

THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR PHILIP THE ARABIAN

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1. *The course of events from 244 to 249 A.D.*

In 242 the aggressiveness of the Sassanids, who wished to revive the ancient Persian empire of the Achaemenids, led to yet another great war between Rome and Persia. As we see from passages in Herodian and Cassius Dio¹, Roman circles understood perfectly well what the Sassanid claims meant for the Roman provinces between the Euphrates and the Bosphorus. The Romans found an ally in the Armenian king Chosroes, a descendant of the ancient Parthian line of the Arsacids and, therefore, a deadly enemy of the Sassanids, who had dethroned the Arsacids in 226², and the military campaign took place on a grand scale. The Emperor Gordian III (238–244) opened the Janus gate in the traditional manner and marched off at the head of a large army. The two praefecti praetorio, Furius Timesitheus and Julius Priscus, went with him, thereby accentuating still further the gravity of the situation, while the praefectus vigilum Valerius Valens substituted them in Rome as *agens vices praefectorum praetorio*³.

The actual organization of the campaign was entrusted to Timesitheus, an experienced technocrat and a specialist in military supplies. He had already been active in this capacity in Mesopotamia in 230 and on the Rhine in 233–235, and, according to Pflaum, Alexander Severus had appointed him for this very purpose *procurator Belgicae* and *agens vices praesidis Germaniae Inferioris* in 233⁴. Timesitheus was a powerful man. He was praefectus praetorio and father-in-law of the Emperor, and he was surrounded by a group of favourites who had made a career

¹ Cassius Dio 80, 3, 1 ff.; Herodianus VI, 2, 1 f.

² See M. L. Chaumont, *Recherches sur l'histoire d'Arménie de l'avènement des Sassanides à la conversion du royaume*, Paris, 1969, 25 ff.

³ See Eutropius, *Breviarium* IX, 2, 2; Zosimus, *Historia nova* I, 18, 2. See H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes sous le Haut-Empire romain* II, Paris, 1960, 830 f. nr. 323; CIL X 3336=ILS 3756.

⁴ See H.-G. Pflaum, *Le marbre de Thorigny*, *Bibl. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes* 292, Paris, 1948; *Id.*, *o.c.n.* 3, 811 ff. nr. 317.

for themselves in his wake and now occupied important posts. Most of them were experienced officers and bureaucrats who came from the eastern provinces. It was to this group that Priscus belonged, as well as his brother Julius Philippus and Atho Marcellus, a former officer of the cohorts XX Palmyrenorum, who was now in charge of the corn ships on the Euphrates. Pflaum observes: "Nous nous trouvons... à la fin du règne de Gordien en présence d'un clan syro-arabe qui détient tous les leviers de commande. L'avènement de Philippe après la mort prématurée de Timésithée était dans l'ordre des choses"⁵.

The campaign got off to a good start⁶. Nisibis and Carrhae, which had been lost in 236, were quickly reconquered, and the first battle, engaged at Resaena, was a Roman victory. The Romans then advanced to Ctesiphon, but at that very moment Timesitheus died, killed, possibly, by poison from the kitchen of Philip the Arabian, who now became praefectus praetorio as his brother's collega.

According to the Persian tradition, particularly the great inscription of Shapur I on the rocks of Naksh-i-Rustam, the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (RGDS) which makes no mention of the Persian defeat at Resaena, Shapur went on to win a decisive victory at the battle of Misiche where Gordian perished, and the Persian king magnanimously granted peace to Gordian's successor, Philip, who approached him on bended knees — an episode depicted at Naksh-i-Rustam beside the

⁵ Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 837; cf. 811 ff., 830 f., 872. See R. W. Davies, M. Aurelius Atho Marcellus, JRS 57, 1967, 20–22; J. Fitz, Les Syriens à Intercisa, Brussels, 1972, 236 ff.; A.E. 1965, 229.

⁶ On the campaign of 242–244, on the death of Timesitheus, and on the end of Gordianus III and the succession of Philippus Arabs see Zosimus I, 18–19; Zonaras XII 18; Oracula Sibyllina (ed. Geffcken, 1902) XIII 13 ff.; S. H. A. vit. Gord. 23 and 26–30; Aurelius Victor, Caes. 27 f.; Eutropius, Brev. IX 2 f.; E. Honigsmann-A. Maricq, Recherches sur les *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, Cl. d. Lettres 47, 4, 1953, 111 ff.; Chaumont, o.c.n. 2, 41 ff.; Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 813, 832 ff.; F. Paschoud, Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle I, Paris, 1971, n. 42–44, p. 143 f.; W. Ensslin, Cambridge Ancient History XII, 87 ff.; J. M. York, The Image of Philip the Arab, Hist. 21, 1972, 324 ff.; X. Lorient, Chronologie du règne de Philippe l'Arabe, Festschrift Vogt, Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ed. H. Temporini) II 2, 1975, 796; B. H. Stolte, De dood van keizer Gordianus III en de onbetrouwbaarheid van de *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, Lampas 2, 4, 1970, 377 ff.; *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* 6 ff.

text of the *Res Gestae*^{6a}. Greco-Roman sources, on the other hand, tell us that the Roman camp was ravaged by famine owing to Philip's treacherous manoeuvres, and Davies suggests the possibility that Philip was operating in collaboration with Atho Marcellus, the commander of the corn ships on the Euphrates, whose career was remarkably successful after the spring of 244.

The famine was not necessarily Philip's doing, however. The death of the great organizer Timesitheus was probably an important factor, and Stolte implies that the Persians adopted a scorched earth policy on their retreat. Hunger drove the soldiers to rebellion; they murdered Gordian; and they raised Philip on the throne. Philip subsequently made peace with the Persians and accorded his son the titles of Caesar and Princeps Juventutis. Stolte opts resolutely for the Graeco-Roman version on the basis of Ammianus Marcellinus 23, 5, 17, where we read of the expedition of Julian the Apostate who came to Gordian's grave in Mesopotamia and found written on it: "...in hoc ubi sepultus est loco, vulnera *impio* cecidisset". Julian only reached Pirisabora or Misiche three weeks later, so Gordian cannot possibly have died there. Stolte goes on to quote Oracula Sibyllina 13, 17-18: "...προδοθεις ὕφ' ἐταίρου καππέσεται ἐν/τάξει τυφθεις ἀίθωνι σιδήρῳ". 'Εν τάξει, Stolte shows, does not necessarily mean "in a battle". He therefore prefers the Graeco-Roman tradition and reduces the battle at Misiche to a successful skirmish against a famished Roman army in retreat⁷. In the panic which ensued after Gordian's death various members of his personal train took to flight, probably out of fear of the soldiers' wrath. One of these was Plotinus, who had accompanied the campaign in order to acquaint himself with oriental philosophers, but who now went, via Antioch, to Rome, where he gathered about him his circle of disciples⁸.

Philip managed to hold the Roman army together and lead it back to Syria — an achievement for which the author of the *Eis basilea* gives

^{6a} See B. C. McDermot, Roman Emperors in the Sassanian Reliefs, JRS 44, 1954, 76-80; R. Göbl, Der Triumph des Sassaniden Schapur I. über die Kaiser Gordianus, Philippus und Valerianus. Die ikonographische Interpretation der Felsreliefs. Denkschr. der österreich. Akad. der Wissensch. CXVI, Vienna, 1974; summary in Anz. d. österr. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, philos.-hist. Kl. 1974.

⁷ Stolte, o.c.n. 6, 380 ff.

⁸ Porphyrius, Vita Plotini 3 ff.; S. I. Oost, The Death of the Emperor Gordian III, Class. Philol. 53, 1958, 106 f.; Stolte, o.c.n. 6, 382.

him high praise (par. 14–15)⁹. Peace was then rapidly concluded with the Persians so that Philip could return to Rome as quickly as possible and consolidate his position. Later, however, there were mixed feelings about the peace. Zosimus compared it to the inglorious peace of 364 and Zonaras tells us that the Romans were furious and forced Philip to reopen negotiations. The causes of this discontent were probably the surrender of Armenia and the large levies which the peace entailed. Chaumont has shown, basing himself on Armenian and other sources, that Chosroes was on his own after 244 and that Armenia yielded once and for all in 252/3, after a war lasting four years. According to Pékary, moreover, Philip did not have to pay Shapur 500,000 silver denarii, but 500,000 golden Persian dinars—a large sum—and I do not feel that Göbl has succeeded in refuting Pékary's arguments. The tribute was probably paid partially in Antiochian tetradrachms, a currency, according to Baldus, for which there was a sudden demand after 244/5. Did the Persians, one wonders, trust it more than they did the debased imperial coinage?¹⁰ "Golden diplomacy", at all events, had set in for good. Cassius Dio could dismiss Caracalla's tribute to the Germans in 214 as an incidental disgrace, but Rome was now paying both the Persians and the Goths, and members of Philip's entourage probably felt the need to defend this type of diplomacy, for the author of the *Eis basilea* speaks in almost apologetic terms of the benefits of avoiding war while there is still room for craft and diplomatic agreements¹¹.

The peace with the Persians was celebrated by Philip in lavish series of coins. The imperial mint at Antioch produced coins with legends like *Pax Fundata cum Persis*, *Spes Felicitatis Orbis*, *Fecunditas temporum*, and *Aeternitati Augusti* or *imperii*, and a representation of *Sol Invictus* raising his "ingens manus" — the symbol, according to L'Orange, of the sun god blessing his friends and crushing his foe. Echoes of

⁹ Cp. Eutropius, *Brev.* IX 3: "...exercitu incolumi reducto ad Italiam...".

¹⁰ See Zosimus III 32, 4; Zonaras XII 19; Chaumont, *o.c.n.* 2, 46 f.; Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* V 7; Th. Pékary, *Le tribut aux Perses et les finances de Philippe l'Arabe*, *Syria* 38, 1961, 275 ff.; R. Göbl, *o.c.n.* 6a; H. R. Baldus, *Moneta Urbis Antioxia. Rom und Antioch als Prägestätten syrischer Tetradrachmen des Philippus Arabs*, Frankfurt/M., 1969, 30 ff.

¹¹ Cassius Dio 78, 14, 2 f.; Iordanes, *Getica* 16; ps. Aelius Aristides, *or.* 35 K, *Eis Basilea* 32 ff.

this same numismatic propaganda can also be detected in the coins issued by the Roman mint¹².

In a letter to the senate in Rome Philip made it appear that Gordian had died of disease and that he himself had been unanimously elected to the throne by the soldiers — a version which the senate accepted. We know that Philip wished to avoid the odium of regicide incurred by Maximinus Thrax. The encomiast in the *Eis basilea* (5 ff.) states emphatically, immediately after his opening words, that Philip came to the throne by way of his achievements and virtues, and with universal approval — the same claim of *Consensus omnium militum* which we encounter later on the legionary coins of Gallienus, and in the “*ingens contio militum*” who raised Diocletian on the throne¹³.

Once he had arrived in Rome Philip inaugurated his rule with an amnesty and a remission of debts or a reduction of tax arrears. The former emerges from the *Codex Justinianus* IX, 51, 7, and the latter can be deduced from the *Eis basilea* 16 in combination with a series of coins and medallions bearing the legends *Aequitas Augusti* and *Aequitas publica*, and closely resembling the coins and medallions which Hadrian had struck in 118 on a similar occasion¹⁴. It had become customary to begin a reign in such a way under the Antonines, but the first Severi had broken with this habit. Only Alexander Severus revived it, although he could not actually afford to pay for it (P. Fay. 20). Alexander was probably trying to suggest that the good old times were about to return. Did Philip, we might ask, have the same object too? If he had, he would have been acting according to the instructions in the mirrors of princes where, Kloft assures us, *remissio* and *liberalitas* were im-

¹² See H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham, C. H. V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, IV, 3, London², 1968, 68 ff. nrs. 69, 72; 70, 73; 132; 90, 112; 246 ab. See H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*, Oslo, 1953, 141 ff.; cp. L. de Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, Leiden, 1976, 165.

¹³ See De Blois, o.c.n. 12, 110; W. Seston, *Dioclétien et la tétrarchie*, Paris, 1946, 199–203, 208. With regard to the succession of Alexander Seerus in 222 A. D. Herodianus mentions the consensus of the senate, the people and the armies: Herod. VI, 1, 2.

¹⁴ See RIC IV, 3, p. 74, nrs. 54 f.; E. M. Smallwood, *Documents illustrating the Principates of Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian*, Cambridge U.P., 1966, p. 43, nrs. 63–65; SHA vit. Hadr. 6, 5.

portant elements. Unfortunately, however, there is too little evidence to support a decision on this matter¹⁵.

Philip assured his position in Rome by winning over the leading senators and by appointing relatives and trusted friends to key posts in the East, the Balkans and North Africa. Zosimus I, 19, 2 says: "Ἐπεὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀφίκετο τοὺς ἐν τέλει τῆς βουλῆς λόγοις ἐπεικέσιν ὑπαγόμενος ᾧ ᾗθι δεῖν τὰς μεγίστας τῶν ἀρχῶν τοῖς οἰκειότατα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔχουσιν παραδοῦναι, καὶ Πρίσκον μὲν ἀδελφὸν ὄντα τῶν κατὰ Συρίαν προεστήσατο στρατοπέδων, Σεβηριανῶ δὲ τῷ κηδεστῇ τὰς ἐν Μυσίᾳ καὶ Μακεδονίᾳ δυνάμεις ἐπίστευσεν".

It emerges from several inscriptions discussed by Davies that Philip's confidant Atho Marcellus occupied the most important military position in North Africa, where he became praeses of Mauretania Caesariensis^{15a}. As for Philip himself, he hastened to the Danube front.

The contrast with the succession of Maximinus Thrax in 235 is too striking to be purely coincidental, and it comes as no surprise to see that the author of the *Eis basilea* exploits it to the full, just as, at a different time, Pliny the Younger, in his *Panegyricus*, had deliberately contrasted the qualities of Trajan with the tyranny of Domitian¹⁶. Maximinus had acceded to the throne by murder and mutiny, and he had antagonised the generals of Alexander Severus by removing them from his entourage and only using them as civil servants. This is what happened to Timesitheus and an officer from the Moorish cavalry called Titus. We can hardly wonder that the latter should have taken part in the rebellion in North Africa against Maximinus, while we find other of Alexander Severus' generals—Pudens Crispinus and Tullius Menophilus—defending Aquileia against Maximinus in 238¹⁷. Besides, Maximinus also made other mistakes. He devoted his attention exclusively to the northern frontiers from where the troops who had made him emperor came, and he neglected the eastern border. The Persians con-

¹⁵ On P. Fay. 20 see *J. Moreau*, *Scripta minora*, Heidelberg, 1964, 34 f.; cp. *H. Kloft*, *Liberalitas Principis*, Cologne/Vienna, 1970, 178 ff.

^{15a} See *Davies*, o.c.n. 5, 20–22. After the disbandment of the Legio III Augusta in 238 the praeses of Mauretania Caesariensis was the most important military commander in the whole region.

¹⁶ See Herodianus VII, 1, 1; *Eis Basilea* 5–9; 16; 20; 21; Plinius, *Paneg.*, passim.

¹⁷ See Herodianus VII 1, 3 ff.; SHA vit. Trg. Tyr. 32, 1 ff.; Herod. VIII 2, 5; SHA vit. Maximin. 21, 6; *Pflaum*, o.c.n. 3, 811 ff.; *SHA*, vit. Max et Balb. 12, 2.

sequently had little difficulty in capturing Nisibis and Carrhae in 236¹⁸, at the very moment when various military companies were looking back with nostalgia to the days of Alexander Severus. The author of the *Historia Augusta* refers in *Triginta Tyranni* 32, 3 to the "...sagittarii Armenii quos Maximinus ut Alexandrinos et oderat et offenderat", and Herodian VII, 1, 9 tells us that the Osrhoënian archers, enraged by the murder of Alexander, conspired against Maximinus.

Where his financial policy was concerned Maximinus followed close in the tracks of Septimius Severus and Caracalla: he doubled the soldiers' pay and levied extra taxes from the rich. Crawford has shown that the financial and monetary manoeuvres of these emperors brought about a shift of income from the non-military propertied classes to the soldiers, and, in a recent article, Kolb has demonstrated how this caused a rebellion in North Africa in 238. Initially led by the administrators of the imperial estates (a particularly hard-pressed group), it soon spread to the individual landowners and was taken up by the senate, which comprised the flower of the propertied classes¹⁹. At this point Maximinus was confronted with the consequences of other mistakes he had made: he had not gone to Rome to reconcile the senate, which had become both powerful and self-assured under Alexander Severus, and, although he pursued a different policy, he had retained his predecessor's non-military personnel: according to Syme the various careers of senators and equites show no interruption in the years after 235²⁰.

Philip ordered matters very differently. He endeavoured to conceal his intrigues against Gordian: the author of the *Eis basilea* rejoices over the fact that, unlike his predecessors, he came to the throne without war, murder or other commotions. He hastened to Rome where he won

¹⁸ See Chaumont, o.c.n. 2, 39 f.; A. T. Olmstead, *The Mid-third Century*, Class. Philol. 37, 1942, 250 f.

¹⁹ See M. Crawford, *Finance, Coinage and Money from the Severans to Constantine*, Festschrift Vogt, ANRW (ed. H. Temporini) II 2, 1975, 568; F. Kolb, *Der Aufstand der Provinz Africa Proconsularis im Jahre 238 n. Chr.* Hist. 26, 4, 1977, 440 ff., esp. 476 f.; R. Günther & H. Köpstein, *Die Römer an Rhein und Donau*, Vienna/Cologne, 1975, 76 says: "Maximinus Thrax stützte sich als Kaiser weitgehend auf die Soldaten des Donaauraumes und setzte in vielem die Politik der Severer fort. Der Grossgrundbesitz beantwortete die gegen seine sozialen Interessen gerichtete Politik 238 mit einem Aufstand in der Provinz Africa."; see p. 138 ff. Cp. Cassius Dio 78, 9, 1 and Herodianus VII 3, 1 ff.

²⁰ R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, Oxford, 1971, 191.

the leading senators over to his side; he pursued, we shall see, a conservative financial policy; he appointed friends and relatives to key posts and furthered the careers of his favourites to secure his own position, as appears from the epigraphic material discussed by Pflaum, Davies, and Fitz²¹. He even went to fight in person on the Danube, where the soldiers had probably regarded him with suspicion, as yet another Oriental and a friend of the senate. Philip's successes on the Danube, moreover, may well have prevented a usurpation in that part of the empire up to 248²² — and successes they were. Demougeot and Fitz have made it clear that Philip defeated a German tribe, probably the Quadi, and a people from the steppes, in the area round Sirmium in the years 245–246, and that he drove the Carpi out of Dacia Inferior in 246/7, albeit without managing to restore the Limes Transalutanus²³. In the Dacian campaign, according to Zosimus I, 20, 2, a glorious role was reserved for the Moorish cavalry. Lorient tells us that Philip returned in July 247 to Rome where he conferred the title of Augustus on his son a month later. Medallions and coins mention the *Adventus Augusti* and the *Concordia Augustorum* and, shortly after, the titles *Carpicus Maximus*, *Germanicus Maximus* and *Victoria Carpica* appear in papyri, inscriptions and on coins. The author of the *Eis basilea* (35) is lavish in his praise of the Emperor: he had not only proved himself better than his enemies in *synesis* and *paideia*, but also in *andreia*²⁴. It therefore seems likely to me that the *Eis basilea* was delivered in this period — on the arrival of Philip in Rome and on the eve of his son's coronation as Augustus. Together with Groag, Swift, Alföldy, Moreau and McMullen

²¹ *Eis Basilea* 5–9; Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 830 ff.; 837; 872; Davies, o.c.n. 5, 20 ff.; Fitz, o.c.n. 5, 236 ff.

²² On the antagonism between the senate and the Illyrian soldiery see n. 42 ff.

²³ See Zosimus I 20, 1 f.; Páschoud, o.c.n. 6, p. 144 n. 45, p. 146 n. 49; Fitz, o.c.n. 5, 114 ff.; E. Demougeot, *La formation de l'Europe et les invasions barbares*, Paris, 1969, 393 ff., 400 ff.; D. Tudor, *La fortificazione delle città romane della Dacia nel III-secolo dell'era nostra*, Hist. 14, 1965, 368 ff. and *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques sur le limes Alutanus et le limes Transalutanus*, Actes IX congr. internat. d'études sur les frontières rom., 235–246.

²⁴ Lorient, o.c.n. 6, 793; RIC IV, 3, p. 92 f. nr. a; p. 71, nr. 26 ab; p. 78 nr. 81; p. 81, nr. 109 f.; p. 89, nr. 165; CIL XVI, 153; P. Oxy. X 1276 (the titles *Ger. Max.* and *Carpicus Max.*); RIC IV, 3 nr. 66 (*Victoria Carpica*); see L. J. Swift, *The anonymous encomium of Philip the Arab*, GRBS 71, 1966, 288 f.; E. Groag, *Die Kaiserrede des Pseudo-Aristides*, W. St. 1918, 34 f.

I believe that it was composed for Philip and does not belong to the corpus of Aelius Aristides, and I hope in another article to refute the views of C. P. Jones and F. Millar who maintain that the speech was held in 143/4, in the presence of Antoninus Pius²⁵.

In 248 Philip celebrated the thousandth year of the existence of Rome with great pomp and in traditional style. This is evident from the extensive series of coins in all metals and denominations, with images of Philip, his wife Otacilia and his son Philip the Younger, bearing legends such as *Saeculares Augusti*, *Millenaria Augusti*, *Romae Aeternae*, *Laetitia fundata* and *Liberalitas III Augusti*, and from the Latin tradition which censures the expense. This particular issue of coins was the largest and most costly of Philip's entire reign: 7 of the 33 aurei of the Emperor and his family, 21 of the 158 silver coins, and 28 of the 171 bronze coins recorded by Mattingly and Sydenham bear the legends *Saeculares Augusti(-orum)* and *Miliar. Aug*²⁶.

All this, however, was mere light relief in a tragedy. In 248 Philip could no longer afford to pay the tributes to the Goths and the Persians, and he was confronted by a coalition of Goths, Carpi and other tribes, under the leadership of the Gothic king Ostrogotha. Such a serious threat, and the discontent with Philip and his generals, led to the usurpation of Marinus Pacatianus. At the same moment the Persians again attacked Armenia, while the eastern provinces of the Roman empire were in turmoil owing to the brutal manner in which the Emperor's brother Priscus, praefectus Mesopotamiae and Rector Orientis, was levying taxes — hence the usurpations of Jotapianus and Uranius Anto-

²⁵ *Groag*, o.c.n. 24, 21 ff.; *Swift*, o.c.n. 24, 267 ff.; *G. Alföldy*, *The Crisis of the Third Century as seen by Contemporaries*, GRBS 15, 1974, 94; *Moreau*, o.c.n. 15, 39 ff.; *R. McMullen*, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235–337*, New Haven, 1976, 10 n. 32; cp. *H. Bengtson*, *Das Imperium Romanum in griechischer Sicht*, *Kleine Schriften*, München, 1974, 564 ff. See on the other hand *C. P. Jones*, *Aelius Aristides' Eis Basilea*, JRS 62, 1972, 134–152; *F. Millar*, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, London, 1977, 528 f.

²⁶ See *Eutropius*, Brev. IX, 3; *Aurelius Victor*, *Caes.* 28, 1; *RIC IV*, 3, p. 68 ff. nrs. 12–24b, 107, 111, 158–164, 116–117, 200a–202d, 224 f., 264ab, 272 (*Saeculares Augusti*); 157a–c, 199a–c, 271 (*Mil. Saec. S.C.*); 25ab, 86ab, 108, 118, 244 (*Saeculum Novum*); 44a–45, 65, 85, 106 f., 140, 243, 251ab, (*Roma(e) Aeterna(e)*); 181–183, 38ab, 37a, 56, 95, 177–180b, 230, 245, 267ab, 266 (*Liberalitas Aug.*); 35ab, 36ab, 37ab, 175a–176c (*Laetitia Fundata*). See *Ensslin*, C.A.H. XII, 91 and *G. C. Brauer*, *The Age of the Soldier Emperors*, Noyes Press, 1975, 3 f.

ninus²⁷. There were also riots in Alexandria, the course of which has been analysed by Oost. Basing himself on the Oracula Sibyllina and other sources, he describes how the Alexandrians rebelled, tried to prevent the corn ships from setting sail for Rome, and finally turned to a spontaneous persecution of the Christians. Matters got out of hand and the Emperor had to dispatch an experienced ruffian who, as *juridicus* of Alexandria, also bore the title *agens vices praefecti Aegypti*²⁸, and could consequently dispose of all the resources in the province without the intermediary of a third party — yet another sign in this period that the old administrative organization was sadly ineffectual in the frequently chaotic circumstances of the mid-third century. Time and again it was necessary to appoint experienced professionals from the equestrian order with the title *agens vices* — a matter which I hope to go into more deeply in another study.

The question now arises of whether the time of Philip the Arabian was a period of famine. Gordian's army was plagued by it in 243/4; there were riots in Alexandria which also affected the transport of corn to Rome; and Philip issued series of coins in all three metals with the legend *Annona Augusti*; or the legend *Laetitia Fundata*, showing Laetitia on a ship's prow. This, in itself, were not new, or even unusual, legends, but an issue in three metals does indeed suggest a special occasion. Famine was a particularly frequent phenomenon in this century, and McMullen has devoted an appendix to it in his work *Enemies of the Roman Order*²⁹. Are we here faced with the results of various obstacles

²⁷ See Demougeot, o.c.n. 23, 402 f.; Chaumont, o.c.n. 2, 47 ff.; Olmstead, o.c.n. 18, 252 ff.; Lorient, o.c.n. 6, 794; Ensslin, C.A.H. XII, 92; G. M. Bersanetti, L'abrasione del nome del prefetto del pretorio C. Iulius Priscus in un' iscrizione palmirena e la rivolta di Ioptapiano, *Laureae Aquincenses memoriae* V, Diss. Pann. ser. II, 11, Boedapest, 1941, 265–268; Zosimus I 20, 2; Paschoud, o.c.n. 6, 145 n. 46; RIC IV, 3, p. 105 f.; 205 f.

²⁸ Or. Sib. XIII, 42 ff.; S. I. Oost, The Alexandrian Seditions under Philip and Gallienus, *Class. Philol.* 56, 1961, 1 ff. Cp. Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 871 ff. nr. 333 (CIL VI 32 759), Claudius Aurelius Tiberius. Is he the Anonymus of ILS 1331? Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 833 ff. demonstrates that the latter is not Philip's brother Iulius Priscus, and the career of Tiberius is the only known career which fits in with all data of ILS 1331.

²⁹ See RIC IV, 3, p. 68 ff. nrs. 28a (AV), 28bc, 29, 59, (AR), 168 a–e (Æ); 35a–37; 72; 175a–176c. See R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1966, 251 ff; M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford³, 1957, II p. 738 n. 17.

to production? One can hardly help thinking of the misery of the countryside in areas afflicted by war — a situation which is clearly expressed in the petitions of the villages Aragoë and Skaptopare (in Asia Minor and Thrace)³⁰. Then there were natural disasters. In the *Historia Augusta*, *vit. Gord.* 26, 1–2, we read about a huge earthquake which especially affected Italy, Greece and North Africa. On the whole the *Historia Augusta* is a source of dubious quality, but in this period the author seems to have drawn on Dexippus³¹. Famine and natural catastrophes in the 240s, moreover, would tally well with the great plague which ravaged the Roman empire in the years 252–270: such epidemics usually followed periods of starvation and turmoil³².

Philip lost heart. According to Zosimus I, 21, 1, he told the senate that he was ready to abdicate and leave the government to the senators. The senate naturally declined this proposal at the instigation of the Pannonian senator Decius, who believed the anti emperors would be shown to be ephemeral. Decius himself was consequently appointed to the Danubian command, a post which Philip could not give to any favourite or relative: Zosimus I, 21, 1 tells us that he knew perfectly well how much the soldiers in that area hated their generals. Indeed, the troops on the Danube made short work of Pacatianus, and Decius had more luck. Ostrogotha died and the Goths and their allies were kept busy by new waves of emigrants, so that the Carpi had to prosecute the war against Rome on their own. Decius managed to defeat them in the spring or early summer of 249, and was thereupon elected emperor by his troops³³.

The balance of power had now shifted drastically to Philip's disadvantage. Decius had a high reputation in the army on the Danube and was also a revered member of the senate — a particularly dangerous combination. Furthermore Philip and his family had antagonised the

³⁰ See Sylloge (Dittenberger)³, 888 (Scaptopare); OGIS 519 (Aragoë); cp. A. E. R. Boak, *Manpower Shortage and the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West*, Michigan, 1955, 22 ff.; *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 9 ff.

³¹ Syme, o.c.n. 20, 235.

³² Cp. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VII 21–22, the letter of bishop Dionysius to Hermamon. Cf. *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 10 n. 31.

³³ See *Demougeot*, o.c.n. 23, 403 ff.; Zonaras XII 19; Zosimus I 21; *Paschoud*, o.c.n. 6, 25/146, n. 46.

East by the behaviour of Priscus, and the oriental provinces had been divided by the rebellion of Jotapianus and Uranius Antoninus. Decius was unanimously accepted as emperor after his victory over Philip's forces at Verona in August 249, and Philip and his son perished⁸⁴.

2. *Philip's military and administrative policy*

In his chapter on "Dislocation et décentralisation de la défense" Rémondon has outlined the great strategic problems facing Rome in the middle of the third century. These problems were the result of the improved armament and organization of the enemy and the virtually constant warfare, and threats of war, on all the Roman borders at once⁸⁵. What could be done when one section of the *limes* gave way? Other border areas could not be deprived of their troops, since that would have entailed an invasion of these areas. A complete switch to a system of mobile defence in the interior, resting on heavily fortified bases in the hinterland, also had its disadvantages: ever since the days of Septimius Severus most of the soldiers of the *limes* had land and families just behind the frontier and would have been reluctant to accept the surrender of the border areas. Herodian tells us that the Pannonian and Illyrian troops in Alexander Severus' army in the East in 230 had been alarmed by reports of German invasions of their homelands, and the same author goes on to describe the wrath of the soldiers in Alexander's army on the Rhine in 235 when the Emperor so much as stopped to parley with the enemy. They regarded this as a waste of time and wanted to take revenge on the German plunderers⁸⁶.

Septimius Severus had probably already spotted the problem. He strengthened the fortifications of the *limes* and, according to E. Smith, he encamped the legio II Parthica in Central Italy in order to enlarge the central reserve. After him Caracalla inaugurated the system of buying

⁸⁴ Eutropius, *Brev.* IX, 3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 28, 10 f.; Zosimus I 22; Zonaras XII 19; *Ensslin*, C.A.H. XII, 93 f.; cp. *S. Dusanic*, *The End of the Philippi*, Chiron VI, 1976, 427 ff. He seems to think that Philip himself was murdered at Beroea, whereas his son was killed in Rome.

⁸⁵ Cp. *R. Rémondon*, *La crise de l'empire romain*, Paris³, 1970, 103 ff.

⁸⁶ Herodianus VI 7, 3; 7, 9 f.

off the enemy³⁷. Judging from the scanty evidence at our disposal it would appear that Philip pursued the line of the Severi. He probably used the pretorian guard in his campaign on the Danube, or so a series of diplomata militaria (CIL XVI, 149–153) suggests. He bought off two enemies, the Persians and the Goths, in order to concentrate on the Quadi and the Carpi, and he tried to revive the system of fortified borders in Dacia Inferior, as we see from the archeological material advanced by Tudor³⁸. Philip also held on to the Agri Decumates: the last traces of Roman presence there date from 253 and in the 240s a few important castella on the Raetian and trans-Rhenish limes were still intact³⁹.

Philip endeavoured, too, to improve the defence of the Danubian and eastern borders by introducing two higher command posts: Priscus became Rector Orientis, and, after the departure of Philip himself, Pacatianus was entrusted with the high command on the Danube front. Both sectors were also provided with a better supply of pay: a new mint was set up in Viminacium for the Danube army, and, according to Baldus, the mint of Antioch could produce twice as much after a drastic reorganization in the years 246–248. The introduction of these higher commands entailed new risks, however. Fitz has shown that all the commanders on the Danube who were not directly connected with the imperial family became anti-emperors: Pacatianus, Decius, Aemilius Aemilianus, Ingenuus and Regalian. Gallienus consequently stopped appointing generals to such posts⁴⁰. Philip may have spotted the danger, and started off by giving these posts to relatives and trusted friends. Yet the introduction of such higher commands was of little value in the absence of further tactical and strategic reforms: they hardly did anything to check the great invasions after 248.

³⁷ See *E. Smith*, *The Army Reforms of Septimius Severus*, *Hist.* 21, 1972, 481 ff.; *Cassius Dio* 78, 14, 2 f.

³⁸ See *Tudor*, *opera citata* n. 23. See *Günther-Köpstein*, *o.c.n.* 19, 77.

³⁹ *Günther-Köpstein*, *o.c.n.* 19, 78 ff.; *CIL* XIII 11 971, 6566, 11 759, 6562, 6552; *W. Schleiermacher*, *BRGK* 33, 1943–1950, 152 (Beilage)

⁴⁰ See *Zosimus* I 19, 2; *Paschoud*, *o.c.n.* 6, 144, n. 44; *Pflaum*, *o.c.n.* 3, 831 ff. nr. 324a; *Ensslin*, *C.A.H.* XII, 92; *Fitz*, *o.c.n.* 5, 119 f.; *A. Dobó*, *Die Verwaltung, der römischen Provinz Pannonien von Augustus bis Diocletianus*, Amsterdam, 1968, 95 ff.; *J.-P. Callu*, *La politique monétaire des empereurs romains de 238 à 311*, Paris 1969, 199–201 (Viminacium); *Baldus*, *o.c.n.* 10, 37 f. (Antioch); *De Blois*, *o.c.n.* 12, 34.

The Emperor's appointment policy was unoriginal. Relatives and favourites made a rapid career for themselves and a few capable centurions were appointed officers on the Dacian front. One of them became dux of vexillationes of two legions (and not, as was once thought, of two entire legions). Otherwise Philip continued to observe the traditional pattern of promotion, as we see clearly from the epigraphic material discussed by Pflaum⁴¹.

What Philip did not tackle were the main technical problems regarding personnel. Ever since the days of Marcus Aurelius there had been a tendency towards increasing differentiation between careers in the army and in the civil service, and an ever greater friction between the requirements of administration, strategy and tactics on the one hand, and the qualities, training and experience of officers and administrators on the other. The senators, members of the well-educated, prosperous élite from the civilized interior provinces and Italy, did not have an adequate military training and could not acquire one in the normal course of their careers, filled more and more with fresh civil-administrative duties. Few senators even attempted to obtain military experience: military activity, after all, had become far more dangerous than it had been before 161, and a full career in the imperial service, whether in a military or an administrative capacity, allowed ever less time for otium cum dignitate in Rome. Birley has pointed out that this did not stimulate the spirit of the senators. Many of them, he says, limited themselves to traditional honores and civil functions. There was, moreover, a wide cultural gap between the soldiers and the "mandarins" from the senate. Most of the troops consisted of superficially Romanized peasants and children of soldiers from the border areas who showed little understanding for the refined culture of literary-minded senators, suspected of "effeminatio" and being absorbed in "nugae"⁴². Nor were the troops prepared to take much from such generals. Cassius Dio describes the lack of discipline in the armies on the eastern and northern borders, and had himself experienced the rebellious attitude of the Pannonians, who murdered

⁴¹ See Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 844 ff. nr. 327; 882 ff. nrs. 339 ff.; 876. See the works of Fitz and Davies mentioned in n. 21/n. 5.

⁴² E. Birley, *Senators in the Emperor's Service*, P.B.A. 39, 1953, 199 ff., 207 f.; *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 66 ff. for more evidence. On "effeminatio" as a rhetorical locus see A. Alföldi, *Das Problem des "verweiblichten" Kaisers Gallienus*, in: *Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des 3. Jhs. n. Chr.*, Darmstadt, 1967, 16 ff.

Ulpian and Triccianus and protested to Alexander Severus about Cassius Dio's own promotion⁴³.

Cassius Dio gained a clear insight into the situation. In his Maecenas' speech (52, 26, 1 ff.) he pleaded for the introduction of physical and military exercises for young senators, in addition to their rhetorical education, and he also broke a lance in favour of measures (52, 24, 4) which would forge closer bonds between senators and soldiers. At the same time there was a desire to improve the education of the troops — or at least Ensslin has deduced from *Dig. L.* 5, 2, 8 (Ulpian) that people were thinking along these lines under Alexander Severus⁴⁴.

Under the pressure of circumstances "viri militares" from the lower echelons of the army and professional technocrats from all sorts of departments had been constantly promoted, ever since the days of Septimius Severus, to officer and governor rank, and had been absorbed in the equestrian order. Some of them even made their way in the higher posts of the civil service and in the senate. Cassius Dio (52, 25, 6 and 26, 4 f.) protested against this development in his Maecenas' speech: he was quite prepared to see equites of merit received in the senate, but not former centurions who had served under them — and here we have the reappearance of an old prejudice against *apaideutheis* (the uneducated) in high places. In *Pol.* V, 7, 20 Aristotle had already claimed that *paideia* was one means of checking a decline into chaos, and Plutarch had uttered the opinion that uneducated people who by *tyche* come into high places, fall deep.⁴⁵

The social mobility of such military *parvenus* also entailed other problems. In Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii Tyan.* V, 36 Apollonius shows that uneducated governors who cannot even speak Greek are being cheated on all sides in Achaëa, and Herodian contrasts the intellectual superiority and mental agility of the Hellenistic East with the slow-witted torpidity of the warriors from the Danube countries^{45a}.

He has Alexander Severus start his reign (VI, 1, 4), the "Indian summer" of the primacy of senators and Greek intellectuals in the government, by reserving administrative and juridical tasks for men with a gift for rhetoric and a thorough knowledge of the law.

⁴³ Cassius Dio 80, 2 and 4.

⁴⁴ Ensslin, C.A.H. XII, 66.

⁴⁵ Plutarchus, *Ad princ. inerud.* 782e.

^{45a} Herodianus II 9, 11; cf. II 7, 9; III 2, 8; IV 7, 3; VII 1, 1; 8, 4.

By this time, then, the great disadvantage of a discrepancy between military and civilian careers was abundantly clear, although it was to become still worse. S. E. Finer has shown that one of the weaknesses of the military apparatus in politics has always been its incapacity to govern a society which has any degree of intricacy⁴⁶. This was now also to apply to the Roman army. More and more officers knew how to behave in devastated border provinces which had a simple structure, but they had no idea how to cope with the more refined fiscal, juridical and social relations in the highly developed provinces of the interior — and this at the very time when an increasingly large number of them had to govern such areas, and when the language of the central authorities was becoming ever more complicated and further removed from day-to-day practice⁴⁷.

One of the results of the tendencies I have described was a growing antagonism between the educated élite whose privileges were threatened, and the *virī militares*, whom Aurelius Victor (*Caesares* 37, 5) described as “*paene barbari*”. The contrast was probably further aggravated by parallel social-economic discrepancies: the senators were the representatives of the large landowners from the interior provinces, while the troops—at any rate those from the Rhine and the Danube—were the sons of peasants or of soldiers from the border areas where there was still a great deal of small landownership. A part of their officers were *equites* who inhabited the relatively simple *villae* round towns like Trier and Sirmium. In a recent article G. Alföldy has given an excellent picture of this group of *equites* and their *villae* near Trier⁴⁸: they were partly descended from the old tribal nobility and partly from Roman veterans and, in wealth and culture, they were by no means so far superior to the mass of soldiers as the “*potentes*” from the provinces of the interior. So little affinity did they feel with the latter that they usually refused the opportunity of acceding to the senate. I hope to return to this aspect in a later study.

⁴⁶ S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback. The role of the Military in Politics*, Harmondsworth³, 1976, 12 ff.

⁴⁷ Cp. MacMullen, o.c.n. 25, 84.

⁴⁸ See Günther-Köpsstein, o.c.n. 19, 62, 138 ff.; G. Alföldy, *Les equites romani et l'histoire sociale des provinces germaniques de l'empire romain*, Faenza, 1977 (*Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 1977), 7 ff.

Such contrasts must be seen against a background of augmenting hatred of the rapacious soldiery on all levels of the non-military population. The greed of the troops and the need to act against it with severity on the part of the emperors and the generals is a commonplace in the literature of this period. Repression of the soldiers' covetousness is rated by the author of the *Eis basilea* as an almost superhuman feat⁴⁹. This avaritia can be well understood, however. Callu, Crawford, Pékary and others have shown that the slow rise in prices in the second century was followed by debasement of the coinage, monetary manipulations and a steeper rise in prices in the third century. On each occasion—and in spite of the wage increases—the purchasing power of the soldiers' pay diminished. This was extremely dangerous for the stability of the Empire. Crawford has pointed out that, ever since the days of Nero, each debasement of the coinage increased the tendency of the troops to rebel⁵⁰. Since the last years of Septimius Severus, however, the situation had become really serious. New pay rises and donativa were subsidised by the debasement of the coinage and by heavier taxes on the rich, the latter measure having been preferred above all by Caracalla and by Maximinus who paid a high price for it in 238.

As a result desperate bands of soldiers regularly went in for savage requisitions, acts of violence and robbery, and harassment by the troops is mentioned again and again in inscriptions and papyri from this period⁵¹. The hatred that had thus been fostered against the soldiers sometimes had dire consequences. Herodian and Cassius Dio mention various brutal clashes between the lower levels of the population in Rome and the members of the guard and the legio II Parthica, who themselves complained in 238 that they were regarded as barbarians. In the same year people in Carthage and the North African countryside, and in and around Aquileia, witnessed the hatred which the civilian population

⁴⁹ On the avaritia of the soldiers and their lack of discipline, and on the use of "severitas" see Herodianus V 8, 3; VI 6, 4; 8–9; VII 1 and 3; Cassius Dio 72, 3, 3; 74, 8, 1; 77, 15, 2; 78, 9, 1; 10, 1–4; 79, 26, 1; 36, 2 f.; 80, 2 and 4; Aurelius Victor 26, 6: ...genus hominum pecuniae cupidius fidumque ac bonum solo quaestu; SHA, vit. Alex. Sev. 12, 4; 25, 5 f.; *Eis Basilea* 30 f.; Philostratus, vit. Apollonii Tyan. V. 36.

⁵⁰ Crawford, *o.c.n.* 19, 560 ff., esp. 563.

⁵¹ See P. Graux 4 (= Hunt-Edgar, *Select papyri* II 291); Sylloge³ 888; OGIS 519; M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford³, 1957, I, 495 ff.; II, 739 n. 18 and 741 n. 26; Alföldy, *o.c.n.* 25, 94 f.

felt for the troops. According to Herodian a number of soldiers, after yet another rise in pay under Maximinus, even had difficulties with the members of their own families, who chided them for their greed^{51a}. The entire situation was further complicated by the particularism of the border armies, especially in times of danger on the frontiers.

Philip did nothing to check this disastrous development. We can even say that his policy of appointing friends and relatives made matters worse. I have already shown that Philip's commanders in the Balkans fell into disrepute amongst their troops and that Priscus was deeply loathed in the East (Zosimus I, 20, 2 and 21, 2). Lack of discipline, social frictions, the poor quality of many high officers, the mutual rivalry of the border armies and the lawlessness of the soldiers, added to the massive invasions on all the borders, all but plunged Rome into disaster in the 250s. It took the tough measures of Gallienus and his Illyrian successors to remedy the situation.

The author of the *Eis basilea* praises Philip's severity and opportune thrift towards the soldiers, while Groag claims—and his view is confirmed by epigraphic material—that Philip set the troops to building roads. Besides, relatively few of Philip's coins display blatantly military legends and symbols. Of the coins struck by Philip Mattingly and Sydenham record a total of 18 aurei and 1 golden quinarius; 82 antoniniani (67 from Rome and 15 from Antioch), 3 denarii and 3 silver quinarii; 100 copper coins (49 sestericians, 31 asses and 20 dupondii); and 25 so-called hybrid coins. Of these only 3 aurei and the golden quinarius, 20 silver and hybrid coins 19 copper coins bear legends like *Fides Militum*, *Fides Exercitus*, *Victoria Aug(g.)*, *Virtus Augusti*, *Victoria Carpica* and *Virtus Exercitus*, and/or appropriate military insignia. As for the coins of Philip the Younger and Otacilia, they have, relatively speaking, still fewer military legends and symbols⁵². What is particularly striking

^{51a} See Zonaras XII, 15; Cassius Dio 80, 2, 1 f.; 74, 13, 3 ff.; Herodianus VII 9, 5 ff.; 11, 1 ff.; VII 3, 6, (quarrels between soldiers and their kin).

⁵² *Eis Basilea* 30 f.; Groag, o.c.n. 24, 22 and 35; Pflaum, o.c.n. 3, 842 f. nr. 326 and RIC IV, 3, p. 68 ff. nrs. 32ab, 33, 34, 34a, 172a-c (*Fides militum*); 61, 84A, 103A, 170, 171a-c (*Fides exercitus*); 49a (AV), b, 50, 51, 191a-c, 192a-c, 193, 194 (*Victoria Aug(g.)*); 71, 74 (*Virtus exercitus*); 10, 51, 52, 114 (*Virtus Aug(g.)*); 1, 7, 11 (AV), 152 (military symbols only); 66 (*Victoria Carpica*). Cf. E. Stein, R.E. X, 1919, 766 f. (road-repair by soldiers).

For coins with the legend *Adventus Aug(g.)* see RIC IV, 3, p. 68 ff. 26ab, 81, 165 and p. 92 nr. a; for coins with the legend *Liberalitas Aug.* and soldiers and a

is the small percentage of gold coins in these issues: we need only compare the series of golden medallions which Gallienus gave his soldiers and which were decked with military insignia and legends⁵³. Another striking feature is the almost total absence of typically military numismatic propaganda in the issues of 248, on the occasion of the millennium, when a relatively large quantity of gold was used⁵⁴. The hypothesis, then, may well be justified that Philip started his reign by conferring a few large donativa on the soldiers, but then began to economise in this domain and also made some rather old-fashioned demands of the troops — measures which cost him dear in 248/9.

3. *Finances, taxes and monetary policy*

Financial problems were particularly acute in this period of the Roman Empire. The existing taxation system and the existing fiscal area had started to prove structurally inadequate, and the monetary system was undermined by the devaluation and debasement of the coinage⁵⁵. The matter was much discussed in the writings of Greek men of letters. In his Maecenas' speech (52, 28) Cassius Dio suggested a daring new taxation scheme and, like Herodian and the author of the *Eis basilea* (30 f.), he expected some "severitas" towards the troops. In this context Dio commended the attitude of Marcus Aurelius (72, 3, 3 f.) who once refused to give an extra donativum after a victory. The discussion produced certain loci communes which we encounter time and again. In the passage already cited in Dio (72, 3, 3 f.), for example, we find the idea that it is wrong to distribute money which has been wrung from the blood or the tears of the poor. These and similar concepts and formulas appear in Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii Tyan.* V 36, Herodian VII, 3, 5 f., *Eis basilea* 30 f. and 16, and in the letter of Alexander Severus in P. Fay. 20. The excessive levying of taxes is constantly rejected, especially if it serves to enrich the soldiers.

citizen on the Reverse see 179. I did not count these, for they were distributed among the civilians as well, and were not purely military.

⁵³ See *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 95 ff.

⁵⁴ See n. 26.

⁵⁵ See *Th. Pékary*, Studien zur römischen Währungs- und Finanzgeschichte von 161 bis 235 n. Chr., Hist. 8, 1959, 443–489; *Callu*, o.c.n. 40 and *Crawford*, o.c.n. 19.

Most of the third-century emperors resorted to debasing the currency and manipulating the proportionate value of the various types of coin. I have described elsewhere how this led, in Gallienus' time, to the collapse of the existing Roman monetary system⁵⁶. At first Philip steered clear of this fatal path, and preferred to increase taxes and exercise caution in granting immunities. Parsons has shown that he introduced new taxes in Egypt, and we have seen how brutally Priscus collected taxes in the eastern provinces. A poet who requested immunity was tartly refused (Cod. Just. X, 53, 3), and exiles were allowed to return home so that they could contribute to the imperial coffers⁵⁷.

In the last years of his reign, however, Philip, too, was reduced to debasing the coinage. Callu has demonstrated, with the assistance of graphs, that the weight of the antoniniani and denarii dropped sharply in 238, less sharply in 239, and that a certain recovery set in after 240, culminating in the years 244/5. There followed a period of slight oscillations in a downward trend, a partial recovery under Decius and a catastrophic fall after 252. The standard of silver coins dropped radically in 238, recovered slightly in the years 239–240, dropped still further in the years 240–244, and again recovered somewhat in the period 244–246/7. This was succeeded by a steep fall, only interrupted in the time of Decius. Callu tells us that Philip also came up with a new, lighter variation of the aureus, the philippeus, made to a standard of 75 pieces per pound of gold and valued at 40 denarii. The old aurei now became multipla⁵⁸.

Under Philip the total amount of imperial money produced almost certainly increased. We have already seen that a new mint was founded in Viminacium and that the capacity of the mint in Antioch was greatly augmented⁵⁹. The Emperor, however, had embarked on path of iniquity. Owing to the devastation caused by war and the disruption of transport by ever greater insecurity, the production of goods probably diminished. Furthermore, goods were constantly being seized by the troops and claimed by the government: the *annona militaris* had already begun

⁵⁶ *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 87 ff.

⁵⁷ *P. J. Parsons*, *Philippus Arabs and Egypt*, JRS 57, 1967, 134 ff., esp. 140; *Zosimus* I 20, 2; *Cod. Iust.* X, 53, 3 (the request of the poet); IX, 51, 7 (recall of exiles). Cf. *Ensslin*, C.A.H. XII, 89.

⁵⁸ *Callu*, o.c.n. 40, 237 ff., esp. 243 and 249; 430 ff, esp. 432; 477.

⁵⁹ See n. 40.

to be levied under Septimius Severus⁶⁰. The quantity of money in circulation, however, cannot have decreased—if anything, the contrary must have occurred—and the quality of this money deteriorated. It is actually a wonder that the great rise in prices was deferred until c.268/270. A hypothetical explanation is that the purchasing power had dropped so low in the meantime that the diminished demand kept prices lower than they would normally have been⁶¹. Philip's experiences in 248/9, moreover, confirm Crawford's view. The troops' tendency to mutiny increased in the very years when the new debasement of the coinage began to sink through.

Brauer has pointed out that there was nothing Philip could do to prevent the monetary decline. This is quite true: nor can Philip be blamed. His expenses were particularly high on account of the tributes to the Persians and the Goths, the difficult wars on the Danube, the *donativa* at the beginning of his reign, the lavish celebration of the millennium in 248, and the foundation of a fully equipped city, called Philipopolis, near Bostra in Arabia⁶², this last being an unnecessary extravagance probably intended to raise the status of Philip's birthplace. And to all this we must add the fact that Maximinus Thrax had doubled the soldiers' pay. His successors, Gordian III and Philip, consequently had their hands tied, as did Macrinus in 217/8 after the great wage increase and the profuse *donativa* of Caracalla. Macrinus then wrote to the senate that there was no money left to pay the soldiers and that if he failed to give them what they expected they would mutiny⁶³.

Where Philip's income was concerned the situation was still worse. According to Parsons his new taxes in Egypt brought in nothing extra; the country could not produce more than it was already producing — or at least not under the existing system of assessment and collection. The accumulated tension led to a rural exodus and riots in Alexandria. Important fiscal territories like Syria, Mesopotamia, Northern Italy and North Africa had suffered from acts of war between 230 and 244. Priscus' practices had brought about nothing but insurrection, and in

⁶⁰ See n. 51. On the *annona* see *D. van Berchem*, *L'annone militaire*, *Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de France* X, 1937, 117 ff.

⁶¹ See *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 13 f.; 89 f.; *Callu*, o.c.n. 40, 401 ff.

⁶² See *Zosimus* I 19, 2; *Eis Basilea* 30; *Swift*, o.c.n. 24, 288 (*donatives*); *Aurelius Victor*, *Caes.* 28, 1 and *Brauer*, o.c.n. 26, 11 f. (*Philippopolis*).

⁶³ *Cassius Dio* 79, 36, 2 f.

Italy banditry had reached such a pitch that galley soldiers from Ravenna were called in to combat it. It is perfectly possible, moreover, to connect banditry with social stress and fiscal pressure, as we see from the story of the bandit chieftain Felix Bulla in Cassius Dio. The banditry of this period has been further analysed by McMullen in an appendix to his *Enemies of the Roman Order*⁶⁴.

Certain areas, like the Rhine area and the Agri Decumates, as well as various Danubian and Balkan provinces, had never paid many taxes, but were now faced with continuous unrest on their borders, the passage of armies and the necessity of improving their local defences and organising emergency militias. The surviving fragments of Dexippus are nearly all about the Greek cities in the Balkans which had to protect themselves against attacks by the barbarians, some of them succeeding so well that the Emperor Decius started to see them as a potential threat to the central power (frg. 26)⁶⁵. And finally, Philip could not impose any extra taxes on the most resourceful members of society, the large land-owners, because he wanted to remain on good terms with the senate, where the richest proprietors were sitting.

In the time of Alexander Severus and Mamaea the Roman authorities had been able to pursue a conservative and thrifty financial policy because they were at peace until 230. But even then the risks of such a policy had become apparent: Mamaea has gone down to history as "avara", and was not loved by the troops⁶⁶. Now, however, there was no chance of success. It is abundantly clear that the taxation system was not suitable for financing the ever vaster military operations at a time of ever greater insecurity.

⁶⁴ See Parsons, o.c.n. 57, 140, esp. P. Lond. 1157 vs. and P. Lond. 2565; cp. Moreau, o.c.n. 15, 36 ff. and Alföldy, o.c.n. 25, 94. See ILS 509 (sailors from Ravenna against bandits); Cassius Dio 76, 10, esp. 7 (Felix Bulla); MacMullen, o.c.n. 29, app. B, 255 ff. and Rostovtzeff, o.c.n. 51, II, 738 n. 17 (brigandage) and I, 479 ff. (Egypt).

⁶⁵ See Dexippus, Fr. Gr. H. Jacoby IIA, nr. 100, p. 454 ff., esp. fr. 26.

⁶⁶ See Herodianus VI 1, 8; Zonaras XII 15; SHA, vit. Alex. Sev. 14, 7.

4. Law and legislation

Much is made in the *Eis basilea* (17–19) of the Emperor's juridical talents: here at last was an emperor who knew the law himself and who was not dependent on the counsel of his advisers. Admittedly the dispensation of justice, like a humane fiscal policy, severity towards the soldiers, self-control and approachability and the avoidance of tyrannical means of government—such as a network of spies and informers—was a standard component of the encomia of a prince. Equally, the various sections of paragraphs 17–19 had been commonplaces in mirrors of princes since the fourth century B.C.⁶⁷ And yet, rhetorical commonplaces are seldom completely independent of reality. Just as modern publicity slogans must refer to some generally known features and must not reduce the object advertised to something absurd by allowing rhetorical exaggerations to turn it into a complete fiction, so it was in the Roman imperial period: the finances, the army, the dispensation of justice and the conduct of the princeps were the most important elements in the practice of government, as Millar has shown yet again, and they constituted the principal sections in the mirrors of princes of the time⁶⁸. And indeed, Philip did take an interest in law and legislation. His pronouncements occupy a relatively important place in the *Codex Justinianus*: in this respect, together with Valerian and Gallienus and, to a lesser extent, Gordian III, he was the most productive of the soldier-emperors between 235 and 284. The praise in the *Eis basilea* 18 may well just have been a sneer at the typical soldier-emperors and “Kinderkaiser” who sat on the throne between 211 and 244 and had little understanding of the law themselves⁶⁹. But according to Groag Philip did have a knowledge of the law, because, in 243/4, he had been appointed

⁶⁷ See *Swift*, o.c.n. 24, 282 ff. Cp. Isocrates, Evagoras; Xenophon, Agesilaus; *J. Bleicken*, Der Preis des Aelius Aristides auf das römische Weltreich, Nachr. d. Akad. d. Wissensch. in Göttingen I, philol.-hist. Kl. 1966, 7, 228 ff.; *J. Palm*, Rom. Römertum und Imperium in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit, Lund, 1959.

⁶⁸ *F. Millar*, The Emperor in the Roman World, London, 1977, 203 ff.

⁶⁹ See *G. Schnebelt*, Reskripte der Soldatenkaiser. Ein Beitrag zur römischen Rechtsgeschichte des dritten nachchr. Jhs., Karlsruhe, 1974, 5; *Eis Basilea*, 18. One of the loci communes in the Greek literature of those days was, that good emperors held frequently court, even when they were campaigning, and that bad emperors hardly held court at all; see Cassius Dio 72, 6, 1 f. (Marcus Aurelius) and 78, 17, 1 (Caracalla). Cp. *Millar*, o.c.n. 68, 466 f.

praefectus praetorio, and ever since the days of Septimius Severus this functionary had been dealing more and more with legal administration. The situation had come to such a pass in the time of Cassius Dio that he explicitly lamented it in his Maecenas' speech, regarding it as a danger to the position of the senate while Ensslin maintains that Maximinus had entrusted the praefectus praetorio with still more juridical duties⁷⁰.

Schnebelt has described the law of Philip's time as epi-classical: the meticulous use of terms and the principles of classical law were still in existence, while the moralising tone and slipshod carelessness of the later soldier-emperors and the later imperial period had not yet prevailed. Philip's chancellery was principally active in the first years of his reign, and Philip was at his best in administrative and financial questions: debt, *actio utilis*, irrevocability of presents to freedmen, offences against property and labour matters. Reference was often made, in the considerations, to examples from the time of the Severi and, according to Pflaum, we can detect an archaizing note in Philip's terminology and diction⁷¹. This is just what we would expect from an emperor who was more of a reliable technocrat than a visionary leader, and who tried to establish links with the last ruling dynasty, that of the Severi.

5. *Philip's concept of the emperorship*

In inscriptions, papyri and numismatic legends Philip placed a strong emphasis on the new dynasty. He deified his father, an unknown sheikh from the Arabian border area⁷², and his wife, Marcia Otacilia Severa, and son, Philip the Younger, acquired just as much honour as had the princes and princesses from the house of the Severi. The appellations of Otacilia were the same as those of Julia Domna, Maesa and Mamaea: *mater Augusti*, *mater castrorum*, *mater senatus*, *mater patriae*, and combinations of these titles. Mamaea and Otacilia were the only

⁷⁰ See *Groag*, o.c.n. 24, 37 f.; Cassius Dio 52, 24, 1 ff.; Cod Iust. I, 26, 2; *Ensslin*, C.A.H. XII, 74 and 89.

⁷¹ *Schnebelt*, o.c.n. 69, 58, 95 ff., 106 ff., 159 ff., 167, 170 f., 193 ff.; *Pflaum*, o.c.n. 3, 846.

⁷² See *Olmstead*, o.c.n. 18, 260; *G. F. Hill*, *Coins of Arabia*, 1922, XLI ff., 42 ff.; IGR III 1199 f.; *L. Cerfaux & J. Tondriaux*, *Le culte des souverains*, Paris, 1957, 374 n. 2.

women who had borne the title *mater exercitus*⁷³, and on various coins Otacilia wore a diadem, the ancient headdress of the absolute Hellenistic kings^{73a}. Like Geta and Caracalla, Philip the Younger obtained the titles *princeps iuventutis* and *nobilissimus Caesar*, and, like Caracalla, he was appointed his father's fellow Augustus. The title *ἐπιφανέστατος Καίσαρ* which Geta was the first to bear on a number of occasions in papyri and which was not used after his death, was revived in full strength in the case of Philip the Younger, an echo of whose appellations can be found in the *Eis basilea* 39⁷⁴.

As in the days of the Severi, the *domus divina* of the imperial family was mentioned and the various family members were represented in different combinations on coins and medallions, with the legend *Concordia Augustorum*, for example, or with a sacrificial scene and legends like *Pietas Augustorum*⁷⁵. Certain medallions and coins display a direct dynastic propaganda. There is a coin with a representation of Philip the Younger on the obverse and a depiction of the imperial couple on the reverse, with the legend *Augusti Patri Augusti Matri*, while on a medallion with a representation of Philip himself on the obverse and one of Otacilia and Philip the Younger on the reverse, we read: *De pia matre pius filius*⁷⁶.

It is surprising that the author of the *Eis basilea* should say nothing about Otacilia, and that only at the end of his oration, in par. 39, should he briefly mention the young successor. Here the encomiast seems to be breaking all the rules of the mirror of princes — we only have to see how Pliny deals with the women surrounding Trajan!^{76a} Probably,

⁷³ See A. Stein, *Marcia Otacilia Severa*, R.E. XIV 2, 1930, 1607 f.; P. Bureth, *Les titulatures impériales dans les papyrus, les ostraca et les inscriptions d'Égypte* Paris, 1964, 104 ff.; ILS 442–444, 485, 507, 513; A.E. 1968, 593; A.E. 1969/70, 496 f., 512, 692; A.E. 1972, 682; A.E. 1974, 618; S.E.G. XII, 517, 3; XXIV, 971, 2. *Mater exercitus*: A.E. 1972, 682 (Mamaea) en ILS 507=CIL III 10 619 (Otacilia).

^{73a} See RIC IV, 3, 68 ff. nrs. 39, 64, 104, 222, 261.

⁷⁴ See Bureth, o.c.n. 73, 101 (SB 8561, 2) and 114 f.; RIC IV, 3, 216a–220b; 254–258d (Princ. Iuv.); *Eis Basilea* 1 and 39.

⁷⁵ See ILS 508; A.E. 1974, 618 (Philippus c.s.); A.E. 1968, 593; 1970, 692 (Severi); cf. C.A.H. XII, 35; see ILS 1188 (Gordianus III). See RIC IV, 3, p. 92 f. nrs. 196a–197c; med. nrs. a–c; p. 68 ff. nrs. 11, 30, 39, 43 (*Pietas Augg.*), 56 (*Liberalitas Augg.*), 68, 104, 229.

⁷⁶ RIC IV, 3, p. 68 ff. nrs. 229 and 30.

^{76a} See Plinius, *Panegyricus* 83–84.

however, the author of the *Eis basilea* left this point deliberately in the dark in order not to come into conflict with his own views of the succession, which he propagates in paragraphs 5–9. He there praises succession based on the principle of selection of the best (*jure meritum*), and regards this as far superior to dynastic, hereditary succession. In the light of Philip's own access to the throne in 244, of course, this choice is understandable: indeed, the encomiast could hardly have done otherwise. Philip was not related to Gordian; he had not been adopted by him; and he was of too obscure an origin for the encomiast to play on his parentage. He consequently made no reference to Philip's background, something which was still more unusual than the neglect of the Empress. Philip's origin, moreover, was a weak point. The senate which Philip wanted to win over to his side, was no friend of parvenus from the equestrian order, as is evident in Cassius Dio's negative judgement of the background of Pertinax and Macrinus. Indeed, the Emperor Philip's humble origin appears to have rankled to such an extent that on one of his coins he placed the unique legend *Nobilitas Augusti*⁷⁷.

Otherwise Philip's concept of the emperorship was fairly traditional. The *Eis basilea* evokes the conventional image of a good prince modelled on Isocrates' Evagoras and Xenophon's Agesilaus. Even the numismatic legends and the appellations in Philip's inscriptions and papyri offer little that is spectacular when compared to the strikingly strong dynastic propaganda and series of coins at the time of the millennium. Taeger has observed: "Die Gesamthaltung ist also durchaus konservativ und vermeidet die Ueberhöhung der Kaiser ebenso peinlich wie auffällige Konzessionen an die unaufhaltsam vordringenden orientalischen Gottheiten". He goes on to say that the coins of Philip the Younger have more to offer than the others: the Emperor's son is depicted as the guarantor of a new era, with Jupiter as his protector — and sure enough, we see the goat Amalthëa, the nurse of Jupiter Crescens, on several coins⁷⁸. The Emperor, moreover, did make a small concession to the oriental deities. On one of his coins we see the goddess Minerva depicted with her foot on a helmet. This was probably the *interpretatio Romana* of Al-Lath, an Arabian goddess who was also venerated in Palmyra

⁷⁷ RIC IV, 3, p. 69 nr. 8; p. 88 nr. 155. Cp. *Eis Basilea* 5 ff.; Cassius Dio 74, 3, 1 (Pertinax) and 79, 11, 1; 18, 4; 20, 3 (Macrinus).

⁷⁸ See F. Taeger, *Charisma* II, Stuttgart, 1960, 436. See RIC IV, 3, p. 70 f. and p. 85 nr. 136 (*Iuno Lucina*) and p. 97 nr. 224.

and whose name is incorporated in the name of Odaenathus' son Vabalathus^{78a}.

It is certainly possible to detect a slight inclination towards personal deification in Philip the Arabian. By using the titles *σωτήρ*, or Restitutor Orbis, *δεσπότης τῆς οἰκουμένης*, and *θειότατος καὶ μέγιστος καὶ ἀήτητος/ἀνίκητος* he was continuing the tradition of the Severi and Gordian III. But he did not stop at this. According to Cerfaux and Tondriau Philip was accorded divine honours in Dacia and was there called *Ἀγαθὸς δαίμων* of the world in an inscription⁷⁹. Like Caracalla, Philip styled himself *Super omnes fortissimus*, and an echo of his title can be perceived in the *Eis basilea* 38, where we read: "ὃ πάντας βασιλέας παρεληλυθώς, σοφίᾳ μὲν τοὺς σοφοὺς, ἀνδρείᾳ δὲ τοὺς ἀνδρείους, εὐσεβείᾳ δὲ τοὺς ἐπὶ ταύτῃ διαφέροντας, εὐτυχίᾳ δὲ τοὺς εὐτυχεστάτους".

The author skilfully extends the title to virtues which he regards as just as important as *andreia*. Moreover, other appellations of Philip and his son are also reflected in this oration: in par. 39 the title *γενναϊότατος Καῖσαρ* or *nobilissimus Caesar*, and in par. 1 the title *θεῖος καὶ μέγιστος βασιλεύς*. Here we again perceive an interesting variation: instead of *μέγιστος* the author puts *φιλανθρωπός*. *Φιλανθρωπία* is one of the two main virtues in the *Eis basilea*; the other is *δικαιοσύνη*⁸⁰. Philip had himself depicted on a coin with a globe, according to Arnheim "the symbol of the rulership of the world". This, too, had been done by Caracalla before him⁸¹.

There is evidence to suggest that the sun god occupied a special place in the pantheon of Philip and his family. Cerfaux and Tondriau assure

^{78a} See Taeger, o.c.n. 78, 435; RIC IV, 3, p. 68 nr. 1 (Minerva) and p. 102, nr. 263; p. 96 nr. 223 (Mars). See F. Altheim, *Aus Spätantike und Christentum*, Tübingen, 1951, 27; De Blois, o.c.n. 12, 157.

⁷⁹ See Cerfaux-Tondriau, o.c.n. 72, 374. Cp. SEG IV 523, 1 (Gordianus III); A.E. 1971, 431 (Gord. III); A.E. 1971, 430 (Alexander Severus); A.E. 1972, 553 (Al. Sev.); SEG XVII, 613 (Philippus); ILS 510 (Ph.). Cf. OGIS 519. See Bureth, o.c.n. 73, 104 ff.

⁸⁰ See ILS 452 (Caracalla) and ILS 506 (Philippus). Cf. OGIS 519. See *Eis Basilea* 38-39; Millar, o.c.n. 68, 528 f. (*Dikaosyne* and *philanthropia* in the E.B.). See Bureth, o.c.n. 73, 113 ff.; esp. P. Lond. 1157 verso, P. Ryl. 683, 37, P. Strasb. 144, 21 (*genaiotatos kaisar*); P. Lond. 950.

⁸¹ M. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1972, 28; RIC IV, 3, p. 68 nr. 2a (AV), b (AR), p. 79 nr. 89 (AV). Cp. Cohen, *Méd. Imp.* IV, 186 nrs. 411 f. and V, 165 nr. 146.

us that Philip had himself called *Invictus* in Rome. In a Greek inscription, IGR I, 1480, Philip the Younger is styled νέος "Ἡλίου, just like Gordian III in SEG IV, 523, 1. The sun lion figures three times on coins in the *Saeculares Augusti* series of 248 and on a coin from Antioch. On medallions and coins with the legends *Adventus Augusti*, *Aeternitati Augusti* and *Aeternitati Imperii* we see Sol or members of the imperial house represented in the typical attitude of Sol, with raised "ingens manus"⁸². Just on coins on which she is depicted with a diademe Otacilia is represented standing on a crescent, the symbol of Luna, as may be seen on RIC IV, 3, p. 80 nr. 104 (AV).

Apollo and Diana, sometimes regarded as replicas of Sol and Luna in the third century, appear on the coins of Philip and his family. Animal symbols of Diana can be seen on various *Saeculares Augusti* coins of 248 and, according to Taeger, Apollo appears on Philip's coins as the deity who helps to preserve the concordia in the imperial house⁸³. Together with Concordia and Felicitas, Pietas is one of the most frequent slogans on the coins of Philip, his son and Otacilia⁸⁴. In the numismatic propaganda of Philip and his house a special place was occupied by coins with the legends *Pietas Augustorum*, *Pietas Augustae*, and *Pietas Augusti* and with representations of the imperial family or personifications of Concordia and Pietas sacrificing and praying. This tallies quite well with Eis Basilea 15, where Eusebeia is mentioned first, before philanthropia and dikaiosyne. In Philip's numismatic propaganda there was almost as much room for legends, symbols and representations connected with Felicitas and Concordia. Frequently the whole dynasty was

⁸² See *Cerfaux-Tondriau*, o.c.n. 72, 374 and CIL VIII, 8809. See RIC IV, 3, p. 70 f., and nrs. 80, 158 and 238 f. (Lion). See RIC IV, 3, nrs. 81 (Philippus), 26ab (Ph.), 165 (Ph.), all three with the Legend *Adventus Aug.*; nrs. 90 (Sol), 137 (Sol) with the legend *Aeternitati Aug(g.)*; nrs. 112 (Sol), 226, 246ab (Sol) with the legend *Aeternitati Imperii*. See *H. P. L'Orange*, o.c.n. 12, 141 ff. (the meaning of this "pose" of Sol *Invictus*).

⁸³ *Taeger*, o.c.n. 78, 435; RIC IV, 3, 68 ff. nrs. 91, 96-98. See RIC IV, 3, 70 f.

⁸⁴ RIC IV, 3, 68 ff. 43ab, 115, 120ab, 121, 122ab, 133-135, 198ab, 205a-c, 206 f., 212ab, 215, 260 (*Pietas Augustorum*); 130, 144ab (*Pietas Augustae*); 146, 234, 236 (members of the dynasty sacrificing); 31, 60, 103, 242, 247, 87, 169ab (*Felicitas Aug(g.)*); 3, 4, 5, 6 (all between 246-248 A.D.), 75-79b (all between 247-248), 105 f., 149ab, 150a-c, 153a-c, 154a-c, 232 f., 235 (symbols, images and representations of *Felicitas*); 83, 109, 110, 119ab, 125a-c, 126, 129, 143, 203a-g, 204, 222 (silver med.), 261 and p. 92 nr. a (med.) (members of the dynasty and the legend *Concordia Augustorum*); nr. 92 (*Felicitas Temporum*). See n. 75-76.

represented on these coins, and especially on the more conspicuous ones. On RIC IV, 3, 43ab and 212ab (*Pietas Augustorum*) and on RIC IV, 3, p. 92 nr. a, p. 68 ff. nrs. 83, 222, and 261 (*Concordia Augustorum*) all three members of the imperial family are to be seen, one on the obverse, the other two on the reverse. On the reverse of nr. 222 Philip himself is depicted with a cuirass, and Otacilia diademed. Philip jr. is portrayed on the obverse. An interesting piece of evidence is that also combinations of the legends and symbols which I mentioned are to be seen on some coins. On the reverse of RIC IV, 3, p. 77 nr. 77 one sees *Concordia*, veiled, holding patera and wand. On the reverse of nrs. 83, 109, 110, 119ab, 125a-126, 129 and 143 *Concordia* is represented sitting, holding scales and cornucopiae (widely known *Felicitas*-symbols).

In themselves these are all ancient slogans familiar to us in imperial numismatic propaganda, but I believe that the combinations of them are neither coincidental nor exclusively traditional. We should probably view it in connection with a world picture which was taking ever deeper root and where Sol and Luna occupied a special place as the authors of victory, prosperity and fertility. In this world picture the Emperor and the Empress, in their concordia, were the earthly replicas of Sol and Luna. Through their *Pietas* they were in contact with the deity, whom they resembled in their providentia: divine providentia maintained order in the cosmos and the pronoia and prostasia of the princely couple did so on earth. Even in their liberalitas, in their conduct and their redemptive activity, the princes resembled the ruler of the cosmos and his godly assistants. Princely conduct, in its turn, was a model for all subjects. The prince was the highest man and the lowest god. In the metaphor of the Neo-Pythagorean Ecphantus he was an eagle, the only bird which could look at the sun without being blinded. Within this world picture Pythagorean, ancient oriental, Stoic and Platonic influences were at play, and the prince was represented as a second Hercules, as a replica of Jupiter or as a manifestation of Sol Invictus.

The emperors could either accept this tradition with a certain reserve as Philip, and Alexander Severus before him, had done, using only, attributes and symbols, or they could identify themselves with their favourite deities literally and bodily, as did Commodus, Caracalla and Gallienus. Commodus went so far as to pose as Hercules in the theatre; Caracalla claimed a resemblance to the sun god; and Gallienus identified himself with Hercules, Mercury, the *Genius populi Romani*, Kore (or

Demeter) and Zeus. So direct a form of imitatio Dei tended, however, to arouse the resentment of the senators and most of the Greek intellectuals⁸⁵.

This is the best explanation I can provide of why Concordia (even in the imperial house), Pietas, and Felicitas appear in connection with each other on Philip's coins. It is with this background in mind that we should read the words in the *Eis basilea* 24: "... οἰόμενος δεῖν τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς βασιλέα τῶ τῶν ὁλῶν ἀπεικᾶσθαι βασιλεῖ κατὰ τε τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ τὴν πρόνοιαν ἀπάντων τῶν ἀρχομένων".

6. Philip and the Christians

According to Zonaras and Syncellus Philip once wanted to pray together with the Christians of Antioch, but the bishop turned him away. Eusebius too knew about this tale⁸⁶. York has therefore deduced that Philip was a Christian and that Eusebius hushed the matter up in order to place his master, Constantine the Great, in a more glorious light, and because Constantine's enemy Licinius claimed to be descended from Philip⁸⁷. Now, although York does not provide a shred of evidence for this somewhat bold hypothesis, it would appear at first sight to tally with the remarkable view in Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos* VII, 20, 3, that the millennium of 248 was celebrated in honour of Christ. Nevertheless I believe that York's theory is untenable. The sources do not provide so much as a hint that Philip was actually a Christian: we find no evidence in Orosius or in the Emperor's numismatic propaganda and appellations, and it would be going too far to ascribe this fact entirely to the influence of Eusebius many decades later. His influence can hardly have extended to the remotest convents and villages, and some trace of Philip's Christianity would surely have survived.

⁸⁵ See L. Delatte, *Les traités de la royauté d'Ecphante, Diotogène et Sthenidas*, Bibl. de la Faculté de Philosophie et des Lettres de l'université de Liège 97, 1942, 149 ff., esp. 154 f. and 159 ff.; J. H. Oliver, *The Ruling Power*, T.A.Ph.S., n.s. 43, 1, 1953, 874 ff., 883 ff.; *Id.*, *The Civilizing Power*, T.A.Ph.S., n.s. 58, 1, 1968, 25 ff.; *Palm*, o.c.n. 67, 28, 39, 60 ff., 93; *Kloft*, o.c.n. 15, 178; J. Charbonneaux, *Aïôn et Philippe l'Arabe*, *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 72, 1960, 253 ff. See W. H. Gross, *Herakliskos Commodus*, Göttingen, 1973; *De Blois*, o.c.n. 12, 148 ff.

⁸⁶ Zonaras XII 19; Georgius Syncellus 682 (B.); Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* VI, 34.

⁸⁷ York, o.c.n. 6, 322 ff.

York's view, then, rests on an incorrect interpretation of the passages mentioned in Syncellus and Zonaras. Both authors use the word *προστίθεται*. Zonaras says: "*Φίλιππος εὐμενὴς ἦν τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς*". This, however, is not a formula which could be used to describe a Christian emperor, and, in this context, *προστίθεται* must mean "to side with, to have a special regard for"⁸⁸. Syncellus also says that Philip wanted to confess his sins on Easter night and wished to pray together with the Christians, but the context shows that the author here has two parties in mind: Philip on the one hand and the Christians on the other. And when we see how Gallienus, who was definitely not a Christian, is adulated by Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.* VII 23 because he put an end to Valerian's persecution, and that the same Gallienus was murdered by his generals who included Constantine's declared ancestor Claudius Gothicus, there is every reason to reject York's view of the role of Eusebius. According to Ensslin, on the other hand, the later tradition that Philip was a Christian can be explained by the fact that he was succeeded by the persecutor Decius⁸⁹. This would correspond perfectly to the black-and-white scheme adopted by the historiography of the time.

It is probable that Philip and Otacilia had the same attitude to the Christians as Alexander Severus and Mamaea. They took an interest in them in the syncretic spirit of the time and, perhaps for humanitarian reasons, they were tolerant towards them. It is interesting to note, moreover, that Otacilia, like Mamaea, was in touch with the famous Christian philosopher Origen⁹⁰.

7. Conclusion

Philip has a bad name in Greek and Latin historiography, as York has again recently shown⁹¹. He is represented as having betrayed Gordian III, as a coward and a spendthrift, and as a man who made of the emperorship a sort of family tyranny. In I, 23, 1 Zosimus says: "*Τῶν δὲ πραγμάτων διὰ τὴν Φιλίππου περὶ πάντα ἐκμέλειαν ταραχῆς πληρωθέντων,*

⁸⁸ Liddle & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford⁹, 1968, 1527.

⁸⁹ See Ensslin, *C.A.H.* XII, 94.

⁹⁰ Ensslin, *C.A.H.* XII, 67 and 94.

⁹¹ York, *o.c.n.* 6, 321 ff.

Σκύθαι τὸν Τάναϊν διάβαντες ἐλῆζοντο τὰ περὶ τὴν Θράκην χωρία", words which may well contain the opinion of Dexippus whom, according to Paschoud, Zosimus used as his source in these passages⁹².

But is Philip of Arabia's bad reputation justified? In the important domain of day-to-day practical government, and also in the opinion of the politically conscious élite and the authors of mirrors of princes, Philip was not nearly as bad as historians have made him out to be, particularly if judged by the standards of the second century. He was an active legislator; he fought in person on the threatened borders; he eliminated dangers to the frontier by means of a skilful diplomacy; and he tried to avoid the desperate solution of debasing the coinage. He was no enemy of the senate, and he was not guilty of an extravagant indulgence in the cult of the emperor. We get the impression that he actually wished to return to the times of the Antonines and the Severi, and he emphatically stressed his links with the Severi—particularly with Alexander Severus—on every possible occasion. In his appellations, in his financial policy, in his attitude towards the Christians, in his respect for the senate, and probably also in his concept of the emperorship, Philip seems to have been returning to the period between 222 and 235. Such a policy was well-suited to the attitude of the educated élite towards the crisis of the midthird century. Alföldy has shown that it is only after 250 that we can detect a deeper and more widespread awareness of crisis in literature⁹³. Up to that time all the various difficulties and dangers were regarded as isolated, ephemeral problems, which could be solved by the good government of an emperor who satisfied the requirements of the mirrors of princes: there was "prosperity around the corner".

The reign of Philip the Arabian shows, however, that this traditional approach was no longer valid. Philip might have cut a good figure in the second century, but in the middle of the third century he missed the mark, precisely because he continued to pursue old-fashioned methods. Reforms of strategy, tactics and the officer corps were urgently necessary. The structural shortage of money and other means required a different system of taxes and munera, payments and bonuses. The civil service and the manner in which administrators were recruited no

⁹² Paschoud, o.c.n. 6, 146, n. 49.

⁹³ Alföldy, o.c.n. 25, 94 ff.

longer suited the drastically altered conditions. Latent social tensions broke out in violence, migration, banditry, hatred between citizens and soldiers and antagonism between large landowners in the senate and small landowners in the army. In addition to this there was a crisis directly affecting the throne. There had been no generally accepted dynasty since 235 and the throne had been occupied by a succession of generals. But such generals could only avoid the coups of other successful generals, who had equally satisfactory means of seizing power, by contriving to legitimize their position. According to *Finer* a regime which has come to power by a military coup has to guarantee itself against a series of rival coups by a successful legitimation. Only thus can a sufficiently high moral barrier be erected⁹⁴. The majority⁹⁵ of the third-century emperors endeavoured, more or less instinctively, to find this legitimation in a supernatural sphere. They proclaimed all sorts of gods their *comites* and *conservatores*, and identified themselves with their favourite deities. Philip did not do this. He sought a solution in the propagation of his *merita* and *virtutes*, in the advertisement of the new dynasty and in the revival of former slogans. But his *merita* were disputed; his dynasty had no traditional authority and originated from an obscure part of the empire which many regarded with suspicion; and the old slogans were ineffectual. The feeble attempt to achieve a personal deification of the Emperor had little effect, and Philip's cautious experiments in the direction of the sun-cult made little impression. Philip showed that he had learnt his lesson from the mistakes of Maximinus, but he did not manage to prevent the great crisis of the years after 248, and consequently went down to history as a man whose negligence merely brought the catastrophes still closer.

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⁹⁴ *Finer*, o.c.n. 46, 14 ff.

⁹⁵ See *Taeger*, o.c.n. 78, 420 ff.; *Cerfaux-Tondriaux*, o.c.n. 72, 365 ff. N.B. I owe thanks to mr. Alastair Hamilton at Urbino, who translated this article into English.