For a powerful argument for a revised dating of the last phase of Herod's life (winter 4/3 B.C. rather than 5/4 B.C.), see A. Kushnir-Stein, “Another Look at Josephus's Evidence for the Date of Herod's Death,” *SCI* 14 (1995): 73–86.

9. Josephus, *Ant.* 17, 11, 1 (300).

10. Nic. Dam., *FGrH* 90, F. 131.

11. Josephus, *Ant.* 15, 2, 3 (354–59).

12. See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East* (1993), 41–43.

These local details are significant only as illustrations of my theme, which is the complexity, and the interest, of the political relations which were created when a kingdom or tetrarchy or *dynasteia* functioned as an element in a wider empire. Firstly, to repeat, the Roman Empire itself was a complex organisation in terms of ideology, constitution, and political structure. In a general sense, it is not misleading to describe it simply as a monarchy. But it was a monarchy which, as seen from the centre, was defined in relation to the institutions of the Roman state, the *res publica*: the Senate, certainly, but not only the Senate. In formal terms, the sovereign body of the early Empire was the Roman people. As the *Tabula Siarensis* shows, the proper description of the legions which were lost under Varus in A.D. 9 was "an army of the Roman people."¹³ Seen from the provinces and the dependent kingdoms, however, the Empire was indeed, to a very large extent, personified by the emperor himself. If we needed any proof of that, it is provided by the city coinages of the early Empire, which give a very prominent place to the name and image of the emperor, and of members of his family. In this respect, as in so many others, the appearance of the first volume of *Roman Provincial Coinage*, covering the period 44 B.C. to A.D. 69, is a landmark in the history of our subject.¹⁴ In actual practice, moreover, so far as kingdoms were concerned, relations to the emperor in person were very important: for instance in the education of royal children at Rome, of which Suetonius also speaks,¹⁵ or in personal appearances by kings at Rome before the emperor, or (occasionally) even before the Senate,¹⁶ or in formal bestowals of a diadem by the emperor in person. Much of the future history of the Empire is summed up in the scene at Rhodes in 30 B.C., when Herod appeared before Octavian without his diadem, argued that his previous loyalty to Antonius should be taken as a sign of his future loyalty to the new emperor, and was

13. *AE* 1984, no. 508; J. González Fernández, *Bronces jurídicos romanos de Andalucía* (1990), no. 11, fr. 1, lines 14–15 (= M. H. Crawford, ed., *Roman Statutes I* [1996], no. 37, lines 14–15 on p. 515): "[T]he fraudulent disaster inflicted on an army of the Roman people has been avenged" (*vindicata frau[dulenta clade] exercitus p. R.*). See F. Millar, "Imperial Ideology in the *Tabula Siarensis*," in J. González and J. Arce, eds., *Estudios sobre la Tabula Siarensis* (1988), 11–18 (= Millar [n. 3], chap. 15, 350–59).

14. A. Burnett, A. Amandry, and P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage I: From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)* (1992).

15. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 48: "And he raised and educated the sons of many of them together with his own." See, e.g., D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* (1984), chap. 1.

16. See F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC to AD 378," *Britannia* 13 (1982): 1–23, on p. 4 (chapter 9 in this volume).

duly rewarded with the return of his diadem and confirmation as king of Judaea.¹⁷ Very soon afterwards Herod played a prominent role in escorting Octavian through Palestine to Egypt, and providing supplies for his forces, then in visiting Octavian in Egypt, and finally in escorting him again on the way back, through the Syrian region as far as Antioch.¹⁸ The escorting of the emperor on journeys by kings evidently became an established diplomatic norm; so much so that Suetonius' description of their doing so "in the manner of clients" has been largely responsible for the invention of the misleading modern term "client kings."¹⁹

It is worth noting that both in receiving Octavian at Ptolemais and (obviously) in going with him as far as Antioch, Herod was playing a very visible political role outside the bounds of his own territory. I do not, however, want to dwell on the case of Herod, partly because it is too well known. But it is worth stressing how strange it is that the three books of Josephus' *Antiquities* (15–18) which describe Herod's reign have played so little part in informing our more general conceptions of the Augustan empire. It is beyond dispute that they depend directly on the later books of the universal history of Nicolaus of Damascus,²⁰ so we thus have in effect something very close to a 200-page contemporary history of a major dependent kingdom whose affairs repeatedly engaged the emperor's personal attention in the most urgent way. This extensive narrative is thus also, to a significant degree, a history of the early imperial regime.

The political contacts of a dependent king were, however, not only with the emperor in Rome, but with the nearer Roman governors. Again, a complex balance of power was involved. On the one hand dependent kings, in the first century A.D., on occasion provided quite large forces for Roman military operations: for example, when Vespasian advanced into Judaea in A.D. 67, about a third of his forces, some 18,000 men (thus the equivalent of at least three Roman legions), came from the allied kingdoms of Commagene, Emesa, Nabataea, and the domains of Agrippa II.²¹

On the other hand, governors might have to intervene to restore appro-

17. Josephus, *BJ* 1, 20, 1–3 (394–95); *Ant.* 15, 6, 5–7 (183–97).

18. References in Schürer (n. 8), 289.

19. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 60: "Kings considered friends and allies . . . often would leave their kingdoms behind and perform (for him) daily chores wearing a toga and without their royal insignia, in the manner of clients, not only in Rome, but also when he was travelling in the provinces" (*Reges amici et socii . . . saepe regnis relictis non Romae modo sed et provincias peragranti cotidiana officia togati ac sine regio insigni more clientium praestiterunt*).

20. See B. Z. Wacholder, *Nicholaus of Damascus* (1962), esp. 62–64.

21. See Millar (n. 12), 72.

priate relations with kings on the fringes of the Empire who were actual or potential aggressors: we see this, for example, in the famous inscription of Silvanus Plautius Aelianus from Tibur, which indicates the formal acts of subservience required of kings, and the role of the Danube as the symbolic frontier of the Empire: “[H]e led kings, who previously were unknown to the Roman people or were hostile to it, to our side of the river, which he guarded, to pay homage to Roman arms”; it also records that Aelianus took hostages from some of them and describes how he lifted the siege of Chersonesus by the king of the Scythians.²²

Equally, the governor of the nearest major Roman province might have to intervene to prevent what seemed to be too close contacts between allied kings. The most notable example is, of course, the occasion in the early A.D. 40s when Domitius Marsus, the *legatus* (governor) of Syria, insisted on the dissolution of a meeting of allied kings called by Agrippa I at Tiberias: those who attended were Antiochus IV, the last king of Commagene, Sampsigeramus of Emesa, Cotys of Armenia Minor, Polemon of Pontus, and Agrippa’s brother, Herod of Chalcis.²³

When the issue was potentially more serious, the political relations concerned became tripartite, that is to say, king-governor-emperor. Again, there is a well-known case from Josephus, when Caesennius Paetus, the *legatus* of Syria, wrote to Vespasian in 72 or 73 to say that he suspected Antiochus IV of Commagene of connections with Parthia. Vespasian wrote back empowering Paetus to act as he thought best, and the invasion and provincialisation of Commagene followed.²⁴

For the whole period, roughly up to the end of the first century A.D., when allied kingdoms were a major feature of the structure of the Empire, such tripartite relations must have been common. We catch a passing glimpse of such communications in operation, though from the following period, in Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan from Bithynia. Firstly, a messenger from King Sauromates of the Bosphorus arrived in Bithynia with two letters: one for Pliny, saying that there was an urgent communication for Trajan, to which Pliny responded by giving the messenger a *diploma* (a permit to use official wagons) to assist his journey; and, secondly, the letter for Trajan, of which Pliny learned no more than that it contained news which Trajan needed to know. Finally, an ambassador (*legatus*) from Sauromates arrived to find Pliny in Nicaea and stayed for two days before Pliny sent him on en route to Rome.

22. *ILS* 982.

23. Josephus, *Ant.* 19, 8, 1 (338–42).

24. Josephus, *BJ* 7, 7, 1–3 (219–43).

Again, there is no indication that Pliny learned anything of the issues at stake between king and emperor.²⁵

With this episode, however, we have already passed beyond the period when dependent kingdoms played an important part in the political and military structure of the Empire in the East. For the first and early second centuries had seen a steady tendency, marked by occasional reversals, towards the eradication of dependent kingdoms and their replacement by direct provincial government. Even if we leave out complex minor cases, a summary list of major transformations from kingdom to province would include the following: Cappadocia (A.D. 18), Mauretania (42), Judaea (44), Thrace (46), Armenia Minor (64), Commagene (72 or 73), Emesa (70s?), the territories of Agrippa II (90s?), Nabataea (106). It is thus significant that, of all the major kingdoms which played such a large part in the first century A.D., the kingdom of the Bosphorus alone survived until the fourth century. Its potential strategic importance in controlling barbarian movements around the north coast of the Black Sea, was reflected in the fact that by the middle of the second century its kings were receiving a regular annual subsidy from Rome. Thus the narrator in Lucian’s *Alexander* records: “There [at Aegiali on the coast of Paphlagonia] I met a party of Bosphorans, ambassadors from King Eupator, sailing along the coast on their way to Bithynia to bring back the annual subsidy [*syntaxis*].”²⁶ It remains unclear in this passing anecdote whether, having reached Bithynia, the ambassadors would have collected the cash there, or merely paid their respects to the governor (like the ambassador from Sauromates to Trajan), before going on to Rome. For what it is worth, the anecdote tends to imply that Bithynia was their actual destination. In that case, not only was tribute revenue from the nearest province being diverted directly to an important allied kingdom, but responsibility for that process rested with the governor. Diplomatic relations, direct or indirect, with the king were clearly part of his duties. The governor of Cappadocia similarly had to keep a watch on the Bosphoran kingdom, as well as the kings of various regions in the Caucasus, and in a more active sense than the governor of Bithynia, in that he controlled major forces. Thus, when Arrian, addressing himself to Hadrian, has finished his description of his journey round the coast of the Pontus as far as Dioscurias, where (he says) the *epikrateia* (dominion) of the Romans ends, he continues: “But when I learned that Cotys, the king of the Bosphorus called ‘Cimmerian,’ had died, I made it my concern to describe for you also the coastal voyage as far as the Cimmerian Bosphorus,

25. Pliny, *Ep.* 10, 63–64; 67.

26. Lucian, *Alex.* 57.

so that in case you were making plans in relation to the Bosphorus you could do so on an informed basis."²⁷ Both before this point in the work and after it Arrian lists a number of other kings who rule areas around the coast of the Black Sea and indicates which of them have received their kingdoms from the emperor.²⁸ But the purpose of this chapter is not primarily to look at the relations of kings and emperors but to sketch some of the other relationships to which the combination of provinces and dependent kingdoms gave rise, including those between kings and neighbouring governors.

Inevitably, since our information on Judaea is so superior to that on any other provincial area, it is there that we can see the complex relations of king and governor most clearly. The best illustration of these relations, however, happens to come not from Josephus, but from some of the later chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*. Paul, probably in the later 50s, is in prison in Caesarea; the new *procurator* of Judaea, Festus, arrives to take up office; after three days he goes up to Jerusalem, and the "high priests" and leading Jews appear before him to renew accusations against Paul. Then, back in Caesarea, Festus holds a hearing at which Paul appears before him and appeals to Caesar. A few days later "Agrippa the king" (Agrippa II, now ruling various territories to the north-east of Judaea), and his sister Berenice arrive in Caesarea to greet Festus. It is implied that it was a routine aspect of diplomacy that he should do so for each new *procurator*. Festus persuades them to join in the hearing. The description of the council which next day heard Paul deserves to be quoted: "On the next day, after Agrippa and Berenice had arrived with great pomp and had taken their seats in the auditorium with tribunes and leading men of the city [Caesarea] and Festus had ordered Paul to be brought in . . ."²⁹

In a sense this scene gives us the mirror image of the main theme which I want to stress. For what it shows is the presence and influence of an allied king inside the Roman province bordering his own domains. This was indeed a very extreme case. Agrippa II not only owned a house in Jerusalem but had the right to keep the high priestly robes, to appoint and dismiss the High Priests, and to convene the Sanhedrin.³⁰ In the years leading up to the Jewish Revolt of 66 Judaea was under a sort of dual local control, both *procurator* and king being under the adjudication of the emperor in Rome.

But what I want to emphasize, as an aspect of the history of government in the ancient world which has been too little studied, is, firstly, the symbolic

27. Arrianus, *Periplus* 17.

28. *Periplus* 11; 18.

29. Acts 25–26.

30. See Schürer (n. 8), 1, 421–22.

presence and real influence of the emperors and the Empire within the allied kingdoms; and, secondly, the complexity of the political—and perhaps one could say also constitutional—structures within those kingdoms. All were of course, by definition, monarchies. But any monarchy, no matter how despotic it may be in intention, has to relate to existing social structures. It has to form marriage alliances either inside or outside its own kingdom, or of course both; it has to recruit a household and a court, which may be made up partly of slaves or freed slaves; it has to recruit an army, and thereby give power to its officers and commanders. It has to raise taxes, which must follow some recognised system of obligations, and cannot be wholly arbitrary. It has to have some definable relations with the various social and political units within its borders. And it is likely to develop some system of symbolisation and self-representation.

To say all this is to say no more than that any established monarchy has to be, in some sense, "constitutional," to operate within established norms. I am thus suggesting that the post-Hellenistic, or sub-Hellenistic, monarchy of the eastern Mediterranean in the early Roman Empire is a proper subject of study in itself, if only because it represented the system within which quite a large part of the Greek-speaking world lived. But, secondly, it is of interest for two particular reasons. One is the implicit or explicit claim on the part of any political unit which defined itself as a Greek city to some degree of diplomatic consideration and respect, to the operation of internal self-government, and to self-representation in a manner which implied a degree of independence. In that sense, the late Hellenistic monarchy of the Roman period continues the pattern of the major monarchies of the Hellenistic period proper, when kings and cities co-existed in a state of tension marked by elaborately polite diplomatic language. The second reason relates to the fact that these monarchies functioned within the shadow of the Empire. Internal relations, and internal systems of self-representation, will have been profoundly affected by that fact, since they had to find a place not only for the king, but for his ultimate superior, the emperor.³¹

It would be easy to go on drawing examples from the history of Judaea—for example, Herod's kingdom, and then that inherited by his grandson, Agrippa I, was profoundly re-structured by his foundation of two Greek cities named after the emperor, Caesarea and Sebaste—not to speak of other Greek cities like "Tiberias" and "Caesarea Panias," as well as minor places

31. For other aspects of this complex relationship, see Braund (n. 15), and earlier the very suggestive article by J. Gagé, "L'Empereur romain et les rois: politique et protocole," *Revue Historique* 121 (1959): 221–60.

whose names also reflected the imperial dynasty, and whose status is not entirely clear: "Livias," "Iulias," and so forth. In Caesarea and Sebaste the power of Rome was explicitly symbolised from the beginning: the main temples in both cities were dedicated to Augustus, or to Roma and Augustus, as was that at Caesarea Panias.³²

There is no need to rehearse these well-known details, which we owe to the fact that Judaea, alone of all the provinces of the Empire, was the subject of a history (or rather two histories) written by a native of it. It is of more interest to ask whether we can gain any impression of social, political, and symbolic structures in other kingdoms, and to consider how far these reflect the presence of the Empire. Often, our information is only anecdotal: for instance Tacitus reports, from the year A.D. 17, that after the deaths of Antiochus of Commagene and Philopator of Cilicia these peoples were in turmoil, "most preferring Roman rule [*imperium*] and others royal."³³ How political opinion was expressed in these contexts, we do not know. Each of these kingdoms, however, contained a number of Greek cities. But we do gain an impression of how, as in Judaea, direct Roman rule could seem a desirable alternative to royal authority. Similarly, Cappadocia, until now a kingdom, became a province in the next year; and whatever the system of taxation had been under the last king, taxes were deliberately reduced by the Romans at the moment of the imposition of provincial rule, precisely to reconcile public opinion.³⁴ Another perfect, if equally brief and enigmatic, example of power relations in the shadow of Rome is provided by a further report from Tacitus, under the year 36. The episode relates to the period of rule on Cilicia by Archelaus II, the son of the recently deceased king of Cappadocia:³⁵

At about the same time the people of the Cietae, subjected to the rule of the Cappadocian Archelaus, because they were forced to undergo a census of Roman type, and to endure direct taxation, migrated to the heights of the Taurus, and by use of the terrain defended themselves against the weak royal troops, until the legionary commander [*legatus*], M. Trebellius, despatched by Vitellius, governor of Syria, with 4,000 legionaries and selected auxiliaries, besieged the two mountains . . . which the *barbari* had occupied, and forced them to surrender.

32. Josephus, *BJ*, 1, 21, 1-8 (403-16).

33. Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 42.

34. Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 56.

35. Tacitus, *Ann.* 6, 41. See R. D. Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Cappadocia," *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980), 1125-68, on pp. 1167-68.

Such passing reports, though suggestive, are hardly satisfactory. This last one, however, does indicate clearly that a census of a type imitated from the (quite recently instituted) Roman provincial census could be applied within the bounds of a dependent kingdom. But it remains a mere allusion. There is no dependent kingdom other than Judaea from which we have any coherent literary evidence, and it is perhaps only in the Bosporean kingdom that we have enough internal documentary evidence, from the substantial numbers of Greek inscriptions found there, to gain a more nuanced conception of royal rule. The rest of this chapter will be concerned to explore a few relevant aspects of our evidence for this kingdom.

The Bosporean Kingdoms and the Empire

The very remarkable political formation represented by the Bosporean kingdom has perhaps not received the attention from historians of the classical world which it deserves, and it goes without saying that nothing resembling a history of it will be attempted here. Indeed a true internal social history, of the sort which, up to a certain extent, is possible for Judaea, is not in any case attainable in this case. None the less, through allusions in external literary sources, through a very remarkable corpus of inscriptions, through its coins and through archaeology, it is possible to follow in some detail the outlines of its history from the fifth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.³⁶ Its extraordinary endurance is all the more remarkable in view of its curious geographical structure, for its main cities straddled the straits of the Cimmerian Bosporus, leading into Lake Maeotis (the Sea of Azov), with Panticapaeum and other cities as far west as Theodosia occupying the eastern promontory of the Crimea, and Phanagoria and other minor cities situated on the opposite side of the straits, on the Taman peninsula. As we will see, in the imperial period the kings also claimed dominion over a large group of peoples living on the east side of Lake Maeotis; and the Greek city of Tanais, at the mouth of the River Tanais (the Don), and situated well over 300 kilometres from Panticapaeum, also formed part of the kingdom. Perhaps surprisingly, the kingdom seems neither to have achieved nor claimed any control of the "Tauroscythians" who occupied most of the Crimea. Even the relatively prominent Greek city of Chersonesus, on the south-west corner of the Crimea, was certainly not an integral part of the kingdom, though from time to time in the imperial period the evidence shows the city to be in alliance with it. As we saw earlier, the governor of Moesia under Nero, Tiberius

36. For a thorough survey, see V. F. Gajdukevic, *Das bosporanische Reich* (1971).

Plautius Silvanus Aelianus, had to intervene to lift the siege of Chersonesus, "which is beyond the Borysthenes (the River Dniepr)," by the king of the Scythians.³⁷ There is nothing in the text of the inscription to suggest that the Bosporan kingdom played any part.

All the more, therefore, the major Greek cities around the north-west corner of the Euxine, namely Olbia at the mouth of the River Hypanis (the Bug), and Tyras on the River Tyras (the Dniestr), in so far as they belonged to any wider political-military system, were gradually drawn into the orbit of the governors of the province of Moesia. This situation is reflected for instance in the inscription recording that "the city of the Olbiopolitai" had dedicated a bath-house on behalf of Septimius Severus, and all his house, in the governorship of Cosconius Gentianus.³⁸ But although there are occasional reflections of the presence of Roman soldiers in this area, there was nothing resembling a Roman military occupation of the north-west corner of the Black Sea coast, and the Bosporan kingdom, in spite of its established relation of diplomatic dependence on Rome, remained remarkably isolated, both geographically and strategically. For in the opposite direction also, south-eastwards round the east coast of the Black Sea, was "the dominion of the Romans," as we earlier saw Arrian reporting, some 400 kilometres from Bosporan territory, namely at Dioscurias or Sebastopolis, where there was a Roman fort.³⁹

Even if very soon after Arrian's report a Roman fort was established at Pityous, another 75 kilometres north-eastwards up the coast, and although as we saw, Arrian regarded the political circumstances of the Bosporan kingdom as being of great concern to Hadrian, the exposure and isolation of the Bosporan kingdom make its survival and relative stability remarkable.

In terms of our evidence, what is equally remarkable is the extensive corpus of Greek inscriptions from the kingdom, over 1,300 being known so far, of which nearly 900 come from Panticapaeum and its neighbourhood.⁴⁰ The inscriptions of the imperial period hint at the complexity of the communal, political, and administrative structure of the kingdom, illustrate the formal status and public honours of the kings, and vividly represent the presence in Bosporan public vocabulary of the Roman emperors, of the wider structure of the Empire, and of the cities of Anatolia, above all those of the Roman province of Pontus and Bithynia, through and to which we have already seen

37. See text to n. 22.

38. B. Latyshev, *Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini I*², 1916, no. 174 (IGR I, no. 834).

39. Text to n. 27 above. Arrian, *Periplus*, 10, 3-4; 17, 1-2; see now D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity* (1994), 193-94.

40. See V. Struve, *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani (CIRB)* (1965).

emissaries of the kingdom making their way.⁴¹ The presence of the Roman Empire was to be symbolised from the first century to the early fourth by the fact that the kings were characteristically (and perhaps without exception), to be, like the kings of Judaea, Roman citizens with the Roman three names (*tria nomina*), retaining to the end the Julio-Claudian nomenclature "Tiberius Iulius Rhoemetalces" or "Rhescuporis" and so forth.

All that will be attempted here is to pick out a few examples from the inscriptions of the Bosporan kingdom, to illustrate the symbolic functioning of a system of dual sovereignty, of the local king and the distant, all-powerful emperor. But we will begin with a striking royal letter from Gorgippia, published in the same year, 1965, as Struve's excellent collection of the inscriptions of the kingdom, but too late to be included in it, and remarkably neglected since.⁴² It was indeed duly noticed by Louis Robert,⁴³ but his intention to re-publish it and analyse it fully in a forthcoming *Bulletin* was never fulfilled. By the mid-1990s it had still not gained a place in *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, or in *L'Année Epigraphique*, until 1994 (as *AE* 1538). As subsequently revised by H. Heinen, the first of the two letters contained in the inscription runs as follows:⁴⁴

King Aspurgos *philorōmaios* [friend of the Romans]

to Pantaleon and Theangelos,

greetings.

Being benevolently disposed towards the city of the Gorgippeis, and wishing to secure for them their rights [*ta dikaia*], since it seemed that in many respects they had been favourable to me, but especially in having preserved themselves, during my journey up [*anabasis*] to *Sebastos Autokrator* [*Imperator Augustus*], in the most complete absence of disturbance, in accordance with the instructions [*entolai*] given by me, I rule for the future that inheritances [*kleronomiai*] should by right be retained by them according to the kinship law of Eupator. Therefore, by putting

41. Text to nn. 25-27.

42. T. V. Blavatatskaya, "Reskripti tsarya Aspurga," *Sovietskaya Archeologia* 10.2 (1965): 197-209. See also S. Yu. Saprykin, "Ebratorov zakon o nasledovanii i yevo znachenie v istorii pontiiskovo tsarstva" ("Eupator's Law on Inheritance," and Its Role in the History of the Pontic Kingdom), *VDI* 197 (1991): 181-97.

43. *Bull. Épigr.* 1968, 378.

44. See H. Heinen, "Fehldeutungen der ἀσάβασις und der Politik des bosporanischen Königs Aspurgos," *Hyperboreus* 4 (1998): 340-61; "Zwei Briefe des bosporanischen Königs Aspurgos (*AE* 1994, 1538). Übersehene Berichtigungsvorschläge Günther Klaffenbachs und weitere Beobachtungen," *ZPE* 124 (1999), 133-44, whence *AE* 1998, 1153.

up this decree [*to dogma*] in public, see to it that this judgement of mine becomes known to all. Be well. [Year] 312. 20th of Daisios.

Like the accompanying one, this letter from King Aspourgos (A.D. 10/11–38/9) dates to the summer of 15. As a royal letter to a city, it is thus very close in time to the well-known letter of Artabanus III of Parthia, to Seleucia on the Eulaeus, of A.D. 21.⁴⁵ But there is a crucial distinction in the presence here of a two-level monarchy. The date makes it very possible, but by no means certain, that the *Sebastos Autokrator* (*Augustus Imperator*) to whom Aspourgos had “gone up” was the new emperor Tiberius. Aspourgos evidently did not share the doubts felt in Cyprus as to whether the *praenomen* (first name) *Imperator/Autokrator* had actually been assumed.⁴⁶ But he may equally be referring to the now deceased *Imperator (Caesar divi filius) Augustus* (Imperator Caesar, son of the divine Caesar, Augustus) and to an earlier voyage. If so, he had failed to incorporate in the letter any reflection of Augustus’ recent deification. The form of the name is in fact not fully correct for either emperor.

What is important, however, is on the one hand the very concrete reflection of the dependence of a king like Aspourgos on the distant emperor in Rome. His “going up” thus perfectly mirrored the well-known journeys of the Herodian household to Rome. On the other hand we see Aspourgos’ recognition of established rights (granted in this case by the great Mithridates VI Eupator) possessed by the Gorgippeis, and his awareness of the need to address them diplomatically, and to return their goodwill. The letter is thus a reflection of the diplomatic expression both of two-level sovereignty and of the delicate relations of king and city.

In the epigraphy of the Bosphoran kingdom over the next three centuries, a double conception of the kings, as monarchs and conquerors on the one hand, and as loyal subjects of Rome on the other, is visible everywhere. For instance, there is a later inscription of King Aspourgos, of the 20s, from Kerch:⁴⁷

The Great King Aspourgos, *philorōmaios*, descendant of King Asandros, *philokaisar* [friend of the Caesars] and *philorōmaios*, king of all the Bosphorus and Theodosia and the Sindi and Maiti and Taipeii and Toreti,

45. C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (1934), no. 75.

46. T. B. Mitford, “A Cypriot Oath of Allegiance to Tiberius,” *JRS* 50 (1960): 75–79. See also F. Millar, “Ovid and the *Domus Augusta*: Rome Seen from Tomoi,” *JRS* 83 (1993): 1–17, on pp. 16–17 (= Millar [n. 3], chap. 14, 321–49).

47. *CIRB*, no. 40, cf. also no. 39.

Psesi and Tanaiti, who has subjected the Scyths and Tauri, Menestratus . . . in charge of the island, [honours] his own saviour and benefactor.

Two and a half centuries later, in the 270s, during the reign of King Tiberius Iulius Teiranes (275/6–278/9), still described as *philokaisar* and *philorōmaios*, we find an inscription from Panticapaeum which was set up “for the victory and permanence” of the king and his queen, Ailia, and which also gives a remarkable list of officials of the kingdom, some of them with functions relating to particular towns or districts: a *lochagos* (military commander); an official “over the *basileia* [kingdom] and Theodosia”; a man who was both *chiliarches* (commander of a thousand) and “over the Aspourgiana”; an *archigrammateus* (chief scribe); two former *politarchoi* (civic magistrates); a former superintendent of accounts.⁴⁸ There is no time to explore these details here. But they give some impression of the complexity of relations between the king and the different elements of the kingdom.

The Bosphoran kings were unique among dependent kings in that they regularly bore the title “high priest of the Emperors for life” (*archiereus tōn Sebastōn dia biou*); it appears first in the reign of Cotys I (45/6–68).⁴⁹ We do not know how the king’s functions related (for instance) to those of the priest of the Kaisareion attested in the second century at Phanagoria.⁵⁰ But what is striking and important is that the kings adopted a public role which very explicitly acknowledged their subordination to a line of superior monarchs. On the other hand, the Bosphoran kings were similar to other kings in that they themselves received honours from the cities in the nearest Roman province, Pontus and Bithynia. It is indeed a very striking feature of the epigraphy both of Olbia and of the cities of the Bosphoran kingdom that cities and individuals from the northern and north-western regions of Roman Anatolia play a conspicuous part. In that sense the honours paid to the Bosphoran kings are merely a reflection of those wider economic and diplomatic connections across the Black Sea to which Rostovtzeff called attention in a famous article.⁵¹ One instance of such honours is a Latin inscription from Panticapaeum naming *Regem Ti(berium) Iu(lium) Sauromaten, amicum Imp(eratoris) populiq(ue) R(omani) praestantissimum* (King Tiberius Iulius Sauromates, an outstanding friend of the Roman emperor and people) put up by the “C(olonia)

48. *CIRB*, no. 48.

49. See Gajdukevic (n. 36), 343, and W. Blawatsky, “Le culte des empereurs romains au Bosphore,” *Mélanges Piganiol* III (1966), 1541–45.

50. *CIRB*, no. 1050: “having been appointed priest of the Kaisareion (Temple) for life.”

51. M. I. Rostovtzeff, “Pontus, Bithynia and the Bosphorus,” *Pap. Brit. Sch. Athens* 22 (1916–18): 1–22.

I(ulia) F(elix) S(inope)."⁵² Sauromates was king from 93/4 to 123/4; the fact that, as late as this, the Roman people (*populus Romanus*) is also mentioned is quite striking. Or there is a Greek inscription of 221 put up by the city of Amastris in Pontus and Bithynia to honour King Tiberius Iulius Rhescuporis (Rhescuporis III, 210/11–226/7), who is described as "King of the Bosphorus and the surrounding *ethnē* [peoples], *philorōmaios* [friend of the Romans], and *philhellēn* [friend of the Hellenes]."⁵³

The diplomatics of mutual honour as displayed in the Bosphoran inscriptions could be explored endlessly. But the real operations of government are hardly revealed by the inscriptions (one inscription recording how King Iulius Tiberius Sauromates rebuilt the walls of Gorgippia is only a partial exception).⁵⁴ Rather more informative is the inscription of 193 from Tanais, which will date to the reign of Sauromates II, and which celebrates victories against the Sirachi and Scyths, records a dedication by one Zenon "sent by the king to the *emporion* [trading station]," and refers to sea traffic from Bithynia.⁵⁵

All that I have wished to suggest in this chapter is that the allied kingdoms of the Roman period represent a significant subject, not just as so-called client kingdoms, that is, in relation to Rome, but as military, political, and social groupings of a complex kind, which represent a modest, but not insignificant, part of human history in the Graeco-Roman period. At one time there will have been several million people who lived under a form of two-level monarchy, that is, under their own king, and beyond him under the distant figure of the emperor. The period of the greatest importance of these subordinate kingdoms was the first century A.D.; and here we must look always to the history of Judaea. But the longest-lasting and most interesting of them all was the Bosphoran kingdom, which survived until some point in the fourth century. It may not help the study of it in the modern world that its territory, on the two sides of the straits, is now divided between two sovereign states, Ukraine and Russia, though archaeologists from the two countries are in active collaboration.⁵⁶ But, all the same, we can now expect that this extremely important frontier of the Greek and Roman world will open up further. While study and exploration of it continues, we can already contemplate the complex symbolic relations which are embodied in some

52. *CIRB*, no. 46.

53. *CIRB*, no. 54.

54. *CIRB*, no. 1122.

55. *CIRB*, no. 1237.

56. For an overview, see J. G. F. Hind, "Archaeology of the Greeks and Barbarian Peoples around the Black Sea (1982–1992)," *Archaeological Reports* (1993): 82–112, on pp. 100–109.

of the latest Greek inscriptions from this area, from the early fourth century. For instance, there is the dedication of A.D. 307 put up by the archons of the "Agrippeis" (Phanagoria) and the "Kaisareis" (Panticapaeum) to honour Marcus Aurelius Andronicus, who had formerly been "in charge of the kingdom [*basileia*]."⁵⁷ It is striking to see that the Roman *tria nomina*,⁵⁸ and the early imperial names of these cities, can still be used. Just as with the city foundations, or re-foundations, by Herod and his descendants, names drawn from the imperial dynasty functioned as prominent symbols of loyalism. In fact, the name "Caesarea" for Panticapaeum otherwise appears in our evidence only on city coins minted under Augustus. "The *dēmos* [people] of the Agrippeis" also appears on such coins,⁵⁹ as well as on an inscription of the Augustan period honouring Queen Dynamis *philorōmaios* (9/8 B.C.–A.D. 7/8), and on another fragmentary inscription, probably of the second century.⁶⁰ Then, from the year before the dedication to Marcus Aurelius Andronicus, namely 306, there is a dedication from Panticapaeum to "Theos Hypsistos Epekoos" (Supreme God Epēkoos) put up by Sogous, who is described as "in charge of Theodosias," as *sebastognostos* (known to the Emperor), as having been honoured by Diocletian and Maximian, and as having been given the name "Olympianus" in the provincial area.⁶¹ Here again, the distant emperors are made very visibly present in the text. Aurelius Valerius Sogous had built a *proseuchē*, by which we ought perhaps to understand a Jewish synagogue.⁶² If so, and if the "Theos Hypsistos" whom Aurelius Valerius Sogous worshipped was the Jewish God, this inscription will serve, like other undoubtedly Jewish ones from the area, to suggest how the Roman Empire had served to make a link between the two best-attested and most interesting of its dependent kingdoms, Judaea and the Bosphorus.

57. *CIRB*, no. 1051.

58. See for comparison B. Salway, "What's in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastic Practice from c. 700 BC to AD 700," *JRS* 84 (1994): 124–45.

59. See Gajdukevic (n. 36), 328, 431; Burnett et al. (n. 14), 334–35, nos. 1936 ("of the Kaisareis") and 1935 ("of the Agrippeis").

60. Gajdukevic (n. 36), 477; *CIRB*, no. 979 (Dynamis); 983.

61. *CIRB*, no. 64.

62. This question has of course been long debated and cannot be discussed again here. For the undoubted Jewish presence in the area, see J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeicarum* I² (1975), nos. 683–91; E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* III.1, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. D. Goodman (1986), 36–38. For a new Jewish inscription from Phanagoria of A.D. 51, see D. I. Danshin, "Phanagoriiskaya Obschina Yudeev," *VDI* 204 (1993): 59–72, which also presents a general review of the evidence. For Theos Hypsistos, see, e.g., J. Ustinova, "The *Thiasoi* of Theos Hypsistos in Tanais," *History of Religions* 31 (1991): 149–80.