

The Face of
Evening and Morning



Franz Altheim

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BOOKS



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FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE MIDDLE AGES

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter I - Transformation of the Spiritual Form	9
Chapter II - New Villages	51
Chapter III - The Sasanids	103
Chapter IV - The Roman Frontiers	127
Chapter V - The Roman Army	165
Chapter VI - Eastern Emperors	205
Chapter VII - Illyrian Emperors	239
References	271

INTRODUCTION

I

Those born at the end of the last century have witnessed historical events that passed through their lives as temporary. Even if they emerged unscathed, they felt their impact, their jolts, which often left them stunned.

Among those who grew up under the shelter of that security that an illusory peace seemed to bring to their younger years, there were hardly any who even glimpsed the contours of what was to come. Those who did realize it could hardly have imagined further developments in their immediate facticity. Events continue to evolve, and their meaning is hidden within the future, a future that is both veiled and threatening. Everyone knows or senses that the cup of bitterness has not yet been emptied.

Events are followed by the question of their significance. And once again we stop before that dark veil that obstructs our search. It would seem that we ourselves obstruct the way. In the majority of cases, cliché phrases come to hide the core of the problem. If only we wanted to believe them... but who wants to? We feel that they are not true, that they cannot be true. We have to confess our helplessness, to admit that what really happened cannot be expressed. Because the events are too powerful, too transcendent, too close and still evolving.

There is no search that brings the solution. And yet, an answer would profoundly influence the individual's own life. It would bring clarity instead of disorientation, it would provide security and a solid foundation where those elements were lacking; at the

very least, it would put an end to the illusory. But how to wrest its secret from the darkness?

It may be appropriate to raise Ranke's question as to how it actually happened. But more than ever, its inadequacy is revealed here. It is not the past, but what is inherent in the past, what continues to work and generate, that fails to satisfy us and prompts us to ask new questions. It must also be borne in mind that the historical revolution that took place and is still taking place does not refer to isolated events. It is both deeper and more extensive. Likewise, our questions must not be limited to the merely factual. Its scope must also be deeper and broader: it must seek the essential. Let it not be said that the universal is deduced from the particular. The essential is never equivalent to the universal that could be determined inductively starting from particular facts. The essence has its own nature. It can be pointed out in the facts, but it is never possible to determine it by adding them together.

With regard to more distant events, the historian may be pleased to carry out interrogations, to make verifications, to decide what is true or what is not. But such a procedure would be absurd in the face of very recent events that continue to take effect today. For events have grabbed and dragged us all along - wherever they have surprised us - revealing our instability and problems to the point of removing from us all desire to set ourselves up as judges. And above all, they have transformed us to such an extent that none of us came out of the merging process that took place in the last decades as we entered it.

This is precisely what must be emphasized: our own psychic and spiritual form has been transmuted. That is why the place of particular events has changed. Nothing has remained the same for an observer before and after the two World Wars. It is necessary to go back to very distant times, to already completed processes of historical evolution, if one intends to judge events objectively and to establish standards and canons.

Among the expressions worn out by use over time is the word "current". Its indiscriminate use seems, at times, to have turned it into a pure and simple guideline. Let us say it in advance: reflections such as those that follow not only pretend to be "current", but, to the same extent, "lacking in actuality". The historical past constitutes a power. Just as the dead, according to the Roman conception, have to justify themselves before a tribunal composed of the illustrious departed, so it will also be the case with our present epoch. It will have to justify itself before history. In other words: instead of turning the present epoch into a standard, as if it were the most logical thing to do, we will try to find historical canons to measure what pretends to be a norm.

Dealing with ancient history has a unique advantage over modern or more recent history: distance. The comparison of very remote events with current events makes it possible to distinguish the fortuitous, that which is conditioned by its epoch, from that which has permanent validity. The chronological succession is replaced by super-temporal and therefore substantial communities; the interlocking of the evolution of events, in turn, is replaced by the concordance of the historical function that is revealed in them.

It is precisely from this that a new criterion is born. For the completed evolutionary process, which we can only follow in the history of antiquity, remains independent of current events. It allows comparison, and by the fact of being concluded, it has a natural advantage over that which has only just begun or is in full evolution. Thus it follows that the remote, and if one may call it so, the unfamiliar, of antiquity and its history, can often seem more current than many events whose actuality is reduced to the immediate connection with the present. Comparison with completed evolutionary processes allows a diagnosis, and perhaps a prognosis, of the epoch.

Such evolutionary processes, which appear not only in their origin and development, but also in their final stage, flow like numerous streams and currents of water into a mighty river: the denouement or, if possible, the twilight of Antiquity itself. It constitutes the great subject of historical reflections, the largest and broadest that exists to date. It has exemplary significance for all epochs of similar profound change, exemplary because it teaches that after an end comes a beginning and that every decline is followed by the birth of a new era.

This is to say that the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages lend themselves to comparison with an era of fundamental transformations such as our own. It is to be hoped that now, as never before, history will serve as a mirror for the present age; that by comparison with the past we will come to know the historical structure and function of what is happening in and around us.

II

The transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages comprises processes extending over entire centuries. A descriptive sketch could never cover the abundance of forms and events; still less would it be able to do justice to the universality of the transformation process. It is therefore necessary to draw from the whole that part which represents the historical structure in the most concrete way and can be, so to speak, a point of junction of the different paths of evolution.

In order to meet this requirement, we have chosen the third century of the Christian Era, that is, more precisely: the century between the accession to the throne of Commodus and that of Diocletian. That century offers a unique and extraordinary

picture. While the centers of ancient and elevated cultures still seemed to emit the light of an intense life, particularly Antiquity still maintained its pretensions and to a considerable extent also its prestige, the revolution that was to lead to the Middle Ages was being announced from the margins of the Oikumene*. Everything seemed to be in equilibrium; as if hypnotized, the great historical forms were momentarily confronting each other before a new movement took place. There will be few historical eras that encompass such a transcendental historical constellation: a historical constellation of global scope in the true sense of the word.

The destinies of the Roman Empire under the "soldier emperors" (to briefly characterize that century) have long been treated as a history of rulers. Events, particularly those pertaining to foreign and war history, were subdivided into reigns of emperors as if they were chapter headings. Only after the First World War were global movements oriented. The key to rapprochement now seemed to lie in the economic-social contrast between town and country, between bourgeois and peasant. The fact that it was no longer the urban population, but the rural population, that made up the armies, contributed to accentuate this contrast. The new peasant troops and the emperors elected by them have made the cause of the countryside their own. This must have been the reason for the decline of urban culture and, consequently, of ancient culture in general.

Personal experiences determined Michael Rostovtsev's conception. The Russian October Revolution, of which he had been an eyewitness, seems to have provided him with the appropriate framework. Today there will no longer be anyone to support his interpretation. For the result of that revolution was not an uprising of the countryside against the city (as it may have seemed at first), but a widespread industrialization of the countryside with its consequent urbanization. Even taking into

account the development that took place in late antiquity, it is doubtful whether it was a class struggle that brought about the change that culminated in the new order of Diocletian. There was undoubtedly a social revolution. But it was not the driving force: to say so is tantamount to confusing cause with effect. The driving forces of history can rarely be derived from internal evolution. Ranke's doctrine of the primacy of foreign policy is still valid, and will rightly be credited in the present case.

Peoples, whose historical past were still blank pages, were knocking at the gates of the empire from the end of the second century after Jesus Christ. But also other neighboring peoples, with whom the empire had had to contend for centuries, became more dangerous adversaries than before, led by new tribes with strong blood. What favored their assaults was a revolution in the methods of warfare. Everywhere the cavalry was being placed in the vanguard, becoming the decisive weapon of combat. Following the course of that revolution and its scope, we find a great movement that took hold of the Old World in its entirety.

It began with the nomadic horsemen of the Eurasian steppes; simultaneously it conquered ancient empires of ancient culture, such as Iran and China, and also spread to the East Germanic peoples. It also spread to the Arabian Peninsula, creating its own particular form in North Africa. Finally, it reached the gates of the Roman Empire. Here, too, it did not stop at the frontiers; and once again a decisive change in the structuring of the army took place.

The starting points of this great movement were the Eurasian steppes, as well as the Arabian Peninsula. From there the new came to burst into the regions of high cultures: China, Iran and the Mediterranean area. Three of the currents that were to determine the migration of peoples, namely the Germans, the Arabs and Berbers and finally the Turks, were already being announced in the 3RD century A.D. Only the Slavs were still in the shadows Seen from Europe and Asia Minor, the

movement was moving from East to West. Once again, a comparison with the present time is necessary.

It was Goethe who, in 1815, raised his prophetic voice announcing the vanguard of a coming movement. "It is true; I no longer see Frenchmen, nor do I see Italians. Instead, I see Cossacks, Basquoians, Croats, Magyars, Casubians, Samlanders, Brown Hussars and others. We have long been accustomed to look only to the West expecting all danger to come to us from there. But the land extends even far to the East." Rudolf Pannwitz was the one who plucked these phrases from the oblivion in which they lay, the first to speak of the migration of peoples that formed the face of our age. That migration also runs from East to West, as seen from Europe and Asia Minor.

This shows that the cataclysm of the century was not due to economic changes nor was it limited to the territory of the Roman Empire. It was not only the decline of the civilization of the late Antiquity, limited to a small urban social stratum that was disappearing simultaneously with it. What happened at that time affected the Old World as a whole. In terms of its scope and significance, it is comparable only to the events that shaped our era and are still shaping it. Today as then, a common destiny determines the entire globe. It shook it, fertilized it and made the new flourish amidst the rubble.

An epoch and more: in the third century A.D. the decline of one of the great spiritual forms of humanity began to take place. It was, at the same time, a decline of values and classes, a failure of the ability to focus on new possibilities and create them as historical realities. But the negative constitutes only one aspect. It requires a complement; it postulates as an applicable canon another young and vibrant epoch of the future. In front of the end of Antiquity a new archaic era arises: the avant-garde of the Middle Ages.

* In Greek, "the inhabited (land)". (*N. of E.*)

CHAPTER I

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPIRITUAL FORM

Although the late Antiquity, as a denomination for a group of historical manifestations, is not a creation of art history, it is nevertheless rooted in it. Art history has coined the concept and has endeavored to clarify it. G. Rodenwaldt, art historian among archaeologists, endeavored to outline the essence and duration of the late Antiquity and to delimit the use of the term.

According to Rodenwaldt, the late Antiquity encompasses the centuries following the classical era of ancient art. In detailing them she was undecided as to the chronological location, and eventually settled on the beginnings in the time of Diocletian. She stated that in Italy, the late Antiquity had lasted until the invasion of the Longorbards, and in the East somewhat longer, that is, through the first Slavic incursions until the triumphal advance of the Arabs. There, the last peak was the time of the Goths, and here, the era of Justinian.

Rodenwaldt added that the participation of barbarian influences could not be easily estimated. And he was satisfied with this generic formulation. He probably suspected that, when he got down to business, the contrived, excessively contrived structure of his definition would collapse. All the more reason for him to state that wherever such barbarian influences made themselves felt, the ancient form had conquered the alien by its own means. Rodenwaldt has attributed an expression: frontality -whose oriental origin is evident- to the Sassanid plastic and to a popular Roman art invented by him, overlooking older examples.

But can an art that has assimilated the principle of frontality still be considered as ancient in its essence? It is said that a characteristic feature of the late Antiquity is the disappearance of the rounded plastic. The argument that it could be the disappearance of a decisive characteristic of ancient art met with this reply: that the free-form bulk had been imposed on the Romans only by the grace of the Greek tradition, and that, therefore, its loss had not been a decisive event for Roman antiquity. However, even in the Greek East, the round plastic did not reappear. There, too, the plastic substance was disappearing, and what remained of this genre appeared increasingly flat, poor and routine.

The round form in art corresponded, in religion, to the individual Greek god. Both constituted the expression of a round form that was defined and determined in all aspects. As an individuality, such a god stood next to, or in front of, other homologous individualities, forming with them a cosmos of coordinated values and beings. Almost simultaneously with the plastic round, the value and substance of the individual Greek god was diminishing. Porphyry's writing about the sun god demonstrates this.

Porphyry believed he was in the realm of a concept of god transmitted by inheritance.

But his system caused all the individual gods to merge into the broad essence of the solar god, the latter, in turn, being subordinated to the Nous, the One, which encompassed everything. Thus, as polytheism became the mere force and mode of action of the One, the gods lost, at the same time, their roundness and plasticity, abandoning their individuality in favor of a single all-encompassing deity. The Neoplatonists -Syrians like Porphyry, Amelius, Longinus; Arabs like Jamblichus; Egyptians like Ammonius Sakkas, the Hermetics and Plotinus himself- were in agreement with their origin and their doctrine, precursors of the Monophysites, who devalued the Logos and

the passion in favor of the father and the historical-human existence of Jesus Christ in favor of his divine nature. And even more: they prepared the way for Muhammad and his passionate invectives against any form of faith that assigned to God "a companion".

It did not take us long to realize that, even in art, a newly awakened East was making its claims. Dura-Europos on the Euphrates added new and surprising features to the picture of the art of late antiquity, through its frescoes in the synagogue and the mithraeum, and also in the temples. In Transjordan, it was found that Mschatta, the castle located in the middle of the desert, and its famous façade, which until recently had been attributed to the Omayyad period, is a product of the late THIRD and early fourth centuries. Thus it happened that, alongside the late Antiquity, the young Arab art immediately emerged with a capital work: "The genius of a people", and the art that flowed from it, which was to determine the history of Asia Minor and the countries of the Mediterranean for almost ten centuries, announced its arrival in an unequivocal way.

From that moment on, it becomes evident that the end of Antiquity cannot be understood starting from the classical period. It is not homogeneous, nor is it a mere late manifestation, but proves to be complex in its mode and origin: next to a dry, dying branch, a new shoot blossoms, introducing future manifestations and, to a certain extent, anticipating them.

In short: that feeble conception which, nourished by classicist ideas, thought it could get by with a minimum of concessions (barbarian influences difficult to valorize...), which saw everywhere the "still" and nowhere the new, does not give what it pretends to give. He kept his eyes fixed on Rome and Italy, Constantinople and Asia Minor, without noticing that new centers of gravity had been formed. In that other worlds had arisen next to the old one and lived, acted, created independently

of it and relegated to the defensive what until then seemed to have universal value.

Add to this the fact that the visual arts alone are not in a position to create a historical conception of the centuries that lie on the dividing line between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. An isolating contemplation is always and only a possibility, and it has to assert itself in the face of a broad and complete vision. Poetry or historiography, religious documents, economy and society cannot be overlooked. It is necessary to examine all these elements as a whole and in their mutual implications, assigning to art the place that, in this general picture, corresponds to it.

I

For the classical school of style, the novel never belonged to the literary genres proper. We find it neither in the poetic art of Aristotle nor in that of Horace. Therefore, it is not subject to any of the laws governing literary genres. Chronological or local unity has never been imposed on the novel, nor has the rigorous vocabulary obligatory for the epic poem or the choric lyric.

Petronius juxtaposes the elegant, somewhat careless language of the narrator Encolpius with the polished Latin of the poet and scholar Eumolpus. Next to the literary language is the familiar language of the cultured world. Opposite these, we have Trimalcion and his circle of freedmen; it is not that they lack the ambition to elevate, shape and purify the language; it was precisely Trimalcion who put it into practice and failed sadly. Moreover, there are paratragical and parodic passages in general and others in which tragic or rhetorical, sentimental or pathetic overtones are intended to be taken seriously. And depending on the theme, the language becomes burlesque, fantastic or lubricious.

He does not even reject the intercalation of verses in the text. Already the ancient novel made use of a conscious and intentional mixture of styles; the modern novel does the same.

Balzac's language, says Taine, is a gigantic chaos. In it there is everything: arts, sciences, professions, history, philosophy, religion . . . However, although the language of the novel lacks unity and sometimes seems chaotic, there is nothing amorphous about it. This is demonstrated both by Longo's amiable grace and prim candor and by the presumptuous style of Apuleius and Heliodorus. Even the galley proofs, covered with corrections, of Balzac's novels attest to his efforts to shape the style. So the novel also has its form, emulated by those who wrote or studied this literary genre. It is all a matter of turning it into conception.

We repeat: there is an epic language and a tragic language, and there is no language proper to the novel. But this only indicates that the style of epic poems and tragedies is subject to general rules that clearly delimit it. Contrary to the unity of form, characteristic of these literary genres, free form is characteristic of the novel (G. Lukács).

It could also be described as a form or attitude of search. The epic poem and tragedy strictly reject all influences foreign to the laws that govern their style; the novel, on the other hand, is accessible to the most varied influences. Cosmopolitan among literary genres, having broken down the barriers of a characteristic nature, it welcomes into its bosom all styles and forms of language. A late but grateful heir, it assimilates everything it can use. Sometimes, it even comes to resemble a beggar of literature, which does not refuse to show off with the tinsel and the old trinkets discarded by the distinguished and exclusive literary genres.

It is a fact that the novel, wherever it has arisen, has at first been regarded as an undistinguished literary genre. Precisely the lack of a well-defined form of language and the acceptance of all kinds of influences must have contributed to the formation of

this concept. Only frankly decadent epochs in terms of their sensibility and awareness of style were willing to overlook these factors. Antiquity never did. It was only after its decline that the novel was able to assert itself.

However, the novel, wherever it has appeared, and in any time, has been able to achieve a success that other literary genres could only envy it. The enormous editions of the modern novel are a well-known fact. The papyri of late antiquity painted a similar picture. It has been said that a novel that does not run has no reason to exist. What is the reason for a similar success?

The novel creates and signifies a world of its own. That world fills its creator and captivates its readers so intensely that, at times, it comes to replace reality. The novel offers something to its readers: an illusion, or rather, a lived reality, without other literary genres being able to produce anything comparable.

The contrast again clarifies what we have just stated. Just as tragic language admits only a selection of terms, so the tragic world, especially the dramatic one, represents only a segment of the real world. The characters of a drama are "counterpoint necessities. The dramatic character constitutes a narrowing of the *varadero*" (H. v. Eufmannsthal). On the other hand, the characteristic of the novel is its breadth, both in antiquity and today. It offers the inexhaustible living, the unlimited, the ubiquitous forces.

The drama and, above all, the tragedy, concentrates all the rays in a single focus. It generates a high flame, but of limited scope. It provides a segment, not a parable, of real life. It is capable of illuminating that reality for the space of a second and reducing it to a formula. But drama can never succeed in juxtaposing to the real world another, distinct world of its own. A tragedy can move, purify and elevate the spirit. But it can only live in the novel.

For what the novel has in common with reality is an extraordinary abundance of material and possibilities. Therefore,

the great creations in the field of the novel cover a lot of ground. Petronius bequeathed us a study of the society of his time. Apuleius also drew us a variegated picture. He gave preference to the lower classes and, moreover, did not hesitate to make use of heaven and hell. And what shall we say of Jamblichus and his books, which at that time numbered thirty-five or thirty-nine!

The breadth and richness of the novel and its world indicate that the concentration and accumulation of events and their brutality and senselessness are also involved. Consequently, the novel takes on an ambiguous and overlapping nuance. Just as its language, at times, appears to be "gigantic chaos" without being so, so it is with the action. It seems chaotic, yet reveals something that at least resembles a "ratio". But it is also blurred and limited: an approximate thing that raises new questions, new doubts. That mysterious glow, as well as the semi-darkness, the undecided and the half-concluded, are part of the novel. Its world is demonic.

The ancient novel preferred an Egyptian environment, a country of enigmas and miracles, where the East and Hellenism met, apparently allying and then separating again. It sought the mysterious element of the basins and tombs of the hidden grottoes, of secret rites, of human sacrifices, witchcraft and necromancy, of everything that seemed to lead from the world of the living to Hades.

Jamblichus' novel must have been an unparalleled work in that sense. Among the ruins appear Chaldeans and priests, there are dreams in temples and mysteries of Aphrodite, royal courtship, soldiers, dismissed Alano mercenaries, as well as thieves. In addition, there are tombs, buried treasures, tortures and mutilations, sorcerers, necromancers and ventriloquists, as well as curious varieties of the animal kingdom: poisonous flies and poisoned bees, dogs that devour corpses and dromedaries that play the role of messengers of love. It was that strange, amorphous and bubbling world, where hundreds of influences

intertwined, where the most ancient and the most modern were mixed: Babylon after Jesus Christ. Jamblichus was, according to his own account, Syrian by birth. He came to know the language, philosophy, customs and history of Babylon only from a prisoner of war. Therefore, Babylon was an environment of the author's choice. It had been a happy idea to choose it as the theater of his literary work, for that country was, so to speak, predestined to become the breeding ground of a novel.

Once again, the novel reveals itself as a free-form creation. It does not deny concrete methods, but they exist only to be questioned, either vaguely or clearly. That is why the novel usually achieves all manifestations of disorganization, decomposition and disintegration to the thousand marvels. Long before Stendhal, Petronius discovered "the province" in the cultural and social sense; Apuleius confirms that the ancient novel already carries the critique of society in its blood. With society disintegrates the myth of which it has been the bearer. That is why the novel parodies the myth, as it necessarily had to happen. *Priapi's wrath* succeeds the wrath of Poseidon in the heroic epic poem... The poetic world of yesteryear coincided with the example-bearing and value-bearing world of myth. The latter had absorbed, for a long time, all that was sententious, elevated or ideal in life. Disintegrated the myth, however, the only thing that remained of life, insofar as it was intended to be captured in poetry, was the low, the vulgar, the adventurous, the mystical-superstitious, the obscene. What remained were the shadows, the dark aspects of existence.

Sometimes, the novel assumes a horror and even an atrocity. Ancient novels are well represented in this category. It is worth mentioning Jamblichus again; Apuleius is no slouch in this respect either. Others seek to create an atmosphere bordering on the tragic. In tragedy, however, this tendency is concentrated in certain moments or leads toward them in an intentional crescendo; on the other hand, it can permeate the entire novel. In

tragedy, the terrible finds expression, in the novel it can remain an omnipresent secret. It becomes horror, always lurking, insinuating itself into the destinies of the protagonists, but without coming to light.

The blurred and inconceivable, the dangerous, doubtful and insecure are externalized, first and foremost, in the novel, in the psychic domain. But it is not only the soul that is willing to wander through limitless spaces. Where the nomadic element, exile and uprootedness prevail, the journey is justified even in the geographical sense. The traveling experience turns the atmosphere that dominates the novel into space. The protagonists are pushed not only from one danger to another, but also from one place to another. Traveling means change, exposure to experiences, receiving impressions, but it also means insecurity and vulnerability. Traveling means lacking connections; it is the free way of living, if we can call it that. Therefore, the protean of the novel has to express itself through travel.

For the ancient novel, its location is never unimportant. There is something like psychic foreshadowing. Longo transplants the lovers to a simple and primitive environment, to the countryside. For Daphnis and Chloe the city, being ungodly, offers no attraction. Nature, on the other hand, offers them a purer life, bringing them closer to the gods. Even after finding their parents, the couple remains in the countryside "honoring the gods, the nymphs, Pan and Eros, owners of great flocks of goats and sheep, and knowing no sweeter food than fruit and milk." In this, Longo is not alone. In Heliodorus' Ethiopian novel, the three countries in which it is set correspond to different spiritual domains. Greece is for the lovers the pure country of their youth which they abandon forever. They flee to Egypt, which for them means adventure, adventures and a nomadic life. The Ethiopia so beloved by the gods is, however, the one that is to become their new homeland, their land of promise. It is there that the

couple finds themselves and where their destiny is fulfilled. And in evolving towards a purified attitude, that same purification also takes place in the Ethiopians. Carried by the will of celestial beings, they rise towards a nobler and more spiritual form of their religion.

The world of the novel, as we have just explained, takes hold of the reader with such intensity that at certain moments it replaces his real world. Above all, the novel transplants him from the real world to a novelistic one. In times of danger, crisis and general decline, it seduces the idea of escaping a depressing present instead of confronting it. Instead of calling to action, it offers the tempting possibility of flying to a beautiful and distant dreamland.

The historical novel is also equivalent to escape. It transposes the action to the most remote epoch possible, looking for a distant and better world in a distant past. The Greek poetry of the time of the emperors gave the astonishing example of a literature and a people that had imposed itself to overlook, almost completely, the epoch in which it had to live. This people sought in the past compensation for the misery of the present. The novel corresponded to a great extent to that attitude. The novel of Niño combines the ancient with the exotic; the novel of Alexander, on the other hand, recounts exploits of Greek history to which neither the Rome of the past nor the contemporary Rome could be equated in any way, as they believed.

In the novel one can live, as we have already said. Also in the historical novel one lives with and in the protagonists. As long as the illusion persists, nothing can prevent us from becoming Niño or Alejandro ourselves, making their exploits and decisions our own. It is up to the reader, as a subject, to deal with the less pleasant aspects of such exploits. In the novel, on the other hand, he can reign as he pleases. He is allowed, as if in compensation, to make decisions, command armies, judge and punish instead of having to grudgingly execute what others impose on him.

The prototypical novel reader is usually excluded from the *arcana imperii*. Without knowing what goes on inside the circle of the hierarchs, he finds in the historical novel what he is looking for. He learns of the royal, divine or mysterious descendants of great rulers and heroes, of their unfulfilled dreams and longings, and, above all, of their love life. In doing so, the novel enters the domain that is most dear to it.

The characteristics of the novel that we have just enumerated come together and increase within the domain that seems to enclose its soul: love. Let us recall once again the insecure and mysterious, the ambiguous, tremulous and doubtful, the chaotic and immense, which are integral parts of the novel. They form the dark background against which love unfolds and flourishes. It is the refuge of sensitive and timid souls that suffer from contact with the world. It is the healing sap that heals wounds, the strength that consoles the depressed. The religion of the novel is, if I may put it this way, faith in love.

Love is so much a part of the novel that it is almost impossible to do without it. It is its constant theme and, frequently, the only one. Only very few have dared to deviate from this norm. But exclusivity runs the risk of meaning a spiritual void. To limit oneself to a single motif, no matter how many variations it is capable of, brings with it an enormous impoverishment. There is a danger that great and profound thoughts are excluded or only brought up by the grace of the theme of love. What is more, love becomes the content and the scale of life. Napoleon called love "the destiny of an inactive society".

Love seems to cover all objects with a too glossy varnish. Stories from the Old Testament, whose impact lies in their grandiose simplicity, are in a way eroticized by Josephus in his work. The atmosphere and the artistic means of the novel begin to infect and fill the historiography. It does not stop at the great or at the sacred and august.

Love is woman's domain. Love fills her to an extent that would be impossible to achieve in man; love determines woman's destiny. The domination of love means that woman begins to become the center. A feminine vision of the world opens up. Man becomes the loving lover; one step further, and he would become woman's plaything. A world of Watteau opens up, and, at times, the road from Longo to rococo does not seem long at all.

It is a particular aspect of the woman that is emphasized in the romance novel. It is not marriage or motherhood, home or family that are foregrounded. Where matrimonial matters are involved, marriage is almost always presented as the antipode of love. The novel does not usually describe obligations and problems, resignation to fate, but the time of promise and seemingly limitless possibilities. Systematically, the novel makes its own the idea that all danger comes before the final union of lovers; then love begins. In real life, however, difficulties often arise precisely afterwards.

Once again the novel proves to be a free-form creation. And by avoiding arduous but necessary elements, it does not compromise. Pleasant and stimulating changes, life enjoyed to the fullest, the possibility of giving and giving, all these elements are an integral part of love, and in most cases, also the quiet idyll. All these characteristics have in common the avoidance of unpleasant realities.

The emergence of the romance novel presupposes a relaxation of existing customs and systems. The novel, as a free entity of literature, is subordinated to analogous manifestations of social evolution. In general, the novel as a valid form distances itself from a situation, since the community felt itself protected in possession of the certain and absolute. What had been valid until then has become doubtful for them and begins to disintegrate.

The crowning achievement of this social evolution is the metropolis. The civilization of the great cities constitutes the

best terrain for novels. This refers both to the time of the Roman emperors and to more recent centuries. For to the novel corresponds the urban intellect, uprooted and devoid of genuine instincts. To it corresponds an increasingly vast, but at the same time increasingly superficial culture. To create the need for the novel, there must be a spiritual poverty coupled with an insatiable voracity for reading, which seeks to absorb with a minimum of effort what is within everyone's reach. Great epic poems, rigorous tragedies, nothing that requires form or discipline are no longer produced; nor can anyone digest the products of more austere times. From the ruins of the ancient literary genres arises a creation that ignores and rejects clear forms, constituting the contrast of that amorphous mass that fills the great cities.

II

The novel of late antiquity, with its free form, survived the closed and well-defined literary genres of classical antiquity, inheriting them at the same time. The predominance of this novel, which determined the literary life of the first century after Jesus Christ, must be interpreted as a symptom of a disintegration of the form. However, in the face of a world in agony, another kind of novel was emerging which, however different its manifestations, was once again uniform and well determined as to its form. What had once characterized the archaic Greek and Roman was awakening to life, but was now lying under rubble and going back millennia. The ideal was not the abundance and even superabundance of individual variation but the consistent and systematic, the geometric, seemingly schematic. What seemed relegated to a very remote past, namely chivalry, hand-to-hand combat, heroic destinies, returned to the present with renewed vigor, and this was soon expressed in

poetry. A new and different sensibility for the forms was emerging next to the dying Antiquity, fresh and pregnant with future possibilities.

The new was not growing where the centers had hitherto been. What was being announced, eagerly seeking its own configuration, came from the margin of what had been until then the ancient Oikumene. From one day to the next, villages that had been forgotten for centuries took on significance and personality.

Among them are the Copts of Egypt or the Syrians, whose national languages and literatures seemed completely covered by Hellenism. Both came to light towards the end of the second or third century. Ancient cultures on which they were based and which experienced a late revival in them, came to externalize themselves in forms created by Hellenism and which at that time were within the reach of all. Thus, the Coptic and Syriac literatures were cuttings of the more recent Greek and Christian literatures. Even the languages of both peoples fit into that mesh. The Coptic and Syriac languages represent the "vulgar form" of the Demota and Aramed languages, respectively, which corresponded to the contemporary Vulgar Latin and Vulgar Greek. This evolution is characterized by the elimination of case desinences, by circumscription by means of prepositions, by the substitution of verbal forms by the use of the participle and the auxiliary verb, the elimination of final syllables and synalephas in the root of the word.

However, behind these languages and literatures, other languages and literatures emerge, of a different kind. They do not come from a field that, a hundred times tilled, has borne fruit again. The Germanic, Arabic and Turkish languages had in common the fact that they had sprouted from virgin soil and emerged for the first time. In them, everything was young and of strong sap. The system of desinences was extensively developed and, coincident with that fact, had stopped in its original phase.

The same can be said of the vocabulary. Everywhere it was only beginning with the written word. The first inscriptions of the Northern Arabs and the oldest runic and Germanic scripts date from the late 2nd and 3rd centuries. A Turkic language appears with the Huns, and the corresponding runic script possibly dates back to the 1st century. Epic qualifiers, handed down in Finnish epic as an inheritance for centuries, indicate its origin in the 4th century.

The new world still struggles for an adequate expression of itself. Nothing has been done anywhere. Nevertheless, a common attitude is already manifesting itself, and even if what has emerged from it is still imperfect, the future belongs to it. A chivalrous world in the ideal sense was expected everywhere, that is, a world in which there was an immovable place for struggle and honor, for heroism and heroic destiny, for magnitude and tragedy. An intense eagerness for the definite and the rigorous, for an austere expression and a concise linguistic form, took hold of those young peoples. Verses that found their expression in alliteration and harmonious meters began to determine poetry once again. The closed form was replacing the free form And all, with one accord, made their own the epic poems of the Germans, the songs of the Garamantes bards on both sides of the Sahara, the runes of the Finns, the alliterative verses of the Huns and of the Turks in general, even the restrained structure of the funeral dirge of Attila.

The Germanic epic, whose origins go back to very remote times, took tangible form for the first time in the 4th century, through its creations. It was at that time that the song of Offa, king of the Angles, the Gothic epic of the battle of the Huns, was born. Lléroe is the outstanding individual; the rhapsode praises his exploits and describes their course. The war and the battle are considered as a single combat, being concentrated, in a certain way, in an accumulation of solid violence. Only in this

form could history be presented, and only a hero could claim to capture it in this way.

At the same time, Arabic poetry, of the same category as Germanic poetry, is emerging, filling the pre-Islamic era. In the Talmudic inscriptions, a world of ideas seeks its expression in a timid and embryonic form, an expression that had to be externalized later in the casida in a more exuberant form, but still subject to a rigorous meter. The appearance of the Sassanids brings us the first works of poetry; they relate combats between Arabs and Persians. We will now try to reproduce this impression by translating two passages:

We fought with Ilaf the faithful with strong hosts of steeds.

When the Persians were defeated, we annihilated Herbedhan with vigor and eagerness.

We came from afar with fire and ardor to hear the enemy's last gasp.

Or:

Do you not suffer, hearing such cruel tidings?

From Abid the dejected tribe is seen,

Daizan fallen and his home destroyed, the horsemen of Tazid cast them into the sea,

Shapur, of great hosts king,

with Ilphs and heroes among his flock

of the fort broke the valar stone

no matter how strong its metal foundations were.

Goethe speaks of the grim, bordering on gloomy, character of ancient Arabic poetry. "The magnitude of character, the seriousness, the justified cruelty of the action represent, properly speaking, the marrow of his poetry."

The finishing touch is the casida of ancient Arabia. It corresponds to a later period. However, it brings to an end what was begun then. The novel and its focal point, the love story, characterized the literature of late antiquity. From the parched,

sun-scorched desert floor came a way of looking at love that was diametrically opposed to that produced by the literature of the great cities. For the Bedouin, love means renunciation; it is equivalent to a retrospective look at what is irrevocably lost. Here are the reveries in the terrain of seemingly limitless possibilities, the resigned look of farewell, the world of the woman in contrast to that of the man. The novel of late antiquity was a dissolute, noncommittal symptom of cultural decline. The casida, on the other hand, heralds a new era. Austere and rigorous, it represents the expression of the recovered "closed" form.

Next to the Arabs we have the Camites of North Africa. The song of the *Lute of Gásiros* reveals to us the world of the nomadic tribes settled in Fezzan. Leo Frobenius wrote it down at the beginning of our century, as he heard it from the mouth of a bard in the northern part of Togo. He realized that it was a very old song, the oldest version of which he placed at the beginning of the 4th century AD. The emigration of the Garamantes from the North, their recolonization in the bend of the Niger River, events that constitute the historical background, are reflected in their beginnings in the geographer Marinus and in Ptolemy, his younger contemporary. With the *Lute of Gásiros*, Frobenius has succeeded in recovering a jewel of world literature, deeply rooted in the chivalrous and combative sentiment. It rises to a grandiose rapport with heroic tragedy and magnitude.

Gásiros rebels against his destiny. He fights daily against his enemies, and his sword is like a sickle in the midst of wheat. Gásiros returns home covered with laurels, but he does not sit among men. He knows that he will not inherit his father's empire, that he will lose it despite all his victories. "Gásiros went out into the field. A partridge was perched on a bush, partridges were peeping through the grass. The partridge sang of his struggle with the snake: All beings must die. Kings and heroes will be buried and rot. But the song of my battles will not die.

They will continue to sing it, and so it will outlive all kings and heroes. The Empire will be lost, but the song will live on."

Gásiros understands that the prophecy is true. He orders the blacksmith to make him a lute. But the lute does not sing. The blacksmith tells him: "It is wood. It cannot sing if it has no heart. You have to give it the heart. The wood has to vibrate to the beat of your sword. The wood has to drink drops of blood that run, blood of your blood, breath of your breath. Your pain must be its pain, your glory, its glory. The wood must be nothing but the wood of the tree from which it has been carved; it must live not only with you, but also with your children. Then it will happen that the sound that comes from your heart will resound in the ear of your son and continue to live in men, and the blood that flows from a heart will water your body and continue to live in this piece of wood. On the other hand, because of it the Empire will be lost. Replied Gasiros: Then let it be lost!".

Gásiros goes out to fight with his sons. His eldest son falls. Gásiros picks up the corpse and rides back, carrying it on his shoulders. The blood from the eldest son's heart falls in drops on the lute, but the lute does not sing. For seven days, Gásiros goes out to fight daily. Every evening, he returns with the corpse of one of his sons. Every evening, the blood of one of his sons falls in drops on the lute. The women mourn, the men become angry. They demand that Gásiros leave them. He goes abroad. He is accompanied by his youngest son, his wives, his friends.

They rode far, day and night. They came to a deserted region. They rested in the deserted region. Slept all the heroes, all the women. The youngest son of Gásiros slept. Gásiros was awake. Gásiros was still sitting by the fire. Gásiros was not sleeping. Gásiros had a start. Gásiros sharpened his hearing. Gásiros felt a voice beside him. It sounded as if it came from deep inside him. Gásiros listened. Gásiros shuddered. It was the lute singing. The lute was singing the singing.

When he sang the lute for the first time, the king, father of Gásiros, died in the city. By singing the lute for the first time, the anger of Gásiros had dissipated. When he sang the lute for the first time, the empire was gone.

III

The new literary dimension that opened up at the turn of the century went hand in hand with a geographical transformation. In an amplified vision of the world, a shift in the centers of gravity was outlined. The difference between young and old peoples became apparent once again: between cultures that were still wax in the hands of their creator and others that were curdled and rigid, to which it was perhaps possible to superimpose but never to impose a new form.

Iran and China were seats of extremely high culture, of a very extensive past. Both stood side by side with the ancient world united under the scepter of the Roman Empire. All of them had in common the fact that they differed from those who for the first time were peering into history, such as the Germans, Arabs, Huns and Berbers. Viewed broadly, the three empires formed a coherent zone stretching across the Old World from east to west. The Roman and Sassanid empires had a common border and there was certainly no lack of cultural exchange between China and Iran, or, indirectly, between China and Rome. Great missionary and redemptive religions, which from the 3RD century onwards were about to displace the more ancient individual gods and cults, arrived at the gates of the three ancient empires and ended up becoming determining factors for them. Over and above this fact, a common rhythm of historical evolution, with typical and therefore common forms, can be observed everywhere. Thus it was that, at least in that later period, there seemed to be the premise of understanding the

commonality of historical destiny, conditioned by common adversaries and by an affinity of their situation and structure, and to act accordingly.

And yet, nothing of the sort happened.

China was isolated and remote from the beginning. It did not even have a common border with Iran. The roof of the world separated the East of the Oikumena from its half and from the Roman West. Even Rome and Iran, those two "luminaries of the world", could not agree. They had already done much to organize the common defenses of the Caucasian gorges against the Huns and Alans. For the rest, dissension was continuous. Rome and China, separated by land and sea, had never attempted a political rapprochement.

So the only link that united the three ancient empires and their lofty cultures turned out to be a trade route: the Silk Road. It crossed the main part of the Asian continent, passing through a series of centers of ancient cultures: the Pluangho and Loyang valley, the Tarim basin, Baktria, Chorasan, Media and Iraq, Syria and Asia Minor. The Silk Road did what it could. The natural obstacles, the distances, the national borders that had to be crossed, made traffic very difficult. The fact that communication was never interrupted is proof of the tenacity of those who built the road, used it and kept it passable.

In the first place, the silk road had commercial purposes. Then the commercial and cultural items followed the great redeeming religions with their apostles and their books. However, soldiers, armies or peoples have never made use of the road. Only one exception is known, and it is the one that confirms the rule. With extraordinarily high losses, Chinese armies, on two occasions tried to get from Ferghana some of the celestial horses "those that sweat blood"; which required the war against the Huns; only the second attempt was successful. From the West no one ever tried to undertake such an enterprise. At most, the Westerners resorted to East Turkestan for their military retreats. The

Buddhists and the Manichaeans evaded their oppressors, the followers of Zarathustra, and then those of Mohammed by fleeing to the East.

Commerce, redemptive religions and ways of retreat: all three have in common the fact of dispensing with the great historical destiny. Redemption and the hope of the hereafter, profit and renunciation separate them from the enclosures in which blood and tears, struggle and fortitude sprout the determining forms of history. Suffice it to say that that link called the silk road was broken when trying to shape a common destiny in common actions.

From the 3rd century A.D. the silk road began to lose importance as a direct link between East and West and not because of the efficiency of any of the three ancient empires; it was already declining. Rather, it was because new roads were opened by Iranian and Turkish nomads in the north and by Arabs and Berber nomads on dromedaries in the south.

Here is first the northern road, or rather: the entire width of the area occupied by the Eurasian steppe, which stretches from the heart of Mongolia to the Dobruja and Alfold. To the north it borders on a wild belt (Taiga), to the south on mountain ranges and deserts. There are no natural obstacles. Pamir and Hindukusch are missing, and the political borders that stood in the way of the silk road are also missing. The bed on which the traffic flowed was wider and clearer; thus, it turned out that even before the transition period, this northern road, from time to time, played a role in trade, and that, from that time on, it became equal in usefulness to its larger companion.

Only by following the northern road could the Hellenistic wool weaving mills reach the tombs of the Hun princes of Noin Ula in Outer Mongolia. Farther still the first heyday of Chwarezm takes us. The state, whose center of gravity was located on the banks of the lower Oxos and south of Lake Aral,

had been determined from very early on to take under its suzerainty the commercial traffic developing further north.

However, the northern road only became important when it became the artery for the movement of entire peoples, a great road of migrations. It was Eurasian nomads, Tocaryans, and other Sacs, Sarmatians, Aorsi and Alans who used it for the first time for their migrations from East to West. The Alans reached the Danube and Tisa plateau, and from there continued on to Galicia, Spain and North Africa. However, the first to be able to boast of having traveled this *great road* * in all its extension were the Huns. The bend of the Ordos to the east and the plateau of the river Tisa to the west, constituted two boundaries of the great Hun migration. Numerous Turkish tribes, and, finally, Magyars and Mongols, had to follow in their footsteps.

The road to the North passed through all the ancient empires. It sometimes touched their respective territories, but never passed through them. The Huns, as they passed through the northern edge of Iran, assimilated all kinds of words and institutions peculiar to that people; the successors of the Huns did the same. However, the influence was never profound; the proof of this is that none of the ancient empires ever tried to establish themselves along the northern road. The latter was reserved for the nomads; the two historical spheres were kept separate.

Also to the south, the ancient empires had a means of communication: it has been called the maritime silk road. The discovery of the monsoons facilitated rapid and regular communication between the ports of the Red Sea and those of India. In the first centuries of the Christian Era, trade flourished between the Roman Empire, on the one hand, and Eastern Iran, India and China on the other. Recent excavations - at Begram, near Cabul, at Aricamedu (east coast of India, not far from Pondicherry) and at Oc-Eo, in the delta of the Mekong River -

have confirmed the extent of that commercial traffic, which extended mainly from Egypt to the East.

However, the geographical sphere underwent a new expansion by means of peoples who appeared for the first time on the historical horizon in the nth century AD. The southern sea route had its complement and continuation in the southern road. By this route, the dromedary came from the south of the Arabian peninsula to the Blemnians and Nobates, settled in upper Egypt; by the same route, the great movement of nomads mounted on dromedaries took hold of Fezzan and the southern parts of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Coming from Yemen, the southern Arabs had set foot on African soil beyond the Red Sea, settling in Abyssinia. They initiated the advance of the nomadic Berbers with their dromedaries towards the northern coast of the continent, dominated by the Romans. The dromedary brought from Arabia provided these Berbers with sustenance and a new mode of combat. It placed them in a position to stay out of the desert; it allowed migrations and war campaigns. However, it was not simply a Camite nationality movement. Arab migrations did not begin only in the time of Muhammad's henchmen. The Nabataeans in the Sinai peninsula and in Egypt, Hatra and Palmyra, the Lacmites of Hira and their adversaries, the Gasanids, the Arab settlement in Cuzistan, all show that the movement was at its peak already centuries earlier. Also the westward movement which manifested itself on the North African littorals and along the Sahara, can be placed in the nth century after Jesus Christ. The foundation of an Arabian district in Upper Egypt, the appearance of the North Arabian Tamud in the same region, the colonization of Palmyrene ark-shooters and Syrians in general on the banks of the Numidian Limes, herald the coming conquest. And again the movement moves from east to west. And again, no ancient empire (in this case neither the Roman Empire) tried to take an active part in it. Berbers and

Arabs, i.e. nomads, were the protagonists of the advances and migrations. Finally, in this case it was not a road as such, but a wide area called the southern road. This southern road was not important as a means of commercial communication, but as an artery for the movement of peoples, like the northern road.

* In Italian in the original.

IV

Among the religions, the "ancient" were distinguished from the "modern" ones. Among the modern ones, Buddhism, Christianity and the Islamic religion, and Manichaeism, now extinct, stand out. Their characteristics are: an individual founder, redemption, mission, and a supranational attitude. They are addressed to every human being, in any country, of any nation and within any culture. They generally begin by imposing themselves among the humble classes, and to these they always address themselves in their revelations.

In the other group, we have the religions of the ancient type. To them belong the religions of the Germans, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Laztites, Babylonians, Indians, Chinese. They are distinguished, in the first place, by the lack of the characteristics just mentioned. They lack a founder and do not seek proselytes; they do not know redemption and world mission, but are limited to individual peoples, being intimately linked to state institutions. Everywhere, the nobility among these peoples is the bearer of religion. If modern religions show a tendency towards breadth, towards extension - whether to embrace the humble classes or the world - the ancient religions, on the other hand, are characterized by their aristocratic isolation.

Between these two categories seem to be the mystery religions of late antiquity. However, ignoring the lack of a founder, these religions have properties in common with modern religions. They proclaim redemption, seek proselytes and are dedicated to world mission. It is true that they arise from the bosom of certain peoples. Just as Christianity was born among the Jews and Islam among the Arabs, so the mysteries of Mithras arose in Iran, and those of Isis in Egypt. But both groups soon crossed these frontiers. The decline of national cultures is the premise for the expansion of Buddhism and Christianity as much as for the mystery religions.

In addition to the elements we have just mentioned, modern religions and mystery religions have in common the concept of sin in the human being, the orientation towards the humble classes, the martyrs and conversion. And it is precisely this last one that, bypassing the enumeration of characteristics, leads us to the essential.

For ancient religions, the gods, plain and simple, exist. This existence is never discussed or questioned. No one has ever been "converted" to Artemis or Aphrodite, to the Capitoline Jupiter, to the gods of Walhala. They all constituted indisputable realities among which men moved. The Homeric heroes felt in each of their own exploits the direct action of a god. It never occurred to anyone to doubt or deny the existence of these gods. There was no atheism in Antiquity, with almost nonexistent exceptions. The Roman gods could be "attended" or "disregarded". The first attitude corresponded to the punishment of the god in question, but it was the business of the celestial beings to emphatically remind such indifferent individuals of their existence. The second case represented the correct attitude: *religio*.

We have spoken of the faith of the Hellenes. This is not the correct expression, since to faith corresponds, as antithesis, doubt. Faith never offers the certainty of a nail in the coffin, but

it is necessary to fight for it. There are challenges, temptations, struggles, and even after achieving victory, one must always be on guard. Faith and the struggle for faith, temptation and conversion; these are the great themes of Christianity, Manichaeism and Buddhism. Frescoes of the sanctuaries located in Chinese Turkestan show us the temptation of Buddha, which is always repeated. But the mystery religions also know this struggle, and above all, conversion. Only the Islamic religion can be considered an exception in this respect.

One more step, and the designation "modern religions" is destined to fall. It may still be acceptable for Christianity and for the Islamic religion; to Buddhism, on the other hand, which was born at the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 5th century B.C., it has no application, nor does it apply to the mystery religions or to Manichaeism. On the other hand, they do have in common the attitude of open doors. For they are open to the multitudes of the faithful throughout the world; they keep open national barriers, the destiny of the soul and faith, which must be reconquered every day.

In contrast to that group, we have the ancient religions. They are limited to their corresponding peoples, fixed and protected by state authorities and ancient traditions, with the premise of a compact and isolated society and an order based on it. Everything is secured, guaranteed and within logic as long as such an order exists. They can be called religions in a closed form.

Free and open form is equivalent to decomposition, disintegration of form. Christianity and the mystery religions herald the decline of the ancient world. Gibbon had already realized this. These were the undistinguished religions, just as the novel represented the undistinguished literary genre within literature. Finally, the religions of redemption take us far from the virile religions of Homer and ancient Rome: they are the

faith of the weak. Here again the relationship between this fact and the crisis of the time is emphasized.

A new world that came to stand beside the dying Antiquity had all the characteristics of primordality. In the light of history, the Germans, Turks and Arabs had their ancient gods. This is shown by the runic monuments of the Germans and corresponds to what is known of the Huns and their successors. The pre-Islamic Arabs are known to have a number of local deities, one of which, the sun god of Emesa, had for a time served as a god in the Roman Empire, until he was displaced by an imperial church. By adopting a new religion, or, as the Arabs did, creating a new kind of religion of their own, all this was given a warrior nuance. Muhammad's proclamation is nourished by war against all those who profess another religion, and more than any other, the Islamic religion was based on the sword. A similar attitude was also manifested in the Germans.

It was not the person of Jesus nor the doctrine of St. Paul that made an impression on them, but the great figure of Constantine. It was this the great lord and emperor, by that fact also prophet. Instead of faith in redemption and resurrection they had adopted and imitated weapons bearing glory and victory, protected by the gods, such as labarum, helmet and shield. The Germans had in that their own starting points. The divine origin of their kings is demonstrated. Their spear was the reproduction of the weapon of Wodan, divine spear-bearer. The helmet of Constantine corresponds to the Germanic royal helmet of the first part of the Middle Ages. The Germans were also attracted by the monogram of Christ, which Constantine himself had stamped on the shields of his soldiers. In the runes they had a similar form of expression; they too were used as symbols to be stamped on the shields. In the Heliand, story that transmits without more or less, the Christian salvation, in Germanic disguise, this attitude continues in rectilinear form.

In addition to what we have just explained, it was not so much the dogma or the yearning for salvation, but rather the myth of Christ that attracted the new peoples. What was related in the Gospels as a historical fact became, from a mere event, a series of configurations containing fundamental and enduring assertions about God and man, as well as patterns and models. That which by its origin was rooted in its epoch, became there something eternal, independent of the epoch in which it took place. The passage of Jesus Christ on this earth, an unrepeatable experience of an unrepeatable figure, then became an inalienable myth that has accompanied the Middle and Modern Ages through the centuries.

V

When they first appeared in history, the new peoples knew no signs of writing. The Huns and the Germans were the most backward in this respect. The runes were originally symbols and at that time were only beginning to develop into a means of phonetic transcription. The Hun characters, the first stage in the development of the ancient Turkic runes (this expression is based only on a superficial similarity, since the Germanic runes have nothing to do with the Turkic ones) may have evolved, in the 3rd century, from a variation of the Aramaic alphabet used in the eastern part of the Caucasian mountain ranges. In Arabia, on the other hand, the written script had already been known for a long time, not only in the south of the peninsula, but also among the tribes of northern Arabia.

There is no way of verifying whether there are any annotations of poetry from that time in one of these alphabets,

since poetry was kept away from any annotation, and from the book as a substance. Ancient Arabic poetry, even surrounded on all sides by alphabetic monuments and even alluding often to them, went to the extreme of intentionally rejecting all forms of annotation. It intended to live only in the mouths of professional rhapsodes, to subsist in the word and in the memory of the community to which it was addressed; living news of glories lived and proclaimed, omnipresent heroic attitude that would permeate the existence of all, finding its crowning glory in poetry. The Garamantino song of the *Laúd de Gásiros* has been pointed out only at the beginning of the current century.

Napoleon said to Wieland, at Erfurt, in 1808: "A good tragedy must be considered as the most worthy school for men of great caliber. ... Historiography, however good it may be, can only achieve meager results. A man will only feel emotions that will never be more than superficial. A collectivity of men, on the other hand, will receive stronger and more lasting impressions".

It is Napoleon's rapport with Antiquity that is externalized in these phrases. He contrasts the sensation experienced through the book with that experienced by the community. His observation expresses something decisive. Attic tragedy and comedy were performed before the whole people. The epic poetry and the lyric poetry, on the other hand, were intended for a select audience, a society of knights; fairy tales were declaimed before groups of listeners. The philosophical textbook is based on the lecture explained in public. Herodotus did the same with his historical work. Even the Socratic dialogue was a reflection of the living dialogue, not the struggle between two theses. However, publication in book form was increasingly replacing the direct hearing. From the time of Hellenism onwards, epic poetry, lyric poetry and tragedy were published in book form.

Here it is worth mentioning the novel once again. For in the novel, more than in any other literary genre, direct collective

experience has been replaced by experience on the basis of the book. The novel was not listened to, but read. It was the typical product of an age of books. Although oriented towards a wide circle of readers and often mass-produced, it led from collectivity to isolation.

For religions, too, the book and the written word came to acquire unparalleled significance. Vedic Elimnos and sacred texts of Zarathustra's followers had been preserved solely and exclusively by oral tradition, some of them for centuries. The tradition from teacher to student, from one generation to the next, was respected and consciously cultivated. When the oral tradition was backed up by written notes, the latter often referred to it. Even Homer, who could write and sometimes demonstrated it, banished from his world all writing activity as undistinguished and unworthy of a hero. Impossible to imagine Achilles or Hector, Agamemnon or Priam writing! Gods writing was, perhaps, a natural thing for the Egyptians or Etruscans; Olympus, on the other hand, was forbidden ground for them. However, the beginning and the end of Antiquity were diametrically opposed as far as the valorization of the book was concerned, even of the religious book. The example of Muhammad demonstrates this.

The founder of the Islamic religion was of the opinion that his annunciation coincided, in essence, with the most ancient religions based on revelations. It is true that the uncreated Word was communicated to him alone by the angel of God in a complete and authentic form. But also the other Jewish peoples, Christians and magi, possessed documented revelations as to their authenticity as a written tradition, as a book. They were not Muslims, but they had the right to be respected and tolerated for "being in possession of the book", that is, of a revealed writing.

Muhammad was not alone in believing in the unity of revealed religion. The Old and New Testaments were united by countless bonds, and still are today, despite all the controversies.

What is written and how it is to be interpreted so as not to deviate one iota from the law and for it to be fulfilled in its entirety, are phrases that are repeated in the words of the Lord. The religion of Muhammad has the greatest degree of affinity with another revelatory religion: Manichaeism. In the latter, the contours and historical significance had been outlined only a generation earlier, at the time corresponding to the 1st century after Jesus Christ.

Manes also had ancestors and names them frequently and emphatically: Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus. However, in comparing himself with them, the founder of the new religion claims a special merit, which is another point of contact with Muhammad. For him, this merit consisted in the creation of authoritative and authentic "books" of his own doctrine. He boasted of having written these books personally, by hand, giving great importance to the making of faithful copies. On the other hand, he emphasized the fact that Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus had not made personal notes, leaving the writing and compilation of the Holy Scriptures to their apostles. This shows that when Manes arose, he already found religious "books" of various origins and with pretensions.

Among them were the sacred scriptures of the followers of Zoroaster, later known as the *Avesta*. Thus, they too had endeavored to create the "book" of their religion. Although Manes had personally written the decisive writings of his doctrine, it was up to the others to compile, order and convert into a legible text what had been transmitted from more ancient times.

With the *Avesta*, Iran was given back its national religion and part of its heritage. But it was not a single individual who was in charge of the compilation; it was the king, the bearer of the birth of Iran, who gave new splendor to the Empire and to the religion, ordering the *Avesta* codification and giving his support to the enterprise. Between Manes, who codified his own writings

personally, leaving to his successors the task of their preservation and dissemination, and the editors of the *Avesta*, who acted by order of the king and the priests, there were, therefore, fundamental differences. And yet they had in common the creation of their respective "books" for their parishioners at the same time, in the same country and for similar purposes.

The sacred book of the followers of Zoroaster and the books of the Manichaeans were not the only ones to confront each other. The Jews, the Christians, the Gnostics and their contemporaries; it can be said that the Old World, as a whole, felt the urge to determine transcendental religious documents and the cultures based on them. The codification of the *Avesta* was only one link in the chain of further measures that continued also throughout the whole of the third century AD.

Chronologically and essentially Zoroaster is situated within a well delimited circle. Confucius and Buddha, Jeremiah and the Deuterocjesaja, the major pre-Socratics and the newly founded cult of Jupiter in Rome, were united not only because they were contemporaries but also because of their spiritual attitude. They all had in common the antithesis to the mythical world of old and the moral criteria they applied to everything, including the gods themselves. A movement united at that time the countries situated between the western Mediterranean basin and northern China. Likewise, when the annunciation of Zoroaster was brought back from oblivion, set down in a "book" and turned into the foundation of an official church, a common denominator was emerging within the Old World. It once again embraced religions and philosophical doctrines, largely the same as in the past. But with the difference that in the 6th century A.D. a spirit full of youthful verve began to make itself felt, throwing out buds promising to blossom and bear fruit, and that, on the other hand, every element that had then stood out as young and promising, was already exhausted and ready to rest. The written

annotation, the "book", captured and preserved what had once been the very breath of God.

Some of the languages in which the sacred books of the Ancient World were spoken had become dead languages, surviving only within religious worship. Among them were the Bavarian and Hebrew languages. For the Jews, the problem of language touched the foundations of their independent national and religious life. A diaspora which in Egypt and its neighboring countries, Cyrenaica and Cyprus, as well as in Babylonia, surpassed in importance the metropolitan Judaism, had led to transcendental innovations. In the West, the Greek version came to replace what in its own language had flowed from the lips of prophets in the form of law, solemn proclamation, inciting words or wrathful warnings. It should be borne in mind that Philo, the eloquent advocate of his people and his faith, did not know Hebrew and depended on Greek translations. In the Eastern Diaspora, even in Palestine itself, Aramaic dialects came to replace the ancient language, with the Targums taking the place of the Hebrew versions of the sacred texts. Only the horrible annihilating wars, organized by Rome against Judaism, managed to shake and awaken the spirits. It was then that they remembered their own heritage, which had been relegated to oblivion in favor of the foreign one for too long. They did away with Greek and, abandoning translations, returned to embrace the originals, determined to restore the language of their ancestors to its rightful place. As in Iran, these were the dawn of a national and religious renaissance.

The establishment of the valid tenor of the sacred books was once again the indispensable premise. The creation of the Masoretic text took place in the first century after the first Jewish war. Before the beginning of the second century, at least the text of the Torah was established, as demonstrated by the most recent spectacular finds of manuscripts on the shores of the Dead Sea. It has not yet been possible to verify in detail when

the other books of the Old Testament were rewritten. At the beginning of the THIRD CENTURY the work was finished. The critical edition of the Old Testament, from Origen's Hexapla, was already based on the Masoretic text.

The Christian church was in no hurry to create a canon of scriptures. The gospels, the epistles, the compilations of phrases uttered by Jesus Christ and the apocalypses were, to be sure, grouped according to their value and category, but such a subdivision was made without compromise. *Marcion* was the first to separate what, according to his criteria, was valid from what was not. Since the church attacked Marcion, it was necessary that to his attempt it should counterpose another attempt of its own. For this reason, the beginning of the formation of canons can be traced back to the end of the nth century. However, the complicated matter of the creation of the canon came to an end in the 4th and 5th centuries.

In addition, the church needed to use a decisive Old Testament text. Apart from the Torah, the Jews lacked a valid, universal Greek translation. Such a book had to be created first. What is contained in our manuscripts of the Bible version of the Seventy is a selection of the numerous translations that had been imposed in the second century for the use of the church.

Then the canon of the Manichaeans reappeared in lower Egypt, in Coptic trodution. Another papyrus find, also written in Coptic dialects, brought a codification of Gnostic writings of the time between the mid-third and early fourth centuries. Again, a religious sect felt called to compile what existed, presenting it later as a "book". Egypt also leads us to the body of Hermetic writings, the compilation of which, this time in Greek version, took place towards the end of the 3rd century.

Finally, here are the Neoplatonists. They felt that they were equivalent to the great religions, drawing from this the conclusion. Next to the books of the other religions, they placed a "book" of their own. Thirty years after the death of Plotinus,

Porphyry wrote the definitive edition of the works of his master, referring to the commission he received from him for this purpose. Not even the greatest of his time was spared from that tendency that dominated that century. In this, Plotinus is equal to his contemporary Manes, although in other aspects there is a gulf between the two men.

In the 3rd century the religions of the Old World became religions of the book. Some of the chronological data above are earlier, others later than that century: but this does not change the result. It was a movement that took hold of all religions simultaneously, regardless of their nature or the antiquity of their respective origins: of "modern" and "ancient" religions; of universal missionary religions and others limited to a single people. The roots of Judaism and Zoroastrianism went back a thousand years or more; they experienced a renaissance, just as Plato's doctrine had to undergo a renaissance. On the other hand, Christianity, Gnosticism and Manichaeism were barely two centuries old or belonged to the present; likewise, the Hermetic movement may have begun only around 100 AD.

Interpretation remains to be dealt with. Perhaps it is plausible to explain the codification of religious documents with the fact that the number of religions and the competition between them necessarily had to lead to a mutual delimitation, an emphasis on what is proper and essential. This would be belied by the fact that it would have been sufficient to make professions of faith: formulas that clearly delineated and set out what was intended to be expressed. Already the fourth century had taken that course. Codification, however, was a different kind of procedure, for it was not oriented toward what was momentarily necessary, but sought to include a great past and impart validity to it. It strove to save documents that threatened to be lost. It sought neither formula nor preservation for preservation purposes; it longed for canon and authentic tenor.

A similar movement was also taking shape in Rome. There, there were no sacred scriptures like those gathered in the East in their compilations. What took their place were the classics of Roman literature. Thus began, according to an expression of Macrobius, *the sacrum studium litterarum*.

As in the case of the *Avesta* and the Old Testament text, the creation of a decisive tenor constituted the basis for a national renaissance. For the senatorial nobility of the Roman city, literary activity went hand in hand with the struggle against Christianity, which, at the same time, represented the struggle for the primitive religion of Rome. As a result, the *sacrum studium litterarum* came to be equated, in its nature, with other codifications. What stood out most clearly, however, was the fact that it was a matter of preserving the magnificent monuments of a spiritual past from imminent decline. The senatorial nobility indeed managed to save and preserve the Roman classics through the migration of peoples and the dark centuries of the Middle Ages, until, for the first time in the time of the Carolingians, a series of revivals ensued that reached their apogee in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The crisis and decline of the Roman Empire, which had its beginnings in the 1st century, is reflected here in its spiritual aspect. The corresponding manifestations in the military sector, i.e. the creation of a fortification zone on the threatened frontiers again in the Roman Empire, but also in Rome and in the China of the imperial Han dynasty, are still to come. Everywhere, an Old World felt threatened, both by the combative force of new peoples and by the new spiritual forms created by them. As a remedy, the codification of authoritative documents was resorted to. In the book, what had survived from a great past was preserved and recorded. Even where the present was noted down, as in the case of Manes and Plotinus, it was to be converted into something unalterable canonical. A numbing breath seemed to transform whatever belonged to the past and

the immediate present. Defense and conservation: these were the two elements that motivated all the acts; both in the military and spiritual aspects, the events ran in parallel. What we have seen is once again the end of one era and the beginning of another: the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

VI

The codification of religious books was the first proof that the culture of late antiquity and what the new peoples brought was not lacking in affinity. An old world hastened to delineate all that was traditional against everything that was crowded and rushed against it, hoping to preserve it. In the spiritual sector, too, it was relegated to the defensive. It soon became clear that it was necessary to make concessions to new influences, to assimilate them and to assign them their place within what already existed. This is demonstrated by the picture presented by art.

Frontality was the name of the new law that had to shape it. It proclaimed the hegemony of flat surfaces, and hence, the elimination of what determines ancient art, that is, the round plastic figure. It is not only the round figure that is disappearing; painting is also abandoning the illusion of three-dimensional bodies. The only thing that matters is the façade. That means: what counts is the design that covers most of the surface; that also represents the full contour of the face; that makes the greatest impression on the viewer because of the grandeur of the body and the head. Nor was it accidental that rulers and gods were particularly represented in this form. And just as the subject seems to be projected on a single frontal surface, so does the space. From environment and background it becomes a frame, which surrounds the flat figure in the form of a lateral continuation.

Other transmutations were inevitable, and they also eliminated what was most dear to classical antiquity. As soon as frontality succeeded in determining everything, the head and clothing took on a life of their own. Just as the head, previously subordinated to the totality of the figure, had to become independent, concentrating in it the whole life and all spiritual substance, so too did clothing manage to isolate itself from the body. It was no longer limited to insinuating the contours, allowing the body to show through, but took on a life and category of its own.

Classical art favored colorless or plain-colored clothing. Printed fabrics were considered barbaric; flowered dress was reserved for hetairas. In Rome, the toga began to be adorned with stripes and borders, but this was limited to the edges of the garment; the principle of the plain color of the fabric remained in place. On the other hand, frontality, in its logical conclusion, necessarily had to detach the envelope from the body; it had to eliminate what had hitherto been the purpose of the garment, by its very form. Extended one-dimensionally and in a certain way stretched, it demanded a new organization, which could only come about by accentuating color and resorting to vivid ornaments.

Therefore, the costumes began to be adorned with precious embroidery and embroidery with lavish application of pearls and precious stones. In the form of circles and squares, they covered the skirt and chest, the border of the dresses and the sleeves. Chinese silk took the place of wool and thread fabrics; no longer was used that transparent fabric, of soft fall, which seemed to reveal the body it enveloped, but stiff, lavish brocade. Its thick, heavy silk seemed thicker because of the metallic threads that ran through it, and a variety of animals began to appear on the surface: griffins, eagles, jibaros and lions. In addition, heroes and sovereigns on horseback, with bow and arrow, all in strong, subdued colors, using purple, gold and silver. A voluptuous and

fabulous world, moving and variegated, began to populate the surfaces, claiming its own right, even preference, with respect to the body that wrapped which came to lose the little importance that remained to him, before such a waste of designs and colors.

Masterpieces of Sassanid and late antique imperial weavings have conquered the world. They are found in the treasuries of the churches of the North as well as in the treasury of Nara, in faraway Japan. In short, in those centuries the costly, the precious, in its exquisite substantiality, came to the forefront. Porphyry, rock crystal, agate, amber..., the larger and heavier they were, the more in demand they were carved in large and uninterrupted surfaces. They attracted attention by their substance, they externalized a new primitiveness, in intentional opposition to Antiquity, for which only the configured and the shaped had value, and which had chosen marble and bronze as its materials for such purposes.

The mosaic came to take on an importance never before achieved. Formerly an imitation of painting with durable material, it rejected such a subordinate role and began to live according to its own law. Shining enamels like gold, rubies and emeralds, rare and luminous stones in general, joined together to form a brilliant surface, with which the means of painting could no longer compete. And it was precisely in the mosaic that the complement to the surface emerged: demarcation by means of contour. With firm straight and curved lines, the mosaic traced the frame and fixed the limits. At the same time, it "broke" the chromatic effect of what was demarcated, making the luminous more luminous, the brilliant and precious more select, by means of its own complementary color.

Finally, we come to the glaze. This is the culminating point of all that has been enumerated so far. For in it arose a genre that is not only not ancient but anti-antique, that is, a typical symbol of the general transformation of styles.

Enameling has long antecedents, which, in the end, lead to the terrain discussed here. Inlay began in China at the turn of the millennium under the Chang and early Dchou, with precious sacred bronzes, inlaid with turquoise, ivory, coral and crushed pastes, continuing with similar creations produced at the time of the three Han empires. More or less simultaneously, with the invasion of the Sarmatians, inlay took root in southern Russia. There an art of metalworking emerged that was both barbaric and refined, imparting life and fluency to vessel walls, as well as to buckles and armor. The third and fourth centuries brought indications of an imminent flattening in the coatings of wine-colored almandine garnets, with which the Goths used to cover the gold plating of their jewelry; in the varied and firm colors of enamel, which the Celtic art of the time of the last emperors was pleased to employ. With the invention of cellular enamel, this art reached its apogee. In it, flatness and frontality, color and luminosity were united, caused by the noble substance of the glazed mineral, and enhanced by the brilliance of the gold underneath the surface.

This again demonstrates that the new prevailed in the third century. The change and the time at which it occurred can be localized with a fair degree of accuracy.

VII

The descriptions of pictures by Philostratus induced even Goethe to express a consideration. Since then there has been silence, and only now and then a curious individual opens the book and, in most cases, closes it disappointed. And yet Philostratus knew how to give us many clarifications. Here are his descriptions of still lifes: what joy in the atmospheric and its multicolored effect! There is little that these eyes have not seen. He sees how neutral shades take on warmth in their shadows,

melt into vast patches in the illuminated parts or glow wounded by the scintillating light. How the colors, though each has its own characteristics, submit to the overall harmony; how they adapt themselves to the subject! The paintings of Philostratus and he himself indulge in a splurge of the precious reproduction of the substantial: of a transparent glass, of a soft skin, of the glistening, coraceous or smooth, velvety or moist skin of fruits.

It is not surprising, then, that he also knew the effects of refracted light, chiaroscuro and the pale moonlit night. There are also other themes: the great historical painting or the bird's eye view of a landscape, with marshes and mainland, sea and islands. The means to reproduce masses and space by magic art, are called staggering of figures arranged one after the other, and continuous presentation. By the former, it was intended to give the impression of a crowded crowd; by the latter to bring together several consecutive events within the frame of a single picture.

At least the simultaneous can be taken advantage of. Septimius Severus informed the Senate and the people of his successes in the war against the Parthians by means of graphic representation. Battles and sieges were represented in paintings that were exhibited to the public of Rome. The great reliefs that adorn the Triumphal Arch of the emperor in the Roman Forum date back to them. Both artistically and in the subjects they depict, they are based on a tradition that goes back to a long series of triumphal representations, prior to the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Like the relief ribbons on those columns, the plaques on the arch of Septimius Severus must be read from the bottom up. A lot of movement, vivid effects of light and shadow, a configuration of the relief that is more pictorial than plastic, confirm the connection. The crowded and staggered crowd in march, combat, pursuit and military review reappears, and the continuous style in the uninterrupted succession of events.

The arch of Septimius Severus was consecrated in 203. Almost at the same time another monument to the emperor was erected, this time not in Rome, but in his hometown of Lepcis Magna, in Africa. Contrary to the stormy succession of events, as depicted on the aforementioned triumphal columns and the Roman arch, in this monument it is no longer the movement, but the static that determines the impression. Simultaneously, here is the new element: the frontality of the central figure. The form under which the art of the late Antiquity and early Middle Ages had to evolve is manifested.

Frontality had already appeared earlier, on the frontiers of the empire. Frescoes and reliefs in Dura-Europos, in the Euphrates and in Palmyra, show that this style comes from the East, and the art of India at the beginning of the Buddhist era confirms it. The monuments of the late Parthian period are of the same type, and shortly afterwards frontality was introduced in Sassanid art.

Therefore, it was the Parthians who created the new, or, at least, who brought it with them to the West. The frontal style, handled more and more rigorously and determining the art even in the middle of the Middle Ages, was the heritage of that people of horsemen who, in the middle of the middle of the century m invaded northern Iran and took over the eastern provinces of what had been the empire of Alexander the Great.

This leads us into a new field, since the most marked influence exerted by the mounted nomads, the new peoples in general, was felt in the military sector.

In this respect, after repeated incursions, they revolutionized the strategic framework and at the same time had a decisive influence on the historical configuration.

CHAPTER II

NEW VILLAGES

I

It has been said that history is the history of wars. This phrase has been coined with intentional partiality and its validity corresponds to this. Suffice it to say that there were times when history was indeed a history of wars, and that those times were among the decisive and transcendental ones.

China has long been opposed to war. It professed the attitude that the perfect army was that which anticipated crises and revolutions and that the most perfect strategy consisted in avoiding wars. Or that the army should be maintained to ensure peace, not for wars of aggression. And yet, decisive epochs in history, including Chinese history, have been characterized by military and warlike changes.

Until the middle of the second millennium B.C., a peasant culture flourished in the valleys of the Wei-ho and Huang-ho rivers and their tributaries. Rice and millet were grown on the limestone silt soil, while wheat was still unknown at that time. Pigs and cattle were already domestic animals; their horns and bones were used to make tools, as well as carved stones. Artistic sensitivity was expressed in the making of pots and mucas with their convexities and doughy strips molded from malleable clay, and in the shades of saturated dark violet, warm red and dark bay of the paint used. The wide ornamental ribbons, scrolls and meanders, and the saturated and vigorous colors, find their close kinship in the contemporary ceramics of the European territory of the Black Earth.

A new people entered this area: the Chang. They were hunters and warriors, not farmers, so they contrasted with the older culture of the other people and with their demetric existence. They molded their vessels in white, hard, sonorous bronze. The forms and contours, in their totality, were rigid, sharp and metallic, and a plasmatory will dominated the abundance of all creative relief in the walls and handles, legs and rims. This ornamental art was determined by the animal which, there as elsewhere, constituted the only theme. The Chang are the creators of the first animal style.

Superior weapons facilitated the victory of the conquerors. They had received the war chariot from Central Asia, and with it they brought to China the metal mask, the bronze helmet and probably the harness, also of bronze. From their swift and agile chariots they wielded reflex bows, long spears and the halberd. Their way of fighting and their weapons accredit the Chang as an integral part of the great chariot-based movement that originated in the Eurasian steppes.

Their appearance marked the end of peasant self-sufficiency. As a people of warriors and victors, they no longer lived from the work of their hands, but from the tribute of the vanquished. They no longer lived in villages, but ruled the country and the tributary peasants from "the great City of Chang". For the first time they gave China a well-defined form of government, with all the advantages and disadvantages necessarily inherent in it....

Until 300 B.C., China continued to adhere to what it had learned from the Chang in terms of military art. The core of the army was still the chariot, but by then there were already a thousand chariots, with their corresponding equipment and a retinue of one hundred soldiers per chariot. What had once been a troop of conquerors advancing with overwhelming speed, had by then become the army of a great State. Everything had been ordered, organized and multiplied, but precisely that fact contributed to the decrease of the fighting force of yesteryear.

The growth had brought with it the dullness of the army, and the strategy of before was no longer sufficient to win wars against the bordering nomads of the North. Thus it came to pass that China experienced for the second time a total revolution in the military sector.

In the era of the "Militant Empires", the chariot was displaced from the position it had occupied before. To successfully control the agile hosts of mounted nomads, the Chinese had to learn from the adversary. Especially the Hiung-nu, who inhabited the steppes and deserts to the north and northwest of the Ordos River meander, were the cause of this revolution. Emperor Wu-ling of the Dschao (325-298) was the first to realize what was about to happen. Under his reign, the army adopted the clothing and weapons of the Hiung-nu and learned to shoot with bow and arrow, on horseback. He then annihilated the "jungle" Hiung-nu in the twenty-sixth year of his rule. As Wu-ling introduced his reforms, he replaced vehicles with horses; the long, flowing robes of the Chinese with the close-fitting clothing of the nomads, i.e., pants and jacket fastened with a belt; and the high riding boots came to displace the spring shoes of the Chinese.

The Hiung-nu were of Turkic origin, although they did not admit their origin. From the nomadic tribes of northern Iran they had adopted the weapons, clothing and saddle. Every Hiung-nu was a warrior; already children were taught the military art. Whoever was strong enough to handle the powerful reflex bow was enlisted as an armored horseman. In addition to the bow, they wielded the spear and sword in hand-to-hand combat.

The mounted combat of the Hiung-nu arose from their existence as herders and hunters. But also in this aspect there was an evolution and systematization of something already existing. This happened towards the end of the 3rd century B.C., by the first and greatest of the Hiung-nu rulers: Mao-dun.

He had conquered power by ruthless means, and planned to expand it. Even the men of his own tribe had to put up with his

heavy hand. From a ragtag band of nomadic warriors he turned them into a disciplined army. The hail of arrows that since ancient times used to initiate all combat was directed in a homogeneous way. An organized cavalry, integrated by well delimited units, came to replace the disorganized assault troops of yesteryear. Even in the matter of weapons, improvements were recorded: the Hinug-nu handled not only the bow, but also the longbow and the long spear. Those carrying light weapons were joined by horsemen armed to the teeth, equipped with harnesses.

By means of the newly created army, Mao-dun extended his rule to the banks of the Orcon River and the Selenga, to the Kyrgyz of Southern Siberia, Dsungaria and Eastern Turkestan.

The Hiung-nu's pretensions increased considerably at that time without even stopping before the representatives of the Son of Heaven. "Ambassador of Han," they said, "don't talk too much. You would do better to pay attention to the measurements of the silk, rice and rice malt that Han has to gather for Hing-nu, so that there are no mistakes and everything is in good condition. What else do you want to talk about? If the goods to be delivered are complete and in good condition, the business is concluded. If, on the other hand, they were not, our horsemen, as soon as your crops are ripe in autumn, will come to trample and gather them."

The systematization of the nomadic combat mode increased its effectiveness. At the same time, however, it had departed from its natural conditions. Once conditioned by nomadic existence, bound to it and therefore inimitable, this method had become a tactic that could be learned and passed on. China did not hesitate to take advantage of this possibility. Just as in the past, in order to confront the adversary, they had imitated their mounted marksmen, China did the same with tactics in general.

The creator of the new cavalry was Emperor Wu-di (141 to 87 B.C.). He introduced the broad sword as a support for the bow;

the javelin was replaced by the spear; he also adopted the saddle and the stirrups of the nomads. The Chinese military units were reinforced by as many others composed of defeated nomads or even Hiung-nu. Their armament eventually became so superior that one Chinese soldier was equivalent to five enemy soldiers. The Chinese proudly boasted stronger bows, more piercing arrows, longer spears, better harnesses and sharper swords. Someone once wrote that they were "brave men without exception, extraordinarily skilled in the handling of the sword, strong enough to kill tigers; perfect marksmen who always hit their targets".

Indeed, the new weapon was crowned with success. The leader, Hotschü-bing, a young boy of eighteen, a horseman and an accomplished marksman since his childhood, defeated the Hiung-nu in six consecutive battles. Another phase of higher evolution was yet to be realized: the armored troop. It required a breed of horse capable of supporting the rider with its harness, as well as strong and mobile armor.

Until now, only the indigenous breed, a descendant of the Przewalski horse, had been used exclusively. Coarse head, vigorous neck, low withers, short legs and stocky trunk characterized the species. At that time, however, it was replaced by a western breed, descended from the Tarpan. Dschangtschien, a famous geographer of western countries, was the first to mention the Ferghana horses as "sweating blood". Following a second voyage (116) he brought back some of these animals: they were heavy battle horses, of the Parthian breed, which proved to be stronger and more suitable for military tasks than the horses used up to that time. After two bloody campaigns, which resulted in many losses, it was possible to obtain some breeding horses from the land of the "Celestial Horses of the Western World". Then the new type of horse made its appearance in the art. It was a horse with a narrow and profiled head, a particular gait, with the forequarter well forward and the

hindquarter well planted, with an arched withers and thick thighs. This was the typical model.

An Iranian invention was also adopted in the manufacture of harnesses. It displaced the unicorn doublet with scales sewn on its surface, preferred in earlier times. It then began to join metal plates by means of leather cords until a very dense braid was formed. Elastic and expandable, as well as extremely resistant, the harness made of plates or sheets covered the combatants' limbs as if it were a suit. At the same time, the custom of covering the horse also arose.

When the Chinese adopted the armor, this meant a technical advance for them. As on other occasions they adopted the weapons and tactics of the adversary in order to defeat him. In the Hiung-nu, and in the mounted nomads in general, the "invention" of the metallic armored suit was rooted in deeper foundations. The technical advancement was based on religious ideas that these tribes had inherited.

Both the leather harness, with the metallic scales sewn on its surface, and the laminated harness are reminiscent of the clothing of shamans. Shamans adorned their clothing with iron objects representing their spirits. Sometimes, the hanging was so thick that the skin could no longer be seen. It is plausible to suppose an affinity between the shaman's clothing and the harness. The shaman keeps his spirits captive and dominated in his iron images; he obliges them to serve him and to protect him against all danger. To the armored horseman the iron may have originally afforded analogous protection. However, by discerningly arranging the clothing and shaping it appropriately, the shamanic garb of the past became something new: a mounted warrior's costume, protected by iron.

Transitional forms have been preserved for a long time. The shamanic jacket could be qualified as a harness; moreover, shamans could wear scale harnesses. On the other hand, expressions such as *lorica plumata* refer to the plumage of birds

and, therefore, in particular to shamanite birds. The blacksmith, maker of the shamanic jacket, as well as of all the scales and iron sheets, was long considered to be the bearer of particular forces, in a certain way demonic. Blacksmiths and shamans come from the same nest, says a Yacuta proverb.

In addition to the harness, there was another object dating back to nomadic origins: the drum. The shaman gathers in the belly of his tambourine the spirits vanquished by him. The sound of the atabal, that he plays alternating strong and syncopated blows with long and vibrant rolls, puts him in a trance of intoxication that places him in conditions to rise to the supreme heaven. The same instrument appears wherever there is enchantment, rapture and ecstatic intoxication. It is rooted in the cult of Cybele and Dionysus. The worshippers of} god in the hedons of Aisquilos roar "with a hollow voice, like the mooing of a bull, similar to the loud roll of a drum."

A people of horsemen of Central Asia, such as the Parthians were, used to give the attack signal with the tympanum, not with the trumpet. In the early hours of the second day of the battle of Carrai, the dull thunder of a coffin was heard. And while the discouraged Romans were listening to the unfamiliar sound, the vibrations of the sinews were heard, the sonorous whistling of the arrows. Those crowds of horsemen felt spellbound, transported, possessed when they assaulted.... In China, the drum was rooted in the cult for a very long time. But only at that time it was destined for military use, inaugurating the combat to the sound of drums and atabales.

In the field of art, new fields also opened up. Simultaneously with the revolution in military structure, the supremacy of chivalry and the influx of shamanistic forms, an animal style of Central Asian origin took root in China.

Already the archaic bronze vessels of the Chang and their successors, the Dschou, were determined by the animal. A highly stylized form captivates and dominates an overflowing

abundance of images. From a background of meanders and spirals, animal masks stand out. Bulging eyes, shaded by eyelids that give them a more intense expression, and slitted mouths open menacingly.

Dragons and coyuyos, as well as aviform beings, are grouped in the opposite direction; animal thighs form the supports of the vessels; feline beasts, their handles. Sometimes, the entire vessel is animal-shaped.

After lasting a few centuries, this form began to disintegrate. From the 6th century at the latest, a new style appeared, which did not manifest itself only in sacred vessels, but rather in round plastics and in relief, in pieces of inlaid bronze, in buckles and metal hooks of belts, as well as in the armor and fittings that were part of the knight's clothing and the horses' rigging. The bodies of the animals began to emerge from their hieratic rigidity; they moved and felt, the passionate mobility revealing a desire to capture new aspects of the animal essence.

First of all, the horse appeared. Bearer of the new mode of combat, he came to characterize the new animal style. Free or mounted, in fiery movement or vibrating with anticipation, in play and in battle, everywhere the essence of the horse was captured as never before. Moreover, animal combat was gaining ground. Fabulous beings, composed of wolf or eagle and dragon, fought one against the other, or dilacerated a horse, a doe. There were tigers that had just cornered a yak and were preparing to kill it, griffins and jibaros, bears, reindeer and other animals of prey. Everything indicated hunting and chasing, duels and the bloody devouring of the spoils.

Comparisons with the Hiung-nu way of fighting are automatically imposed. War and pursuit, fighting and hunting are parallel elements. Just as for the Parthians the battle resembled a hunt, just as they cornered the encircled enemy like a deer and then annihilated him, just as they rushed after their adversary, possessed and carried away by an ecstatic emotion, so

did the Hiung-nu. The combat of the nomads in the East and West had distinctly Shamans' characteristics.

Under the Han dynasty, the theater of China's history was the north of the country, the Huang-ho valley. The landscape is more monotonous than that of the south, determined by atmospheric change with its play of colors, fog and water. Contrary to the southern Chinese, with lighter blood, endowed with vivid imagination, the northern race is more clumsy, but at the same time more serious and loyal. Their robust body, so different from the slight physique of the southerners, demonstrates their struggle for daily sustenance with diligence, frugality and perseverance. Peasants, they are confronted with a nature prodigal in her gifts, but merciless in her whims. On their subjection by man depends the security of their goods and of life itself. Terrible are the effects that unbridled elements can produce. Only organization, solidarity, tenacity and hard work from sunrise to sunset can lessen the catastrophes that often occur.

The repeated invasions of the Hiung-nu were among these catastrophes. The havoc they wreaked resembled the effects of a strong tide, the breaking of a dam. The Chinese were determined to meet them also with strength, tenacity and perseverance; they did not hesitate to learn from their adversary. But the cavalry tactics, adopted from the Hiung-nu, proved from the beginning to be different. It had not sprung from Chinese soil; it had already been acquired in its evolved form. Finally, the barbarians were defeated with their own weapons, but with vernacular and traditional tactics, simply adapted to the new demands.

A new long-distance combat weapon entered into victorious competition with the Hiung-nu reflex bow. Until then, mounted marksmen used to shoot the elongated feathered arrow at distant targets at a gallop. Then the crossbow appeared in the hand of the Chinese infantry. By employing an ingenious trigger they

were able to increase the value of the weapon. Its short, stubby darts were fired at close range, but with lethal impact. If the bow had originally been the weapon of the hunter and the pursuer, the crossbow turned out to be a weapon of defense. Its purpose was not to hit and wound, but to annihilate. That is why it became the symbol of the sedentary man, rural or urban, to confront the thieves who threatened to annihilate the settlements and countryside of his land, not as a born warrior, but as a disciplined soldier.

Further expressions of this attitude are the great bulwarks behind which the Chinese sought to protect themselves against unwelcome neighbors. We will find them again in Rome and in Sassanid Iran.

Emperor Chi-huang-di (259-210), in order to reinforce existing fortifications, had begun to isolate the center of the country from the northern tribes, by means of a border bastion extending to the Yalu River. In the first century B.C. the road leading to Lou-lan was added. That extreme western sector of the Limes was discovered by Sven Hedin and Sir Aurel Stein. It passed along a commercial road that served mainly, but not exclusively, for the export of silk to the West.

Long stretches of this fence with its fortifications, reservoirs and sentry towers have been preserved to this day. The buildings were made of unfired mud, reinforced by toghrae logs and tamarisk wood braiding. Amnestied prisoners, exiled to the deserted northwestern frontier of the empire, or barbarian mercenaries, formed the garrisons. At the same time, Chinese colonists applied the plow to the uninhabited land. Agrarian colonies were established and secured by defensive bastions. The most that the enemy could achieve then, when undertaking an invasion, was to assault by surprise some guard posts or outlying forts. Nothing more could be done. For, according to a contemporary account, "signal fires at the boundary markers along the frontier shed much light and the observation posts

were in good condition; therefore, raids into frontier territory did not yield much to the Hiung-nu, and therefore they raided the fortified frontiers infrequently".

Lou-lan proper was located on the shores of a salt lagoon; it had been created out of nothing. The area was uninhabited and the land was not very fertile. However, by laying irrigation ditches, wheat, millet and hemp could be grown in irrigated fields. All other items had to be brought from inland China. The depots stored the garrison's stock of weapons: plush cloths, furs and fur-trimmed helmets for the winter; clothing and footwear; saddles and riding gear. Columns of Mongol camels, donkeys and horses from Tibet were available as pack animals. All this was under the charge of a corps of officials, who, according to Chinese custom, took detailed notes of everything, even accounting for every muzzle.

With the establishment of the Limes, the series of counterattacks that the empire of the center had inflicted on the Hiung-nu had reached its climax. The victory did not consist only in having discovered and copied the secret of the adversary's mode of combat, but, with the establishment of these bastions, the sedentary man had successfully imposed himself, thanks to his own capabilities.

II

The southern part of the Japanese archipelago belongs to the lands where the tradition of rice cultivation is the oldest. These are the monsoon countries and adjacent countries: the East Indies, the archipelago, and South and East China. If the Japanese islands constituted the eastern end, Iran was the western end. The homeland of wild rice is Indochina, where it

can still be found today. In India and Iran, rice cultivation was passed on to the Aryan immigrants by the people living there. The Western Ghats, the southern foothills of the Himalayas, Assam and the western sector of Burma are the rainiest areas; they were, therefore, at the same time rice-growing areas and the seats of pre-Indo-Germanic cultures.

Since rice is a swamp plant, it requires a warm and humid summer. The water beds must remain in these conditions for some time before sowing. The soaked, warm, muddy, putrid and fertile soil receives the rice grains, which swell immediately. The plants must always remain covered with water, which must rise as the rice grows. Farmers and women work in the rice fields with water up to their knees.

Rice forms man in the same way that cereals, corn, hunting and cattle raising do. The patient cultivation of the soil and plants, a warm and humid atmosphere, as well as the comparison with fertilization procedures in women, which is evident in all aspects of rice cultivation, are all elements that create the preconditions for a feminine world view. In southern China, the Tchu were bearers of rice cultivation and the concomitant buffalo breeding. They belonged to the Tai tribes whose culture, unlike that of northern China, was determined by this feminine vision.

From the eastern confines of Finland, across the Eurasian steppes and forests, to China and North America, the sphere of action of shamanism extends. Elsewhere its male representative had prevailed; in China, on the other hand, it was the female shaman who took first place. The culture of the Tai also belongs to their world. In the imperial colloquiums, the chapter of the Tchu state recalls these shamans, their wisdom and their ability to foretell the future, to climb the upper spheres and descend to the lower ones. In the alphabet, the letter meaning shaman represents the latter receiving the divine spirit and the latter taking possession of her. Also the letter meaning *ling* ("spirit,

magic power") contains, from under the raindrop (*ling*), the character corresponding to shaman. This implies (in addition to the purely phonetic element) that she conjured divine water in the rain sacrifices.

The shaman also acted as a seer and inspirational prophetess. In addition to dance, music and song, her spheres of influence encompassed genial conversation and clairvoyant poetry. In that, her influence has been preserved to this day, even though the hetaira has largely inherited the artistic and inspirational aspects of the shaman. "It seems that, according to the Chinese mentality, in the physical the man begets and the woman conceives and gives birth to the child, but in the spiritual it is the other way around, that is, the remarkable woman fertilizes the man and he brings to term and produces the work. For intuition and wisdom are gifts given by nature to women; on the other hand, reason and the gift of externalization are given to men" (E. Rousselle). The Chinese peach, which ends in a point, has the shape of a drop and a spore, as well as that of a nursing woman's breast. It is a symbol of immortality, but also of the spiritual inspiration that leads to the immortal.

A strong representative of this female-oriented Tai culture was Lao-tse, who was born on the northern border of the state of Tchu.

Dao, famous for its collection of sayings, is not a male spirit, much less a philosophical abstraction. Lao-tse calls it goddess and mother. Dao is "parturient," the "animal-female," the "mother of heaven and earth" (writing "earth goddess" as follows: "clod of earth that is female lap"), "she who gave birth to ten thousand beings", mother of the world and of the earth. She gives birth and nourishes, protects and saves her creatures; if they are lost, there she is "in death without danger". She has no pretensions or pretensions of a master; however, she is, as her name already expresses, "Guide of the Universe".

They circumscribe Dao as "the Unnamable", as secret among secrets, as "lap of secrets"; as "Summit of emptiness and constancy of silence". In addition to these names, comparisons derived from water are found. The guide of the universe pours out, she is deep as the waters, she is goddess of the spring. She is very close to goodness, and supreme goodness resembles water. The masters of earlier times were deep, unfathomable, as another writing tells us, liquid as ice that is about to melt and murky as swampy water. The figure of Dao is also embodied by a culture akin to that of rice farmers: "She is deep like water. She seems eternally fresh like dew!"

The buffalo is an integral part of the water. Swamps, mud and all kinds of water are their environment. Robust but peaceful animals, they let themselves be guided by women and children. Lao-tse himself is depicted riding a buffalo. Riding on the animal, he reached the western gorge and the edge of the imperial territory. There, the commander of the gorge asked him to write down the results of his studies and meditations: and so his book was born.

On the other hand, the horse had essentially nothing in common with that culture. It came from the nomadic North and brought with it chariots, cavalry and its way of being. For Lao-tse, the horse represented the symbol of an opposite world. The battle horses of the world empire live in the common pastures instead of pulling the dung cart as they should. He knows about the "master of ten thousand chariots," but at the same time pronounces the ruling that horse racing and hunting brutalize man's mentality. Lao-tse protests against the invading world from the North. He had opposed the "digitigrades" and the "scrapers", who, before the guidance of the universe, look like "waste food" to the boastful ones with their "jaw dislocation". He also attacks the "pompous". In Chinese, this word is written with the interpretive symbol for the meaning corresponding to

"horse", and with the interpretive symbol for the meaning and sound of "bridge".

It is not only for rice cultivation that the Japanese islands belong to this area. Female shamanism, in addition to the Tai peoples, took hold of the sailors and fishermen of the Jüe culture, of the Tungus reindeer herders, from the northern Chandung to Siberia. The shaman could not be missing on the nearby islands. However, the cultivators of Kiuchu, Chikoku and the southern Hondo were not slow to be invaded by the new world of horse and horsemanship either. The most masculine culture in existence was superimposed on a feminine-oriented culture. The peasants became serfs, and the shaman was replaced by the hetaira. In its details, the process is not clear, as with many elements of ancient Japanese history. But some stand out clearly. Bones of devoured horses have been found in shell hills corresponding to the late Stone Age. The use of the horse in fighting, especially the very custom of horseback riding, points to Korea as a starting point. Tombs in North Korea, which, according to findings of Chinese varnished cups date back to the late pre-Christian Era, have revealed the long sword with bronze ferrule in animal style, which the nomads used for horseback riding. In addition, stirrups have been found along with Chinese mirrors from the 1st to 4th centuries. The clay plastics (Haniwa) from tombs of the 5th to 7th centuries take us a little further. They show the horse with saddle and stirrups, leather doublet, plate harness and plate breastplate, long pants, bows with quivers, helmets, jaw-guards and nose-guards. Affinities with Iranian and Central Asian armor have long been observed; in some aspects the influence of Han art is still noticeable. Also in Japan the new way of life will have been imposed since the 3rd century.

III

The establishment of the Hiung-nu empire and its controversy with Han China had a very extensive repercussion, especially towards the West. The Asian nomads began to move in waves, and, finally, it was the bulk of the Hiung-nu themselves who advanced magically towards the eastern confines of Europe.

The jue-dchi or Tocaryans had previously been subdued by Mao-dun himself, the founder of the empire. The tribe of Iranian nomads had nothing to do with the language we now call "Tocaryan"; the Chinese name in its original form reveals that they were Scythians. During the reign of Mao-dun's son, the Tocaryans were defeated for the second time: their king perished in battle and the victor had a jicara made from the skull of the fallen. Then, the bulk of the tribe, which until then had been based beyond the upper reaches of the Huang-ho, moved westward, running over their neighbors, the Saka, and reaching the northwestern border of Iran, Fergana, in the mid-second century BC, after fierce fighting with other tribes and mixed with Saka fragments. The Sacks attempted the first invasion. However, they were defeated by Mithridates I, founder of the Parthian splendor, settling in 139 in what is now Sistan, in eastern Iran, then called by them Sacastane. The second wave, under the command of the Tocharians and composed of Sacs and other nomadic tribes, was luckier. They crossed the Amudarja river ten years later and put an end to the Greek domination in Sogdiana and Bactria. Then, they ran over the whole Parthian territory, after having defeated and killed the successor of Mithridates in a battle.

This movement covered even more ground. The Sarmatians, who until then had lived their nomadic existence between the lower reaches of the Don and Volga rivers, respectively, attacked their western neighbor, the Scythian empire, in southern Russia. Both peoples were of Iranian descent, and both

by language and blood, close relatives of the Tocari and Saka. From the dawn of the second pre-Christian century the domination of the Scythians began to crumble. The Sarmatians spread over the territory of southern Russia displacing the previous masters, who took refuge in the Crimea or crossed the Danube to the Dobrudj.

The world was on the eve of a far-reaching movement that began in the 2nd century and spread from the northern borders of China to the banks of the Danube. The homogeneity of that process is confirmed by archaeological finds from that period. Chinese mirrors from Han times and jade sword handles, also from China, were found in Sarmatian tombs in the area of the Kuban and Volga rivers. On the other hand, the stirrup, a Sarmatian object, prevailed in China in Han times, and also in India in the 2nd and 1st centuries.

There are certain parallels between that movement and the great migration of peoples that was to take place half a millennium later. It also had its beginnings in the Far East, in the Hiung-nu, or Huns, as they were called at that time. Only it was the destruction of their empire, and not its establishment, as happened in the second pre-Christian century, which gave rise to the beginning of the movement. The victories of the great emperors of the Han dynasty and the erection of the massive frontier stronghold on the southern borders of their territory pushed the bulk of the people towards the West.

The struggle of China against the Hiung-nu has strange points of contact with what was happening at the same time in the Mediterranean area. The beginning of the great controversy, which lasted several centuries, coincides with the years in which Rome felt for the first time the strength of its barbarian neighbors. After 168 B.C., a year of such importance, the budding empire was put to a severe test by the struggles in Spain and North Africa, southern Gaul and the Balkans. At the end of

that century and the beginning of the next, the first clash with the Germans and the newly strengthened East took place.

Simultaneously, the struggle against the Hiung-nu entered its decisive phase. The first emperors of the Han dynasty did not yet achieve their true triumph. Only during the reign of the most important among them, Wu-di (141-87), were they able to deal heavy blows to the adversary. Chinese cavalry units invaded enemy territory in repeated campaigns full of setbacks and losses. Under the pressure exerted against them by the enemy, the Hiung-nu moved their center of gravity to the north, to the Orcon and Selengá river basin. Gradually, their resistance was diminishing.

An Asiatic war has an Asiatic scope. "The armies of China had gone deep into the territory of the Hiung-nu; there they had exhausted the enemy, bringing him in like a sarsen. The creatures had been stillborn or before term; the population was tired, exhausted and embittered, and everyone longed for peace," it was noted as early as 58. "Of the Hiung-nu, countless people had been killed and wounded, and others fled far away with their livestock, dying or disappearing in strange lands." Or: "Tens of thousands of people and horses perished, in addition to countless cattle and sheep. The number doubled due to hunger and famine, which wiped out three tenths of the population and half of its livestock. Then a tremendous depopulation, a general decline, took place in the Hiung-nu people. Empires which had hitherto been under their sovereignty fell from them like shingles from a roof during a storm." "The people were starving, and to feed themselves, one cooked and fried the other."

What inevitably had to happen happened. In the year 54 B.C.E., the ruler of the Hiung-nu proclaimed himself a vassal of the Chinese emperor. The tribes living north and northwest of the Huang-ho River thus became Chinese subjects. Twenty years later the western part of the Hiung-nu empire also collapsed.

Beyond the Issyk-kul River, the ruler himself died in battle; his head was sent to the capital.

At that time, Chinese cultural influence had come to cover a lot of ground. This is evidenced by the widely scattered location of subsoil finds, reaching as far as the Altai and Outer Mongolia, as far as Minusinsk and Perm, in the territory crossed by the Volga and Kuban rivers. Danish swamps revealed finds depicting imitations of sword handles, which at first were made of jade, but already at that time, of bone.

At the same time, a new expansion of the Roman Empire took place. The East and Gaul fell under its sovereignty. During the reign of Augustus, the borders on the banks of the Rhine, the Danube and the Euphrates were extended.

The revolts that followed the rule of a usurper gave the Hiung-nu a new opportunity to launch themselves against the Chinese border territories. However, when the younger Han came to power (from 22 AD), they continued the policies of the older dynasty. The strengthened power of the Eliung-nu again broke down. From the year 100 AD, which marks the beginning of Emperor Trajan's policy of conquest in the West, Chinese power in the heart of Asia was at its peak.

Under the pressure of the enemy's superiority of forces, the northern and western tribes of the Hiung-nu abandoned their territories and set out northward. The Sien-bi, formerly neighbors and subjects of the former, (it is they who gave their name to Siberia) reinforced the pressure by seizing larger and larger areas of Hiung-nu territory. Some of their tribes submitted to the new conquerors. But the strongest of them started to move again, and subdued the Sien-bi and the Chinese. In 170 A.D. they disappeared forever from the Far East's field of vision.

In the year 376, the commanders of the Roman fortresses on the banks of the Danube learned that there were signs of great unrest among the barbarians of the North, and that all the tribes between the river Tisa and the Black Sea were in revolt. They

learned that a wild and vigorous people were pushing forward the bulk of their neighbors. Soon it became clear what had happened. The empire of the Goth Ermanaricus had collapsed under the shock of the clash with the Huns.

Since ancient times, the Hiung-nu have always been equated with the Huns; on the other hand, there has never been anyone who doubted this equivalence. Linguistically, there is no way to reduce these two names to a common denominator, however similar they may seem at first glance. Nevertheless, the question can be answered in the affirmative. In oriental documents the voice corresponding to *Hunni*, *Chunni*, *Chunoi* appeared recently, precisely with reference to the Hiung-nu.

The fact that both the Hiung-nu and the Huns spoke Turkish confirms the theory. As for the Hiung-nu, this was always known from the remains found. As for the Huns, the proof could be presented by interpreting the inscriptions of their descendants, the Proto-Bulgarians.

Added to this are archaeological traces of western migration. In the middle course of the Enisei River, the Hun and Iranian elements merge to the point of making a clear separation difficult. However, the plaster masks found in the tombs reflect how the Mongoloid type gradually crept in, and other findings confirm that the direction of migration was from East to West. The finds of skulls in the Altai tombs show the same picture, and traces of the migration of the Hun people to the West appear again. In the Kyrgyz area (Alatau) there are traces of an initial phase of migration: Chinese-type arrows and again Mongoloid-type skulls. A second advance in the early 9th century A.D. led the Huns, in their westward migration, to territory between the Barkul and Balkach lakes. Gold-plated ceremonial arches, found all along the last stretch between the Dniester River and Hungary, date back to cultures based in the Altai and on the banks of the Enisei River, where the same use of gold in equipment blades and clothing is evident everywhere.

Ptolemy, who wrote his geographical work in the sixties of the second century, already knew of the existence of the Huns between the rivers Don and Volga; around 290, Hun mercenaries appear in the service of the Armenians. From this it can be deduced that the first contingents of the great migration must have arrived very early to the river that they crossed in 375, giving rise to the beginning of the migration of peoples. This is confirmed by documents from central Persia, which accredit as mercenaries or auxiliary troops of the Sassanid army, Huns established in the Caucasian highlands.

It is possible to trace the route traveled by the Huns at that time. From Dsungaria and northwestern Russian Turkestan, where Chinese sources last mention the Huns, this route leads to the northern banks of the Yaxartes River. The Huns did not manage to cross the river. The bulwark, once erected by Cyrus, which stretched along the river, also stood in the way of the nomadic raids on that occasion. To the west, on the lower course of the Oxus river, was Chwarezm. That country, strong because it was skilfully led, was not a promising target for the Huns either. For these reasons, seeing all roads to the south closed, they turned around the Aral and Caspian lakes to the north, stopping at the lower reaches of the Volga and Don rivers.

During their migration to the West, the Huns borrowed a few details from the Iranian culture. Among the words from that language, naturalized by the Huns, are the words "king" and "lord" as well as "morning drink". This test of manhood recalls the orgies in Attila's hall.

The Huns had a poetry and even an epic, how interesting it would be to know how it was related to Gothic and whether the Iranian influence was reflected in it! The adoption of letters, precursors of the Turkish "runes", takes us already to the Caucasian territory, that is, to the end of the journey.

The linguistic form of the naturalized words, the alphabet, the architectural forms adopted at that time, all point to the northern

border of Iran as the territory of origin; on the other hand, nothing indicates as such the Persian southwest. Already the conqueror Mao-dun admitted that he knew nothing of *li*, nor of *i*, that is, of the rules and duties of life. This delightful part of Chinese culture went unnoticed by the Huns, as did the chivalric customs and discipline cultivated at the court of the Sassanids. On the banks of the Yavartes, in Chwarezm and in the Caucasian highlands it was difficult to learn such things, even if the Huns had felt the inclination to cultivate them. The Huns were inspired by examples from other spheres.

The Hiung-nu and the Sarmatians were bearers of the most recent animal style; coming from Western Siberia, it came to replace the previous animal style, of Scythian origin. The change took place simultaneously with the appearance of the Hiung-nu on the Chinese frontiers and with the Sarmatian incursion into southern Russia. Not only in art did the animal style appear, but also as an example for man; human action was determined by animal action. The Huns' attitude to Iranian religions was thus established from the beginning.

Tsaratustrianism had a profound significance for Chwarezm. But there is no indication that it influenced the Hun mood; he remained faithful to his own ideology. The parable taken from the animal kingdom continued to serve as a north for human behavior. In Attila, the most outstanding man of his people, one can see to what extent - even to the exclusion of others - this ideology determined the decisive actions. In all respects, the animal example and, above all, its knowledge of the future influenced human events.

A hind had shown Hun hunters the way through the Mayota swamp, thus opening the Hun people the way to southern Russia. It can be seen that even the conquest, even the occupation of territories obeyed guidance received from animals. The eastern Woguls and Yaques have an older version, according to which it was not the doe, but a hexapod elk that

showed them the way. The hunters, assimilation of the image of the Greek storyteller determined by man, appear as human arctic managers, with and without wings. Behind the softened tale we see the original version emerge: primitive, counter-factual, it takes place in a No Man's Land populated by ghosts, but with a strong and powerful expression, captivating even to us. The Eurasian steppe appears and even more: that area leads to the homeland of the elk and the Arctic wolverine, as it prepares to make the transition to the mysterious semi-darkness of the Taiga.

IV

Beyond the Don River, which the Huns crossed only in 375, there was a vast territory dominated by Goths and Alans.

In the pre-Christian era, the Goths were based in southern Sweden. Gotland, then Västergötlandia and Östergötlandia, has retained the name and archaeological heritage of that people, who came by sea to the shores of the Baltic Sea. West Prussia was the core of the new territory; the area around the mouth of the Vistula River was called the "Goda Coast".

From the mouth of the Vistula, the Goths set out again. Once again they headed southeastward, bound for the countries along the shores of the Black Sea. Other tribes, who like the Goths came from the Scandinavian peninsula, followed in their footsteps, pushing them onward: the Burgundians to the southwest, the Vandals from Silesia to the Danube. A Gothic legend tells that, led by Filimer, son of Gadarig, the Goths crossed a swamp, crossed a river and reached the fertile region called Oium. According to the legend, half of the contingent remained behind, without crossing the river, and the rest invaded

the territory of the Spalos, establishing their kingdom on the coast of the Mayotis.

At first glance, it is understood that it is the Pripet marshes; from its bordering region comes the moharra of Kowel, with its inscription of gothic runes. Oium is the "meadows", that is, the plateau of southern Russia. There lived the Ostrogoths, as they came to be called later, then called *Greutunger*, i.e. "inhabitants of the fields", in contrast to the Visigoths or *Terwings*, "inhabitants of the forest". The Spalas lived between the Dnieper and Don rivers, so the river crossed by the emigrants was the Dnieper.

Already under the domination of the Scythians, the wide strip of land north of the Black Sea was divided into the territory belonging to the agricultural tribes and another region covered with forests. The chronicle of Nestor similarly divides the Slavs: some settled on the banks of the Dnieper and called themselves *Polians* (country people), and the others *Drevlians*, because they inhabited the forests. The same groups existed among the Goths, and this distinction has been confirmed since ancient times. In this respect, the Germans poured themselves into prefabricated molds of supra-ethnic duration.

Here, then, on the one hand, was agriculture and animal husbandry, on the other hand, lumbering and forestry. In the first place, both referred to the subjects, who fed their masters with the work of their hands. The owner of the forest was the hunter. On the other hand, the landowner and herdsman was obliged, because of the extent of his territories and the protection they demanded, to lead a warlike existence. Ancient ways of life, typical of Eurasian territories, were hardly conceivable without horses.

Next to the forest and the field appears, as a third sphere of action, the steppe; next to the hunter and the landowner appears the mounted nomad. The forest and the countryside remain limited, signifying for man rootedness and restriction. In the

steppe, on the other hand, a different law prevails. It lacks borders and comforts, which in the forest and in the countryside are determining factors. Unconscionable is the winter with its cold and the icy blow of the storms; unconscionable is the summer with its heat and drought, and also the spring in the prodigality of flowers and the torrents of the waters of thaw, which turn the limestone silt into yellowish gray or black paste. Inordinate is, lastly, the monotony of the steppe, which lies rigid under thick layers of snow or is covered with grass and a sea of flowers as far as the eye can see. Man is forced to submit to the law of the steppe, which takes hold of him and subjugates him. Its monotony takes away his land and imposes on him a nomadic life.

This is where the Gothic existence began to flow into the life of the new neighbors.

The Alans were the strongest Sarmatian tribe and at that time the dominant tribe. As their name indicates, they were Aryans and, in particular, Iranians (*aryanam* in the Old Persian language). They spoke a dialect originating from Eastern Iran; the present-day Ossetians, in the Caucasian highlands, can be traced back, as their language indicates, to the Alans or Sarmatians. It is not known how they got along with each other or with the Goths. It is very probable that there were warlike encounters. The Norse legend that relates the struggle of the Goths against the Huns also refers to Gothic victories won on the banks of the river Dilgia, in the countryside at the foot of the Iassar mountain range. That leads us to the banks of the Don and to what today is called Kossa Dolguiana, in front of Mariupol; it seems that the Iassar mountain range is the mountain range of the Alans. When the Alans later appeared as a Gothic tribe, there had already been an association: the Alans had been Germanized, at least in part. However, the influence was not one-sided, for the Goths owed to their Iranian neighbors a far-reaching transformation of their way of life.

"The Alans, says a historian of the late fourth century, have neither huts nor plows, but feed on meat and milk in abundance, living in their wagons with arched roofs made of bark; in them they travel through the vast infinity of the steppe. When they reach a pasture, they stop and group their wagons in a circle, and then feed in the style of wild beasts. When the grass is at its peak, the group continues their journey in their wagons. In the wagon, man and woman are united, children are born and raised. It is their permanent residence, and whatever the region they are in, the Alans consider it their homeland. Cattle accompany them, and together with the herds they seek food. To the breeding of horses they devote great care. In their country, the earth brings forth ever new produce, and from time to time they come to a place where the trees yield their fruit. Therefore, they can go wherever they please, for they do not lack food or pasture anywhere. Both grow in sufficient quantity thanks to the humidity of the soil and the great number of rivers."

It can be seen, then, that the horse and the chariot determine the existence of the Alans. Both factors have had a permanent influence on the Goths.

In search of new arable land they had left the Baltic coast. However, they did not stay long on the conquered land. Not even when they reached the coast of the Black Sea, finding new places there, did they leave their chariots.

Like their neighbors, the Goths then became a people for whom the wagon and the chariot barrier meant homeland; a people constantly on the march. This even influenced their way of fighting. Rome, which had long since relegated the art of camp building to oblivion, learned from its Gothic adversaries to appreciate the chariot barrier.

In southern Russia, the Goths became the great transhumants known to history. Their restlessness and eagerness to travel frightened their Roman neighbor. Extolling Aurelian's victory over the Goths, Amianus Marcellinus coined the phrase that the

fearsome adversary had remained immobile for a whole century - *siluerunt immobiles*.

In addition to the cart, the Alans had the horse. The Goths knew how to ride horses when they arrived in southern Russia. But it was only after they made contact with the nomadic Iranians that this art became established among them.

The Sarmatians and Alans passed for cowards in infantry combat, but there was no one to resist a solid attack from their squadrons. The horsemen wore armor of palastra or thick leather; they wielded both lance and sword, with either hand indistinctly, from the saddle, as they rushed after the enemy shouting: "Marha, Marha". Contemporary descriptions indicate the armor of scales or an armored shirt that reached to the feet, with conical helmet and spear, pants and riding boots. It is strange that the stirrup, a Sarmatian invention, which provided a firm support for spear combat and allowed the bow and arrow shooter freedom of aim in all directions, is missing.

Up to that time in the Germanic armies the horsemen had fought mixed with the infantry. From then on, however, the cavalry, especially the heavy cavalry, became the core of the army.

The Germans fought exclusively with spear and sword. They absorbed the Alans into their ranks, and later also the Huns. They soon became so strong that the Roman infantry, without cavalry of their own, could no longer cope with the Goths. The compact bulk of the cavalry had to play a decisive role in the battle of Adrianople, in 378. "Like lightning," says a contemporary, "it tore through the enemy ranks: everything that opposed its assault was run over." "Like lightning," the king of the Goths had scattered the Roman army a hundred years before. It is to be supposed that back then, too, it was the cavalry that struck this blow.

For the king, it became indispensable to appear on horseback. At tournaments, with his lance, wearing his shining armor and

decorated with the symbol of his majesty, King Totila gave proof of his prowess before the battle of Taginae. The bronze statue of Theodoric at Ravenna depicts him on horseback, with spear and shield. The runes on the stone of Rök confirm this:

*Here it is armed
on a mounted steed,
Shield on the shoulder to the prince of the Maringos.*

Riding a horse became, from then on, a symbol of the Goths and of the East Germans in general. In the West the matter was different. On the eve of the battle of Strasbourg in 357, the commons demanded that the nobility dismount and join the ranks of the infantry. Even in the 6th century, a Frankish army was composed mostly of infantry; only a few mounted men were grouped around the leader.

At that time it was not only the horse that determined the Gothic way of life. With their arrival in southern Russia, the Goths had become part of a cultural circle created by the animal in general.

Not that animal experience was lacking in the Germanic people. Masks of Germanic warriors made them appear as bull or boar, bear or wolf. Ornaments on helmets and shields were inspired by the same animals. Even the northern Cerserker was able to resort to animal forms. The Romans used to compare the overwhelming attacks of their Germanic adversaries to the violence of rabid wild beasts. With menacing gestures, gnashing of teeth and howls of rage, they rushed after the enemy.

The mounted tribes also pretended to present animals: wolves, bears, the Arctic wolverine and other bloodthirsty beasts. In this respect they were on the same plane with the Germans; that is to say, they met and then separated again immediately. For the Germans, attack and hand-to-hand combat made the hero, while for the nomads the art of war found its consummation in

misleading the enemy, attacking him by surprise, fleeing by stealth and annihilating him by remote control. Their model was not the charging beast, but the flight and pursuit, the speed and cunning of animals. If one of them wanted to escape as a pigeon, his pursuer would catch him as an eagle; if he escaped as a fish, the other would catch him as a sturgeon.

The animal style was the expression of the world of ideas of nomads, it was as old as the appearance of mounted tribes in southern Russia. It came from the Asian steppes. With the Iranian Scythians and their precursors, the Cimmerians. The Sarmatians brought a more recent variation of this style, vigorous and yet highly refined, distinguished from the older phases by its polychromy. Weapons and equipment, gold and silver plates were adorned with variegated mounted stones; pole-tips and banners crowned with animal figures alternated with openwork belt buckles depicting intertwined animal bodies in full fight. This animal symbolism appears in belt buckles and belt tips, felt appliqués and wool embroidery, from the mouth of the Danube to Outer Mongolia.

In southern Russia, the Goths soon assimilated this art. From Bosphoran craftsmanship they borrowed filigree and granulation, mounted stones and paste glass; from Sarmatian goldsmiths, polychrome inlays. The Goths covered the gold of their buckles and fibulae with wine-colored almandines from the Hindu-Kush. The first reproductions of animals were soon added to this. The Goths were not inspired by those pathetic scenes of struggle and violence in which the Arctic wolverine attacks and tears the elk; the tiger and the griffin the mare. On the other hand, the head and body of animals are becoming more and more established in the creations of goldsmiths. The Germanic tendency to intertwine lines came to unite with the art of the Iranian nomads, creating a new style: the animal ornamental art of the Germans.

What had begun with the horsemen's way of life and tactics, and continued with the animal style, reached its climax in a

political creation that came to embrace large parts of the territory of southern and central Russia: the Gothic empire of Ermanaric. By the middle of the fourth century its formation had come to an end. It soon disintegrated again under the impact of the invasion of the Huns. Nevertheless, its importance for the cultural development of that vast territory was lasting and far-reaching.

Among the peoples belonging to this group were not only Goths and Alana tribes, but also Slavs, precursors of today's Ossetians, and not lastly Ugrophinians: Merenes and Mordenes, that is, Cheremises and Mordwinos. These indications, even if very sparse, allow us to mentally reconstruct that empire of such an ephemeral life, and yet so exceptional.

The founder of the Gothic empire (or the one who gave it the final touch) has been compared by his contemporaries to Alexander the Great. But Ermanaric left an unfavorable impression among the Germans. Legend depicts him as a cruel tyrant who attacked his own dynasty. Our sources tell us of the slavery in which he kept the people under his rule. It is to be supposed that the domination of such an extensive territory and of such varied subjects demanded a more imperious attitude and a more implacable treatment than that which the Goths were accustomed to receive from their kings. The symbol of this new domination, despot and orientalized, was the clothing of the Gothic rulers at that time.

It was a garment of Iranian origin. Long tunic with vertical central border; mantle open in front, with pearls applied along the shoulder and the border; cap crossed with a ribbon in the form of a cross, embroidered with pearls and wearing a large spherical gem on the crown; these are the details that, as can be seen, were all an integral part of the Arsacid royal costume (and to a lesser extent, of the first period of the Sassanid kingdom). It can be taken for granted that the Alans were not the mediators, since they had nothing comparable. On the other hand, the oldest

clothing was preserved at the time when the Sassanids already reigned in Iran, where the Arsachids have always remained, that is, in Armenia and the surrounding territories. The royal dress of the Caucasian highlanders is known; it resembles the Gothic. It is also worth remembering the Iberian-Caucasians, forerunners of today's Gruzinians. Their recently found royal epigraphs show the marked influence of the Arsacid royalty.

This is where we must look for the mediators who brought the Goths the Iranian clothing. As we have said, Ermanaric's sovereignty extended also over the Ossetians in the Caucasian highlands, and in Dagestan Gothic imported merchandise was found. Gothic and Iranian forms, channeled by the antiquity of the Alans, came to assert themselves more markedly. Ulfilas, a younger contemporary of Ermanaric, by converting his Goths to Christianity, caused a revolution whose significance can be appreciated only today.

In the activities of this man, who in addition to his native language was fluent in Greek and Latin, was personified the distancing from Iran and the approach to antiquity, signifying at the same time a rapprochement to the West and to Europe, a decisive feat in the history of the East Germans. Thus it was that the Goths were saved from becoming entangled with the East, a rapprochement that had reached its climax precisely under the reign of Ermanaric.

The subjugated Finno-Ugric tribes reveal the extent of this interpenetration. The words *steed*, *chain mail*, *sword* and *whip* were found in a number of dialects, including *cheremise*, *mordwino*, and *osseta*, i.e. they were naturalized Alana words. The "word" could not have reached the Finno-Ugric people without the "thing". Subway finds confirm what the language indicates. In Perm (Charin culture), as well as on the banks of the rivers Desna, Oca and in the territory of the Volga-Kama, an import composed of chain mail, long swords and three-edged arrowheads is noted. To this are added components of saddles,

belt and boot buckles, as well as gold jewelry adorned with variegated stones, filigree and granulation, inventory typical of a nation of horsemen, imported from the Gothic empire and again cancelled with the invasion of the Huns.

There were two ways by which imported goods reached the North. To the Kama, the road led across the steppe stretching between the Volga and the Urals; to reach the Oca, on the other hand, one had to make one's way through the forest belt of central Russia. By way of exchange, the coveted furs came south from the Kama. The Goths wore fur caps and fur coats until the very end of their historical existence. The naturalized words confirm this also in this case. The name of the Otters goes back to the Ossetian in an Ugro-Finnic dialect. We realize, then, that the valuable furs were in great demand among the Alans.

Thus, the Gothic empire fostered economic exchange within Russia. Political power went hand in hand with economic expansion. Not with infantry troops, but solely and exclusively with mobile cavalry armies could such territory be conquered and defended. By means of a tactic adopted from the Iranian mounted tribes of southern Russia, the Goths built their empire in the heart of Russia. When the economic penetration of the huge area began, the products of the mixed Alano-Gothic culture were also spread among the subjugated tribes. Horses, equestrian clothing and weapons conquered central and northern Russia at that time. Behind all this there was a lordly and chivalrous lifestyle, of the Alano-Gothic style. Once again it is the naturalized words that point the way. The word for king has been adopted by the Finns from Germanic; the word for lord and sovereign by the Permaic dialects from Alano-Ossetian. Elements of equestrian costume were not only imposed not only among the Cheremises and Mordwinos, but even on the Baltic coasts.

Also in the songs that must one day have been compiled in the *Kalevala* we can see the evolution. The Finnish "rune" has

possibly a Gothic name. In the sixth rune the "straw-colored body horse" of Wáinámói-nen is described as "blue moose". In a repetition the "blue elk" and the "slender steed" are confronted. These are fixed associations, typical adjectives which, as in Homeric, Germanic and Indian epics, are not lacking in Finnish epics either. A precondition for the comparison of these two animals, which at first sight seems paradoxical, is the fact that the horse has come to replace the elk as a mount (it has been proved that the elk as a mount existed until the 17th century. The fact that these forms were consequential is not only reflected in runic poetry; it also appears in a tomb from Pazyryk in the eastern Altai.

One of the horses of the nomad prince buried there around the year zero, placed in the tomb with its owner, was disguised as an elk with a mask of leather, felt, gold leaf and skins. Here then is, on the one hand, a horse called an elk; on the other hand, a horse disguised as an elk. Thus, we can realize the transcendental importance for the peoples of Northern Eurasia of the introduction of the mounted horse and, at the same time, of mounted combat.

V

The western ranges and the eastern plains have always been among the most densely populated territories of Arabia. Especially Syria and Palestine, Hedjaz and Yemen intervened from time to time in the history of European life.

According to their cultural characteristics, these healthy and prolific highlanders belonged more to Europe than to Asia; in fact, the Arabs in general always lived with their sights set on the Mediterranean and not on the Indian Ocean, especially as far as their expansion was concerned. For the problem of ethnic displacement constituted one of the greatest and most complex

basic forces in Arabia; this applies to the whole country, however diverse its effects in the various territories that make it up.

In Syria, the cities suffered from a low birth rate and high mortality, due to poor sanitary conditions and unhealthy lifestyles. As a result, the surplus rural population found a home in the cities and was absorbed by them. In Yemen the situation was different. The cities were nothing more than villages, primitive and rural like the towns. The population was gradually increasing; the standard of living was falling and in all aspects of life it was noticeable that the country was overpopulated. It was not possible to migrate across the sea, nor was it possible to move northward along the coast, as the way was blocked by Mekka and its port Djidda. The overpopulation of Yemen, which by then had become an alarming situation, could therefore be alleviated only by eastward expansion. As a result, the inhabitants of the less populated border region were pushed further and further east down the slopes of the mountains and then retreated along the Wadis to semi-desert areas that further north became the Nedchd desert. It was then up to these weaker tribes to retreat, replacing fertile lands with abundant springs with more arid areas, until they reached a region where it was impossible to live on agriculture alone. There they began to supplement their meager subsistence by raising sheep and dromedaries, on which, as time went on, their existence became increasingly dependent.

Finally, the frontier peoples, almost all of whom had already become pastoralists, were driven out by the hungry population that was pushing them from behind, becoming nomads. This process, which today can be reconstructed by following the traces of lineages and tribes, must have already begun at the beginning of the comprehensive colonization of Yemen. The Wadis, below Mekka and Taif, are full of memories and names of localities of fifty or so tribes that had left those places and are

today in the Nedchd, in Djebel Chemar, in Llamad and even on the borders of Syria and Iraq. It was the starting point of migration, the cradle of nomadism, the origin of the current of desert pilgrims.

The desert tribes were as wandering as the inhabitants of the mountainous areas. Their economic base was the dromedary. The Bedouins lived from their breeding, which in turn determined the territory of the individual tribes by keeping them constantly on the move in search of pasture, from spring to winter, wherever the herds found fodder, however scarce. The problem of overpopulation sometimes arose even in the wilderness. Then, the countless tribes began to push and move one another, following the natural instinct to seek a position in the sun. They did not want to go southward, where the inhospitable sand and sea stretched out; but neither could they go westward, for the towering heights of the Hedjaz were densely populated by mountaineers who enjoyed the advantage of a position of natural defense. Sometimes they reached as far as the central oases and if the tribes that sought new places were strong, they could manage to occupy them in part. If, on the other hand, the desert had not tempered their forces, they were gradually pushed northwards, towards the territory between Medina on the Hedjaz and Casim on the Nedchd, until they found themselves at the fork of two roads. They could head east, to become river Arabs on the banks of the lower course of the Euphrates. Or they could climb the ladder of the western oases step by step, until they approached the Djebel Drus in Syria, or water their flocks in the northern desert near Tadmor, on the way to Aleppo or Assyria.

But even then they could not escape the pressure; the inexorable suction that drove them northward persisted. The tribes were pushed to the margin of the cultivated territory of Syria or Iraq. The propitious opportunity, that of the stomach, convinced them of the convenience of raising goats and, later,

also sheep; they ended up cultivating cereals, even if it was only a little barley for the cattle. They were no longer Bedouins and suffered as much as the villagers from the incursions of the nomads, who continued to push forward. Spontaneously, they made common cause with the settled rural population and found that they had become peasants.

We see, then, that tribes coming from the Yemen plateau, pushed by stronger tribes into the desert, became nomads, contrary to their will, in order to stay alive. Year after year they moved further and further north or east, until the pressure eventually displaced them even from the desert, causing them to return to settle as forcibly as before they had become nomads. This vicious circle kept the Semites vigorous. There are few in the North, perhaps none, whose ancestors have not traversed the desert in very remote times. Every one of them bears, one more or less, the mark of nomadism, which is the hardest and most decisive discipline there is.

E. T. Lawrence wrote these sentences with current events in mind, but they have application beyond their immediate purpose. They determine the law of Arabian life. With insignificant modifications they can be applied to the time of which we speak here.

The starting point was again the Yemen plateau. In the present account we can overlook the complex history, only partly elucidated, of the South Arabian tribes and kingdoms. Viewed on a large scale, it is possible to speak of Minaeans, Sabaeans, and Himjarites, even if the earlier dates must be considerably reduced. The Himjarites occupied the predominant position from the 2nd century B.C. They were related to their ancestors; their languages and characters remained identical. As a priest and powerful landowner, the king continued to preside over a state whose economic base was agriculture. Even at that time he derived his wealth from the harvesting of incense and trade with it, opting for the maritime trade route through the Red

Sea, or the trade road from Marib to Syria by way of Mekka. After seventy days the caravans arrived from Main to the Bay of Akaba, where the Nabataeans took charge of the further transport and shared the profit with the southern Arabs.

During the early Ptolemies, this business suffered a severe shock. The rulers of Egypt did all they could to wrest trade from the Nabataeans as intermediaries by establishing direct communication. And indeed, the Ptolemies succeeded in taking over the maritime trade almost completely. They were helped in this by a momentous discovery. The Alexandrian helmsman Hippalos had discovered that the monsoons blew regularly. He dared to abandon the coast and, taking advantage of the southwest monsoon, crossed the sea to India. From then on, the South Arabian shipping had also lost its monopoly of communication with India.

The Hijmarites did not succeed in regaining the position they had once occupied in trade with India. It was the Romans who followed in the footsteps of the Ptolemies, and from the time of Nero, there was a regular maritime traffic that bypassed the South Arab mediators. Alexandria became the transit port par excellence and the Hijmarites became Rome's clients. Present-day Aden was the headquarters of a Roman occupation. In the 1st century, the Hijmarites stopped minting coins. New finds near Pondicherry, on the east coast of India and in the Mekong delta, show us the enormous scope of Roman trade at that time.

Under the pressure of economic ruin, Yemenite tribes began to migrate northward. Crossing the steppes and deserts of Central Arabia, they advanced towards the Syrian and Mesopotamian borders. Indigenous tradition associates this migration with the breaking of the dam at Marib, once the Sabaean capital. Inscriptions show that there was one in 449/50 and another in 542/43; both times the damage was repaired. The final catastrophe seems to have occurred prior to 570, but the breaking of the dam was not so much the cause as the symptom

of the general decline. The great South Arabian migration had already begun earlier. The two sovereign lineages of Arabia at the end of antiquity, the Gasanids and the Lactamids, derive their origins from the breaking of the dam; so much so that the Gasanids begin to count their era from that catastrophe. However, it is proven that the migration of both dates back to earlier periods.

Syria was always a transit country, and, therefore, a disputed country. The conquerors made incursions along the coast and through the valley of the Chontes, in a north-south direction and vice versa. From the east, the country was exposed to nomadic raids. Pressure from the south and from the interior of the Arabian peninsula pushed the Bedouins of the Hamad towards the "fertile crescent". Syria and Mesopotamia.

Then, as today, their success in this regard depended on the strength of the regime in Syria. The Bedouins, prevented from raiding fertile land, had to confine themselves to voluntarily ceded land. When a hot summer burned the scarce pastures and dried up the watercourses of the Hamad, the herds were allowed to graze in the fields after the harvest. When the Bedouins wished to settle, they had to make do with barren land. A weak regime, on the other hand, soon lost control over the tribes, which began to oppress the peasants living on the coveted lands, plundering and finally forcing them to abandon their fields and villages. If the colonization of the nomads advanced fertile lands towards the steppe, now the steppe advanced towards the fertile lands. Thus it was that deserted areas were being devastated, irrigation facilities were deteriorating and the desert was reconquering the land that had been taken from it.

These conditions came about as a result of the collapse of Seleucid power. Arab dynasties were being established everywhere. The Roman Empire also limited itself, for the time being, to incorporating the existing principalities into its own clientele and entrusting them with the protection of the frontiers.

It was only the first century of the Christian Era that led to the absorption of local powers. Indirect rule became direct. From then on, the history of the Syrian frontier zone began to coincide with that of Rome. Independent life began only beyond the military demarcation line, tangible, above all, in the northern Hedjaz.

Medain Saleh then constituted the outpost of the Nabataeans on the road of incense, which began in the south. A little further on, the Lijjanites, together with the Tamudans, had impeded the advance of the Nabataeans. When the empire of Petra became a Roman province in 106 A.D., the situation changed, oasis after oasis was conquered. At the end of this series of conquests around the year 250 the Tamudenses had become the mercantile people they have been since then.

Their inscriptions are scattered over a vast territory: they appear in southwestern Hedjaz and central Arabia; in ancient Midian, Edom and Moab, as far as the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt. The language is Norarabic, but many proper names, as well as the alphabet, indicate Sudarabic influence. Indeed, Talmudic inscriptions have been found in Nechran, north of Yemen. The same can be said of the Safavid inscriptions, most of which come from an inhospitable mountain range south of Damascus. They are also written in a Norarabic dialect. However, the proper names and other details again indicate a possible Surarabic origin. The Talmudenses were a partially sedentary people who had themselves described and painted with the mancera in their hands; on the other hand, in the black rock of Harra they continued to live a nomadic life. They grazed their dromedaries and horses, goats and sheep as far as the Euphrates. The inscriptions attest to ownership and sales, watering places and ranches, and there is no lack of typical Bedouin traits, such as the pride of an ancient lineage or sadness at the sight of a deserted ranch. These Safaiids were already

subtracting themselves from the arm of Rome, and deserters from the Roman army found refuge among them.

The first independent empires were formed in the second half of the nth century AD. The beginnings of the history of the Gasanids are still unclear. It is not known whether the castle of Mchata, located in the middle of the desert, with its regal façade, the first splendor of Arabian art, was built by one of them or by the Lachmid Imru ul-cais; both dynasties, of South Arabian origin, already existed at that time. As vassals of the Sassanids, the first Lammids, established in Hira on the banks of the lower Euphrates, had subdued large parts of northern and central Arabia. Gadima, the "king of the Tanu," appears in an inscription from southwestern Hauran; his successor Amr is mentioned in the Coptic *Mani-Papiri*, and of the combats of both with Queen Zenobia of Palmyra the Arab tradition still tells. For a moment it was granted to the third in that hierarchy - Imru ul-qais, who proudly appointed himself "king of the Arabs" - to dream of the creation of a third power alongside Rome and Iran. But with his death, that abortive plan was undone.

As we have said, Syria was a land of transit. For this very reason, its inhabitants were always able and willing to assimilate everything new; they have the gift of adaptability, of quickly understanding any situation. At the same time. Syria represents the country of light and clarity. For the Syrian there are no concepts lost in nebulous semi-darkness, there is nothing blurred or dreamy. It is characterized by an active and receptive intelligence, whose speed and clarity is reminiscent of light and hardly finds its equal in other peoples.

On the other hand, the agile and flexible are, at the same time, unstable and fickle. Restless, active, although not always crowned with success, they represent the eternal mockers, who are unaware of loyalty and reverence. *A priori*, their intelligence is of an urban nature; they enjoy the happy moment, which explains their enthusiastic and overflowing joy at parties. But

constancy and perseverance, everything that requires tenacity and firmness, is alien to the mentality of these people. Their vivacity, reminiscent of the flight of restless birds, consumes the strength necessary for such activities. Therefore, the Syrian spirituality is more like a voracious fire that consumes quickly, than a slow fire source of well-fed heat; it dazzles, but lacks depth, and even more so, fertility. The Syrians succeeded in forming lasting sovereign states. Appreciated for their skill, feared for their irony, they did not leave the category of subjects, and not even of a subject worthy of much trust. But they never created serious problems for Rome.

Iraq is another matter. The variegated polychrome of the Syrian landscape contrasts with a much more monotonous picture. The vegetation is exhausted in a brief spring, of exuberant intensity. During the other months of the year, a fertile chalky flax covers the plants and the huts with a brownish gray dust, darkens the sky, spreads over everything its monotonous mantle. To the mind, nature has denied the inhabitants of that country the ambiguous gift of Syrian intelligence. They are heavier, more poised, more rustic; they are coarser and slower but cut from a tougher cloth. At all times, the Iraqis prove to be tenacious, stubborn and capable of defending themselves. The states that were formed in the first centuries of history within the Arab world, emerged from its bosom.

The loose structure of the Parthian Empire made it the breeding ground for a variety of local empires. Everywhere appeared dynasties endowed with a tactful independence. In Babylonia there was temporarily a Jewish kingdom of the Assinaeans and the Anilaeans, and in upper Iraq mention should be made, above all, of the Abgarians of Edessa and the kings of Adiabene, also Jewish. A picture of the existing conditions is given by Hatra, a city located to the west of what is now Mosul.

The city was part of the territory of an Arab tribe, which, like the Shamar of today, had crossed the Euphrates River from central Arabia. It is not known when that happened: under the reign of Trajan an urban colony appears for the first time. Like the cities that sprang up in the oases of inland Arabia, it was surrounded by a brick wall. But it was not this fortification, but rather the inhospitable land, that kept the enemy away. During one skirmish the life of the emperor himself, who, despite his age, participated bravely in the combat on horseback, was in danger. The mounted sharpshooters of the Hatrenes aimed their arrows at him, having recognized him by his gray hair and the dignity of his bearing, although he had removed his insignia.

Almost a century later, when Septimius Severus arrived again at the city gates, he found a powerful and prosperous community. Embedded in the mud fence of old were stone towers that were powerful bastions. Twice the victor over the king of the Parthians attempted to take Hatra, and both times he failed. The treasures of the Temple of the Sun in that city, which the emperor was ambitious to obtain, remained out of his reach. A hail of arrows and burning tar greeted the assailants, and the catapults of the watchtowers proved to be powerful weapons.

Shapur, the second Sassanid, achieved what his predecessor had not been able to achieve. When Julian's army passed through that place, another hundred years later, the city lay deserted. "Have you not seen Hatra," sang an Arab poet at the time, "whose inhabitants always lived well?" Yet even today the ruins of Hatra are among the most impressive monuments of that lonely region.

Of more recent foundation than Hatra was Hira, located on the lower course of the Euphrates River. Its population was divided into three classes. First, the Tanuch, that is, the Arabs who lived between Ambar and Hira, in tents made of toquilla; then the Ibad, the Aramaeans who had settled there; and, lastly, the "companions of defense". These were also Arabs, but they

were outside the union of their tribe, burdened with guilt and escaped from blood vengeance.

In the lower Euphrates alluvium, the dividing line between nomads and peasants is more blurred than elsewhere. The peasants also live in tents, settling either in this or that part of the habitable terrain. Only integration has put an end to such a transitional life. Companions of defense and inhabitants without the right of citizenship also exist elsewhere: in pre-Islamic Mecca they play an important role. In times of war, they formed armies, together with conscripted Bedouins and Abyssinian slaves, for the Kuraisch nobility.

The tanuch constituted a creative element. It is to be supposed that they entered Iraq at the beginning of the decline of the Parthian power, under the last Arsachid. We have already referred to Gadima of Hira, the "king of the tanuch". He was able to enter into arrangements with Palmyra. The Sassanids recognized the new state and entrusted him with the protection of the frontier on the banks of the Euphrates. Persian and Hira interests met; once in possession of the land, the former Bedouins did not mind sharing the land with the newcomers, even if they were their desert cousins.

Hatra and Hira arose from camps, and their names reveal it. The residence of the Lachmids was built in the military manner and its picture, handed down by an Arab, shows us that Mchata had followed the example of Hira. The castles of the Abbasids, at Balcuvara and Ucheidir, still follow the same form. The camps were soon transformed into trading posts, protected by the kings. In the very center of the fortified Hatra was the caravan parade ground, which meant rest and lodging for the merchants. Its dimensions were enormous; it extended in front of the royal palace, whose high vaulted windows overlooked the square.

As the city had arisen from the camp, so arose the military order of the nomad. The bulk of the army was made up of

Bedouins, for whom the incentive was, above all, the hope of booty. For the most part, they were mounted on dromedaries; only the sheikhs had horses. The horsemen wielded spears, bows and the small round shields that appear on rock carvings of the Safaiids.

In addition, there was another troop recruited from among the inhabitants of the towns and villages. Contrary to the Bedouins, they were accustomed to discipline, complied with orders given and agreed to form integrated units. They also rode on dromedaries, since then, as today, horses were rare and expensive in Arabia. However, from time to time the kings distributed horses from their own studs to men they trusted. In this way, the Sassanids were able to assert the superiority of their cavalry over the Bedouins riding dromedaries.

These sovereigns also provided weapons to some of their henchmen. They were distributed only in cases of danger; generally, they were stored in special armories. Ambar, in the vicinity of Hira, was one such armory, and the armor that the Sassanids placed at the disposal of their vassals was stored there. Thus they succeeded in forming an armored troop and again defeated their nomadic neighbors. Likewise, the army of pre-Islamic Mecca, the famous Ahabich, was recruited and provided with weapons only at the very moment of danger. It was composed exclusively of foreigners, and if it had remained united, it would have constituted a constant threat to the wealth of the great merchants. The bulk of the Ahabich was made up of Abyssinian slaves. Only the military ranks were occupied by Arabs: expelled from the Bedouin tribes, thieves and exiles, they had, however, a particular concept of honor, a reputation for daring and recklessness. The foot soldiers were mounted on dromedaries, and all received from the *Kuraisch* weapons from their armories, which were well stocked.

A peculiarity of the Arab armies was the women. They accompanied the tribal shrine, "bait" or "baitilos", carried by a

dromedary on a high saddle, in the form of a pavilion. A Palmyrene relief represents this animal with its sacred burden, followed by a group of women covered with veils. The shrine and the women followed their tribesmen to the battlefield. At the climax of the combat, the women used to strip off their garments, trying to stimulate the warriors by their nudity, their gestures and satirical songs; there was nothing more embarrassing than letting the enemy conquer the shrine and the women. Many years after the Hidchra, the prophet's contemporaries still remembered mothers of the tribe who, in pagan times, had been the vestals of such an idol.

Arabia, therefore, falls into the category represented until that time only by the Eurasian peoples. It enters this category, even though it differs from it in essential points. Among these points are the dromedary and the position of women, who in the North find nothing comparable. Both have also decisively determined the life and the way of fighting of the nomadic North Africans.

VI

Under the reign of Thrasamundus (496-523), the Vandal army suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Moorish tribes of Cabaon. This prudent and systematic prince, who had his pastures in the vicinity of Tripoli, waited for the Vandals on the coastal road leading from Carthage to the south. For the battle, the Moors had formed a circle, the center of which was occupied by their women and children, in addition to the tribe's goods. They were protected by a living wall of dromedaries, which surrounded them on all sides, forming a line of twelve in front. The warriors, armed with shield and javelin, were distributed among the dromedaries, receiving the vandals with their projectiles.

Such a tactic was a new element. Never before had an army of horsemen been defeated by dromedaries. At a stroke, this animal took on an importance it had never known before. This infected the tribes that relied on the dromedary both militarily and economically, using it for their raids and migrations. That the people of Cabaon lived as nomads near Tripoli shows that the steppe and the Sahara had advanced towards the civilized lands, while the latter were narrowing and shrinking proportionately. But the coast was never the nomads' homeland. Hundreds of rock drawings, scattered throughout the Fezzan and neighboring regions, attest that the center of gravity of these tribes was in the south, in the steppe and desert territories.

These drawings always represent the same thing: warriors, mounted or on foot, armed with shield, javelin and spear. In addition, large and small livestock, grazing or roaming in herds. The first place, however, is occupied by the dromedary: only as a domestic animal and as a mount for armed warriors. For these nomads, the dromedary meant everything: provider of meat, milk and wool, mount and beast of burden. Cattle rustling was the safest and often the only way to increase their wealth and alleviate their harsh living conditions.

The steppe and the desert dictate harsh living conditions. Only by struggle can one conquer and keep what one has conquered, whether it is cattle or a house, or the possession of a woman. That is achieved through trials and risks, and has to be continuously defended against rivals. The woman claims as her prerogative to give herself to the strongest and most capable, which imposes on the man the obligation to remain continually alert and ready to give proof of his prowess. Single combat under the most arduous conditions is the rule; death or mutilation of the vanquished is usually the outcome.

Thus forcing the male to continually prove his manhood, the woman creates a fighting and, if we may call it so, heroic type, capable of withstanding the worst, while revealing herself, in the

struggle for her woman and for her personal honor, as an absolute individualist. Her type is far from the obedient and disciplined Roman-style soldier or the Germanic hero, whose greatness is born of his tragic confrontation with destiny.

This type of man is not only individualistic, but also shows an anarchic trait. The subtraction from the bonds of family and parental life, the free warrior existence, full of adventures, constitute the determining characteristics of man, also conditioned by woman.

For not only does he have to fight for the possession of the woman, but she herself is also the center of the household. The role that falls to her has nothing of *pater familias*; it is the woman who chooses the man, who enters the family, so to speak, from the outside. The latter, however, is composed of the woman's relatives: the maternal uncle, the brother and the cousin are closer to the woman than the man. The children are not considered children of the father, but of the mother. Also, the work in the house corresponds exclusively to the woman, especially the construction of tents and huts, while the man is limited to war and hunting. In them he lives his life of strength and courage, of heroism and risks. But only women are allowed to relate these exploits at home. In short: woman and man have the same degree of independence, but each within a clearly delimited sphere.

The same picture emerges everywhere. Woman has displaced man from the inner circle by relegating him to the outer world, making him a hero, but at the same time an adventurer. In this capacity, he finds himself in a constant struggle for existence and for power against his fellow man, but this life of his, full of dangers and vicissitudes, is surprisingly free of obligations. It remains free of laws or bonds, oriented only towards the most immediate and most meager peremptoriness.

The nomads mounted on dromedaries are part of the peoples described above. Their appearance in North Africa corresponded

to the introduction of the equestrian style among the Huns, in Han China, among the Goths and Finns, among the Arabs. Everywhere, the animal was elevated to the category of the symbolic, evolving from it a warlike and heroic existence based on animal life. Austerity and danger, single combat and the taste for war and adventure, a lively and independent existence have succeeded in imposing themselves, even under different forms.

The dromedary determines the North African landscape to such an extent that it is difficult to imagine it without this animal. When the Romans arrived in Africa, they had not yet encountered them. In Egypt, it had been gradually gaining ground since the dawn of the Ptolemaic era, and it was only in the 4th century AD that a North African city was required to provide thousands of camels as pack animals. At the same time, riders mounted on dromedaries emerged in the Roman army of occupation. Two of the squadrons were organized under Diocletian and a third in the 4th century. All were located in upper Egypt and were destined for the protection of the desert tribes.

The Blemians and Nobates, beyond the Nile, constituted adversaries that it was necessary to fight. For a long time they had lived as peaceful neighbors of the kingdom of Meroe, on the banks of the Atbara and the upper course of the Nile. In the second half of the first Christian century and at the beginning of the second, there was the economic heyday of Meroe, attested by the ruins of the capital and the cities of lower Nubia (Iierma, Karanog, Faras). Then began the decline, and the fact that several of these cities have been surrounded by strong fences, shows that the blow has been struck from outside. At the same time, the Blemians and their neighbors attacked the Egyptian frontier. From the middle of the nth century, there were uninterrupted complaints about their incursions.

What was the reason for the aggressiveness of the nomadic tribes. At a stroke, they had become dangerous neighbors. The

fact that the Romans confronted them with units mounted on dromedaries demonstrates the extent to which the fighting strength of the desert tribes had increased, making them capable of dangerous and far-reaching raids. Thus, most of the cave drawings that appear in Nubia and upper Egypt depict dromedaries and riders mounted on dromedaries, fighting from the back of their mount using spears. These Blemians had become mounted nomads; they were the first in North Africa.

From then on, dromedary-based combat as a tactical innovation spread eastward. In the upper Egyptian frontier it became popular in the second half of the 4th century, in Numidia only in the 4th century; however, the starting point was the Arabian peninsula. From there, Bedouins had brought the breeding and use of this animal across the Red Sea. Tamudenses settled near the Blemians, other tribes in Arabia, the Egyptian district whose inhabitants were known for their dromedary breeding and trade. The mediators in the North were Nabataean tribes, whose rock drawings and graffiti covered the entire Sinai peninsula; in the South, Sabeans migrated to Ethiopia. In Abyssinia itself, rock drawings of dromedaries and combats on dromedaries were found. Starting from Arabia, a powerful current spilled over all the North African deserts, transforming its inhabitants.

VII

The migration of peoples is a larger movement than most people would suspect. To the European observer, it is limited to the migratory movements of Germanic tribes. At some distance, it also takes into consideration the Arab expansion, an epilogue and therefore of secondary importance. The above compendium has set out to rectify that opinion.

It has been proven that Arab displacement did not begin in Malromet's time. It is necessary to get used to recognize precursors, in this as in other cases. The expeditions of Cimbros and his fellow travelers, the war against the Marcomans in the nth century, the struggles against the Goths and Alamans in the nth century, took place, in part, long before the traditional beginning of the migration of peoples. Something similar happened with the Arabs. Also to be considered as precursors are Hatra, the Lachmids of Hira and their Gasanid adversaries, the migrations of the Nabataeans and Thamudans, as well as later events such as, for example, the rise of Palmyra. For all of them, not excluding the Nabataeans and Palmyrenees, were of Norarabic origin, as their names indicate.

Both the Germanic and Arabian migrations covered a lot of ground. The East Germans conquered Spain, North Africa, Italy, the Balkans and southern Russia only to disperse and bleed to death in those lands; the Arab people, on the other hand, were able to annex extensive territories through a series of similar advances. The colonization of eastern Jordan, Syria and Egypt, begun long ago, was completed; and in Iraq, too, the advance was continuous, once the left bank of the Euphrates was reached. The decisive battle of Qadisija was only the culmination of a movement which, despite occasional setbacks, has not been interrupted.

The third stream, often overlooked, was constituted by the Turkish migration to the West. Where it is mentioned, it is passed off as an integral part of the Arabian: Selchuk and Osmans took over from their predecessors. Others make the beginning of the great Germanic migration coincide with the Hun raid of 375, that is, with the first appearance of a Turkic people on the eastern frontier of Europe, without understanding that both the Selchuk and Osmans, as well as the Huns, were integral parts of a single movement.

The Turkish and Arabian migrations were similar in that they both covered the same territory in repeated raids. The Huns and Onogurs, Avars, Chazars and Cumans advanced westward along the steppe zone or the northern highway, as it was formerly called. Other Turkic tribes had made their way further south, through Iran and Asia Minor, to meet the above mentioned north of the Balkans. It always happened this way, that is to say that a new wave absorbed the remains of the previous one.

The decline of one historical entity coincided with the birth of a new, similar one. This constant renewal had stamped its seal on the Turkish migration, and the fact that for an entire millennium there had been, without ceasing, secondary movements of the tribes, created a state of affairs of unprecedented constancy.

However, there was also contact with the Germans. Again the conquest corresponded to a loss in the East. Where Turkish tribes appeared as conquerors, they were absorbed into the melting pot of "colossal China" *. But also former areas of Turkish splendor, extolled as homeland and nucleus of the own nationality - Ordos and Tchachar, Orchon and Selengá, the forest of Ótükan - fell into foreign hands. Displaced to the jungle zone, the Turkish Yakuts turned from shepherd-riders into reindeer-riding nomads. A fourth movement appeared on the horizon: that of the Slavs. In the Ermanaric Empire, the Slavs appeared first, together with Finnish tribes. It was the Slavs who were the last to knock on the doors of historical areas. They occupied territories that their predecessors had evacuated or had been forced to evacuate. Although the beginning of this migration - the incursion into the Black Earth area, the occupation of northern Russia - may have taken place in a twilight that is not very clear from testimonies, everyone is aware of its outcome and its historical significance.

In the introduction we referred to the expansion of the geographical horizon, the result of the opening of a northern and

a southern road, both built outside the spheres of the great civilizations existing until then. Within the framework of the great migrations, both roads reappear. On the northern road came the Turks, and then followed the Germans and Slavs. The southern road was the way of the Arabs, but also of the nomads with their dromedaries, continuers of the first Arab migration. In the middle of the great routes along which the peoples crowded and crowded together, we find the two great empires of the Ancient Ages: Sassanid Iran to the East, the Roman Empire to the West. Engaged in constant conflict and separated by annihilating wars, these brother enemies remained united by a common destiny. That destiny was called: defense against the active peoples advancing from the North and from the South in mighty waves, and which caused forms to evolve in both empires that constituted a bond between them, above all differences.

* In English in the original (*N. of the T.*)

CHAPTER III

THE SASANIDS

I

After the death of Alexander, the "Roman", there were two hundred and forty kings in Iran. Their chief was Artebanus, king of the Parthians; Persis, Isfahan and the surrounding counties were under his jurisdiction. He brought to his palace Ardashir, son of Sasan, of the lineage of the ancient Persian kings, the Achaemenids. There Ardashir grew up in the atmosphere and discipline of a knight. One day, a girl whom King Artebano respected more than the other girls in his court, revealed to Ardashir a secret she knew. She said that the astrologers had foretold to her master that a new king would arise who would kill many sovereigns, reuniting the world under one scepter. And, furthermore, that each servant who escaped, within the next three days would attain greatness and sovereignty by defeating his former master. Both the girl and Ardashir resolved to act in accordance with the prophecy. They fled with the king's best steeds, taking with them his Indian sword, a crown and many of his jewels and precious stones.

Artebano and his men set out in pursuit of the fugitives. The superior astrologer announced to him that it was necessary to capture them within three days, since later it would not be possible to do so. People who met the king on the road told him that they had seen the two pass by on their steeds, with the speed of the wind, followed by a thick Morueco. Artebano passed by. He met other people, who told him the same thing. The king consulted the superior magician about the meaning of such

news, and the latter replied: "The Morueco represents the splendor of royal sovereignty; it has not yet reached Ardashir. We must try to seize it before that happens".

Artebano continued the journey at an accelerated pace. The next day he encountered a caravan. "We noticed," said those individuals to the king, "that next to one of those horsemen was riding a very large and robust Morueco. Artebano again asked the chief of his magicians, and the latter replied: "Be immortal, O king! But the splendor of royal sovereignty has reached Ardashir; in no way can you regain it. Therefore, do not continue to exert yourselves and tire your horsemen and your horses, lest they perish. Seek other means to fight against Ardashir".

The king sent an army to fight him. Ardashir also went out with his henchmen to confront the king. For four months, great fighting and slaughter took place daily. However, since the splendor of royal sovereignty was with Ardashir, he was victorious, killed Artebano and all the latter's property passed to him. He took Artebano's daughter as his wife.

So reads the legendary account handed down to us in a book from Central Persia of the revolution that occurred in the third century A.D., long after the actual events. The story seems to indicate that one dynasty replaced another. Ardashir came to take the place of the last Arsacid. With him rose the Sasan lineage; for more than four hundred years he was to remain on the throne. But the revolution indicates more, and precisely our story highlights it.

The great change then took place in Iran that made it rethink its own past and, with it, its own identity. It went back to the Achaemenid empire and the Zoroastrian religion, those huge creations of Iranian history. What had been resurrected in them was then confronted, as an inescapable rule, with the state structures of the intruding Parthians and the mixed, half-Eastern, half-Hellenistic civilization that had arisen between them.

Thus it turns out that the exaltation of Ardashir means the definitive repudiation of Alexander's great work. But the historical scope of the event is not limited to Iran: it transcends Rome and at the same time the future. The new Empire of the Sassanids is, in part, the consummation of what the history of a people and of a civilization means, and therefore has a national character. But like everything national, provided it is apprehended with due depth, it exceeds its own limits. As an "Empire" with the right to "universality," it is equated with the Roman Empire. And it takes us even further, being the first universal empire with typically medieval traits.

All this was manifested in the legendary account referred to at the beginning of this chapter. The advent of the Sassanids is perhaps described elsewhere in a more concrete form, taking into account historical causes and connections rather than marvelous elements. However, the subsequent epochs must have found in that "novel" of Ardashir something that captivated them; a reality capable of attracting them. Otherwise, they would hardly have included it in the Persian "Royal Book", that voluminous compilation of vernacular tradition, written shortly before the decline of the Sassanid Empire and surviving as a national legacy. Indeed, even if the historical elements it contains are scarce, that account, to a certain extent, is more valuable than if it had stuck to the historical: it is the myth of the founder and of the foundation of the Empire that is narrated in it.

History in its most limited sense aspires to events, that is, to a chronological course; myth, on the other hand, does not depend on the epoch, but is oriented towards the essence. When myth narrates, it is neither for the purposes of the story itself, nor to guarantee the textual truth in the course of the narration; but the latter is simply the chosen form, the possible expression of what it may entail and of what it was actually intended to express.

But what was intended to be expressed? Much of what has been said bears a remote relation to the particular event and to

the unique person of Ardashir. It appears wherever there is reference to success and favorable activities. That women and fortune, both belonging to the same sex, are offered to the hero; that everything goes well for him when his hour comes; that the hero seizes that hour without hesitation, these and similar elements are constantly repeated in such stories. Moreover, there is another aspect that is valid only for Iran and only for the Sassanids: that is, a courtly and chivalrous style is united here, in a very singular way, with a rigorously legitimist and universal attitude, both elements being dominated by a Zoroastrian profession of faith, which could only appear in this form at that time. Trying to unravel this exquisite fabric is not the same as destroying it, since it is precisely the attempt to do so that will reveal its structure and unity.

II

When the king of the Parthians brought the young Ardas-hir to his palace, he ordered him to be brought up with the sons of the knights. With Artebano and his horsemen he would go hunting. He sat in the royal stables and played the tympanum, sang and amused himself in his own way; there, among the horses, he met the king's girl, there they became friends. And also on horseback took place that challenge between Artebano and Ardashir, during which the splendor of royal sovereignty rode in the saddle beside his protégé.

The horse and rider appear everywhere. It is the way of life proper to the Parthian royal court: the same young Persian who annihilated Artebano was brought up in this way. This was given to the Parthians from their beginnings and constitutes the new element that they introduce into Iranian history.

Iran, as a country, does not represent a homogeneous territory in terms of its civilization. Its development takes place from two opposite poles. One is in the southwest, in Mesopotamia, which is in contact with the Mediterranean territories and can therefore be influenced by them. The other pole is represented by the northeastern Turkic countries. Both poles signify, at the same time, the contrast between the fertile land and the steppe, between agriculture and hunting, between sedentary life and nomadic life, between urban civilization and the vagrancy of rapacious hordes. The Achaemenids, Alexander and his successors, however different they were, had in common their origin from the southwest; the appearance of the Parthians, on the other hand, is equivalent to a swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction.

The Parthians, a Scythian tribe, had entered Iran proper, crossing the protective border mountains, coming from the Turanian steppes. Ancient inhabitants of the banks of the Ochos, to the east of Herirud, they had taken possession of the satrapy of Parthia, receiving from it their name, with which they figure in history. They have long retained the characteristics of their origin, which they have never been able to deny.

The sedentary peasant and proselyte of Zoroaster recognizes in the cattle the animal that expresses and supplies his existence; the horse, on the other hand, means the same for the nomads. The nomad is the transhumant, the bandit, despot and violent man, who travels through vast territories considering them as potential booty; he is the hero who has oriented his existence towards the fight. The means to make that life, to travel those distances, being at the same time the expression of his existence as a knight, for him is the horse. That is why nomads are representatives of a free and chivalrous way of life. And it is in the partos where these characteristics stand out the most.

On foot they were defenseless. Their clothing, which reached down to their ankles, prevented them from walking, fighting and

fleeing; it was easy to capture them or knock them down. Only in the saddle did they feel at ease. "They always ride on horseback; on horseback they go to war, to their feasts; on horseback, likewise, they perform their public and private duties. On horseback they travel and on horseback they stop, negotiate and converse. Finally, the difference between servant and master lies in the fact that the former walk; the latter, on the other hand, always appear on horseback". What life on horseback meant is illustrated in this account by an ancient historian. It also expresses the nobleman's awareness of his status as a knight.

Only a step separates the way of life of the nobles from that of the sovereign. "Country of good horses," so Darius called Persia; from the valley of Nyssa, in the adjoining Media, comes a famous breed of steeds, and countless herds are bred there. According to the account of Herodotus, that same Darius owes his throne to the neighing of his horse. On the other hand, how insignificant was the role played by the rider and his mount among the Achaemenids! According to Assyro-Babylonian custom, the king is mounted on seal-cylinders, on the chariot. Moreover, the ancient Persian reliefs show him on the throne, under the canopy, in battle with lions or dragons, before the altar of fire or before Ahuramazda, but always on foot. And on the gold coins, Darius appears on foot, in the great rock relief of Bisutun, contemplating his victory over the kings of the lie. Finally, the cohorts of the personal guard parade on foot in the friezes of the palaces of Persepolis and Susa.

The Sasanian cave images show that this world of ideas has changed. In the tributes or accompanied by the paladins, in the scenes of pacification, in the investiture by Ormuz with the ring of sovereignty, in equestrian duels with the adversary, wearing the heavy harness and going hunting, the great king of the Sassanids always appears on horseback. Only in isolated cases is he seen on foot; so intimate was the association of ideas between the horse and royal majesty at that time.

The Sassanids were not the first to bring about this change. Already in the Parthian royal reliefs, there are duels on horseback to dispute sovereignty and the scene of homage to the king on horseback. Add to this the use of the horse in war, which in the world of ideas of antiquity was inseparably linked to the Parthians.

The Parthians had kept their Scythian weaponry in Iranian territory. Most of the army was composed of slaves, but even they were forced to learn to ride horses and handle the bow as well as those who were free by birth. A man's wealth was usually evaluated according to the number of horsemen he was able to place at the disposal of the king for his armies in case of war. The Parthians held melee fighting and sieges in low esteem; their strength lay in sudden attacks by their cavalry and in mock flight, inducing enemies to commit imprudence. Perseverance in combat was certainly not their strongest point, and they often interrupted the battle at its climax; but then, after having fled, they gathered in order to resume the resistance, and prepared for the presumed victor an unexpected outcome.

Mounted bow shooters, fleeing and resuming their attacks, deploying and carrying out surprise assaults, we can only conceive of them as lightly armed troops. And that is how the Parthian bowmen appear in terracottas and graffiti, and also extensively in literature, even in poetry. But with that the picture is not yet complete.

The Coracina or scale harness originated among the horsemen of Central Asia. Already in the time of Alexander the Great this type of armament existed. At the battle of Gaugamela, Bactrian and Scythian troops fought on the left wing of the Persian formation. The Bactrians were subjects of the great king; the Scythians, on the other hand, were only allies; the inhabitants of the Turanian steppe had contributed an auxiliary troop to the royal army. They have been called mounted bow-shooters;

however, we learn at the same time that both the rider and his mount were protected with a harness of scales.

The Parthians have preserved this Central Asian heritage. On the coins of the early Arsachids appears a bowman covered with a scale harness that reached up to his leg; and it has been expressly mentioned that the armor even covered the horses. Fragments of horse harnesses have been found in the bordering Parthian fortress of Dura-Europos; they resemble those found in southern Russia, where relatives of the Parthians, Scythians and Sarmatians fight alike.

As a distinctive weapon of the heavy troops, the spear was added. Thus armed, the men could face the adversary also in melee. The light and heavy horsemen complemented each other when the hail of arrows of the marksmen who surrounded them on all sides had succeeded in undermining the enemy resistance; the frontal attack of the catafracts came into action; the clash of the armored cavalry finally dispersed the ranks of the enemy infantry. It was a Parthian general of the Surian lineage who brought this tactic to its climax, defeating and annihilating the legions in the battle of Carrai. His wealth and noble lineage had placed that man in a position to maintain by his own means a corps of a thousand armored horsemen and nine thousand mounted bowmen; the latter, light-armed, had been recruited from among his own slaves and the Surian tributaries. A caravan of a thousand camels accompanied the troop, carrying the arrows so that the marksmen were never short of ammunition.

The Sassanids imitated all these forms of combat. In their armies, the light-armed bowman appears on horseback accompanied by the catafract. A graphite of Dara shows us one of those catafracts: riding at full bridle, the mount also covered with a harness of scales, the rider appears armed with bow and spear, the head covered with a high and heavy helmet. This picture is repeated, taking grandiose forms, in the statue of the horseman of Taq-i-Bostan, a masterpiece of Sassanid art. Man

and steed covered in chain mail; bow and quiver, a heavy helmet with visor, round shield and spear complement the armor. Descriptions of the Shaman, Chinese Turkestan frescoes repeat and confirm the picture, showing how long such a form of armament was maintained, how far it extended beyond the Iranian territory proper.

Everything mentioned so far, namely: the predominance of the cavalry, the armor of rider and mount, the heavy helmet, the adarga and the lanzon, represents a foretaste of medieval characteristics. The cavalry, as a military institution, corresponds to the political aspect of a well-evolved feudal state. Powerful families, owners of extensive real estate and large contingents of vassals, are characteristic of the Parthian Empire; they signify a limitation of the royal power by the very fact of having the right to the highest ranks and because they are in the hands of these families, who transmit them by inheritance to successive generations. The properties of the suros were mostly in the country of the sacks, those of the Caros and Mirans in the southern and northern Media; moreover, it seems that the lieutenancy of Mesopotamia had been in the hands of the suros for a long time. There were also semi-autonomous units: dynasties and local urban states of Eastern or Greek origin. The Greek subject cities enjoyed wide autonomy, to the extent that they were allowed to have their own militia. And the kings of Edessa and Hatra, the owners of Batnai, Singara and others, all depended, in a more or less indirect way, on the great Parthian king of Ktesiphon.

The new Sassanid royalty intended to eliminate the "partial kings" and to recover all the territory for the only lineage to which it corresponded. There was no doubt that the central power had become more rigorous and that it remained so, at least, under the reigns of suitable sovereigns. The Parthian feudal nobility tried to oppose a new one, more closely linked to the Sassanid dynasty. It seems that, in order to achieve this, they

started from the same royal lineage, creating secondary branches. But this procedure shows that, fundamentally, the order and hierarchy of yesteryear had remained intact. Much of the nobility was also preserved: the Suros and Caros lineages were able to maintain their power even under the Persian dynasty. The new element that emerged with the establishment of an official religion was the high clergy. Even this, however, constituted a strengthening of the power of the nobility, and very often the royalty had to bow to the demands of the Zoroastrian clergy.

III

While hunting one day, Arclashir, according to the story he tells elsewhere, managed to hit a masterful target. He wounded a hemi-monkey with an arrow shot that penetrated its body from one side to the other, and the animal died on the spot. However, the son of Artebano, envious of the prowess of his subject, claimed to have been the one who made such a masterful shot, which came to cause the first disagreement between Ardashir and the king of the Parthians.

Why this disagreement, and what is the meaning of the hemi-monkey pierced by an arrow? This animal, which in its numerous species exists throughout the interior of the Asian continent, can be considered the king of the steppe, extolled as such by Sven Hedin in a song that glorifies the impetuous joy of life of the hemi-monkeys, their unbendable courage, their audacity and the grace of their movements. The pride of their free life characterizes Hebrew poetry. "Who loosed the hemihon?" said the Lord to Job, "Who loosed the bonds of the

fugitive to whom I gave the steppe for a home and the wilderness for a dwelling?"

In the reliefs of Assyrian palaces it appears as a deer, preferably as a royal deer. The most recent Sassanid history tells us of a king who had received his name from the hemi-monkey, to qualify his character and for having achieved a similar masterful shot during a hunt. He had killed with a single arrow shot the hemicon and the lion that had pounced on it. In short, the hemi-monkey represents the royal deer, and its hunting tests the sovereign's marksmanship and dexterity. That is why the silver trays of the Sassanid period in their embossing, and the silk fabrics in their prints show the royal master marksman in full action; apart from the lion and the jibaro, the hemi-monkey also constitutes his booty. When Ardashir dared to kill the hemi-monkey he had performed a feat befitting a future ruler of Iran. It was therefore not unfounded that the son of Artebano wished to pass the deed off as his own.

The bow and the art of handling it is as old as Iran itself. However, Ardashir and Artebano hunt on horseback and their images created by the Sassanid craftsmanship show it. The intervention of the horse again signifies a change from the previous era. For the gold coins of the Achaimonids represent the bow-armed king on foot, ignoring the adversary or another target; on the other hand, from the Parthian period onwards, the mounted marksman and hunter represent the form under which the sovereign is conceived. The art of the Siberian Scythians and the Sarmatians of southern Russia shows that this form also comes from Central Asia, the homeland of the Parthians. From there it reached Iran; here as elsewhere, the Parthians introduced equestrian life, the concept of the horse as an expression of nobility and lordship. They were never separated from their steeds or their bows, always making use of them, both in war and in their hunts. Passionate hunters, they only ate meat when they had hunted the animal. In the Parthian art there are many

illustrations of hunting; there was no more important activity for them.

Here is that the equestrian style is once again taking over everything within its reach. Having first imposed itself on military life and hunting, it then spread to the behavior of the noble knight in private, and did not stop at the feminine world either. The imagination is pleased to pause at Ardashir, young man of royal blood, bridling across the vast plains, with the court girl on his back. It is a foretaste of the charm of the Persian miniatures that later adorned the epics of Firdusi and others. Or it also brings to mind those delightful clay figures that represent a related and contiguous world; Tang China, with its chivalric and palatine culture. Here, too, the horse is uniquely prevalent, and the woman does not refuse to show off on horseback either.

There is a small masterpiece of that genre, a young polo girl riding through the countryside on her steed, at a full gallop; the rider rides with grace and poise. The paragon of such an attitude is to be sought where the horse-linked way of life has taken hold in the empire of the Center, similar to its arrival in Iran. Even contemporary tourists praise the strength with which the Mongolian woman knows how to master her mount, not to mention the grace of her movements in the saddle.

This again reminds us of the mounted peoples of central and northern Asia, from whom the Parthians had previously emancipated themselves. However, even if all that, as far as style and way of life were concerned, had retained its validity, as long as the Parthian domination lasted and even beyond it, the Sasanian epoch was distinguished in only one respect from the preceding era. And that difference is fundamental.

As we pointed out above, Turan and Iran, the land of pirates the one and of farmers the other, the land of nomads the first, and the second of settled colonies, villages and burghs, were the poles that determined the history of the regions situated between the Tigris and the Pamir. The Parthians and their neighbors had

invaded these regions by crossing the Turanian decline to the northwest, seizing Media and the whole territory as far as Mesopotamia; Iran had submitted to the will of the Turanian conquerors. They had settled in the country, in their own way, leaving the vanquished to continue tending the cities and agriculture; however, they themselves adapted to that way of life, though only partly and reluctantly. The Parthians behaved exactly like their fellows, the Thecarians, who had subdued Bactria but still despised the urban way of life, dominating the subdued territory from their camp beyond the Oxus River on the edge of the desert. In Dara - there where the Arabian land is becoming steppe - had been established at first the Arsacid kings. And then, when they moved that seat to Mesopotamia, they avoided again any fixed place. These kings camped on the northern bank of the Tigris, separated by the mighty river of Seleucia, the populous Greek metropolis. Their cohorts of horsemen and warriors stayed away from that urban and stable world so different from their own.

The Parthians have always preserved a way of life reminiscent of the steppe and the transhumant life, typical of nomads. In the steppe, the link between the people and their land is extremely fragile: chance, even a mere whim, can break it. The camp, not the land, is the homeland of such horsemen peoples. However, when the Parthians were overthrown and replaced by a new Persian dynasty, that other, previously rejected world was re-imposed.

Persia had also adopted the equestrian style. But it is strange that, in that region, neither Parthian nor Seleucid domination could ever really take root. The lineages of indigenous dynasties continued to exist, even depending on the great king. Ardashir's ancestors were based in a place south of Lake Bachtegan; although they were "kings", they were subject to another king based in the "white castle" east of Persepolis. Ardashir's mother descended precisely from this lineage, so that the son had the

expectation of a position as mayor and leader of the local levy in a neighboring village. And since people then lived in fortified villages and towns, and everyone was united by close ties of kinship, the attachment to tradition was intense and tenacious. People lived strictly according to the commandments of the Zoroastrian religion. The center of that religious cult was the fire temple of Anahito in Istachr; Ardashir's grandfather had been the head of that sanctuary. The coins of the Persian dynasties bore inscriptions in the vernacular dialect, while the Araschids had long used the Greek language. To be sure, all this took place in a small and insignificant circle. But that Persia, linked with great memories, where the ruins of the Achaemenid palaces stood and the tomb of Cyrus proclaimed the glory of the founder of the empire, was practically a fortress of traditions. And it was a fortress even in a different aspect.

When the peace between him and his vassal Ardashir was broken, Arrebaño, king of the Parthians, sent him the following message: "You have overstepped your bounds and created your own destiny; you are a Kurd, raised in Kurdish tents". An Arabic proverb informs us that there are three evils in the world: Kurds, country mice and grasshoppers. The word "Kurd" means "representative of all that is harmful and of all lack of culture". At the same time, that word means that the person to whom it refers lives and acts like a Kurd. That he resides in the high and impassable mountain range, where he leads a hard existence. This is how the Kurds lived in ancient times, how the Persians had lived before Cyrus introduced them to power and wealth, and how they would live again later, before founding their empire for the second time. The labeling of Ardashir as a Kurd underlines the contrast between him and the great Parthian king, with his opulent court, based in Susiana and in a fertile and flat countryside, on the banks of the two rivers.

It is not that Persia lacked fertile territories or extensive plains. The region around Pasargadai is a good place to run

horses. However, to a people of horsemen that land never appealed like the steppes of the northeast or the plains of Mesopotamia. Persia is isolated, by high mountain ranges, from the Tigris River and the coastline. Eight or nine mountain ranges rise one after the other, rising in terraces to the height of eternal snows, and are impassable. At times, this labyrinth opens up to form small valleys and plateaus, but these are surrounded by mountains so colossal that the villages see the sunlight only in the morning and remain in shadow for the rest of the day. The "road" used to pass through there, but every time the great Acamenid king, coming from Susa, took it to go to his Persian homeland, he had to pay tribute to the tribes of the mountains. Only by turning around could Alexander conquer the gorges; near Gaugamela, on flat and open ground, he had just been victorious in a great cavalry battle. In the mountains, however, he had to submit to the laws of mountain warfare.

Persia was a full-fledged fortress. Its inhabitants were attached not only to tradition, but also to the land, whether it was the highlands or the plateaus and ravines that provided space for the cities and food for the men. It was no mere coincidence that it was from this corner of Iran that the uprising against the descendants of the nomads of old began. With the Sassanids, the farmer, the city dweller, the nobleman in his tower and the sedentary man in general, raised his head again. Nor was it by chance that Ardashir was the founder of cities like few others; no less than eight cities owe their existence to him.

Who does not remember the escape of Ardashir from the royal court, another legend that also tells of a similar escape? When Waltari and Hilda escape from the court of Attila, the couple, like the Persian prince and his wench, run to their "small homeland". They do not seek the boundless remoteness, as would befit the steppe dweller, but head in haste towards their homeland, in whose soil the roots of their existence are deeply anchored. They are autochthonous beings who leave the king of

the Huns or the Parthian court to find their homeland and, in it, themselves.

IV

The assembled peoples of Asia are often called indifferent in religious matters. At least as far as the Parthians are concerned, that statement is true, for it was a long time before they became followers of Zoroaster, and even then they did not show much religious fervor. Only conjectures can be made of the original religion of the Parthians; nothing is known for certain. The origin of the beginnings of the people shows us the way also in this respect. The Parthians, natives of the northern and northeastern steppes, cultivated the religious forms peculiar to those regions. The situation is different for the Persians, that superior nation, and for the royal stock from which they descended.

In the story of Ardashir, the "splendor of the royal majesty" appears as a decisive power. That divine being, called Chvarna in the sacred scriptures of the Iranians, imparts success to the hero. Thus it is that the coins of the Greek-Bactrian kings represent that Chvarna in the form of the Tikh; in the alphabet of central Persia it is expressed by an Aramaic ideogram which means nothing less than "luck".

If Chvarna appears in the form of a ram that chases and overtakes Ardashir, there is an analogous episode in the Greek legend. For it was a ram whose possession secured the kingship to the descendants of Pelops. Hermes had given the animal to Atreus as a gift; its fleece and wool were of gold. Gold and celestial splendor is proper to Chvarna. For her name is related

to the name of the Sun by its etymological origin. And the igneous gold coming down from heaven plays elsewhere the role that corresponds to Chvarna; for the Scythian legend says that the two elder brothers of the royal line tried in vain to seize the burning metal, while the younger took it without hesitation and without burning, revealing himself, therefore, as the sovereign chosen by God.

Whoever can grasp the celestial splendor of the Chvarna, or with whom the Chvarna is associated, is called to reign. This is the meaning of the Scythian legend and that of Ardashir. Only to a sovereign of Iranian blood is such splendor offered; that is why he is called the "Iranian", or - what amounts to the same thing - the Aryan. On the other hand, the Turanian hero Frarasian strives in vain, according to legend, to seize the "Chvarna of the Iranian peoples". So exclusive to Iran and the Aryan world is the divine call to sovereignty. With Ardashir, descendant of the Achaemenids, the ram is associated, since this lineage, like no other, had emphasized its chaste descent. Darius called himself an Aryan, of pure Aryan lineage. On the other hand, the Arteban birth, like all the kings of his lineage, was nothing more than a usurper; he could not hope to face the new bearer of the Chvarna.

The world of ideas derived from these elements came from an older religion and was incorporated into the Zoroastrian system. However, by the time of Ardashir, it had long since become an integral part of that system. Chvarna and Hormuz share the role of a protective deity of royalty. The first Sassanid is depicted riding towards Hormuz; the god gives his earthly interlocutor the ring of sovereignty.

The legend of Ardashir often depicts its protagonist glimpsing the sacred fire of Ba-ram. He is one of the five forms in which the divine element of fire can reveal itself, considered as the son of the Supreme God Ormuz. It is designated by a name which, at one time, meant "slayer of dragons" or "slayer of enemies," and

in Vedic myth corresponded to Indra, which then meant "victor" or "victory" in general. The relationship between this fire and the splendor of royal power lies in the fact that the Chvarna has given victory to Ardashir; at the same time, its very igneous essence entails it. That is why Ardashir, the victor, shares his success with the sacred flame. When he marched eastward to Merw, Balch and the remote regions of Corasan, he slew many men and sent their heads to the fiery temple of the Anahit at Istachr, in the heart of Persia.

Such fire worship means for Ardashir tradition and even more: legacy and commitment. One of his ancestors had been superior of that temple. In the coins that the Persian princes had ordered to be minted in the Seleucid period, the sanctuary of the fire appears, next to it the royal flag and the sovereign in attitude of deep veneration. Ardashir himself and his successors to the throne had the igneous altar reproduced on their coins, thus continuing, as great kings, the tradition of their land of origin.

The preservation of an inherited cult finds its complement in an act of renewal. Restoration of the sacred Zoroastrian scriptures, creation of a sacred canon: these are the religious feats of the first Sassanid,

The destinies of these writings, called Avesta, a name originating from Central Persia, are full of vicissitudes. They were originally kept in the archives of the Achaemenids, in Persepolis, traced with gold ink on parchment. It is said that Alexander, destroyer of the power and splendor of ancient Persia, had this first Avesta burned. A Parthian king had ordered the first compilation of the remains still extant. Ardashir completed this compilation, making it "a faithful image of the original light". He had the original deed deposited in the royal treasury; he added another version to the archive and disseminated others in the country.

The compilation of the Avesta is not conceivable without the active cooperation of the clergy. One of them is named as the

author of its writing. Or it is also said that Ardashir summoned for such purposes forty thousand magicians, choosing among them, first forty, then seven. These magi or Mobedos were judges in whose hands was the ecclesiastical power; each was prefect of his district, and above them was, parallel to the king of kings, a "Mobedo of the Mobedos." Here a real hierarchy appears, alongside the political order. This clergy, dominant and powerful like no other, was not lagging behind in intolerance either.

Ardashir already gave a canonical hierarchy to the compilation made under his reign. He outlawed all uncollected avest scriptures. Under the reign of Ardashir's successor, a special court was created to arbitrate in religious disputes. It was the king's will that, since the light of the true faith had shone again, all that was contrary to the truth should be considered erased and liquidated; and that no false religion should be tolerated. This attitude constitutes a new element in the history of Iran. The Achaemenids also professed the true doctrine; there is even mention of a persecution of foreign gods. Nevertheless, religious tolerance was a fundamental characteristic of Achaemenid policy. In contrast, in the new Persian empire, the royalty, in union with the clergy, created the concept of orthodoxy; the state power saw fit to grant it absolute authority. The new principle was soon opposed by other religions, especially Christianity. The archives of the Syrian church recount numerous martyrs attesting to the fanaticism of the Zoroastrian clergy.

Mesopotamia was, in the first place, the seat of the religions attacked by the new attitude. Not only Christianity was rooted there, but also religion, whose founder arose simultaneously with the Sassanids. Manes, a descendant of noble Parthian lineage, had originally belonged to a sect of Baptists in southern Babylon, until he began to preach his own doctrine, in opposition to his original religion. Manes absorbed Christian and

Greek ideology by the Gnostic way. It can be said that he belongs to the group of the great Gnostics; he can be named together with Bardesanes of Emesa and Marcion, at a certain distance from the latter. The spiritual homeland of Manes must be sought in Babylonian Hellenism; he was the last representative of this culture, which was next to the analogous cultures of Syria and Egypt.

Manes succumbed to the enmity of the Zoroastrian clergy. It is said that on the day Shapor I was crowned, "when the Sun was in the sign of Aries", Manes preached for the first time. The king's brother gave him his patronage and knew how to protect him. It was granted to him to deliver to Shapor an exposition of the doctrine written expressly for the sovereign, who authorized the mission in the empire. However, under the reign of one of his successors, the magicians prevailed, obtaining the accusation and condemnation of Manes.

V

The Parthians managed to adapt to the Iranian environment only later, adopting its ways with reluctance. This refers not only to religion, but also to language. Although they originally spoke an Iranian dialect, they used the Arsachid language on coins and Greek in inscriptions. These great kings called themselves Philhellenic; Greek tragedies were performed at their court. A royal charter addressed to the city of Seieucia, on the banks of the Eulaios, is still preserved, from which it appears that the citizens of such Greek cities had climbed the highest ranks of the hierarchy, that the royal chancellery wrote in Greek,

and that the great Parthian sovereign arbitrated the internal disputes of the city according to Greek law.

Under the reign of the Sassanids, the use of the Greek language in royal inscriptions appeared only at the beginning and in isolated cases. With the official Greek language, Philhellenism disappeared, and an ideology was imposed that intentionally resorted to the Achaemenids and the Iranian national element. It referred to an ancient situation which had had its validity, but which in the times of the general decline had deteriorated. It seems that after Alexander's action, the country had fallen prey to profane and religious anarchy, ignorance and irreligion, until St. Arpad submitted to the test of fire, in order to temper the purity of the restored Avestan letters. This is related in the book *Arda-Vira*, and in the legend of Ardashir, the new political order is described in an analogous way. The former is based on the pure doctrine of Zoroaster; the latter, on Achaemenid kingship.

This relationship is deduced from Ardashir's origin. Persia was his homeland, his ancestor was Sasan, a descendant of the ancient dynasty. It seems that in hard times, that lineage had also declined in status, like everything else; empire and religion, they had lost their former splendor. In the legend, and not only in it, but in the general ideology, the proposed amalgamation with the great past had become inbreeding. Forcibly the exaltation of Ardashir, his campaigns against Arte'bano and the subordinate kings had to appear as the performance of the legitimate heir claiming the return, as property of his ancestral empire. For this reason the king, in his first act as sovereign, wrote insistent letters to all the subordinate kings demonstrating that his claims were legitimate and inviting them to obey him. When Artebanus was defeated in battle, Ardashir trampled his adversary's head off the trunk; and in the rock relief above the inscription of Bisutun the Archemenid was seen trampling Gaumata, the rebel and impostor, who lay on the ground.

Ardashir's attitude towards Rome was the same. He claimed from its owners the return of all the territory up to the Propontide, as an ancient Persian inheritance. He claimed that Cyrus had conquered it and that, from then on, it had remained in the possession of his descendants, until Alexander destroyed the Achaemenid empire, and it was up to Ardashir to recover the ancient property.

Art was the expression of the new royalty; the stimulus for artistic creation came from the sovereign and the court. Also the Sassanid art knowingly resorted to the models of the Achaemenid art, as far as they still had it in mind. Certainly, the horse came to join Sassanid art as a new and preferred object at the time of the Parthians. But the images of homage, the parades organized as a sign of triumph and tribute, and the sacrifices, were the same as those cultivated particularly in the time of the ancient Persians. Here, as there, there is symmetry and subdivision of the picture into bands of overlapping reliefs. And just as the Persian dialect under the reign of the Sassanids conquered Iran and became, thereafter, a determining element of the national language and literature, so did Sassanid art originate in the same region. Its monuments are found where the greatest number of testimonies of the Achaemenid period are also preserved; there is often a direct association between the two, especially in rock art.

It is clear that the Sassanid royalty, however intentionally it may have pretended to be nationalistic and Iranian, and however averse it may have been to an interregnum outside the law and divine designs, could not completely dispense with the importance and significance of the Parthian dynasty. He proceeded, in that case, as with knights and chivalry, that is, he simply adopted it. Even the principle of legitimacy could be violated when it was convenient to join, through kinship ties, the Arsacid dynasty to secure the newly conquered domain. In Ardashir's novel, Ardashir marries Artebano's daughter after

achieving victory and to document it. Later, the royal annals relate the same event in great detail, to make their readers believe that the successor and heir to the throne of Ardashir, King Shapor, had been the son of that Arsacid princess. In short: the annihilator of the Arsacid dynasty, in whose capacity Ardashir is described, knew how to impose his own limits in certain cases. Even if the Sassanid dynasty, for its part, was destined to perish, the hand of a captive Persian royal princess was not to be despised in order that she might impart royal splendor to her person and her lineage.

With Artebanus gone, Ardashir appointed himself "king of the kings of Iran". This implied that he wanted to reinforce his sovereignty over the subordinate kings, the "little kings", as the sovereigns of the other peoples were called in medieval Germany in comparison with their own emperors. However, his successor had the rather more portentous title of "king of kings in and out of Iran". Such an attitude transcended national boundaries; by all accounts, it was a universalist claim. Also in this aspect, the lineage followed in the footsteps of the Achaemenids.

Such a claim was derived from the successes achieved in the East, where the rulers of Turanus and the Indus territory had to submit to the king of Iran. It was nourished by the possession of Mesopotamia; it was nourished by the pride of the victories won in the struggle against Arab princes and against Romans. Contrary to the Parthians, they did not recognize the Roman supremacy, not even quietly anymore. As express competitors of the Romans, they began to mint gold coins, a right that the Parthian kings had never arrogated to themselves. And the aplomb of the new Sassanid period reached impressive proportions when they achieved what none of their predecessors had ever achieved: the capture of a Roman emperor. Sapor never tired of commemorating the event in his monuments. In them he appears mounted on his steed, dressed in the rich and lavish garb

of the Sassanid kings; before him kneels a prisoner dressed in the Roman style. His feet are chained; he raises his arms and head in supplication. This last figure represents the captive emperor Valerian; behind him is seen, standing, humbly hiding his hands in the presence of the leader, Cyrades the defector, whom Sapor had named emperor. In another relief, the king rides in the vanguard of his army, and again Valerian appears kneeling before him. The conqueror receives the ring, symbol of the domination snatched from the Roman. And four horizontal and parallel rows represent the moments in which the booty is delivered to him: chariot and steed of the emperor, a battle elephant, chained leopards and lions, the imperial pavilion and the war treasure; the prisoners follow wrapped in Roman togas.

However Sassanid Iran is evaluated, no one bent on judging it fairly will think for a single moment of equating it with Rome, as far as its intrinsic value is concerned. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that it was a rival of the Roman Empire, both dangerous and triumphant. This importance was the result of a unique historical constellation.

It has often been emphasized how much the Sassanid form influenced, not the signs of the Arab conquest, but the empire of the caliph of Baghdad. Perhaps this reflection can be formulated in a still more general way. The nobility and the nobility, the clergy, orthodoxy and heresy, universal empire of a theocratic nature, all this anticipates forms that are characteristic for the evolution towards the Middle Ages, and precisely at a time when Rome had not yet taken such a course with the same decision and with the same success.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMAN FRONTIERS

Like the causes of Rome's greatness, the events that led to its decline also constitute the cardinal points of historical contemplation. The chain stretches to our times, passing through Polybius, Posidonius, Sallust and Tacitus, through Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Gibbon and Niebuhr. The reason for returning to meditate on the subject is that constant elements subject to their time, some fortuitous and others legitimate, special and general, are interwoven in a very particular way. Platen described the history of Rome as "the only true, great and significant history, full of strong evolution".

For Roman historiography, life and death were linked to each other in a very particular way. At the moment of death, the last actions and words of the dying person were attributed a singular importance. In such a circumstance, the Greek historian emphasized the generic, everything that went beyond the individual event leading to the general; the Romans, on the other hand, proceeded the other way around. At the moment of death his individuality was externalized, for the last time, in actions and words. Moreover, it found the most vigorous and concentrated expression. Aspirations that had filled a human life, shaping it into what it was, were condensed in a last expression of symbolic vigor.

When the assassins sent by Nero find his mother, she utters her "*ventrera feri*". She had felt, planned, lived only for that son of hers; it was she who had helped him climb the throne. Now her destiny changed: she had to die by order of the very one to whom she had dedicated her life. The womb that had given life to the ungrateful one had to be wounded by the sword. The

tawdry word of Claudius with which he passed to the other world in the same way he had lived; the famous chapters of Tacitus that relate how Seneca, Petronius Trasea were preparing for death, all led in the same direction, although by different paths.

"Nascentes morimur finisque ab origine pendet", wrote Manilius. For the Romans, death and gestation, annihilation and the formation of life have in common that both reveal the same unique and unrepeatable element. Both obeyed the same law. This law prescribed to man the nature of his aspirations, of his ascent, of his performance and decided at what moment he would have to leave the stage.

At the moment an individual entity was formed, it already contained the germ of a particular and individual form, of a life and a death. Did the Romans, with these concepts, express something decisive about themselves? Perhaps in such a way that what was expressed went beyond individual life, enclosing at the same time a statement about the larger creation, the Roman World Empire? If so, even creation and decline, becoming and dying would have had to be subject to the same law.

"Les institutions périssent par leurs victoires" *. These words of Renan were already quoted by Jacob Burckhardt in his *Reflections on World History*. It was hardly by chance that he quoted them precisely in the chapter dealing with historical crises.

In the evolution of Rome, times of crisis alternate with times of conquest and expansion. In them, ascension and disintegration, the vital and mortal aspects of the Empire confront each other. Crisis is not the same as decline. The decline is definitive; on the other hand, the transient and surmountable are inherent features of the crisis. This does not mean, however, that the Roman crises have remained without consequences. We must distinguish between the dawn and the

end of the Empire, between the rise and the decline, between the flowering and the withering. While Rome was young, not even the worst crisis could seriously affect it. When the Gauls had encircled the Capitol, Rome was more directly threatened than in all her later history. Notwithstanding this, she rose from her state of prostration to undertake a new victorious campaign. In the third century A.D., however, the enemies did not even come close to the capital, which was saved from the fate that the Gauls had dealt it. However, this salvation hastened the decline of Rome more than its previous destruction. For in such a late epoch a crisis leaves its mark on the organism that is the Empire, as if it were a serious illness, and each new crisis deepens the traces of the previous one. Like illnesses, crises are also transcripts of death. They are spectral anticipations of the sunset that will inevitably come. Even a crisis that has been overcome always constitutes one more step towards the end.

Crisis and decline are also distinguished in that the latter is a unique phenomenon, while the former repeats itself, or at least can repeat itself. Crises occurring in the course of a people's history can be compared with each other, but not with its decline, unless one intends to contrast it with the crises as their indications. By the very fact of offering the possibility of a comparison, crises open the way that leads to the revelation of recurrent phenomena. They make it possible to distinguish the typical from the extraordinary, the essential from the fortuitous, the causes from the consequences.

The crises and the decline of the Roman Empire have not found their historian in Antiquity. Gibbon was the first to present to posterity a transcendental picture. The work impresses the contemporary reader as much as it impressed Gibbon's contemporaries, who snatched up the newly published volumes. No one would dare to repeat that colossal undertaking. But neither would anyone want to endorse Gibbon's views today. To

the enormous problem - which remains the greatest ever posed by history - each era will have to try to find its own answer.

However, who will try to reduce this colossal process, which lasted several centuries and encompassed all human spheres, to a formula? We must be satisfied with applying the probe where historical common sense indicates it.

It is a question of confronting two epochs of Roman history. What they have in common is that an era of conquest, expansion, success and victories was followed by a period of crisis.

In the century between 264 and 168 B.C.E., Rome had established its sovereignty over the Mediterranean area. The subsequent era was full of setbacks and internal turbulence, until the restoration of Sulla brought preliminary equilibrium. Let us contrast this sketch taken from the history of republican Rome with another from the imperial era. We refer to the era of the last Roman expansion, which found its climax with Trajan and, passing through Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus, led to the great imperial crisis of the first century AD.

In the republican era, the center of gravity was in the conquests. They determined the face of the centuries to come. The upheavals that followed were relatively benign. In contrast, in the later era the conquest on the frontiers was insignificant, the crisis severe, almost fatal. Apart from these differences, however, the two epochs agree ostensibly. The differences lay in the effect caused by the events; the similarities in their nature and orientation. The dimensional contrast confronts the homogeneity of structural form.

* "Institutions perish by their victories", in French in the original (*N. of the T.*).

I

In 264 B.C.E., Rome overran the Apennine peninsula for the first time. In the following century it was already in a position to establish its sovereignty over the Mediterranean area. Polybius considers the year of the battle of Pidna, i.e. 168 B.C., as the year that determined the epoch. Not only did it bring about the annihilation of the Macedonian reign, but at the same time the reascension of the Seleucid empire was halted. The "day of Eleusis" banished the conquest policy of Antiochus IV from the Mediterranean area.

Both Hellenistic states had suffered serious defeats at the hands of Rome. Since the resolution of Zama, Carthage had been prostrate. The allodial property of the Barquides in Spain had fallen into Roman hands. In Italy itself, the northern frontier had been considerably fortified. The outposts of Roman power reached as far as southern Gaul, and in the northwest, as far as the Istrian peninsula and as far as the country of the Taurischians, i.e. what is now Carinthia. And yet, a victorious Rome was fighting a fierce defensive battle since the middle of the first century BC. Never, since the war against Hannibal, had the ranks of the Romans subject to military service been so decimated as in the forties of that century. The Roman army, which shortly before had conquered the whole world, suffered the most serious defeats. It was only after long battles that it was able to prevail over the Numidians, after a series of defeats against the Cimbri and Teutons. To defeat Numantia, an Iberian city with only a few thousand men subject to military service, the best general of Rome and all the military power were mobilized.

As long as they could maintain their integrity, the Hellenistic states had been in charge of the protection of the civilized zones, east of the Mediterranean, against the bordering peoples that

were advancing from all sides. Macedonian military power kept the Thracians, Illyrians and Balkan Celts under control. Further east, Greek Bactria fixed the frontier against the nomadic mounted Sacks, who tried to advance from their steppe into the civilized country. The historical and cultural mission of the successor states of Alexander the Great, which lay in the preservation of the cultural centers and in their protection against the barbarian outside world, was absolutely recognized in that capacity. As late as 197, the protection of the borders of Greece against the Balkan north by Macedonia caused Rome to desist from the political annihilation of that kingdom.

Only the weakening and definitive elimination of the Hellenistic states succeeded in cancelling this system. Macedonia, deprived of its royal dynasty in 168 and converted into a province twenty years later, suffered the incursions of its Balkan and Thracian neighbors. The Roman military forces stationed in that country had to accept repeated defeats, especially at the hands of the Celtic Scordisks. Antiochus IV, forced by Rome to impart oriental norms to his policy, wore out his forces in battles against Elam and Persia. Added to this were the incursions of nomadic North-Iranians and the loss of the Greek outpost in Sogdiane and Bactria. Already earlier the weakening of Selekid and Greek-Bactrian power had led to the Parthians taking over sector after sector of Hellenistic territory.

In short, there was a strengthening of the East against the superior people, who seemed invincible. The defeated had always found support in religion. Antiochus III fell in battle during a plundering campaign against an Elama Templar state, and Antiochus IV narrowly escaped the same fate. He and his successors squandered their forces in the struggle against the Maccabees. Everywhere the natives revolted. Apollodorus of Artemia, writing from the point of view of the Parthian dynasty, went so far as to distinguish between "Greeks" and "Macedonians," regarding the former as allies of the Orientals.

Traces of a similar ideology have been preserved in the Greek redaction of the *Book of Esther*.

The eastern restructuring was still taking place externally under Greek forms. The effective adversaries, the Arsachids, as well as Mithridates of Pontus, presented themselves as friends of Greece. And yet the time for restructuring had come. Not only Alexander's successor states, but also the Romans, would feel its intensity. The difficulties inherent in the Mithridatic wars were the precursor events to the terrible defeat of Karrai. Something similar was happening in the West. In the past, Carthage had dominated the tribes of the North African desert; in Spain, the Barquides had kept the warlike Celtiberian tribes away from the rich and fertile coastline. Amilcar Barca had lost his life in repulsing such an incursion. With the decline of Carthage, the great Numidian Empire arose in North Africa; once the city was razed to the ground, it automatically became an adversary of Rome. And in Spain, the search for living space led the Celtiberians to raid after raid in the coastal area, which, in the meantime, had become Roman. Endless struggles against these tenacious, freedom-loving adversaries, led by heroic leaders, year after year undermined the foundations of Rome's ethnic and defensive strength.

The harshest impact came from the north. Uprooted from their homeland by great tides, the Cimbrians, Teutons and Ambrons made their way southward. They tried to advance through the gaps left in the fence erected by the Celtic migration to the east. They were repulsed by the Beyenses and Scordiscos. But where the Romans had crossed the eastern Alps, weakening, by their incursion into the Noricum, the resistance of the Celtic barrier, the Germans succeeded in getting through. A few years later they attempted a new advance in the West, again on the border of the territory under Roman jurisdiction. Annihilating defeats inflicted on the Roman armies opened the way for them. For the

first time, Rome had to face the danger of an invasion by Germanic peoples.

It was precisely the conquests that had provoked the foreign policy crisis. By weakening or annihilating the existing bordering states, the Romans only succeeded in creating new adversaries in place of the old ones, worn out and exhausted. Impetuously, young and fighting barbarian peoples broke through the fence that had contained them until then, advancing towards the frontiers of the Roman Empire. Bloody wars, with countless casualties, were the result. This shows that expansion and crisis not only succeeded each other, but also conditioned each other, to the extent that one remained incomplete without the other, that both complemented each other like light and shadow, like the mold and the piece, like two halves of a globe.

So far we have only considered foreign policy. Its "primacy" is confirmed by looking at other aspects of state life. Foreign policy crises inevitably lead to analogous domestic conditions. All phenomena can be derived from foreign policy situations.

With an army of bourgeois and peasants, Rome had won its victories over Hannibal and Antiochus III, over Philip V and Perseus. However, that same army failed in the face of the problems posed by the guerrilla wars in Spain and North Africa, and by the fighting against the Germans and Parthians. Casualties greatly decimated the ranks of the Italic peasantry. Agriculture suffered from the absence of its owners, who for many years were fighting in foreign theaters of operations. The flooding of the capital market with captured money, tribute and war indemnities imposed on the defeated, led to the hoarding of agricultural properties. The slave markets were filled with prisoners of war and people from conquered countries and cities. The abundance and low cost of available slave labor allowed competition among the large agricultural enterprises, against which the small and medium-sized landowner was unable to fight. The ruin of the peasantry, until then an inexhaustible

source of Roman ethnic and military potential, was imminent. History expressly tells us that the greatest of the Gracchi had foreseen the military consequences when he undertook his reform work.

New war tasks required new means. The technical aspect was struggling to come to the fore. By means of formidable entrenchments dotted with abundant light and heavy cannons, Scipio the Less encircled Numantia and forced it to surrender to him. It became increasingly necessary to have an army of long military service and trained for its special tasks. During the struggle against the Cimbrians and Teutons, Marius endeavored to create such an army. The recruits consisted, for the most part, of dispossessed elements, provided with weapons by the State. These, who in a war had nothing to lose and much to gain, became loyal henchmen of their general, who in turn knew how to win their sympathies by means of rewards and promises. The duty of loyalty to the State as a whole came to be replaced by personal loyalty to the victorious general. These bonds of union were not loosened even in the event of imminent civil war.

To this metamorphosis corresponds another analogous one within the bourgeoisie itself. Italic allies had carried the burden of war along with Rome. Nourished Italic contingents had been enlisted until the last moments. Now the latter demanded a share in the privileges granted only and exclusively to Roman citizens; they even ended up claiming the right of citizenship itself. But it was only as a result of an open struggle that their claims were acceded to. Romans and Italians served side by side in the legions, and already under Sulla, the new citizens were represented in the ranks of the Senate. It was not long before the situation that existed during the period of Caesar and Augustus came about, that is, that "the whole of Italy" occupied the seats of the curia.

This is precisely the phenomenon that needs to be emphasized. The Roman strategy not only had to adapt to the

demands of the time and learn from the enemy, but, along with the new tactical order, the structure of the army changed. The bourgeois army disappeared and was replaced by new elements, able to meet the new demands that had increased. At the same time, the number of recruits grew. It was no longer only Italians who served in the legion: warlike vassal tribes were also enlisted, assigned to the handling of special weapons. Numidians, Thracians and Galatians fought in the cavalry. A bronze document has been preserved that makes collective granting of the right of citizenship to an entire Spanish squadron that had successfully attacked. And Caesar's last battle, that of Munda, was decided by the Moorish cavalry assault.

A process of evolution was taking place everywhere. But no matter how vivid its consequences, it never affected the Roman nature of the Empire and its politics. The Italians who succeeded in realizing their ambitions did not make Italian politics, but exclusively Roman. They did not pretend to be Italian, but Roman. They struggled to assimilate and carve out the political and spiritual essence of Rome. The shaping and overwhelming force of the concept that was Rome was manifested. It had lost none of its vigor or its intensity when it was confronted with similar tasks in the 20th century.

II

It is a fundamental principle of proven truth in foreign policy that internal transformations can be reduced to external events, both political and warlike. However, according to competent

researchers, this and subsequent crises of the Empire have originated from the internal situation.

This is a fundamental difference in the way history is viewed. An ideology that sees historical events rooted primarily in internal phenomena considers the people and the State as a monolithic unit governed by its own laws. Movements conditioned by this same self-legality originate in its bosom. They grow, gain ground and eventually overstep their original confines. When they encounter similar controversies from neighboring peoples and states, war and foreign policy complications arise.

If this ideology sees things from the outside in, ours takes the opposite course. If according to the former, decisive movements emanate from the original cause of an individual, state or ethnic entity, moved solely and exclusively by the mysterious conditionalities of that individual entity, the latter springs from a transcendental order. No people, no state is at any time isolated, realizing with astonishment, only at the moment of being restrained in its growth, that it is surrounded by neighbors with similar aspirations and impulses of expansion, but each community constitutes from the outset a link in a world of other communities. In an atmosphere of emulation and conflict they grow, jostle and clash in space, fight and agree again. These external conflicts are echoed internally and provoke reactions within the communities, reactions whose nature and dimension are determined, in the first place, by external events. But by the very fact of reproducing themselves inwardly, they awaken the individuality of these communities. Thus awakened and liberated, the individual state begins to realize its individuality, its latent potentialities.

Both theories are reduced to different conceptions of state and people. They are not only of a cognitive nature, but point towards action, they cannot be understood by their essence, but must be lived in their active execution. However, when acting,

we encounter ethical norms. Peoples and states also have their ethics, the congruence of which with individual ethics is greater than is usually admitted.

It seems that the first ideology corresponds to an individualistic ethic that is exhausted in the postulate of integral self-development. Free growth is the supreme goal. Unexpectedly, as one might say, this is curtailed when confronted with the expansionist drive of other individual entities. It is then that a conflict arises, the outcome of which is determined solely and exclusively by the right of the stronger. The controversy reveals the essence of all individualistic ethics: a selfish will to self-assertion that is ingnite and recognizes only itself.

On the other hand, the second conception corresponds to an ethics that from the outset considers the individual as a link in a totality. Man is obliged to rely on others and to practice the art of the possible. However, as he encounters this need, the will to confront and overcome it grows. The understanding of existing limits forces an inner expansion all the more intense. Individuality is not a gift that fairies place in the cradle. It is only in inexorable conflicts that the character of a people or a state takes shape. The determining factor is not unimpeded expansion, but the success of the task; individual character is not forged in freedom, but by encountering resistance. "Character in general," said Goethe, "expresses itself in the ability to act, to counteract and, what is more, to limit oneself, to suffer and to endure. From without, character is tempered by the courage associated with it as an equally healthy element."

Here we are dealing with the crisis of Roman domination, an inexorable consequence of the basis of this domination, which was expansion. It would be useful to know how these things were reflected in the minds of the Roman statesmen. Manifestations and projects of the greatest among them allow us to answer this question.

Caesar had risen to power by knowing how to handle, with sovereign skill, the means of demagoguery in domestic politics. His greatness, however, lay in his ability to see beyond this aspect. He had before him the whole of the Empire at stake, not only the struggles of the oligarchs for power. He must necessarily have realized how each of the processes of expansion of the Roman Empire entailed contact with younger, more vigorous, less exhausted peoples; how with each penetration of the belt of states that surrounded the Mediterranean and the Roman provinces, a new threat arose from outside, from the edge.

It is a fact that Caesar realized the profound difference between Gauls and Germans. Posidonius had already differentiated between them, but he still considered them brother peoples, and for him their respective territories separated by the Rhine resembled each other. Caesar clearly diverged from this opinion.

For him it was a law that the vigor and warlike force of the peoples increased according to the distance between the frontiers of the Empire and its territories. Hence the superiority of the Belgians, who lived farther from the Roman province than the other Gauls. Also in Brittany the tribes settled on the coast were among the civilized ones; those of the interior, on the other hand, were tougher and simpler. The Germans kept foreign traders at a distance, and each of their tribes surrounded themselves with a strip of desolate territory that protected them from enemies and external influences. This is how they managed to preserve their vigor and their naive simplicity, and succeeded in overcoming the Gallic superiority of earlier times. Once again the defensive vigor of a people was undermined by trade and the proximity of the Roman frontier.

Caesar foresaw a danger in the near future. Because of their warlike superiority, the Germans were in a position to occupy Gallic territory; they could also make their way through it, advancing as far as the Roman province or even into Italy. Thus

had proceeded the Cimbrians and Teutons who had desolated the whole of Gaul, meeting resistance only in the land of the Belgians. Through Ariovistus and his Suevi, the Aedui were defeated and the territory of the Secuans was reduced to a third of its original area. It remained to be feared that a Swabian advance would cross the Rhone River and follow the example of those tribes.

The situation in the Danube territories was similar to that in the Rhine area. There, too, the annihilation of an independent Mecedon had removed a dike of containment. Roman lieutenants were forced to fight hard against invading peoples from the north. Particularly the dice proved to be dangerous adversaries, and simultaneously with Caesar's Gallic campaigns, Burebista began to found his Great Dado Empire. The project of fighting that powerful neighbor dated back to Caesar's consulship in 59, when the latter allowed him to be granted the Illyrian lieutenancy in addition to the Gallic one. In his last years, the dictator returned to the project, resolving to annihilate Burebista even before undertaking the fight against the Parthians.

On the banks of the Rhine, the Danube and the Euphrates warlike conflicts were being prepared. If Caesar's theory was true, according to which the vigor of the peoples increased with the distance of their territories from the frontiers of the Empire, the continuation of the policy of conquest would risk leading to an endless struggle, a struggle that would become more problematic with each victory. Possibly, behind the Parthians and the Dacians, or behind the Germans on the banks of the Rhine, there were peoples even more dangerous because their strength was even less exhausted.... Looking at the situation from this angle, only a radical solution would be the remedy.

The solution has been transmitted to us: Plutarch describes it in the name of Caesar. According to this plan, Caesar intended to advance to Hyrcania, once the Parthians were defeated. From

there he planned to continue northward along the Caspian Sea (which was considered a bay of the outer ocean), the Caucasian Mountains and the shores of the Black Sea. The idea was to cross the country of the Scythians and the eastern territories bordering Germania to make contact with the Germans themselves. The conqueror then planned to return to Italy, passing through Gaul. Then, an empire of such a size would be surrounded on all sides by the ocean, which would play the role of frontier.

It was not exactly a question of establishing a world empire. Caesar would have stopped in the East, in the territory located between the two ocean bays, the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Nor is there any reference to the southern frontiers in Africa. The plan had another objective. It was intended to integrate into the Empire also the peoples located behind the Germans, that is to say the Dacians and, to a certain extent, also the Parthians, and to eliminate any threat from further bordering peoples, setting as far as possible the Outer Ocean as the frontier of the Empire.

Caesar's plan was to resume an enterprise similar to that projected by Alexander in his later years. He, too, had intended to turn the ocean into a frontier. Caesar's imitation is unmistakable, even if he had fixed frontiers to the East. The Roman, on the other hand, not only modified the example, but became the bearer of a new and constructive political thought. What had been the forced goal of Caesar's earlier statements and his experiences with Gaul, became broad and extensive planning.

For this purpose, Caesar was able to rely on the most recent findings of geographical research. As a basis he used the worldview of Posidonius. The latter also knew nothing of the interior and northern part of today's Russia. That is why the idea came to Caesar to try to establish, there, too, an ocean-border, believing that the ocean was nearby. As we have just said,

Caesar himself added to this picture the Germans, as a far-reaching ethnic element that reached as far as the Scythians.

III

The law that dominated the crisis of the Roman Empire in the ninth century, later also determined, according to its particular nature, by the previous expansions, clearly stands out.

The validity of this law also refers to the crisis of the Roman Empire in the first century after Jesus Christ. Again its prelude constituted a century of expansion. It led to lesser successes and hardly achieved, of course, than those that had rained down from the sky on the robust and luxuriant Rome of the centuries m a n. But those successes were enough to weaken or annihilate what were then the bordering states of the Empire, to open the way for new and terrible barbarian incursions. Through the vacuums produced by the last Roman expansion, the tides beat against the rotten fence with which the aging Empire tried to surround itself.

In the East, the traditional adversary, the Parthian Empire, was mortally wounded by the campaigns of Trajan, Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus. This is evidenced not only by the definitive loss of Mesopotamia, but even more so by the subsequent plans hatched by Rome. It was a matter of establishing more direct communication with the great economic territories of the East, that is, China and India. Until then, the way had almost always been through the Red Sea, rounding the southwest corner of Arabia; now, however, it was planned to take the shortest route, from the Persian Gulf. Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus were granted to believe, for a brief period, to have protected the mouth of the Euphrates River. The

significance of the newly opened route is revealed in the enormous influence of the Roman province reflected in the art of Gandara, in the revival of the silk trade, and in a more marked orientation of contemporary literature toward conditions existing in India and China. Finally. Severus Alexander, on the occasion of his Persian campaign in 202, repeated the attempt to settle in the Chatel-Arab, though without success.

Rome achieved its purpose of weakening the Parthians. The Parthian capital was conquered twice and as a result of that conquest, the Romans were able to reach the Persian Gulf. The Parthian-controlled transit trade began to look for new directions. Everything seemed to be a triumph for Rome, and indeed it was. However, the victorious Romans did not get to enjoy their conquests. The place of the Parthian Empire, weakened and humiliated, was taken by a new dynasty, a new people. The Sassanid Persians came to fill the breach opened by the Roman armies, and instead of a vassal there appeared an adversary who gave Rome rather more to do. The enormous expansion of the Roman Empire then resulted in a new crisis.

Not only in the East, but also on the Danube frontier, Marcus Aurelius intended to expand the Empire. He had replied with an attack to every previous defeat in the eastern theater of war, penetrating to the heart of the enemy's power, and he proceeded likewise in the territory of the Danube. "He intended to convert the country of the Malcomans into a province; he intended to do the same with the Sarmatia, and would have succeeded, but for the defection of Avidius Cassius," assures the emperor's biographer. The Romans crossed the Danube, widened the breach opened to the east, and to the north they reached the Tatra Mountains. They ended up by subduing the Marcomans, the Chechens and the Sarmatians.

His son and successor. Commodus, abandoned the conquests. The consequence was a weakening of the Germanic tribes, both politically and economically. But, in that case, Rome was not the

winner either. Subway finds reveal that from the late nth century onwards, East Germanic tribes entered the breach opened by this last attempt at conquest. There, too, in place of the weakened and defeated neighbors, new and vigorous tribes arose on the borders of the Empire, threatening omens of impending storms.

A similar attempt was also made in Brittany. News preserved by the geographer Ptolemy show that between 148 and 162, the Romans had made a deep incursion into Northern Scotland, setting up their reign in that territory. The enterprise would rather correspond to the combative early period of the reign of Marcus Aurelius than to the peaceful regime of Antoninus Pius. Agricola's offensive against the Highlanders, which he had had to interrupt, was resumed. The Romans not only restored and extended the defensive fence stretching from the Gulf of Forth to the Gulf of Clyde, but penetrated inland; Agricola, on the other hand, had never reached beyond Strathmore.

Once again Septimius Severus followed him. In his last campaigns, between 208 and 211, he again embraced the previous project, reaching the northern tip of the island. The castles built by him reached the vicinity of Aberdeen. Caracalla had them evacuated after the death of his father.

The Roman Empire - at least according to the idea - had always pretended to dominate the Universe. The reality and the idea never came closer than under the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus. Consequently, since the late nth century, the sovereigns, on their coins, are extolled as restorers or guides of the Universe, whose safety and salvation of mankind are trumpeted as mottos. Earlier, the orator Aelius Aristides had expressed the general sentiments by exclaiming: "Wars are no longer believed in, even if they have existed in former times, and the multitude hears of them as of other myths. But even if wars break out somewhere very remote, on the frontiers, as is inevitable in so vast and boundless an Empire, they simply become myths." He goes on to say, "As if preparing to celebrate

a feast, the Universe has cast off the iron, its ancient garb, heading freely towards joy and beauty. All other ambitions have deserted the cities, but one dominates them all: the ambition to be the most beautiful and noblest of all."

In reality, the Empire had long since become a besieged fortress. It was possible to get out of it and even a limited success was not impossible. But everywhere, a new world was pressing against the old, and an army of 450,000 men had to be maintained to protect the frontiers of such an enormous expanse. Everything depended on the possibility of successfully defending them.

The last raids had brought a lasting advantage only in Mesopotamia. Everywhere, the Romans had essentially stopped at the frontier fixed by Augustus, formed by the three rivers. Wherever they crossed that frontier, a fortified boundary enclosed the territory of the Empire.

It is not that this system was created intentionally, but that it gave a permanent character to a situation that had evolved. The frontier coincided with the line where the Roman army stopped in its advance. As the advance solidified, so did its forms. The earthen fences surrounding the camps had become stone *fences*; the tents, wooden barracks or fortified settlements of solid construction. The outposts had been reinforced. Fences and ditches with their palisade enclosures, wooden watchtowers, later stone ones, formed a compact line. Even the deployment of the troops was more compact and of tighter formation. In ever increasing numbers they were called into service in the front rank and deployed along the front line to perform the task of continuous and uninterrupted border control.

However, they had not yet adopted the pure defense system. The boundaries were far from being fortified outposts for defense purposes. They lived in the illusion that the solidified front could resume the advance at any moment; that they could again regard their stone camps as starting points for a new

offensive rather than as permanent garrisons; that they could run the frontiers and move into foreign territory.

These attempts were made again on the main fronts under the governments of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus. The result, in short, was so insignificant that it did not bring about any fundamental change. If, however, the system by which they had hitherto secured the frontiers was maintained, it was subject to the recognition of the superiority of Roman arms, and to the fact that, disregarding occasional repressive expeditions, frontier traffic was confined to peaceful exchange. We will see later that this hypothesis was not accurate. When all the bordering peoples started up again, crowding against the frontiers with a vehemence hitherto unknown, the Romans found themselves in a situation superior to their forces. The offensive position had, therefore, to serve necessarily as a line of defense.

And it performed its task deplorably. The boundaries, with their palisades and watchtowers, were insufficient for defense purposes. The castles resembled fortified barracks rather than fortresses in the proper sense of the word. Where the enemy succeeded in opening a breach, it was extremely difficult to close it again. Since there was a lack of reserves for action, troops had to be drawn from elsewhere, always in fear of being late or suffering another counter-offensive in the weakened sector. The frontiers of the Empire became a continuous and vulnerable line of attack on all sides.

IV

The first irrecoverable losses were suffered by the national defense under the empire of Commodus. They, like the emperor with whose period the event coincides, inaugurated a new epoch.

Northern Scotland, which had remained free from Roman occupation, was populated by the Picts. The Roman historians describe those lands as wild, mountainous and scarce of water, interrupted by deserted and marshy plateaus, full of fog and vapors from the marshes. The Picts did not know the cities, the construction of walls and agriculture. Their sustenance was livestock, hunting and the fruits of wild bushes. Their weapons corresponded to their nomadic and hunting culture. They had preserved ancient elements such as the war chariot. But their strategic agility, the high esteem in which they held long-range weapons, their tactics of assault and flight constituted the link with the forms cultivated by the equestrian peoples.

The shifting, barbaric world of the North was confronted, to the South, by the stable world represented by the territory dominated by the Romans. Two barriers isolated it from the independent tribes that populated the Scottish plateau: firstly, the frontier defense system dating back to the time of Hadrian; a huge fence more than two meters thick and twice as high, reinforced with stone bastions and brick walls. This system had sixteen large stone camps; among them were interspersed minor forts and masonry watchtowers. Further north there was another defense system, erected under the Empire of Antoninus Pius, who had limited himself to erecting earthen buildings reinforced with wood. The garrison was not concentrated in camps, but was distributed along a line of sentries.

In the early years of Commodus' empire, the Picts rose up. Crossing the fence of Antoninus Pius, they defeated the Roman military forces in open battle. An energetic lieutenant, sent by the emperor, managed to control the troops by iron discipline and to reconquer what was lost. But the northern part of the wall was left in ruins, and the defense had to retreat to Hadrian's line.

Shortly thereafter the latter was also lost. Clodius Albinus had taken out the garrison to employ it in the struggle for the imperial crown in Gaul. The tribes seized the opportunity

presented to them. They rushed upon the evacuated camps, razing them to the ground. The Romans had to rebuild those on their side, sparing no means to reform and modernize the installation. It was therefore not without reason that the new fence was associated with the name of Septimius Severus. In 208, the emperor arrived in Brittany in person. The subjugation of the plateau which he had planned remained unfinished; Septimius Severus died, and the enterprise was abandoned. Not even the Antonian fence was rebuilt.

Shortly after the middle of the century, a similar event occurred on German soil. It was the loss of the Upper Rhine Limes, of the "ten countries" situated between the latter and the Rhine, and finally the retreat effected on the border of the Lower Rhine.

Caracalla had to repel an attack by the Alamanni, who tried to cross the Main to penetrate into the heart of the territory of the Limes. Under the reign of Severus Alexander another incursion took place further south, where the Limes and Upper Germania meet. Severus, Alexander's successor, had to expend enormous effort to close the gap again.

Under the pressure of the Alamans, the Rhaetian Limes became a fence. The cities were surrounded by strong ring roads. Along the Limes of Upper Germania, too, a good number of stone sections were erected. Despite this, however, it was not possible to halt the development of events. Valerian was forced to clear the frontier by marching south with detachments of Rhaetian, Noric and Rhenish legions to conquer the imperial crown. The Alamanni then broke through the border defense dyke by launching an attack at two points, one following the course of the river Main, the other in the direction of Ladenburg, Worms and Speyer, crossing arable land. The Rhine line was already in danger when Gallienus, Valerian's son and co-emperor, succeeded in stopping the enemy with the help of British reinforcements. In addition, the Rhaetian Limes was

demolished and several cities were razed to the ground, with Augsburg suffering serious damage. The victorious Alamanni reached the north of Italy. Once again it was Gallienus who repulsed them in Milan.

There was no lack of attempts at reconquest. The Romans held on to the Main and Neckar plains, as well as the territory north of Lake Constance, so important for Gaul's access to the Danube. The Limes, on the other hand, was never restored. Behind the Rhine a new line of fortifications emerged, and they were already evacuating the border formed by the Lower Rhine basin. The Limes, along the Old Rhine, with the fort of Utrecht as a key point, was abandoned in 260. A new line further south, in Belgium, opposed the advance of the Franks.

Gaul was no longer even safe. Under the empire of Caracalla, it had still experienced an economic heyday. Numerous buildings, including the Porta Nigra in Trier, had been constructed at that time. Around the middle of the ninth century, all that came to an end. The findings of buried coins, the cessation of pottery and tombstone sculpture from Neumagen, as well as the extent of the charred areas of the villas give an idea of the extent of this catastrophe. Still under the reign of Gallienus, Frankish cohorts reached Spain, sacking the city of Tarraco (Tarragona). Some units reached the North African coast, where they destroyed Tamuda.

It was due to the vicissitudes caused by the Germanic incursions that a Gallic empire separated from the great Empire, taking over the defensive struggle intermittently. A new border defense system was established along the Rhine. But as soon as the country was recovered and reintegrated into the central regime, new incursions began. Lugii, followed by Alamanni and Franks, crossed the Rhine frontier simultaneously. Seventy unfortified cities fell victim to the flames, and the devastated regions became deserts. Not even Trier was spared. It was the greatest catastrophe suffered by Gaul up to that date. The raids

spread again to the Mediterranean area. Frankish prisoners based on the shores of the Black Sea set sail, spreading terror in Greece and Sicily. They sacked Syracuse, were repulsed at the very gates of Carthage and managed to return quietly to their lands with their booty.

Only Probo succeeded in restoring order. His generals drove the Franks out of the country; he himself drove the Alamanni back behind the Neckar River and the Swabian Plateau. He then proceeded to re-establish the Rhine frontier and the Rhaetian Limes. The emperor donated land and houses to the garrisons of the new fortresses, so that they would have the incentive to defend their homeland along with the frontier.

New defense systems were also conceived in Brittany. New fortifications arose on the coasts of England, more powerful than the installations erected at the dawn of the Empire. The bastions had supports for the heavy artillery pieces that dominated the beaches. With these fortifications, Constantine tried to put a stop to the incursions, by sea, of the Saxons and Franks, predecessors of the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings.

As far as the adversaries were concerned, the state and military structure of the Empire imposed new forms on the Germans as well. The league of tribes was increasingly displacing the system of isolated tribes. The Swabians and Hermandurs joined with the Semnons who had migrated from the territory east of the Elbe River to form a league under the new name of the Alamans. A tribe from the interior, as yet untouched by Roman civilization, made common cause with those settled there, thus marking the end of the frontier defense. The Franks were also a league of tribes, pushed from behind by new Germanic waves which, in turn, put in motion, were reinforcing the pressure exerted by those who preceded them.

The situation was similar where Germanic tribes from the East and North encountered settled tribes. On land formerly occupied by the lake of Jellerup, blessed weapons were found

that had been thrown into the water during the armed clash of the Danes from the North with Saxons, Angles and Jutlanders. Deposits of blessed weapons have also been found in Fiinen and in the Slesvig marshes. Everywhere, the conquerors delivered the conquered booty at spearpoint to their gods by sinking or burying it. The finds correspond to periods spanning entire centuries; the beginning invariably dates back to the 3rd century.

Under pressure from the Danes, the Saxons began their westward expansion. The geographer Ptolemy knew them when they were still in the "neck" of the Cimbrian peninsula; they also occupied three islands near the mouth of the Elbe River. They proceeded to subdue the Chauchans, Angrivarians and Cheruskans, all of whom had once been powerful tribes. In the time of Diocletian, they even ravaged the Roman frontiers. There was pressure against certain parts of Frankish tribes that had stood in the way of the Saxon advance, being pushed or dragged out to sea. Together with the Salic Franks, the Saxons advanced along both coasts of the channel as far as Brittany. On the Frisian and Dutch coasts they erected their mounds to build dwellings, the starting points of the future colonization of Brittany.

The Saxons and Franks differed from inland tribes, such as the Atmans, Burgundians, Jutunges and Vandals, in that they combined their raids by land with expeditions by sea. Even more extensive were the raids undertaken by the Germanic tribes of Southern Russia. From the middle of the 3RD century, they reached the southern shores of the Black Sea, as well as Propontide and Aegeis at increasingly shorter intervals.

The Borans, a Sarmatian tribe settled in their territories for a long time, served as an example to the Goths. The latter appeared in southern seas, still in foreign vessels and guided by strangers, and managed to plunder the rich city of Trapezuntus, which prompted the Germans to do the same. By land they crossed the mouth of the Danube and by sea they assaulted the

northwest of Asia Minor. Nicia and Nicomedia fell into the hands of the Goths with a tremendous booty. No one could stand in their way: the pirates repeated their raids, often year after year, extending not only to the northeast of the Balkans and Asia Minor, but also to the Peloponnese. In 262 they succeeded in striking a blow that was to find a painful echo throughout the ancient world. The Goths sacked Thrace and Mecedonia, besieged Thessalonica and advanced as far as Athens. Other cohorts ran over the ancient sanctuary of Artemis in Ephesus. The temple outside the city was destroyed and razed to the ground. Another sanctuary, the Didymaion of Miletus, was also attacked, but with weapons and garrisons, it managed to repel the looters' assault. The misnio Apollo saved the people enclosed in the temple from thirst by causing a spring to gush forth.

The Germanic peoples of southern Russia exerted the strongest pressure against the Roman front deployed along the lower Danube and against their advanced bridgehead far to the north, the three Dacian provinces. For a stream of migrating peoples advancing from the northeast against the riparian frontier, the Moldo-Valkachia constituted a natural basin. Even Roman Transylvania had to suffer the blow. This, however, did not happen in the west, where the cities and gold mines were located, and where the two legions were quartered to protect them. Also in the northern sector of the country, the strong fortifications surrounding the camp of Poroliso repulsed the assault. On the other hand, the eastern part of Transylvania and the southern part of the Limes válico east of the Olt were in danger.

Once again a non-Germanic tribe was in the vanguard: the Carps. The Gothic advance pushed and dragged them at the same time. The line of resistance east of the Olt River had to be abandoned in 242 and retreated to the river itself. Under the reign of Philip the Arab the Carps penetrated into the heart of

Transylvania. The emperor promptly responded and drove them out of the country by launching his excellent Moorish cavalry against them. But the economy of Dacia had received a heavy blow, from which it never recovered. Philip did all he could, but towards the end of his reign he was forced to remove from the province of Dacia contingents of the most recently promoted legion to protect Italy. They were transferred to Aquileia.

The most vehement and intense attack was then directed against the lower course of the Danube. The Goths became the vanguard people; the Carps and parts of the Vandal tribes joined them. Istria, at that time still an open city, fell victim to their attacks and so did the other cities along the coast. Only the fortifications surrounding Marcionopolis were able to withstand the impact of the aggressors.

The year 249 witnessed a new assault led by Kniva, king of the Goths. The bulk of his armies broke through the fortified line along the Olt River and advanced south of the Danube. Some contingents went as far as Philippopolis, others as far as Macedonia and the shores of the sea. The emperor Decius was not long in coming; he met the king of the Goths at the siege of fortified Nicopolis, and forced him to desist from his purpose by inflicting on him a loss of 30,000 men.

However, Kniva was a tenacious and suitable adversary. When Decius pursued him too quickly, the Roman army suffered a crushing defeat at Beroia. Decius had to witness the fall of city after city, and the loss of over a hundred thousand men who fell prisoner to the Goths. Only in the spring of 251 was the emperor in a position to undertake a new military action. After scoring a few successes he obstructed the path of the adversary who was returning to his land loaded with booty, in southern Dobrudia, where the decisive battle was fought in June, near Abritos.

After these happy beginnings, Decius' luck changed. He himself waded into a swamp and succumbed to the arrows of the

Goth sharpshooters. It turned out to be the most severe blow dealt to the Romans up to that time. The embarrassing peace treaty concluded by Decius' successor provided another brief respite for the Danubian front. Not even the advanced bridgehead in Transylvania was withdrawn, only the eastern sector of the country being evacuated.

Under the dual reign of Valerian and Gallienus, the father took over the east; the son, the Rhenish frontier. The defense on the Danube was left to itself; moreover, it was weakened by transfers of troops to other theaters of war. The consequences were not long in coming. For a while it seemed that the Roman hegemony there would collapse completely. Fortifications were already springing up on the Balkan plateaus; the front was now far behind the line formed by the river. Dacia was then beginning to become the lost outpost.

Only the Illyrian emperors, coming from the Danube countries, set their sights once again on the abandoned border territory. Claudius re-established the Danube line and Aurelian's victories seemed to bring with them the salvation of Dacia and the restoration of the borders of yesteryear. *Happy Dacia*, the coins proclaimed, and for a moment it seemed that this would become a reality. However, at the hour of victory, Aurelian knew how to impose moderation. Dacia was horribly ravaged and could not be held without continuous efforts. Therefore, the troops and part of the population evacuated the bridgehead. However, a remnant of the Romanized population has been preserved in the Transylvanian west. Unequivocal evidence shows that the Apusenian Worlds had become their territory of retreat.

The fatal hour for the Rhenish and Danubian frontiers coincided with that of the east of the Empire. As Gallienus hastened to the Rhine to intercept the Germanic incursion, the Danubian countries being left to their own resources, his father Valerian took command on the banks of the Euphrates River.

There he found himself faced with a task as difficult and desperate as that prevailing on the other frontiers.

The raids of the Goths on the Black Sea had begun. At the same time, a series of assaults as tenacious as victorious took place on the eastern front by Sapor I, the second Sassanid. First Armenia was lost, and then the attack against the Empire proper began. When Valerian appeared in the theater of war, Sapor had conquered a few years earlier Antioch, the metropolis, killing or kidnapping its population. In vain the emperor tried to stop the disaster. The plague decimated the nuclei of his troops, the infantry units of the Germanic legions and the excellent Moorish cavalry. When Sapor, in 259, launched a new attack, Valerian confronted him. The situation in the besieged Edessa induced him to risk the combat. Initial successes were followed by catastrophe. Decius had been killed in battle as first emperor; Valerian was taken prisoner by the Persians. "And we seized the emperor Valerian with our own hands", so proclaims Sapor in his magna triumphal inscription.

Forming a broad front, the conquerors invaded Syria, Cappadocia and Cilicia. Old and famous cities were annihilated. In Paphlagonia, the troops of Sapor reached the sea. Everywhere a large amount of booty was collected. The catastrophe was general, but precisely the fullness of the Persian victory produced the revolution.

With the capture of Valeriano, a leader guilty of many misfortunes was eliminated. The fort of Edessa remained intact, and in it the members of the dispersed units were grouped together. Another group managed to assault the enemy loaded with booty when he was about to retreat from Cilicia. The retinue and harem of the great king fell into Roman hands. The latter managed with great difficulty to reach the Euphrates River. By payment he was able to acquire permission to cross Edessa. On the way he was attacked by Odanatus, owner and ruler of Palmyra, suffering new losses.

With Palmyra, a third power emerged juxtaposed to Rome and Persia, which until then had been the protagonists. The city had its own particular reasons for opposing the Sassanids.

Their wealth was based on the caravan traffic to the Persian Gulf following the course of the Euphrates River. Under the Parthians this traffic had been compromised. On the other hand, the new Sassanid dynasty did everything in its power to appropriate it by force and to profit from it, thus cutting off Palmyra's source of income, and also upsetting the ambitious and arrogant owner of the city by haughtily refusing a request for an alliance.

To date, the military regime in Palmyra had not been cut to the size of a great power policy. In this respect, too, Odenatus effected a change. He reinforced the excellent archers, mounted or on foot, with armored cavalry; the cataphracts. This had been created in the image and likeness of the Persian and thus made it possible to confront the mounted armies of the Sassanids with complete success. Decisive were the relations with Rome. Odenatus became its supporter from the beginning and did not abandon this attitude even at the end. It allowed him to assume ever wider powers and to become the *de facto* master of the eastern border countries. Gallienus, busy maintaining order on the Rhine and Danube, was unable to intervene effectively.

On the other hand, the eastern army of Rome was not willing to accept this situation. It opposed its own pretenders to Gallienus, who were recognized even in Egypt. Odenatus did not hesitate to give proof of his loyalty to Gallienus. He subjugated the pretenders claiming to do so in the name of the emperor, and was appointed by the latter *corrector totius Orientis*. But the conqueror was not Gallienus but Odenatus. The latter was at the height of his success.

Odenatus was then able to move against Persia, in union with the legions that had remained in the East. He recovered the frontier and its fortresses, and twice the conqueror advanced

until he reached the gates of the adversary's capital, Ctesiphona. Likewise, the commercial road leading to the Persian Gulf returned under the control of the Palmyrenians. At that time Odenato was assassinated. His wife Zenobia took over the regency on behalf of her youngest son. In Rome also the first Illyrian emperors, Claudius and Aurelian, had succeeded Gallienus and had restored order on the other frontiers. In the meantime, they recognized the succession of Zenobia. But it was inevitable that also in the east Rome would again assert its claims.

Zenobia did everything she could to provoke the decision. Unaware of the situation she tried to gain a foothold in Asia Minor and Egypt, she gave her son the titles of Emperor and Augustus and herself that of Augusta. But Aurelian also had his hands free; he headed eastward with his troops. Egypt, newly occupied by the armies of Zenobia, again escaped him, and Palmyra suffered a crushing defeat. The attempt to regain his former position only confirmed what was destined for him.

V

With the elimination of Palmyra, the power of Rome was assured also in the east. The failure of the Roman border defense under the reign of Valerian was proof that the Sassanid strategy could no longer be confronted with the methods employed to date. The strength of the Persian army was based on its cavalry. Swarms of mounted archers, of fast and impetuous advance that knew how to dodge the counterattack with the same speed, were supported by the armored cataphracts. In the combination of light and heavy weapons, of agility and thrust, lay the value of

Persian tactics. Such an army was able to enter the very heart of Roman territory, passing around fortresses and legion camps. The Roman territory seemed to be at the mercy of the enemy, who plundered and burned with impunity.

To Diocletian belongs the merit of having restored the frontier defense. He recovered Mesopotamia and included it in his defense system. For it was only possible to face such a dangerous adversary, as were the Persian mounted armies, with the support of an extensive system of fortifications, a system both wide and deep.

Starting from Bostra in the south, the Limes passed along the edge of the Arabian plateau, from the foothills of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains which, in turn, run from Damascus in a northeasterly direction. Then the Euphrates and Chabur, until it joined the Tigris, took over the defense. Everywhere ran one line behind the other; a system of parallel roads was festooned by major and minor fortifications connected to each other by transverse roads. The system had fortified cities in the interior such as Bostra and Damascus, Palmyra and Nisibis, and extreme outposts in the desert designed to protect the wells, springs and steppes of the nomadic land against incursions from without. Everything was effectively arranged so as not to let any mounted unit through, no matter how devious its leader might be.

In addition to the task of defense against the Sassanid mounted armies, the Limes were responsible for the control of the nomads. During the rainy periods in spring and autumn, the Bedouin remained with their herds in the steppe, the Hamad; as soon as drought set in, they moved to higher regions of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, as well as to the fertile valleys of the Orontes and Beka. A similar change was brought about by the Limes, whose fortifications made it possible to monitor the movements of the transhumants and to channel them along fixed paths. In addition, Bedouins were enlisted, as the new tasks required the recruitment of additional mounted units. These were stationed in

special fortresses erected in the indigenous manner and provided protection against surprise raids.

In the Syro-Mesopotamian Limes, the organization and perseverance of Rome, with its propensity for durability and stability, triumphed over the great transhumants in the East. A similar process was also at work on the other frontiers. In cases of extreme urgency, a double measure was resorted to: to enclose the cities with fences, even from the inside, and to extend the new defensive works on the frontier.

It was not only in the Mesopotamian Limes that cities had become hotbeds of combat. When the Goths first appeared, at Moesia, it was still hoped that they would be able to drive off the defenders of the fences by a mere shower of stones and projectiles, and then take the city without much effort. However, the Germanic assailants soon began to build throwing machines and erect a defensive dyke. At the fences of Thessalonica, the Goths tested the effectiveness of their new assault equipment. They may have been assisted by Roman prisoners or subjects from the Bosphorus cities.

On the other hand, citizens and garrisons competed to collaborate in the defense against defeat. No one was frightened to see the enemy filling the trenches with carcasses of stolen cattle or helpless prisoners. The cruelty of the assailants only increased the spirit of sacrifice and ingenuity of the defenders. As the barbarians pushed deeper into the heart of the Empire, the patriotism of the citizens was awakening from a long slumber. The young men of Athens faced the plundering enemy with weapons in hand, under the command of Dexippos, historian of the time.

Semi-destroyed fortresses were restored or new ones were built everywhere; special officials were appointed for the construction of fences. The irregular layering and the intercalation of spolia are eloquent proof of the haste with which these works were carried out. Everywhere it was a matter of

making up for lost time. It was already becoming clear that the erection of fortifications meant not only bypassing, but also limiting oneself to what was actually possible to defend. From the point of view of urban development, circumvallation often coincided with shrinkage. In Strasbourg, at that time, all the suburbs were evacuated and the former camp of the legion, which could accommodate at most six or eight thousand inhabitants, was converted into an impregnable fortress. From the remains of the evacuated quarters arose a circular wall three times stronger than the previous one. Thus reinforced, the city resisted the migration of the villages.

Even the capital submitted to the new conditions. The fortification of Rome began under the reign of Decius, being carried to completion by Aurelian. Urban guilds of Rome had to take charge of its execution, because the soldiers were needed in the war against Zenobia. The walls were erected and have been maintained to this day: with their parapets, their protruding corner watchtowers, their vaulted gates, all made of bricks. These structures combine realism and the Roman sense of grandeur. Trier, Milan, Sirmium, Byzantium, Nisibis and Ecclesia also became centers of defense. They often had to house the imperial headquarters within their walls.

The beginnings of something that Rome had not known until then, that is, of a full-fledged defense system, were everywhere apparent. Also the fixed camp and the frontier defense based on it underwent the same transformation. In the British Limes, ordered to be built by Septimius Severus, this new element already appears. The forts were reduced in size in order to reduce the area vulnerable to attack; watchtowers were used to protect dangerous corners, and the camp was gradually converted into a fortress for the sole purpose of defense.

No new buildings were erected on the banks of the Danube, Rome being content to modernize the existing ones. Watchtowers re-secured the corners of the fortifications, thus

turning them into real bastions. The reduction of the area vulnerable to attack was achieved by closing all the gates except for one, placing a powerful bastion in front of it. The picture is repeated in the Arab Limes or in the Diocletian fortifications of Morocco.

The rigid and continuous front along the frontiers came to be replaced everywhere by deeply structured fortifications formed by defense points. Former frontier defenses, once broken, were soon overwhelmed and taken from behind; raiding a single place always brought with it the danger of having to abandon the entire line. The new fortifications had been so arranged that each could defend itself alone, independently of the others, even in case of loss of adjoining posts. In the past, a strong contingent of troops was wasted by being spread in a thin line along an extensive front; then, instead, reduced units were stationed in well-chosen and fortified defense installations, increasing resistance instead of reducing it.

In this system of fortifications, both the peasant and the citizen had come to their senses. They responded to the challenge of the frontier tribes, the nomads and the great transhumants that threatened everywhere to flood a world. They proceeded to protect fertile and cultivated land from raids, plundering and violent conquests. This awakening of conscience soon bore fruit. In all phases, the neighboring countries experienced a new economic and cultural flowering. This is attested by the buildings in Trier erected at the end of the Roman era, as well as a school of Celtic orators, Celtic pottery and Celtic weaving. Messianic cities such as Istria, Tropea, Tomi, Abritos, all destroyed by the Goths, were reborn in territories fought over in bloody battles and preserved, some modestly, until the seventh century. Syria also found tranquility. Antioch, in spite of having been destroyed twice, offered the sumptuous aspect described by Libanius and confirmed by excavations. A number of two hundred thousand inhabitants - with the

exception of slaves, children and inhabitants of the outskirts - is recorded for posterity.

This reaction is impressive even where the protection of the border defense has awakened a new life of its own. The demands of supplying the border troops and the semi-agricultural existence led to the careful exploitation of the immediate rear area. Areas along the Numidian and Arabian Limes were taken from the steppe. Desolate territories such as the Sin desert, located between Sinai and the Dead Sea, were covered with farms and settlements. Beautiful terraces were built, water shortages were counteracted by cisterns and reservoirs; every strip of land was cultivated with plow and hoe. In many cases, this was the only peak reached by such a territory in the course of history.

Chronologically, the expansion of a new defense system coincided with the creation of a field army, which, separated from the frontier, was available in the interior as a permanent reserve. Gallienus, the creator of such an army, began, aided by his fortress architects Cleodamus and Athenaeus, with the circumvallation of the cities. The field army and the new defense system depended on each other. Previously, attack and defense had not been two separate functions; by now, however, each began to play a separate role. We have seen it: older boundary lines came about as a result of an advance that had been halted and, as it were, solidified in a particular place. However, although the advance had stopped, it was not yet ready for defense. In the first place, especially where it was a question of opening larger breaches, the lack of an effective reserve was noticeable. Double attacks occurring simultaneously on the Rhine and the Danube created a desperate situation for the Empire.

With the adoption of the new system, however, these difficulties diminished and partly disappeared. Instead of achieving a rapid and favorable incursion the assailants were

confronted by a belt of fortifications within which the defender enacted his own laws. Where the fortifications were staggered in thickness, the greatest obstacles arose only as the attack progressed. To this, with the adoption of the new system of fortifications, was added the danger of counter-attack, carried from within, after careful evaluation of enemy weaknesses, against the adversary entangled in the attack by the rested, vigorous and concentrated reserve army. Effective reserves that had previously been lacking were available, and through the combination of defense and counterattack, the principle according to which the attack constitutes the best form of defense once again prevailed.

Of course, the division of functions meant that the hitherto monolithic army corps became divided. The units on the frontier, the garrisons of the forts and fortresses were soon downgraded to the status of mere occupation troops. The imperial field army, on the other hand, rose to prominence.

No matter how clearly this development is highlighted in its results, it is very difficult today to separate the beginning and the individual phases. One has wanted to attribute the responsibility to Septimius Severus or Severus Alexander; finally, one has even attributed the beginnings of frontier defense to the Antonines. It does not matter who was its author: the step towards settlement was taken on the frontiers. The soldiers became peasants and settlers, and compulsory hereditary service guaranteed their link to rural property. A field army whose creation came to an end under Gallienus' empire, but which had begun earlier, signified a new mobility. This army was recruited from the new quintas of the remaining continents of the military core, which were continuously available, well armed and abundantly supplied with cavalry.

Economically, the two categories were also distinguished. The plots of land assigned to the troops serving on the frontier remained inalienable. The beneficiaries had to commit

themselves and their descendants to military service. With the disappearance of the financial economy around the middle of the century, the new system, based on the exchange of natural products, was becoming more and more established. However, the field army continued to collect its pay, and was therefore forced, as the value of money fell, to earn a living by force. Thus, the economic circumstances came to accentuate the result of strategic needs.

Once again, Diocletian tried to counteract this development by moving all units back to the frontier. But he could no longer do without the field army. Under Constantine, the division became definitive: a central reserve faced the settled colonists protecting the frontier.

CHAPTER V

THE ROMAN ARMY

I

The century between the death of Marcus Aurelius and the ascension to the throne of Diocletian was adopting more and more military features. One speaks, at least from Maximian Thracian onwards, of soldier emperors. The occupant of the throne was becoming more and more an exponent of the army. The army contributed to the elevation of the emperors, supported them, and decided on the continuation and termination of their rule.

Seen from the outside, the Roman army of the second Christian century represented a unity. Latin as the language of administration and military command, the continued importance of the legions, uniform armament, a compact officer corps, discipline and spirit of comradeship constituted, it seemed, indestructible bonds. Wherever these troops appeared, the Roman way of being, the Roman culture, followed them. A uniform army had paved the way for the unity of the Empire both militarily and culturally. And yet numerous tensions existed latent beneath the surface.

Contrasts between the different arms, contrasts between the large military contingents on the banks of the Rhine, the Danube and the Euphrates had already manifested themselves long

before. The proud and haughty auxiliaries of their warrior spirit, such as the Bavarians were, were always ready to pick fights with the legionaries. Within the garrison of the capital, the infantrymen looked upon the cavalrymen with envy and did not conceal their joy whenever the latter lost in a scuffle with the rabble of the cities. The *esprit de corps* was great in the armies, and it was expressed in an aggressive and quarrelsome manner, and they were often more eager to fight among themselves than the pretenders. Likewise, disagreements were traditional between the frontier armies that protected the empire against the barbarians, and the metropolitan guard that, pampered and privileged, served the court. The frontier legions boasted of being battle-hardened, while the praetorian cohorts in Rome claimed their higher rank.

Tensions of this kind, which had always existed, albeit in a latent state, rose violently to the surface at the end of the second century. After the death of Marcus Aurelius, the great moment of the guard seemed to have arrived. Commodus rushed upon it and Pertinax was defeated by the Praetorians, while the latter helped Didius Julianus to conquer the throne. Among the aspirants it was the latter who offered the highest sum, i.e. the throne was effectively bought. The imperial crown seemed like a booty waiting for the thief. But its bartering, the humiliating farce played by a soldiery greedy for money and some pretenders who fought to acquire it, came to fill the measure. The plebeians of Rome did not reserve their opinion on the matter; and such events affected, above all, the frontier armies.

These armies, stationed and isolated in inhospitable territories, charged with the task of defending the Empire, felt relegated to the background in favor of the metropolitan garrison. That is why they watched the events in Rome with suspicion. The assassination of Commodus seems to have once again postponed the outbreak of rifts, especially since Pertinax owed the throne to the support he had received from the frontier armies. But when

the new emperor fell at the hands of a Tungrian guard rider, the accumulated indignation could no longer be restrained.

Three of the great frontier armies each nominated a candidate of their choice: the British nominated Clodius Albinus, the Syrian-Egyptian nominated Pescennius Nigrus, the Illyrian-Pannonian nominated Septimius Severus. However different the armies, the suitors and the hopes attached to his ascension, they all agreed that they were unwilling to tolerate the opprobrium of the Praetorian regime. Septimius Severus not only defeated Didius Julianus, but also the other pretenders. The army of the Danube led his general from victory to victory and, at last, to the sole possession of the imperial crown.

That a frontier army under the command of its general had usurped power was nothing new to Rome. In the year 69, the tri-imperial year, the Rhenish army on the one hand, the united legions of the Danube and the East on the other, announced their claim to the imperial throne. Already at that time Vespasian, backed by the army of the Danube, eventually prevailed. But the rise of Septimius Severus was very different from what had gone before.

Since the Dacian wars, the Danube front had come to the fore. Under Antoninus Pius, twice as many troops were stationed on that front as on the Rhine, and in the war against the Marcomans. Marcus Aurelius was able to review military forces unequalled in the entire era: from the time of the Empire of Commodus, the command of the Illyrian troops was divided, so that such a great power would not be gathered in a single hand.

What happened under the empire of Septimius Severus was more than the violent uprising of an occupying army stationed in the border region. When in the year 69 the Rhenish legions of Vitellius marched south, death and desolation traced their traces. The population, intimidated, used to humbly beg the soldiers to respect their lives and their property. Under Septimius Severus things were different. The garrison and the frontier province, the

army and the hinterland were no longer adversaries. In 193 all the provinces in which the Illyrian legions were stationed rose up with the Illyrian legions, becoming at a stroke the strongest factor of power within the Empire.

Hadrian's new order with which he supplemented the army served as an introduction to this change. Outside the legions, the principle of local recruitment had always been in force. The military contingents were supplemented by taking recruits from the region in which the auxiliary troops were located. With Hadrian, the application of the procedure was extended to the legions. Previously, the Illyrian legions were supplemented by recruiting in southern Gaul, Africa and Asia Minor; under Hadrian, however, they were increasingly reinforced by young men born in the military camps, and by recruits from the provinces where they were located. The new principle had all the greater effect because the drawing of frontiers by the Roman administration took into account the tribal units where this was feasible. Historians of the mth century took it for granted that the legions stationed in the Illyrian region were composed of Illyrians, and that the contingents stationed in Syria were composed of Syrians.

The Illyrians were of a brave caste, strong and of tall stature, men born to be soldiers in body and soul. But they were naive and easily exploited by those who were skilled in persuading them. It was easy to raise them against the praetorians, who had stained themselves with imperial and plebeian blood. It was also possible to appeal to the conscience of the Illyrian force, for they were convinced that no other people within the Empire would dare to stand up to the Illyrian name.

Septimius Severus was African by birth. He made use of his legions to reach his own and very personal objectives. However, by awakening the national conscience of the Illyrians, by fixing the Illyrian motto to his eagles, he incited and was incited at the same time. His henchmen accompanied him to Rome, to the

East and to Britain. But such loyalty not only bound the soldiers to the emperor, but also the emperor to his Illyrian army. After the victory, what had hitherto been the praetorian troop was dismissed and replaced by a new guard, reinforced up to twice as many. It had been selected from experienced and effective contingents of the entire army, it was said, but, in reality, it belonged to the army stationed along the Danube.

Due to this resolution, new ethnic elements were coming to the forefront of the Empire. To the throne ascended a North African native of a colonial city that had previously been Phoenician; in the army, on the other hand, the Illyrians had conquered the undisputed primacy. This result contained a contrast that, at first hidden, had to be increasingly accentuated in the course of the third century.

The primacy of Italy had already disappeared towards the end of the first century. The metropolis was replaced by the western provinces whose Romanization had progressed, above all, through the Pyrenean peninsula. It had long supplied the Empire with excellent soldiers. After winning through Seneca a prominent place in literature, the Spaniards took the step to the throne through Trajan, where they remained until the end of Antonine. In the event of a change, the position would have fallen to Latin Africa, as the closest, to play the leading role.

In the regions of Greater and Lesser Sirta, Romanization had long taken root. Native Africans held seats in the Senate; even Septimius Severus and his brother had obtained the rank of Senators under the Empire of Marcus Aurelius. Under the protection of imperial peace, prosperity reached a flourishing apogee. At the same time, Africa also knew how to insert itself brilliantly in literature. There were literary luminaries of the highest level alongside literary luminaries such as Fronto, a native of Cirta, who considered himself a Numidian, representatives of Christianity alongside the glories of pagan literature. Apuleius of Madaura, a pure representative of

classical antiquity - but softening it with the means of an elegant art and adorning it with the variegated lights of his style - a brilliant and skeptical spirit, playful and at the same time thirsty for salvation, acted simultaneously with the original thinker who was Tertullian, the first to wrap Christian thoughts in the garb of a rhetoric in perfect Latin. The fiery passion expressed in Tertullian's combative writings, his exciting antitheses and the juridical subtlety of his argumentation, constituted the precursory elements of what in St. Augustine was to find its apogee and its culmination.

The fact that Septimius Severus, a native African, had ascended the throne, seemed to be in accordance with the evolution of events up to that time. Also his opponent, Clodius Albinus was of the same origin. And yet there was a new element. For these emperors supported the Africans and the African legions as little as they helped them to seize the throne. More than anything else, the victory of Septimius Severus gave the Illyrians supremacy in the army, and two generations later they could already think of nominating a candidate for the throne. This meant that from then on the decisive factor was not the degree of Romanization, but rather the resilient strength of an ethnic element little affected by the civilization of the world empire. Barbarism itself then came to the fore, for the first time, as a hierarchy of values. It became the legal claim of those who aspired to hegemony within the Empire.

Of the territories that once belonged to the Illyrians, they had again lost a large part. The East German plain between the Oder and the Vistula, the homeland of the Lusatian culture, or the part of France occupied by people from the Umbrian camps had long before been abandoned to their fate. The same applies to southern Germany, with superimposed Illyrian element, or to Bohemia. What was left was within the borders of the Empire: Recia, the Noric territory, Dalmatia, the two Pannonias and part of the Upper Melia, the Dardania.

The Illyrians had tenaciously defended themselves against the hegemony of Rome, only to be defeated. The new masters brought Romanization. The Dalmatian coast was soon penetrated from Italy; later, it even passed through part of the neighboring country. In the interior, the newly founded municipalities, colonized by licensed veterans of Italic origin, received in allotment large parts of what had previously been the manor regions. The rural population of these territories often became economically dependent on the new owners.

Despite all this, the Illyrian ethnic element prevailed. In vast regions, the ancient tribal culture still prevailed. In the countryside, the settled inhabitants were in the vast majority living as farmers and shepherds. The Illyrian nobility lived in the cities, the tribal chiefs became chiefs of the manor regions, confirmed by Rome. In the urban and legionary territories Romanization also failed to take hold. The natives lived quietly in their villages; they only had to deliver part of their agricultural products, in addition to providing labor and draught services.

The language was also preserved. Illyrian names of villages, such as Ampass, Amblas, Stans or Ertetns, Spertens, Tettens, Norfertens - especially numerous in the Zürlertal mountain range - indicate that they have passed directly into the German language without Roman intervention. Customs and clothing confirm that under the Roman veneer the traditional gender had been preserved. The women still wore the coif and the double skirt, the apron and the large humeral brooch; and the men also wore fur caps. The vernacular gods with their shrines, ornamental art and indigenous housing were maintained. On the banks of the Una and Save rivers there were still villages of lake houses: like products of a primitive world, they looked back to Antiquity, which was already in decline.

Everywhere a healthy and vigorous ethnic force had been preserved. The Illyrian countries were noted for a high birth rate.

In unbroken succession, their sturdy stock was nurturing other territories with human potential, colonizing the bordering strips south and north of the Danube. The fights with the barbarians beyond the border of the Empire, as well as big game hunting, helped to strengthen the young men; from a very early age they were accustomed to overcome all kinds of obstacles. The cities and their quayside life could not sap the vigor of this race. The legions were recruited for the most part from the rural population, to whom the right of citizenship was granted before entering the ranks, for in order not to lose the excellent human material offered for military service, favors were ready to be granted. The Cottians, still under the rule of Marcus Aurelius deprived of the right, soon after provided soldiers for the guard and, as a result of this, they were soon promoted to a more privileged position.

Until then, ancient culture and the ancient state had been based on the urban element; this also prevailed in the times of imperial civilization. Its expansion, Romanization in general, was effected by a deliberate urbanization. The rise of the Illyrians coincided with the first departure from the attitude that had prevailed until then.

Soon there was growing antagonism between the cities and the peasants, who were serving in the Illyrian legions. With desperate courage Byzantium defended itself against its besiegers, the Messianic legions of Septimius Severus. The sack and burning of Lyon in 197, from which the city never recovered, had the effect of a beacon. If the destruction of Cremona in 69 had aroused the indignation and abhorrence of all, the historiography of the time of Severus was content with a simple annotation of that event.

The change was immediately seized upon by those concerned. In 238, as the emperor Maximinus advanced into Italy, the inhabitants of his cities abandoned them, fleeing before his

Pannonian, Messianic and Germanic armies. While the soldiers were ravaging the vicinity of Aquileia, cutting down vineyards and fruit trees, the civic conscience of that city experienced a great awakening, inducing it to put up a resistance worthy of Venice's predecessor. The fences that had crumbled during the long period of peace were reconditioned. Everyone got down to work, both the population living in the city and those who had found refuge there.

In open campaign, city dwellers rarely prove to be suitable soldiers. Their strength lies in the defense of the homeland. The fences of Aquileia made the heads of the Illyrian legions bleed; the burning pitch made horrible havoc among the assailants. It was known what awaited the city in case it was conquered. Byzantium was converted into a village and in that capacity subjected to the jurisdiction of the neighboring city; Aquileia into a desert, destined to serve as pasture for cattle.

The defense achieved, the victory won, was given thanks to divine help. An Italic citizenry, in turn, who had fought so valiantly against the barbarian military forces of Maximinus, saw their savior in a barbarian god. The Celtic Belenus, whose cult had its origin in the Noric region and in the area of Aquileia, was given the nickname of Augustus, which was also a symptom of an era that had evolved.

A new epoch was born, so revolutionary and decisive that it had no equal in Roman history. It was not only that barbarism gained the ascendancy over Romanization, the rural element over the urban, but that the frontier guard displaced the citizen soldier, and the bordering province prevailed over the nuclei of the Empire, the inarticulate force over culture.

II

As contenders for supremacy, the British and the Syrians faced the Illyrian army. The rivalry of the former was no more than an episode; the Syrians, on the other hand, proved to be a different matter. Pescennius Nigerius was as little their compatriot as Septimius Severus was Illyrian. But an entire nation rose up again along with the army: the east of the Empire against its western half.

Disagreements between the army stationed on the banks of the Danube and the Syrian legions had appeared before. Under the Empire of Marcus Aurelius, the eastern provinces had fallen to a Syrian usurper, Avidius Cassius. To avert the danger, a historian of that time refers to the following speech of the emperor, delivered, according to him, before the core of his Illyrian troops: "Cilicians, Syrians, Jews and Egyptians have never been superior to you and never will be; however superior they may be numerically, as they are now, they are inferior to you in this respect. Cassius himself, who enjoys the reputation of an able general and crowned with successes, when he is at the head of weak and ineffective military forces ceases to be a notable general, and the Arab and Parthian wars have not been brought to a victorious conclusion by Cassius, but by you."

Indeed, the Syrian legions were not equivalent adversaries for the Illyrians. Already since the time of Augustus they were recruited from the same country, and the consequences did not take long to manifest themselves. The race there was of less hardy stock, and urban temptations undermined physical strength and military discipline. Rebellious, insubordinate and not very punctual, they did not even want to get used to carrying arms. It could happen that these soldiers, upon sighting the enemy, would take Villadiego's weapons.

The fatigues of military life were rarely demanded and often endured even less. There were soldiers of great seniority who had never been on guard duty and were astonished to see a military camp as if it were the eighth wonder. Well cared for and rendering such comfortable military service that, apart from it, they were engaged in a lucrative profession, they lived in peace and quiet. In most cases they were housed in the neighborhood, being a burden to the population and undermining their own fighting strength.

And yet the easterners proved to be a military opponent for the Illyrians. The latter had underestimated them too hastily.

Two ethnic groups collide in the "fertile crescent-moon" comprising the Arabian desert from the northeast and southwest. The man based in the land of fruits, characterized by his tenacious perseverance, his commercial spirit, his skill and dexterity, but also by his unbridled self-indulgence in the face of all material and sexual needs. He always knows how to assert himself precisely in the face of conquerors. The second determining group of the physiognomy of these countries: the Semites of the desert know this from their own experience. They succeeded easily in subjugating the settled population, but rarely succeeded in displacing or annihilating it. Rather, it happened that a few generations later, the vanquished would once again impose himself, molding the physiognomy of the conqueror in his image and likeness. Only where desert tribes were continuously admitted, with the consequent numerical superiority, did they manage to impose themselves: beyond the Jordan and in Chalkis, in Hauran and on the south bank of the Euphrates River, in oases such as Palmyra. Although the felaches and the inhabitants of the cities of the Syrian interior had no part in becoming capable legionaries, the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes were still warriors. Of course their strong point was not hand-to-hand combat; as heavy infantry they were not much. Instead, they were excellent archers and horsemen.

The Palmyrenees and Nabataeans had such a troop for the protection of the caravan roads. In addition, there were units mounted on dromedaries, advanced as far as the northern Hidchaz. Repeatedly, the Romans had had the opportunity to see what archers were worth in combat, in the Parthian wars and then when Septimius Severus besieged the city of Hatra, located in the middle of the desert. It was not, therefore, a new world that faced Rome; but only at the beginning of the century m after Jesus Christ, it began to influence the Roman army. The Illyrians limited themselves to make available to the Empire their reserves of men of strong lineage, and, for the rest, they adapted to the traditional tactics; on the other hand, the East imposed its strategy on the Romans.

Syrian and Armenian archers appeared for the first time in Trajan's wars against the Dacians, as Roman auxiliary troops. They remained in the conquered land; in Poroliso, a frontier fortress, a Palmyrene unit was quartered. Towards the end of the 11th century there was a general expansion of the weapon, in which, apart from the Thracians, the Syrians took first place. The newly organized divisions were recruited from Aureans, Comagenes or from the inhabitants of the region of Chaléis or Damascus, and the continuation of such a practice became the general rule. The archers constantly received reinforcements from the East, wherever they were found' and began to form a compact ethnic unit within the whole army: Under the Empire of Septimius Severus a new growth took place, for the indigenous divisions which still existed and in the wars had fought shoulder to shoulder with the imperial army as *symmacharii* began to be incorporated into the imperial army.

Like the Illyrians, the eastern archers in turn gave rise to a barbarian world that had never belonged to the bearers of the ancient culture. These troops were native to the desert, its oases and the border belt, a transition zone between settled and nomadic existence. The infantry archers had been recruited from

the villages; the mounted troops came from the Bedouins. Nowhere were there any urban contingents: the strong vigor of an ethnic element never touched by civilization rose up here and in Illyria against forces that until then had exclusively determined the life of Antiquity.

The desert has a very particular mentality. Its characteristics are sudden changes, the variegated play of colors, open spaces and the quixotic world of mirages. A vivid fantasy, passions that fluctuate sharply between two extremes, mobility and cunning characterize its inhabitants. The dry, warm, limpid and clear air of the desert has determined the mentality of the Bedouins. They despise the life of the villagers and citizens, their immobility and comfort. No son of the desert would be willing to voluntarily exchange the life of the great ups and downs for the regularity of their life, the freedom of movement for the limitations and inert permanence characteristic of village and rural life. Back and forth, escapes, persecutions, deployments and sudden assaults abound in the combats of the nomads. Mobility and remoteness - in other words, the horse and the bow - are their weapons.

If the dromedary represents the Bedouin's wealth, the horse is his pride. It is the basis of his existence as a warrior and free lord. The Arabian race, nervous and agile, surly and courageous, ready to react to any action, is the living portrait of its riders. If such an evaluation of the horse and the art of riding was strange to the Romans, archery was much more so. Like other peoples, Rome had also rejected this way of fighting as ignoble. Now, however, they had to recognize its value. In the Sahara and in southern Russia, against the agile inhabitants of the Scottish plains and the horsemen peoples of the Hungarian plain, the marksman proved to be as indispensable as in the fight against the Parthians and Germans.

The combat of the Germans seemed to the Romans, at times, like a kind of homicidal fury. Lack of discipline and calculation prevented success, despite the existence of warlike advantages.

And yet it could not be denied that the Germanic strategy, which combined cavalry with infantry, was effective and well planned. Since this enemy, due to the shortage of iron, had to renounce armor and had to use the lance instead of the sword, he tried by all means to avoid a prolonged melee, seeking instead to break through the enemy lines with sudden advances. Atrocities replaced gradual annihilation.

From then on, Rome possessed in the archers a weapon like no other to face the Germans. The archers knew how to approach lightly and silently, stealthily, standing out from the enemy with equal ease. Their arrows wounded the naked bodies of the Germans; their aim was all the more effective because these huge bodies were good targets. The perfected convex bow, adopted by the Parthians, considerably surpassed those of older design, as far as range and efficiency were concerned. The arrows could penetrate two men without difficulty. The new weapon has not failed to influence historical events in favor of the Germans: Caracalla and the expeditions of the Germanic army under Maximinus owe their success to it.

These were astonishing events. An oriental style of combat, foreign to the Romans, had imposed itself and achieved prestige among them. And even more: to fight the barbarians of the north they had resorted to means learned from barbarians of the east. It was plausible to apply similar experiences also in the interior.

From the ascension of Septimius Severus, the Illyrians had conquered the predominant position within the army. They were able to respond to the hopes placed in them from the military point of view. They were always in charge of playing the main role in combat. Both for wars against the Parthians and Persians and for wars against the Germans, they had to provide the Empire with recruits. However, these basic troops were a rebellious factor in the hands of weak emperors. Above all, the Syrian emperors suffered greatly due to the rebelliousness of the Illyrians, which went as far as aversion and revolt. The Illyrian

praetorians tenaciously opposed Heligabalus and finally brought about his downfall. Likewise, Severus Alexander was defeated by the anger and contempt of his Pannonian contingents.

What more natural for these emperors, then, than to seek compensation? Severus Alexander found it by resorting to the proper and typical weapon of his homeland. Setting out on an expedition to the Rhine, he brought with him a new corps of marksmen, recruited from the Osroena, as well as from Parthian defectors and mercenaries. The troop gained the reputation of a terrible weapon, whose renown it continued to enjoy until the following century. It was sententious that it formed a direct part of the imperial entourage. The Osroenan marksmen became a troop of bodyguards of the sovereigns who were also natives of the ^{East}.

Mounted archers and iron-armored horsemen armed with spears were an integral part of the Parthian army, and later of the Persian army. They were inseparable since Sureñas, conqueror of Carrhae, had evolved that tactic of the two mounted weapons combined to annihilating effect. It was logical that the eastern emperors, who had already set their sights on the archer, would also try the use of the ironclads or catafracts, as they were called.

Again, it was Severus Alexander who was in charge of evolving this weapon. It is said that, when he made war on the Persians, Roman horsemen were provided with the weapons stolen from their adversaries, armed to the teeth. Thereafter, there was a regiment of armored horsemen also armed to the teeth in the army. Later new formations were added to it. A distinction was made between catafractas, units in which only the rider wore harness, and the clibanarios, units in which both rider and horse were covered with armor. Frescoes from Dura-Europos, on the banks of the Euphrates River, and parts of man and horse armor that had also been found there, help us to form an idea of what these units looked like.

The new regiment integrated in the eastern frontier moved to the banks of the Rhine with Severus Alexander, its founder. Under Maximinus they fought against the Alamanni; they also participated in the civil war. When the Danubian legions raided the Venetian plain, they were accompanied by several squadrons of cataphracts, combined with eastern archers, Moorish javelin throwers and Germanic horsemen. In accordance with Iranian custom, heavy squadrons fought alongside light cavalry, and horsemen in combination with archers.

In the subsequent period there is no record that cataphracts were used in combat. The successor was Palmyra, which, in general, took charge of the fight against the Sassanids. Odenatus organized an army whose nucleus were the armored horsemen. They made his fight against Sophor I a crowning success. Likewise, when the armed clash with Rome occurred, the Palmyrene cataphracts played the main role in the combat.

It was not easy for Aureliano to overcome the dangerous adversary. On the occasion of the first encounter, the Dalmatian horsemen exhausted the clumsy armored units by means of simulated escape, until men and horses were exhausted as a result of the heat, the dust and the fatigue. Faced with a new assault, their resistance crumbled. On the other hand, in the second battle, which was the decisive one, this tactic did not work. The cataphracts of Palmyra were on the alert, they knocked down the cavalry of the adversary, and only the intervention of the Roman infantry brought the outcome.

From then on, it was no longer possible to imagine the Roman army without that weapon. Catafractas appear in the reliefs of the Arch of Galerius in Thessalonica; soon after, the clibanarium appeared in complete form. The iron armor enclosed not only the man, but also covered the horse's head and chest up to the legs. When the Gallo-German army of Constantine penetrated into Northern Italy, a body of these clibarons barred its way. An iron-covered mass had formed a

wedge to bring down the adversary in a single but massive assault.

For the first time we meet the medieval knight. The Swedish tombs in Vendel, Valsgärde and Vimose reveal the transition from the Clibanan, who belongs to the late Roman period, to his Germanic successor. They fight with bow and arrows, with the spear; they wear the chain shirt, of Iranian origin. Heavy helmets, covered with a tangle of ribbons and extremities in the North Germanic animal style, imitated a form used by the armored horsemen of the Roman army towards the end of the imperial period. King Arthur, the model of all chivalric heroism, led, it has been shown, a unit of cataphracts. According to the oldest tradition, he had a Roman title. His weapon consisted of a golden helmet and a harness whose Roman origin still stands out in the Celtic name.

III

Next to the mounted archers there was a counterpart unit, which, however, was not recruited from the East, but from the tribes of the North African desert: the Moorish javelin throwers. They also fought on horseback and in a mobile organization. Their glory goes back to ancient times, since they were the successors of the Numidian cavalry, so famous for their fighting efficiency.

These horsemen were considered irresistible, both in the tenacious and fierce pursuit of the adversary and in the simulation of escape, stopping suddenly in their tracks and pouncing on the enemy who advanced too confident of victory. Raids and robberies had accustomed the Moors to the warrior's trade; being nomads like the Scythians and Sarmatians, they were as unassailable as the latter. The Moors were so skilled that they knew how to master the horse in full race, without reins and

with bare poles. As javelin throwers, their marksmanship was unequalled.

This troop is already in Trajan's column. Its mount is a short and agile horse, easy to handle despite its spirited temperament. A rope around its neck is enough: it is neither bridled nor saddled. The riders are equipped with javelins and small shields. Their hair is braided in long locks, and their beards are loose, long and curly.

With the archers went up also the Moors. They were preceded by the reputation of being a bloodthirsty and reckless race, and in the war against the Parthians, of which Macrinus took charge having inherited it from Caracalla, they proceeded to justify this renown. Moreover, the Moors had great affection for this emperor, whom they regarded as a countryman. From then on they were to be found represented in all military enterprises. They were not lacking in the army led against the Germans by Severus Alexander, and under Philip the Arab the Moorish cavalry overcame the resistance of the Carps, who had settled in Transylvania. They had long been counted among the army's guard units, as were the archers, their sister weapon. Also when Valerian moved east to meet the attack of the Sassanid Sapor I, the Moors were at his side. However, the epidemic that was then decimating the Roman army, made the greatest ravages among them. It was thus that Sapor found a free passage to advance.

A new use of the weapon arose under the empire of Gallienus. He combined the Moors with the Illyrian horsemen integrated by him, called Delmatae; together they formed the cavalry reserve, the nucleus of the imperial field army. Mounted javelin throwers fought together with a troop that, lightly armored and equipped with a large shield, manipulated the spear. Moors and Dalmatians appeared where decisive battles were concerned. The former annihilated the battle-hardened Pannonian and Messianic legions that had risen against Gallienus; the latter followed the emperor when he fought the disloyal Aureolus

before the gates of Milan. In the Gothic war of Claudius, the newly created cavalry corps proved effective, as well as in the fight against Zenobia; it was sent as a garrison to the newly conquered eastern provinces. There the Moors, still under Aurelian, made his compatriot Saturninus emperor, putting on the sacred mantle of a figure of Astarte, according to the indigenous custom.

In the Moors, the warlike violence went hand in hand with that disloyalty that had always been characteristic of the sons of the Sahara. To put a stop to this, Aurelian created a new weapon of archers that was recruited again of easterners. Apart from them, other African tribes soon knew how to impose themselves, especially the Blemians, natives of the upper course of the Nile. For the first time they appear in the contemporary relief cornice of the Arch of Constantine, recognized for carrying the arrows under the quiver and not in the quiver.

Thus it happened that Easterners and Africans joined the Illyrians, gaining weight on their own account. However, the strongest competitors of the Illyrians turned out to be the Germans.

Considering the enormous demand, it was inevitable that the time would come when people from beyond the frontiers would be called upon to join the imperial army. From the time of Septimius Severus' Empire onwards, there were uninterrupted complaints about the decrease in human resources. Precisely the healthiest and strongest parts of the population of the Empire were wearing out as a result of the demands posed by the constant wars. To this was added that: barbarians who did not belong to the Empire possessed to an even greater degree everything that had elevated the integrated barbarians to their position. Untouched forces and reserves of brave men, wholeheartedly attached to the warrior's trade, were offered everywhere. The Germans and their neighbors occupied *a priori* a dominant position.

And yet it was a step of great significance. Up to that time, the foreign barbarian and the barbarian within the confines of the Empire had been opposed to each other; now, on the other hand, they began to fight the adversary from outside with men from outside. Between the latter and those who up to that moment had been components of the army, a controversy had to take place, the Germans disputing their positions to the Illyrians. For the permanence of the Empire, such a controversy had to be of other importance than the rivalry of nations that were integral parts of it, acting, therefore, as subjects.

The evolution of the events that we have just outlined was crowned outside the chronological limits traced. However, the beginnings go back to the times of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, when, in addition to the Jacians, also the Quraks and Marcomans were forced to supply the Empire with men for the army. From the border tribes of the Danube and the Rhine. Caracalla formed a personal guard, called "lions". The troop was formed by enlistment, forced mobilization of prisoners and purchase. And here is an innovation out of the ordinary: the "lions" could reach the rank of non-commissioned officer or "lower rank of officer". Also Maximinus, who had Gothic blood in his veins, made use of Germanic horsemen, prisoners or mercenaries that he had brought back from his expedition to the Rhine. They made use of their blind and reckless bravery to begin the combat, for all dangerous enterprises. Even the adversaries of Maximinus, Pupienus and Balbinus, emperors invested by the Senate, had obtained a Germanic personal guard, which was to serve as a counterweight against the Praetorian rebels. For the first time, therefore, Germans and Illyrians faced each other.

From the middle of the century onwards, the participation of German forces was steadily increasing. It was no longer limited to isolated parts of troops, but was becoming an inexhaustible stream. The great inscription of the Sasanian Sapor I, on the rock

of Naksch-i Rustem in Persia, brought the surprise that Gordian III had undertaken his expedition against the Persians with a levy of "Gothic and Germanic tribes". The Gallic Empire of Postumus was supported by Frankish auxiliary troops; in the coinage of one of his successors, the effigy of Germania appears for the first time. Claudius radiated the Germans defeated by him, but he also integrated them in his army. Aurelian followed him: Vandal units were traced back to him, and Goths were recruited to carry out the planned expedition against the Persians.

Then the disadvantages of the innovation began to manifest themselves. After the death of Aurelian, the recruits, plundering, dispersed in Asia Minor and had to be tamed. From then on it was decided to distribute Germanic contingents of fifty or sixty soldiers among the existing units, in order to show, without being visible, that Rome was supported by foreign forces. Nevertheless, the imminent outcome between Illyrians and Germans was inevitable. Claudius and Aurelian, by the very fact of accepting Germans, had prepared the way for the adversary of their own nationality. Another Illyrian, Constantine, led him to success.

Virtus Illyrici, proclaimed the coins still under the empires of Aurelian and Galerius. At the time of both emperors, Illyrian valor had conquered the East. An orator of that time was able to equate Pannonia with the past glory of Italy. "To whom can it be doubted that in the many centuries that the vigor of Pannonia has been attached to the name of Rome, Italy has remained the mistress of the world by the antiquity of her glory, and Pannonia has become mistress of the world by her warlike expertise?" The same orator exclaims, addressing the Illyrian emperor, "You were not born and grew up in a part of the globe devoted to tranquility and corrupted by the quayside life, but in the provinces, educated to become endlessly accustomed to fatigues and endurance by an adversary repeatedly vanquished, a frontier

people eternally quarrelled over by arms. It is that you have women who are stronger than men elsewhere!" At the moment of a seemingly undisputed glory, it happened the other way around. In the battle on the Milvian Bridge, a decisive combat with consequences like few others, not only a Christian emperor defeated the representatives of paganism, but also the Gallo-German army reached a position of supremacy within the Empire. The inscription *Virtus Illyrici* on the coins was replaced by *Virtus exercitus Gallicani*.

The victorious Rhine army had already acquired Germanic characteristics. The cornice of the Arch of Constantine at that time bears the customary costume of the Gallo-German border region. And once again a new world was imposed. Germanic shield ornaments, symbols and runes were introduced, as well as the helmet with brooches that the Iranians and the Germans had in common. Naturalized words of Germanic origin also began to infiltrate the common language of Vulgar Latin, spoken by the army. At the same time, the Germans reached higher positions in the army. Even earlier, a man with Gothic blood in his veins - Maximinus - had occupied the throne of Rome. He was reportedly the first to accommodate the concept of Germanic proselytism, through the recognition of the emperor by the army and the consequent pledge of loyalty to him.

IV

The military history of the 3rd century is characterized by the fact that the frontier armies began to play an independent role. But the current produced the counter-current. The same circumstances that had brought about independence also created the antidote: a recentralization.

When Severus Alexander concentrated his contingents to take them against the first Sassanid, the legions of the Danube

constituted his nucleus. In the warlike theater of Mesopotamia they fought worthy of their glory. But the bloody combats and the rigorous climate caused numerous casualties. Therefore, the mood of the Illyrian troops was depressed. The lack of success was attributed to the emperor and his indecision. In addition, the spread of the news that the Germanic neighbor had crossed the Danube border, they demanded repatriation. They believed that the Germanic danger was worse than any threat from the Persians; they referred to the predicament in which the country found itself and to their relatives killed by the enemy. Detention with the barracks and local recruiting areas made it seem to these men that their own interests were more important than an evenly directed imperial policy.

Severus Alexander fell, victim of the indignation of his Pannonian recruits. With Maximinus Thracianus a Danubian ascended the throne, with Decius, the first Illyrian. Likewise, thereafter, the Danubian legions from time to time postulated their pretenders to the throne. The controversy between the frontier army and the central power lasted, although the last two anti-Caesars had succumbed to the strategic art of Gallienus.

Outside the Illyrian regions, too, the dangers of a regionally determined attitude became apparent. Following the catastrophe of Valerian, the East began to withdraw from the power of the Empire. Palmyra soon became a champion in the struggle against the Sassanids and ended up exercising effective power in the eastern provinces. Palmyrene, Syrian and Osroenan sharpshooters fought under indigenous banners. Almost simultaneously, the third among the great frontier armies also began to emancipate.

Valerian owes his power, above all, to Germanic and Rhaetian troops. For the first time, the army, composed of Celts and inhabitants of the upper Germania, and the Pannonian-Messian army clashed in the struggle for dominance. It did not come to a bloody conflict, as the Pannonians abandoned their

candidate and handed him over to death. Likewise, the Rhenish army refrained in the wake of Valerian's catastrophe from supporting Gallienus, the latter's son. As soon as the latter had run towards the Danube, Postumus' fate fell to him; thus a Gallic anti-imperium was founded.

Then, tendencies towards the constitution of regional powers manifested themselves everywhere, and these were based on the regional army. Hand in hand with this process was the new regional order of the *annona militaris*, the pay and supply of the army. Like the command of the army, this was subject to local commanders. The fact of being able to dispose of economic goods placed the pretenders in a position to act as such and to emancipate themselves.

Gallienus, against whom the aspirations were directed, tried to achieve it with alternative expedients. On the occasion of his expedition against the Danubian army's predecessor, the most recently promoted quintas formed into independent divisions followed the British Rhenish legions. The uprising crushed, Gallienus took the same divisions - to use a Roman term: vexillations - of the Pannonian and Messianic legions. Every two vexillations, under unipersonal command, were equal to one legion. Thus it happened, then, that a mobile army consisting of such vexillations began to gather around the emperor. The reserves were variable, but the fact that such an army remained together and was available was of decisive importance.

The longer the vexillation remained away from the original troop, the more it differed from it in its mentality. Their interests were identified with those of the emperor, and their proselytizing provided a new homeland. The totality of the vexillations, the army integrated from them and always available, became a weapon to combat the rebelliousness of the frontier armies and the pretenders postulated by them. Galieno realized the possibilities thus offered. In official festivities or when minting his coins he extolled the loyalty of the new army,

in which the vexillations of the Rhenish and Danube legions were represented in the foreground.

In addition to the frontier armies there was now an imperial field army. It was not based in any barracks-base, but always formed part of the sovereign's retinue. Coming from Germanic and Celtic, Illyrian and Thracian units, these vexillations differed in origin. He welcomed men belonging to the most diverse nationalities. However, it was precisely this fact that compensated for the fact that, in the frontier armies, certain ethnic elements were in the forefront. A universal power found its appropriate expression in the integration of the army.

Incidentally, there were also disadvantages in integrating the new field army. There were complaints that the frontier was left uncovered, while the troops appeared where no one had sent for them and lived exposed to the softening and disintegrating influence of urban life. But these complaints were justified only up to a point.

Under Gallienus, the uninterrupted military expeditions kept the field army trained. In addition to this, the separation of the vexillations from the main troop was increasingly bridging and leveling the existing differences between the tribes. In a process of increasing amalgamation, the ideal unity of the Empire, which at that time showed separatist tendencies, began to express itself.

Simultaneously with the field army had been created the Moorish and Dalmatian cavalry corps, which were also always available; they were even more agile and, like those vexillations, were an integral part of the imperial retinue. They too were recruited from various nations. However, the supra-tribal principle asserted itself again, in the union between Africans and Illyrians. The unity of the Empire and the unity of the army, previously subordinated to the hegemony of the Italic nationality, then displaced by the rivalry between Illyrians and Orientals, Africans and Germans, regained their former importance.

The supra-tribal integration did not mean agglomeration of any mixture of peoples in the field army. This army was recruited from the most warlike layers of the population. Moreover, ignoring the Africans, the Rhine and Danube tribes - Illyrians and Thracians, and Celts and Germans - constituted the core. They were available as a depleted reserve, and the troops, from which they were integrated, sustained and reintegrated the Empire when it was about to crumble.

Gallienus was not allowed to live long enough to see unity achieved. On the other hand, his successors: Claudius, Aurelius and Probus succeeded vigorously, in less than three lustrums, in restoring firmness to that loosened conglomerate. Not the frontier armies but the creation of Gallienus, the field army, was their instrument. That army, from whose ranks the sovereigns themselves had risen, repulsed the Germans by driving them back to the Rhine and the Danube: and brought Palmyra and the countries of the Gallic Empire back under Roman jurisdiction.

V

Formerly, the Roman army was made up of the general mobilization of citizens and peasants. Only the crisis of the second century B.C. brought about a change. The general compulsory service continued to exist in name but in fact the legions formed on the basis of citizens' levy were becoming a long-term professional army, of proletarian origin. Rome and Italy continued to provide the human material, partially or totally. But from the beginning of the second Christian century, the provinces came to replace the metropolis. At first it was only those in an advanced stage of Romanization. The rise of the Severi, however, brought a further change. The adoption of urban civilization by a province was no longer a source of pride; a strong, barbaric ethnic vigor determined the criterion. Only by

relying on this source of vigor was it possible to cope with the tasks of defending the Empire, the demands of which had increased enormously. Of course, it was not possible at that time to dispense with the use of subject nations, which at that time did not yet occupy highly respected positions within the Empire, to join the army. Not only within the army, but also within the Empire they came to assume an importance they had not had before. And it did not take long for them to raise their own demands.

To the continuous frontier wars were added the fights of the pretenders in the interior. Both factors resulted in a notable increase of the military contingent. It was still a professional army, but the numerical increase and the replacements, integrated more and more of barbarians, brought the danger of its degeneration in mere army of masses. Only the establishment of the differentiation between frontier army and field army succeeded in averting this danger. From the mass of farmer-soldiers settled in their camps, in increasing numbers, a new professional army arose, whose decisive weapon, besides the vexillations, was constituted by the mounted units.

Even in the present time there is a tendency towards the use of professional armies numerically reduced, but well armed and of high quality. These are certainly not identical but fundamentally similar causes that are decisive, both today and in the Rome of those times.

The militia and the idea of the national state in the 19th and 20th centuries constitute essentially homogeneous elements. Since the revolution and the wars of emancipation, the postulate of general compulsory military service has been based on them, and from there, the creation of modern mass armies. Still in both world wars, a few powers insisted on conducting combat mainly by means of militia conscripts. The consequence was a profound depletion of both ethnic and defensive strength. Even without defeat, these states are not in a position today to afford the

luxury of a third war. Only the number of lives lost and their influence on the population index would exclude the mere possibility.

The experiences won by Rome were repeated: imperial policy cannot be made with an army composed of militiamen and peasants. And yet today we live in an era as determined by such politics as there has hardly ever been before. Correspondingly, not only the militia, but also the nation state on which the latter is based, is undergoing a crisis. The nation states have not simply disappeared, but - especially in the aftermath of World War II - have been replaced by large conglomerates of states. These do not consist of a single ethnic element, but are aggregates of peoples united by a common form of government and a common political ideology. In most cases, a collectivity is headed by a predominant nation. In this they resemble the Roman Empire, and the analogy also consists in the fact that modern empires, like their ancient predecessor, make use of annexed peoples for military purposes.

Military principles that necessarily had to be derived from this had already arisen before, in the colonial armies. With few modifications, they can be applied to the new conditions.

First of all, the individual character of nations must be taken into account. Their equipment and direction is a product of this individual character. The national vigor of others is exploited, but without relying solely and exclusively on it. For this would mean entrusting decisions concerning the Empire and the sovereign nation to an annexed or even subject nation. Therefore it is advisable to integrate the nucleus of the army of such a sovereign nation providing it, if possible, with special weapons: Where it is a question of a numerically weak sovereign nation, where it is not enough to integrate any nucleus of army or none that is worthwhile, it is necessary to recruit the remaining contingents of different annexed or subject nations. These contingents must be limited; they must be distributed in a

weighted and balanced manner and possibly instigate one against the other to keep them in check.

Armies recruited to a limited extent from annexed or subject nations and armed according to their nature constitute a specialized professional army. Also the nucleus of the recruited army of the sovereign nation must evolve in an analogous sense, especially where it is an army provided with high quality weapons. No imperial state, and above all, no state organized in a capitalist manner, however rich and powerful it may be, can still afford to maintain a continuous supply of a general levy armed and trained in accordance with the highest standards of the respective epoch. For it will hardly be able to muster the necessary means without permanently damaging its national economy.

From the middle of the first century, the organization of large mounted units forced Rome to impart further specialization to its professional army. Not only did the contingent increase but also the cost per soldier. Cavalry has always been an expensive troop. It requires longer and more painstaking training than all other weapons. Soldier or mount losses are more difficult to replace. Horses are especially predisposed to succumb to epidemics and fatigue. Violent attacks and the corresponding losses caused difficulties in replacement and reinforcement. In addition, the use of cavalry, especially in close formation, is limited from the beginning to suitable terrain. Infantry is capable of fighting in the highlands as well as in the swamp; on the other hand, the battlefield has to be reconnoitered to see if it is suitable for mounted combat and its use has to be carefully examined before a cavalry unit can be thrown into the charge. All these limitations indicate that a general will make use of such a weapon only if success is more or less assured.

In short: Rome had to tread lightly with its mounted troops. Of course, it was conceivable to compensate the performance of its own cavalry by better armament, training, discipline and

superior command. It was possible as long as the economic resources were able to bear the resulting burdens. However, precisely in this aspect, the possibilities were not unlimited. The increase in military expenditures in turn increased the tax burden to intolerable limits. With the last economic reserves exhausted, the Empire was forced to reduce either the quality or the demands of the army and the cavalry.

If the transformation of infantry into cavalry had contributed to the increase in military expenditures, in the same century, the sharp increase in effective demands, pay increases and donations, further construction of frontier fortifications and the costs of recruiting foreign mercenaries were added to these in the same century. If the provisioning of veterans is included, the army represented the highest item of expenditure in the budget. Everything else: games and food distribution, distribution of money, architectural works, emoluments for the growing bureaucracy, and even the expenses incurred by the imperial court, followed at a great distance.

All the voices of the time agree on the ruthlessness of the tax burden and the fact that the army was the main burden. Everything was aimed at satisfying military demands. Such a decisive measure as Diocletian's maximum price tariff had been taken in order to prevent price increases to the armies in transit. In order to secure the receipts of taxes, it had been proceeded from time before to bind to land and profession the elements engaged in public or private latifundia. On the other hand, the imminent transformation of the economic system into a new system of exchange of species, forced to conserve as much as possible of the urban economy on which the state economy was based. The difficulties that Rome had in its last period in organizing a valuable and highly specialized army, are multiplied a hundredfold in the case of modern armies.

Modern technology has accelerated the development of weapons, ammunition and armaments to such an extent that

most of them are in danger of becoming obsolete from the outset. It would then be logical to demand a rearmament, without this meaning an effective and lasting guarantee against a repetition of the same setback. In the case of an army of citizens, a series of rearmaments to keep up with the state of the art would entail an unsustainable outlay even for a prosperous state.

The training of a modern people's army with modern weapons and armaments poses new problems. Such training cannot be limited to the handling and maintenance of weapons. It must guarantee success in combat; it must be of a sufficiently high quality to put the army in a position to carry out rapid and decisive operations. A particularly high degree of suitability would have to be demanded of the warlords. All this would require such long periods of training that in the long run they would be economically unsustainable in the case of a popular army.

These reasons also make it necessary to insist on the formation of a numerically reduced army with military service as a profession. Such an army has the advantage, if compared to the popular army, of representing an economically sustainable, but always high burden. It makes possible a more careful training and an armament not easy from the technical point of view, but easier to keep up to date than that of the mass army. Greater ease of entry into action and greater maneuverability represent advantages to be taken into account in addition to the above. Fundamentally, the professional army is equivalent to the attempt to replace the mass by a higher quality.

In conclusion, the comparisons between today and in the past refer to strategy and tactics. Here again is the fundamental difference between the two forms of army. To the popular and mass army corresponds, by its very essence, mass combat. The strategy reaches its culminating point in the postulate of the annihilation through battle of the bulk of the enemy's military potential. The battle must be provoked and obtained by force if

necessary, in exchange for numerous losses of one's own potential. According to the doctrine of Clausewitz and Foch, only the accumulation of potential in a decisive place guarantees success; and he who uses the mass thoughtlessly, without regard to bloodshed, is the winner.

It has already been said how expensive this type of strategy was for the ethnic potential. In spite of this, Foch formulates his results by saying that there is no strategy but tactical success, that is to say that the victorious battle is everything. To the brutal fact of the mass army corresponded, in doctrine and manipulation, an equally brutal leader.

With the motto "Cannae" * a myth has been created of the annihilating battle in which Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Moltke confronted each other. That "Cannae" was an erroneous interpretation of Schlieffen, one of the greatest and, nevertheless, most fortunate, known to the history of military theories. Cannae was not a battle of masses, but, in its purest form, the test of a small but high-quality professional army against a popular and mass army, of a considered strategy that economized its forces against the impetuosity that tries to achieve the decision by force without considering the losses.

It is high time that we demolish the idol of a whole school. A battle of Antiquity cannot be contemplated in abstract isolation, but only in its historical connection.

In Carthage, it was not so much the strength of the attack that was cultivated as maneuverability; it was a matter of finding the weak points of an adversary and then taking advantage of them. The combination considered was aspired to: it was hoped to defeat even the most powerful, luring him into an ambush or setting traps for him. The aim was to achieve the maximum effect with a minimum use of force. In this, Hannibal proved to be a typical son of his people. He knew how to appeal to the deeply rooted instincts of the Roman masses and their strategists, namely the predilection for frontal attack and ruthless

annihilation of the adversary, thus trapping them in their own net. He counted on the violent Roman assault thus sinking under its own weight.

Napoleon considered acting according to circumstances as the ultimate conclusion of strategic wisdom. For Hannibal, "Cannae" was linked to unique circumstances of its kind; it was unrepeatable and, indeed, the adversary never tried anything like it again. Already on the shores of Lake Trasimeno, Hannibal had set a trap for the adversary, but the battle was arranged differently, and at Zama, a masterpiece according to the Khalan, the general again revealed another aspect of his strategy. Very recently, however, "Cannae" has become a general recipe. But not even the conquerors of Tannenberg have achieved a repetition.

For without an enemy that guarantees a number of errors, a true "Cannae" is impossible. Such an enemy would have to shorten his front, deepen his wing, thus condemning the bulk of his fighters to inactivity. Hannibal knew the Romans and had an accurate judgment about his general Varro. But what was the probability that also in the future every projected "Cannae" would find his Varro? Add to this the fact that "Cannae" means secrecy and surprise. How could they be presupposed, when the general recipe has been publicly discussed and its effects extolled for years!

For Antiquity, "Cannae" meant that popular recruitment had gone out of fashion and that the era of the professional army had begun. The Roman army, composed of citizens and peasants, never recovered from the blow dealt by Hannibal. It did not suddenly disappear. But already the battle of Zama was finished by the Numidian cavalry, not by the legions. From then on, it is the victories of the cavalry that mark the phases of Roman military history. In the battle of Carra, in 53 B.C., the heavy infantry of Crassus succumbed to the Parthian mounted army, which, from then on, remained invincible. Munda, the last battle

of Caesar, was won by the Moorish cavalry of the Bogud. Likewise, it was the Moors who in the battle of Mursa, in 260, drove off the battle-hardened Pannonian and Messianic legions, and in the second battle of Mursa, in 351, the Clibarrians of Constantius brought about the victory over Magentius and his semi-German army. Finally, the battle of Adrianople was decided by a single attack of Gothic and Alan cavalry.

Here is yet another truth, confirmed by the two world wars: morale in the People's Army drops almost as soon as it enters combat. Already to the reservists, and much more so to replacements lacking training and preparation, the soldier's spirit, proper to a troop well trained for a considerable period of time, is lacking. Under strong and prolonged stresses, the sense of duty and the conduct of a troop filled with old fifth-years and reservists soon diminishes.

Armies of this kind require the use of well-trained strategists for other purposes than the command of troops. Again it is necessary to resort to the replacement. Then it is necessary to compensate the lack of training with the effectiveness of the material. However, battles based on material accumulation cost the troops their best elements. Having lost its best soldiers, the command then has to rely increasingly on ineffective replacement. Even the supply of materiel is counterproductive. It is true that high-quality weapons and equipment produce a better effect, but only if they are in the hands of trained military units. Soldiers who have undergone a short period of poor training do not know how to effectively use weapons whose employment requires high strategic performance and application. Equipment is irresponsibly wasted and damaged, falls into enemy hands or is otherwise lost. The consequences are loss of confidence and a further drop in morale.

Finally, the influence of political agitation should not be forgotten. The members of the people's army, sub-chiefs and leaders of the replacements - and, in general, those who have

become soldiers by chance and not by profession or inclination - bring from political life slogans, ideologies and, sometimes, an independent way of thinking. Their influence increases wherever there are elements bent on bringing about disintegration by propaganda and cell formation. Then it happens that a germ of chaos penetrates into the heart of the army, undermining its usefulness.

These processes are not limited to armies of the modern era. The crises of the Roman citizen army show essentially the same pattern. Military service rendered with indifference, especially in cases of long duration or losses, deterioration of military conduct and performance, defective and inappropriate training for the requirements of the case, waste and squandering of materials, decrease of confidence in the leaders, effects of political turmoil, were features that also existed at that time. Faced with the demands of imperial policy, of warlike and worn-out peoples who had to be imposed, and of their equestrian style of combat, the army recruited from citizens and peasants proved inadequate. Long-lasting wars led to extensive processes of disintegration within the army; it became necessary to think of a remedy. Rome chose the path of the professional army, and so will the evolution of tomorrow's events.

Professional armies lack what must necessarily undermine the morale of a popular army. Consisting of volunteers, military service, far from being for them an imposed obligation, constitutes the content of their lives. They are products of a long and meticulous training, they know how to use their highly specialized weapons effectively and are under a select and well-prepared command for their tasks. Their morale is much less prone to weakening than that of mass armies, as has been proven by experience.

However, Rome provides us with an example not only for the advantages, but also for the disadvantages. Its danger lies in the fact that it tends to form a world apart.

Already by impulse of self-preservation, such an army has to isolate itself from phenomena that tend to disintegrate its morale. A professional army without caste honor and esprit de corps is inconceivable. It tends to consider itself as a closed entity, as a State within the State. The renunciation by the majority of a people of military service can lead to the mass and the State becoming the dominant object of a professional army. It was not warlords of politically convulsed masses, like the great popular tribunes in the last third of the second century B.C.E., who took the reins of dominion, but Romans backed by the professional army. Even in the century of the emperor-soldiers, the phenomenon of the army deciding on the ascension of emperors to the throne was repeated.

Also, ideologically speaking, the transition from the mass army to the professional army means a shift of the center of gravity. Collective revolt and enthusiasm are emotions peculiar to the mass army. They can spread like wildfire, but their vigor is rarely maintained. Quantity comes to replace quality, contrary to what determines the attitude of the professional army. Ideals usually associated with the warrior's profession - courage, enthusiasm, spirit of sacrifice, comradeship - are limited to a fixed and reduced group. They become the privilege of a stratum and, finally, of a caste. In front of it, here is the rest of the people: masses exclusively included in the industrial mobilization. There is no longer recourse to ideal concepts to guarantee maximum performance: coercion prevails.

Such coercion can be exercised by psychological means, and is then called propaganda. Admonitory speeches and appeals have always existed. They summed up the feelings latent in every heart and which required only a spark to burst into flame. Propaganda, on the other hand, is designed to help ideas take hold that are not in the air waiting to be awakened. It artificially creates opinions which in the first instance suit the aims of whatever government it may be, but which cannot easily find a

place in the hearts of the masses. To plant them in a soil that will produce the strange plant reluctantly, it requires an irremissible perseverance and tenacity in the pursuit of its goal. Propaganda does not presuppose a people as an organism but as a conglomerate of individuals, however emphatically it may claim otherwise. To apply it to rootless individuals, deprived of their instincts, is tantamount to coercion disguised only in the form of persuasion.

Even more effective is physical coercion. By mobilization of the last man, also of women and children, the war remains total, even where the professional army commands. What shaped the later form of armies composed of masses of citizens increases under industrial mass mobilization.

For once the possibility of winning the war had depended on numerical superiority and technical equipment; now it came to depend on strategy, solely and exclusively. The soldier of the citizens' army could live convinced that he was doing his military service for the fatherland, for his home. In the new army, on the other hand, he was primarily fulfilling his profession, and the armaments worker, involved in the process of industrial mobilization, was obliged to fulfill the technical requirements necessary to achieve this purpose. This means that those ideal incentives that gave military existence a more or less radiant aura disappeared. Temporarily, the enthusiasm of an army of citizens for combat or death can be awakened, but when it comes to working on the assembly line of war production, all nimbus tends to disappear. State coercion makes itself felt in its merciless reality.

At first glance, this seems to apply only to times of war. But even in times of peace, decisive measures must be taken to ensure the successful outcome of a war. This applies not only to the organization and training of the professional army, but above all to its armament. First and foremost, the renewal of weapons and their further development must continue to be carried out in

an impeccable manner. But also the form and phases of industrial mobilization, the planning of its organization, the securing of the supply of raw materials, the provision of the necessary machines and manufacturing drawings, even the tolerances, have to be constantly checked and perfected. As the preparation for war increases, even before it breaks out, coercion, primarily a symptom of the state of war, is spreading to the peacetime economy.

The coercive State assigns to the individual the place of work and forces him to remain there even if it does not suit him. It tries to get the maximum work output from each individual and to avoid any loss, whether of production or of personnel. To the extent that everyone is bound to a profession or a place of work by legal and, if necessary, physical coercion, it is superfluous to condition him by propaganda. Persuasion, at least according to form, is replaced by threats of punishment. The work ethic, which the propaganda would insist on pointing out, is replaced by coercion, the citizen by the slave of the State.

Likewise, the character of the functionary class is modified. In a coercive State, its size and importance increase. However, officials formerly in charge of management, planning and execution become mere supervisory bodies of the labor coercion exercised by the State. As it falls to them to supervise the perfect functioning of the prescribed production process, they, in turn, are supervised by others. As they punish the backward who do not comply with the required performance, they are also under threat of punishment, in case they do not succeed in keeping the links of the chain that is the slave-state or ant-state in tireless movement.

The late Roman state fits this description. Economic coercion as a characteristic had already manifested itself in it. The consequences had been that colonists were tied to the land and forced corporations were formed. Taxes in kind, regarded as especially oppressive, were based on Diocletian's military

demands; the urban corporations were obliged to erect the fences of the Eternal City in accordance with Aurelian's instructions. Under the pressure of the demands placed on the popular treasury by the continuous wars on the frontiers and in the interior, it became necessary to adopt an increasingly rigorous system of rationing in all respects. Only in this way was it possible to preserve something of the old economic structure that was disappearing. The beginnings of the coercive system go back to ancient times; all the symptoms exist as early as the nth century, and in Egypt they have even earlier origins. Diocletian gave solid and definitive form, in this as in other aspects, to what had begun before.

Likewise, other forms, familiar from current events, had their parallels. State propaganda with all its concomitant manifestations emerged early. Horace had based the moral of his Roman odes on the punditry of the magistrates. This was later replaced by material commitment. In the offices that the chiefs addressed to the officials, their punditry was never appealed to, but they were always threatened with imprisonment, or else the consequences of a possible omission were indicated. Each chief was responsible for his subordinates and each subordinate was responsible to his chief with his property, and if necessary, with his life itself.

*In Latin in the original. Canas city of Apolia, famous for Hannibal's victory over the Romans in August 216 B.C. It was one of the most important, decisive and bloody battles in ancient history. (*N. of the R. T.*)

VI

A coherent movement had taken hold of the ecumen. It was based on the horse and cavalry. Even more: catafractas and clibanarios with heavy armor became the decisive weapon for the outcome of a battle. The arrival of a new equestrian and knightly style was being heralded as a foretaste of the Middle Ages.

The Roman Empire was surrounded by neighbors that had figured little in history, standing, both literally and figuratively, on the fringes of the ancient world. However, the moment the new style of equestrian combat was adopted and found application in warfare, the nations on the fringe gained a momentum hitherto unknown in them. They became dangerous enemies whose attacks shook the foundations of the Empire. Rome had to decide to abandon the strategy employed until then and to learn from the adversary.

With all this, the movement did not stop. That military revolution had gone hand in hand with another in all parts of the ancient world. As has already been said, little known tribes, until then, had appeared as bearers of that revolution and had begun to assert their historical claims. Not only outside the Empire, but also in its own territory, new peoples and races emerged, beginning to replace the disappearing Italic ethnic element in command.

The first place among them was occupied by the Illyrians and the tribes of the eastern border with Syria. Here Semites, there an Indo-Germanic tribe, and behind them, Arabs and Germans waiting for their inheritance. Both groups fought for supremacy in the army and in the Empire. Later we shall see that in this controversy there were other issues more at stake. In vying for supremacy, both fought for the spiritual heritage of Rome.

CHAPTER VI

EASTERN EMPERORS

I

The adoption, by free selection, of the son and heir, played a special role in the Roman ideology. According to it, what was born naturally was nothing more than chance, subject to the whim of a fickle deity. On the other hand, it was considered much more advantageous to be able to choose according to one's own will, one's own criteria. In the former way, the natural heirs were often unsuitable; on the other hand, it was possible, according to the latter system, to join the best and most intelligent. Adoption, long practiced in a private sphere, gained its greatest importance in the succession to the imperial throne.

To begin with, Trajan was elected son and successor to the throne of Nerva. It was believed that it was not the mere kinship but the intrinsic value of both, that is, of the chosen and the one who chose, that constituted the bond of union; that the common commitment to their task, the common vocation to the leadership of the State was what united father and son; that normally the Empire was transmitted from generation to generation within a single family; instead, through adoption, free selection was guaranteed and, therefore, the recovery of the lost freedom.

"Not in the bedchamber," so exclaims Pliny the Younger, addressing Trajan, "but in the sanctuary; not in the bridal bed, but in the bed of Jupiter Supreme, that your adoption has taken

place, not to bring about our slavery, but our freedom, salvation and security." Jupiter, far removed from anything derived from the merely natural, from the merely private, guarantor of the public life of Rome, presided over the act by which the best was elected future sovereign for the good of the State.

Let us not ask what were the secret causes of the imperial adoptionist policy; perhaps it may have been done out of a lack of male descendants. Be that as it may, the principle was proclaimed and celebrated; a whole century seemed to profess it.

Adoption in this form was the fruit of masculine reasoning; it was a profession of faith in intellectual predominance. In contrast, there was another criterion that appealed to natural relationships. According to him, neither the spiritual succession - in work and task - nor the affinity between father and son was decisive, but only and exclusively the bond of consanguinity between the son and the mother who had given him being. Both feel united by being flesh of the same flesh. It is a feminine vision of the world that is thus externalized.

Each of these criteria had its antecedents. Roman adoption coexisted with that Etruscan "matriarchal right", the choice of the son with that union of consanguinity that made the Etruscan designate himself son of his mother. Roman rule did not bring change either; the element foreign to its nature remained and spread where it would have been least expected. From the Flavian era onwards, a component that designated the mother's offspring appeared in the name of the senatorial nobility and can only be interpreted as a variation of the Etruscan custom. Finally, the opposite movement ended up being communicated to the Empire as well.

The first step was taken by a ruler one would have least expected. Marcus Aurelius appointed his own son as successor to the throne. Already with this he posed an enigma for his time. To date, no one had ever so immediately represented the principles of succession to the throne by adoption, no one had

ever made them so much his own or emulated them to such an extreme. It was said that Marcus Aurelius' paternal love had not been blinded, far from it, by weaknesses of character; that only the mother's insistence had motivated the appointment of Commodus as successor to the throne. However, this interpretation is mistaken. The imperial father placed his son in the position he was to occupy from then on, underlining his decision by significant acts. When Marcus Aurelius died, Commodus had already been coadjutor emperor for three years. He smoothly took charge of the succession to the throne.

"My father preferred to call me companion instead of son; for he considered the latter link as merely physical; the former, as communion in action and attitude", Commodus seems to have stated on the occasion of his public presentation. Had Marcus Aurelius been of the opinion that in this case the natural succession coincided with the succession of the best? Had it been for this reason that he opted for the succession of the son as a natural solution? In any case, the principle of adoption was interrupted, giving way to natural succession. But in deciding to give to nature what seemed to correspond to it, the way was opened for it in other aspects as well. Like the waters of a contained current, other forces were unleashed which, alien to the spirit of antiquity, also appealed to nature and its instincts, to primitive forms of life in general.

It was Commodus himself in whom such phenomena were manifested. However we judge his actions, whether we try to understand them or condemn them, there is no doubt that in him a new type of man has arisen, or, rather, that in him ancient and primitive instincts have revived. Covered and buried under Antiquity, they came to the light of day: a typically Mediterranean character together with the half-forgotten forms of oriental sovereignty. In the century that witnessed the twilight of Antiquity, past worlds would re-emerge, to merge with it into a new era.

The effigy of Commodus says it all: bulging eyes with an elusive gaze, pointed chin and sybaritic mouth, reminiscent of an infant of the Habsburg dynasty or a portrait of El Greco. Late sprout, degenerate, proud' of the lineage of his ancestors, he considered himself the sole patron of all things.

The young ruler emphasized his imperial blood. He had not been brought from outside to occupy the throne, but the throne belonged to him by birthright. As he stepped into this world he was greeted by purple; daylight greeted both the newborn and the emperor. Through these veins ran imperial blood on three sides, and by the female ascendenica, Commodus was linked to the ancestors on the throne.

Giving birth, maternal womb, consanguineous bond and rank of maternal offspring are called the ideas evoked by this attitude. A physical, material vision predominated in everything. From this ideology derives the following: the pride that Commodus felt in his harmonious and well-groomed body. He used to bathe six or seven times a day; his beard and hair were of such a radiant blond that they were considered to be covered with golden dust. This was a period in which Roman art created ingenious examples of hair treatment in the portrait of Lucius Verus and Commodus himself, and in which Apuleius had written his beautiful eulogy of female hair. In all aspects a cult of the human body was beginning. Even more: the body with all its senses and instincts invaded the spirit, trying to take possession of it.

Commodus externalized the pleasure he found in the exhibition of the body in the ring and in the circus, in all the opportunities that were offered. It was whispered that the emperor had a harem in the palace: women and grooms of extraordinary beauty and in uncommon numbers. But Commodus was not afraid to show what he felt. He lived his life and lived it in a way that seemed to him worthy; indeed, worthy only of a sovereign.

During the triumphal parade, in the carriage, he turned to the groom who held the golden crown of Jupiter on his head. Commodus kissed him with his body thrown back; he did so repeatedly and in full view of all. If Zeus and Ganymede had served him as models in this respect, if the emperor drew this conclusion from the amalgamation of triumphant and god, it was not for that reason that the Roman public god was before his eyes. Jupiter Optimus Maximus was free from all connection with marriage and birth. He was also free from all the love affairs that another age and another world had bestowed upon him in generous measure: the Roman sense of dignity did not admit these variegated and voluptuous facets in the character of the Supreme God. On the other hand, for Commodus, that ancient and seductive image that allowed the celestial sovereign to live devoted to his senses, draining the chalice of pleasure to the dregs, reappeared before this virile and austere Roman god, before the representative of the principle of the State, blurred to the point of having become a mere idea.

And yet. Commodus took seriously what he considered religion. His behavior was fed from the same source as on that occasion when he seemed to profane the dignity of triumph. The emperor submitted to the cruel postulates of oriental mysteries and demanded the same of his co-religionists. And it was not mere fanaticism of an alien religiosity that manifested itself in this way. The ruler of the ancient East was close to the gods, and in spite of this, he had to humble himself before those same gods year after year as a penance. On these occasions, the exaltation of the majesty of a quasi-divine nature became the deepest humiliation. Commodus proceeded in this way when he wished to relive all the horrors of bloodthirsty perpetration; when he ordered to execute effectively what for others seemed to have only a figurative meaning.

Likewise, in the combats against wild beasts organized by Commodus, this behavior was manifested. In archery, his

marksmanship was unparalleled, and with a single shot he was able to kill the most dangerous beast. The master hunter was the confirmation of the Iranian king and hero of old; nor should we overlook the representations of lion or dragon slayers, corresponding to the dawn of the oriental era. Mithras, bullfighter, was emulated by all in the time of Commodus. In this picture are inserted the functions of the gladiators and the apotheosis of the victors of the arena; the adoration of Hercules and then the comparison with him were the climax and the logical ending.

The desire for self-transformation had always been an inherent characteristic of Commodus. One could see, for example, the emperor arriving at the theater wearing a white Chinese silk tunic, interwoven with golden threads and with sleeves cut in the Asian style. Or with his head adorned with a diadem of precious stones from India, wielding the scepter of the god Elermes. This looked like a disguise and yet it was something more. For to appear disguised as a god meant to externalize his veneration of that power. Commodus was preceded by the lion skin of Hercules and his mace, carried by servants, who then placed both objects on the golden throne, whether or not the emperor was present in the theater. The Hero whose insignia became the imperial one, had subjugated and pacified the globe by his performance. His imitator on the throne was designated "undefeated pacifier of the globe" and Roman Hercules.

The veneration of the great fighter and martyr existed already in the times of Commodus' predecessors. In the way in which he, as emperor, lived in emulation of Hercules, his model, it remained, however, a personal attitude of his. All the strange, primitive and new elements that came to light in the person of Commodus were again synthesized in traditional form. However, Hercules, before becoming the human martyr and hero, had taken his place in a pre-classical world. He could

never rid himself of the symptoms and uncertainty of that provenance, and it was precisely these that were revived in Commodus' performance. The exploits of Dactyloid, husband of the fifty Thespiades, have found their imitation in the orgies of the imperial palace; and likewise the servant of Omphale.

Roman historiography used to turn its attention to the death of great personalities. In the manner of death or in the last word, the unrepeatability of the one who was about to leave the scene was once again revealed. Contrary to the Greeks, who even in death emphasized the standardized and generic, Roman sights were set on the unique. Commodus died defeated by the powers that had determined his life; when they overcame him completely, they annihilated him. On the eve of the day on which the emperor planned to move to the gladiators' quarters, his favorite wife gave him a chalice of poison and the athlete with whom he was accustomed to wrestling ran over the weakened emperor, hanging him.

II

A mysterious destiny has guided the foundation of the dynasty of the Severi. It was more than chance that caused the meeting between the Roman knight L. Septimius Severus of the North African Leptis and Julia Domna, siren of priestly house. And whatever produced this union had to result in consequences.

From his beginnings, Septimius Severus was guided by astrology. Because of this inclination he was close to ignominious death and learned the way to the glorious future. When a "mathematician" predicted that he would become emperor, the man destined to become emperor began to look for a woman born under similar aspects. He found her in Julia

Domna, whose nickname already suggested the idea of command.

The Septimians of Leptis Magna were of knightly and partly senatorial rank. But their secular residence on the banks of the Sirte had left indelible traces, and these were manifested in Septimius Severus. This crafty and violent man, tireless, restless and implacable, choleric, but quiet, thrifty and greedy for money, was a typical product of the African soil. His depraved youth reminds one of St. Augustine, and his tendency to magic and practices to force the hand of the gods resembles the attitude that Apuleius was reproached for. Until the dawn of the imperial era the name of the city was engraved on coins in Phoenician letters; the Punic language, in general, was still in full use, both in inscriptions and in daily life. Septimius Severus spoke it fluently, in addition to Greek and Latin; however, despite his excellent training, until his very advanced age his voice articulation betrayed his African origin.

Septimius Severus remained conscious of this origin. After ascending the throne, he adorned his native city with sumptuous buildings. Carthage, Utica and Leptis were promoted to the status of colonies under Italic law. The tomb of the most illustrious Carthaginian, Hannibal, far away in Bithynian Libisa, was rebuilt all of marble by the emperor and the Punic language was allowed to be used in legal documents. Septimius' wife received goddess honors as Juno Celeste, goddess of the city of Carthage.

By marrying a native Syrian, the emperor returned to some extent to his origins. The man who came from the Semitic colonial city on the African coast joined the powerful priestly dynasty of the sun god at Emesa. The god had long been worshipped beyond the confines of the city; pilgrims from all parts of Syria and its neighboring countries flocked to him. Soon he had to set out to conquer Rome itself.

The faith in the unlimited power of the stars had caused the meeting of the sovereign couple; they were therefore represented on the coins as the sun and the moon, respectively. Even in this aspect, ancient forces were externalized in them. The stars, so it was taught, were masters of the universe and of eternity. They determined destiny, and men are subject to the trajectories traced by the celestial bodies.

Septimius Severus professed this faith throughout his life. The occult and secret in general exerted a powerful attraction on him, both in writings of magic and oracles, as well as in monuments of a gray past. Strange dreams and omens have accompanied him everywhere, and a contemporary managed to fill a book with them. Egypt, the land of wonders, became for Septimius an event: the royal cities, the Colossi of Memnon, the Serapeus and the tomb of Alexander. The Septizonium, adjacent to the southeast corner of the Palatine and the imperial palace, bore the effigies of the seven planetary gods who guided everything, and in its center the effigy of the sovereign. Likewise, inside the palace the stars were reproduced, but the sign corresponding to the birth and death of Septimius remained blurred, so that no one would know when it was his turn to die.

For that man, who believed in the stars and allowed himself to be guided by them on the path of his life, was wary lest this same faith should turn against his own person. Whoever asked a Chaldean about the nativity of the emperor was punished by death. Suspicion and distrust accompanied Septimius everywhere, and a secret fear weighed upon his actions. No one was sure of the imperial distrust; in the case of Plautiano, the all-powerful, a dream was enough for the emperor to believe the accusation. It has been spoken of a cavernous instinct of the African. It has been said that the idea of heaven was not accompanied by liberation, but by confinement and oppression, which weighed on man as an immutable law, transforming itself into oppression and anguish in the human soul of the individual.

Septimius' soul was filled with universal anguish, and he himself radiated terror and anguish. His enemies he pursued relentlessly. He knew neither generosity nor forgiveness; only the annihilation of the hated adversary could put an end to the emperor's suspicious fear. And even after that purpose was achieved, he used to violently attack the wife and child of the outlaw. In the face of these spheres of horror stood radiant that security which the stars promised him and which his visions repeatedly confirmed to him. In such a prediction was based the bond that united him with the wife that was chosen for him by the work and grace of destiny, an indissoluble bond.

If a marriage was celebrated under such an aspect, the feminine part necessarily gained weight and importance by this very fact; Julia wanted to be not only a wife, but also a mistress, as her name indicated. Her admirers called her a philosopher, and indeed, she was a cultured woman. She was fond of intellectual activities and of dealing with the philosophers and sophists of her time; and she made a point of showing off her intellectual knowledge during the hearings. To his group belonged Arria, to whom Diogenes Laertius intended to dedicate his life as a philosopher, to whom the admiration and adoration of Galen was directed. Also belonging to his group were Aelius, poet of Oppianus, and Gordianus, a poet himself before he ascended the imperial throne; then Ulpian, Papinianus and Paullus, the great jurisconsults of the time, as well as Philostratus, who at the initiative of the empress described the life of the miraculous Apollonius of Tyana. But this reveals the mentality of Julia.

Certainly, Septimius Severus and Julia had points of contact in that orientation towards the miraculous and occult. But the behavior of Severus before these spheres was more masculine and solid; his knowledge gave him power and security, and considering himself guided by an ulterior world was translated in him in activity, restlessness, thirst for revenge. The woman's

attitude also contained a desire for security. But she was much more gentle, self-sacrificing and in need of consolation; it is the "religious need" that appears in this form on the horizon of the history of religions.

There are times when religion seems to coincide with such a need. Faith is the daughter of longing, contrary to what determines the attitude of the person, but faith and doubt constitute a couple as inseparable as light and shadow. One motivates the other, and only in a religiously torn world are faith and longing for faith possible. Achilles and Alexander,* heroes of the Edda,** typical Romans of pure stock, have not known such sentiments; for them, the gods simply existed. They were immediate and natural forces, and even in Severus' behavior there was a reflection of them. On the other hand, Julia's determination reveals an awareness of her abjection and guilt, an awareness that seems to be ingrained in human existence.

Busts and coins reveal the impotent portrait of that woman, with a full and plump face, but with strong and well-defined contours; with a pronounced and aquiline nose, a massive chin dominated by a full and sensual mouth. Her beauty was said to be inferior only to her immorality. Nevertheless, the emperor tolerated her at his side, and great was the power she exercised over him. The needy turned to her, and indeed, she succeeded in obtaining from the emperor relief for their sufferings. Only the prefect of the guard Plautianus was a strong competitor for her husband's favor. But her son Caracalla brought about the fall of the favorite, acting in his mother's interest as well as his own.

On these foundations the rule of Septimius Severus was based: it was not long before he had to think about the future of his dynasty. For a time he feigned sympathy for the adoptive system, but the mask soon fell. The eldest son, Caracalla, became Caesar and successor; soon followed the appointment of the younger Geta, who at first had been excluded from succession to the throne. The imperial father boasted of leaving

the state, like Antoninus Pius, two heirs to the throne, with the difference that the former had annexed them to his dynasty by adoption, while he, Septimius, was handing Rome over to native sovereigns.

At the same time he tried to assure his own lineage the legitimacy it lacked, taking over the lineage of Commodus and elevating him, his "brother", to the category of a god. The profession of faith in favor of natural succession was underlined by the elevation of Julia to the rank of "Mother of Caesar". With that she was granted the ancient honorary title of the eastern harem, simultaneously with the appointment of Caracalla as heir to the throne.

Fear and distrust, thirst for revenge and cunning, astrology, as well as the preferential treatment of soldiers and the organization of a praetorian guard, all had only one basic motive in Septimius Severus: security. Towards it all his thoughts were oriented by all means, and, if necessary, also magical, he tried to obtain by force what refused to adjust spontaneously to his plans. To that faith in the stars and in the destiny that the woman had recommended to Septimius, blinding him to all his defects, to that security guaranteed by the gods, corresponded in the aspect of succession the decision in favor of the natural heirs.

A Syrian oracle had predicted to the emperor his future greatness, but without hiding from him that his dynasty would perish in a bloodbath. This father spared no means to ensure, at least, the future of his children. He bequeathed them a treasure that had no equal among the goods ever bequeathed to descendants. Julia, the mother of his children, was represented as a divine concord called to watch over the future concord of the children. A golden portrait of Fortuna, which accompanied the sovereign on his travels and which he used to place in his chambers, was reproduced so that each of the sons had a Fortuna of his own. It seemed as if this demonic man wanted to force everything to follow the path of his will.

Septemio's plans failed. His desires were broken precisely because of the forces on which they were based. Blood and kinship, taken materially and as magical coercion, produce a demonic force of their own kind. And the emperor gave free rein precisely to the occult forces of blood.

This father, inexorable towards others and deaf to every cry, always pleased his children in everything. Although he foresaw what was to come, he always limited himself to forgiveness and exhortation. He did so when he surprised Caracalla in an attack, in flagrante delicto, and likewise he proceeded in the dispute between the two sons. For Septimius was too attached and indulgent towards those of his blood; in his sons, on the other hand, having the same blood made them rise up against each other. What should have constituted bonds and guarantees, had risen in a sudden change overthrowing all barriers. The emperor status of both brothers, in which Septimius saw the support of his dynasty, had engendered a fratricidal hatred; a seemingly complete unity had produced the most deadly discord and hatred. It had already begun in his father's time and did not abate until Caracalla succeeded in eliminating the younger brother.

Geta, his mother's favorite son, had inherited the character of the Syrian and of the Syrian race in general: he was a lover of parties and amusements, of the pleasures of a pleasant life; moreover, he was pleasant and easy-going. He knew how to win sympathy more easily than his brother, of a more inhuman way of being; on the other hand, Geta was also more malleable, more effeminate, being in that way a precursor of the Heliagabalus and Severus Alexander, who grew up completely in the sphere of influence of their mother. It was therefore no coincidence that Geta succumbed to Caracalla, who lacked scruples and was cut from a more resistant cloth, much less that the deadly blow was dealt to the younger brother while he was in the mother's arms.

The character of Septimius Severus endured in Caracalla. He had inherited from the father the implacable rancor, and the

thirst for blood had turned in the son into cruelty, the cunning into malice and hypocrisy. Septimius had tried to lean on the army; Caracalla flattered the soldiers by showering them with gifts. He used to address the praetorians by calling them comrades, and in times of danger he was apt to call them his benefactors. He himself did not pretend to be more than a private soldier. He broke bread with them, and outdid them at work. The man in the street, who realized that the sovereign, in spite of his frail appearance, did not lag behind in any fatigue, took an enormous affection for him, and abundant cash donations ensured the maintenance of such an attitude.

In this emperor barbarism gained predominant force for the first time, becoming a model for one's own behavior. Caracalla appeared in public dressed in Germanic style and with a blond wig whose hair was knotted according to Germanic fashion. Germans and Scythians made up his personal guard, who professed unlimited loyalty to him. On the other hand, he did not attach much importance to jurisprudence, and was capable of calling a coward who played his role well in the forum. Culture and all delicate and elevated behavior seemed suspicious to him. The instincts of the lowly soldiery had taken hold of this emperor.

Already in the portrait of the cheeky young Caracalla, the round, bulging eyes and his impertinent nose catch the eye. In the bust of this man everything is united: crudeness in the abrupt movements, baseness in the forehead, cunning in his crafty look. It is understandable that Caracalla could rejoice at being called fierce by an oracle: the vulgar had become style. And yet this man dreamed of higher ideals: his model was the Macedonian who had once conquered the whole world. Alexandrian gestures run through his whole demeanor. They take the most varied forms and continue to glow fleetingly through his performances like wildfire, even when his incipient madness could hardly be denied.

During his stay in Macedonia, Caracalla consecrated to his idol statues whose heads represented half himself, half the Macedonian. He formed a phalanx whose commanders bore the names of Alexander's generals. The weapons and equipment of the world conqueror were appropriated by the latter, his successor. It was to be expected that such behavior would arouse scorn, especially in a city like Alexandria, which regarded mockery and derision as its special privilege, still fueled by the contrast between the fragile appearance of the emperor and the heroes Alexander and Achilles, whom he had chosen as idols. Just as the scorn was connected with the name of the great king, so was the revenge of the mocked man. Caracalla announced that he wished to integrate with the young men of Alexandria a phalanx worthy of the patron of the city, and then unleashed his bloody vengeance on the unsuspecting who had come to that end.

Just as on that occasion he had abused the name Augustus to make a bad move, so he did in another case. Under the pretext of marrying the daughter of the Parthian king, Caracalla had the Parthians who had come to the wedding put to the sword. Parthians and Romans, Caracalla had said on a previous occasion, had to be in solidarity, since their way of fighting and economic conditions indicated the need to complement each other; united under one scepter they were in a position to subjugate the entire globe. In the projected personal union, Alexander's idea of turning Macedonians and Persians into a new nation of supermen resurfaced. It resurfaced, then, in actualized form, and in the dreams of a madman. Therefore, one could hardly expect logical reasoning. The creator of the Antoninian Constitution, who granted the right of citizenship to all pilgrims, had imagined another kind of Alexander, a sovereign of the world giving participation in the Empire also to the defeated and subdued, that is, an Eastern Alexander.

Under Caracalla's empire, Julia's importance increased even more, if possible; there were periods when business was entirely in her hands. But the hand of the skull still weighed heavily on her mother herself. The latter, playing the role of Yocasta, had repeatedly tried to reconcile her children, who were mired in quarrels and grudges. When the idea arose of dividing the Empire between the two to put an end to the discord, she preferred that they split her in two rather than consent to it. It was then that the terrible thing happened; Geta, covered in blood, left her life in Julia's arms. But the savage fury of Caracalla forced his mother to hide her grief and to burst into laughter and joy.

It was believed to be known that this son did not shrink even from the worst. It is said that Julia, seeing herself desired by him, had exclaimed: "What pleases is permitted"; with these words she had mocked him and had spurred him on. Again, Julia played the role of Yocasta. With the difference that she experienced, with her eyes open and possessed by her demon, the same thing that a merciful destiny had hidden from the other until the hour of her death.

Caracalla met his death in a well-deserved manner. He was on a journey to offer a sacrifice to the god of his maternal ancestors. Just as he was relieving himself and the guard had withdrawn, he was struck by the avenging sword. His death, then, was as unseemly as his life had been.

* ALEXANDER: name by which Paris, son of Priam and Hecuba, the abductor of Helen, and thus the cause of the Trojan War, is also designated in the Iliad. (N. OF THE R.)

** EDDA: collection of Scandinavian mythical tales from the 12TH century. The first part begins with a cosmogony and speaks of Adam and Eve, Noah, Jupiter, Trojans, etc. (N. OF THE R.).

III

From the historical point of view, the dynasty of Septimius Severus had arisen from a union of Carthage with Eastern Syria. With the branch of the dynasty that ascended the throne with Heliogabalus, it was reduced to a closed group. Maesa, sister of Julia, had married her daughters to Syrian knights; for Septimius wished that branch not to reach the parity of its rank. In spite of this, Soaemia's husband went his way successfully. During the empire of Caracalla, at the beginning of the age of the splendor of the knights, the highest offices of the capital were in his hands. What he and his brother-in-law lacked in social rank was compensated by the reestablishment of the dynasty on metropolitan soil.

Emesa remained for Maesa and his descendants a homeland and intellectual center. Then, as today, one of the most marvelous cities in all Syria, it found in the veneration of the solar god the fulfillment of its existence. Julia had devoted herself to contemporary philosophy; Maesa and her people, on the other hand, were adherents of the god of their land, who was a strong and vehement god like all those of their race. Maesa had insisted that her two grandsons become solar priests, and Heliogabalus, while occupying the throne, considered himself a slave of his god.

That god was of Arabian origin, as was the priestly dynasty, as indicated by its name. Heliogabalus had a similar name, but posterity had simply imposed on him the name of his god. Although he never made use of it, this designation contained a right. All the aspirations of Heliogabalus were to serve his heavenly master, and he thought nothing less than to become master of Rome as well. For this reason, the emperor was not satisfied with having married him to the celestial goddess of Carthage: he had the stone of the Great Mother, the shields of

the Salios, the fire of the Vestal transferred to the temple of the new god.

At that time, Rome was celebrating unusual events. In Entesa there was in a sanctuary, adorned with gold and precious stones, the stone of the god, fallen from heaven. It was transferred to Rome, and Heliogabalus erected a sumptuous sanctuary for it. On the occasion of public celebrations, Heliogabalus, as priest, used to dance around the altars, accompanied by choruses of Syrian women, and their cymbals and drums. In the circle were senators and gentlemen, spectators of the exotic function, while holders of the most exalted offices acted as acolytes, wearing Syrian national costume, covered with white linen.

In front of the city gates was erected another shrine to the god emeseno. In the days of heatwave, the emperor took the sacred stone to summer. Six steeds of gleaming white pulled the vehicle, on which no mortal was allowed to ride, whose reins no one was allowed to grasp. These were placed around the sacred stone, since the god himself, it was believed, drove the vehicle. Heliogabalus preceded him, with his face turned backwards, so as never to turn his back to the god.

Heliogabalus' actions aroused the indignation of his contemporaries. The life to which he devoted himself seemed to be based on the basest instincts. There is little that was not attributed to him or believed him capable of. What seemed unequivocal, however, was in reality more complex and determined by strong tensions. In Heliogabalus' personality, a complex sybaritism meets the dedication and unconditionality of the mystic; marrullery, whims and fancies with religious fanaticism. His sensuality and his devotion to religion form a strange fabric.

Heliogabalus was not unaware of states of ecstasy. Also the projected self-castration, which constitutes such a peculiar contrast to his acts of debauchery, had arisen from religious motives. The imperial high priest had successively given his lord

wives from the most diverse spheres of the divine heaven, and likewise united himself to the most diverse women, separating himself from them afterwards. If among the divine wives was the palladion of the temple of Vesta, among the terrestrial wives was a vestal. God and emperor obeyed the same law and, therefore, the latter may have found in the marriage of the priest with a vestal the justification for his actions.

Possibly, another case that aroused a huge scandal gives a glimpse of a religious idea. The emperor was said to have offered himself as a prostitute, in exchange for money, following the example of the sacred prostitution in vogue in Syria? Also in the service of the celestial goddess Carthage, whom Heliogabalus had given as wife to his god, it was customary to perform such ceremonies, which until very late times used to provoke the wrath of belligerent fathers of the Church: it was said that the virgin goddess had been presented with spectacles that even a married woman could have added as a novelty to her wealth of experiences.... .

Tyeliogabalus himself played a feminine role, and not only there. When he played the role of priest at Emesa, he looked splendid with his precious diadem, wearing an outfit of purple and gold under which he wore, in the oriental style, long pants of the same fabric. This attire harmonized with his appearance of youth in bloom and his delicate, feminine, attractive culture; he was compared to the young Dionysus. As emperor he appeared in public wearing habits of Chinese silk: with his face painted, adorned with necklaces and feminine clothing, he seemed to have completely renounced the male sex; only when circumstances compelled him, he donned the toga. "In the Arabs who resemble birds," remarks C. M. Doughty, "it is the male sex that goes about adorned and covered with variegated plumage. With his long, parted hair, eyes painted blue, the narrow head of the Arab under his colored kerchief, looks like a female head, and by his other attributes he also looks like a woman." In the

relationship between Heliogabalus and his mother, the decisive role of the feminine element is once again expressed.

For both mother and son lived in each other; it was as if they had been created for each other. Once installed at the imperial court and appointed Augusta, Soaemia gave herself ungrudgingly to all excesses; the general opinion was that the mother was worth as much as the son. Everywhere she exercised her influence, accompanied the son to the Senate and to the barracks; but nowhere is it recorded that she had tried to put a stop to unbridled immoralities. Nothing was done without Soaemia's approval; but where a moderating voice would have been needed, there she failed. The emperor continued to live his libertine life. Before everyone he appreciated his favorites, companions of his adventures. Dancers, actors, charioteers, hairdressers who had been able to prove their prowess of debauchery during the orgies of the court, were called to occupy the highest positions. Until, finally, the secret indignation of the Senate and the people was joined by the open revolt of the garrison of the capital.

In a desperate situation, Soaemia had already fought once before for her son. As Heliogabalus, proclaimed emperor by the Syrian legions, faced his adversary Macrinus in open battle, the ranks themselves had fallen back. It then happened that Soaemia, together with Maesa, her mother, had confronted the fleeing soldiers, inducing them to continue resisting. Now that the soldiers were about to abandon Heliogabalus and pass over to the son of Mamaea, Soaemia came again. The astonishing fact occurred that the two cousins - Heliogabalus, emperor until that date, and Severus Alexander, called to be his successor - openly settled their dispute before the praetorians. In the middle of the barracks, in a nocturnal and tumultuous meeting, it was decided who would occupy the throne. The floor was given to the two mothers. Thus it came to pass that the daughters of Maesa faced each other on that occasion, both sisters and mothers: talking

and arguing, they fought for themselves and their respective children, they fought for who would survive that night. At dawn, the last followers of Heliogabalus left him. He died along with his mother, who embraced him until the last moment. The corpses were decapitated and dragged away; the mother's body was thrown into an unidentified place; the son's body was thrown into the Tiber.

The open disagreement between Mamaea and Soaemia, who thus came to the conclusion, was quite recent. It began when Heliogabalus had to adopt the cousin, only slightly younger than himself, as his son and, therefore, as co-regent. But in a certain respect, this disagreement was based on the character of the two sisters. Soaemia and Mamaea represented an unequal pair, not unlike in this respect their cousins Caracalla and Geta.

Julia Maesa had circulated the rumor that Caracalla, as a young man, had given two sons to his cousins. Maesa's purpose in spreading such a rumor was obvious: it was to establish a non-existent legitimacy. Mamaea was also persecuted by gossip concerning her secret contact with Caracalla. But she herself, unlike her sister, never divulged it. She lived far away from the dissolute life of the elder. But she was also a mother, and, therefore, she intervened deeply in the life of her son.

Mamaea gave Alexander a careful education; she tried to keep him away from all vice. Together with the soldiers she watched over the life of her Alexander, threatened by Heliogabalus. Mamaea was in charge of the regency during the minority of her son, and continued to carry it out even when he, already a man, could have carried it out personally. Alexander, creature of his mother and grandmother, never ceased to be one. Alexander's peaceful character rejected all bellicose activity, and any physical exertion affected his delicate health. By docile indulgence he hoped to impart to his sovereignty that security which his predecessors had lacked.

In this desire for security mother and son coincided, with the difference that the mother thought to achieve her goal in another way. Septimius Severus had already accumulated enormous means of fortune to ensure the future of his children. For this man, of course, money was just one more means, among many others; for Mamaea it simply meant power and security. However, the demon, which was her acquisitive urge, once awakened, never left her again: she could not be separated from her treasures when it came to using them in the interest of her son and her own. The empress-mother was accused of avarice, and her son was unable to control her.

The tragedy of motherhood is what is revealed for the second time after the yocastoid destiny of Julia Domna. All her dedication to the welfare of her son, gathering, sacrificing and saving everything to obtain and preserve his sovereignty, nevertheless led him to destruction. For it is precisely this attitude, typical of a mother, that harms the son, unless the son himself puts a stop to it on his own initiative. Otherwise, the mother's love turns into obsession, and her constant desire for security becomes counterproductive.

But, in addition to maternal love, there is another obsession, also rooted in deep layers of the feminine soul: she jealously watches over her son's heart, so that no woman can take possession of it. The relationship between Alexander and Mamaea goes beyond the limits of the enclosure drawn by the Irish visionary poet with the expression "Sons and lovers". This mother led the first wife to her son, and, the marriage proving happy, undid it by despotic intervention. For Mamaea was brimming with inordinate pride: she envied the other the title of Augusta, and envied her something else besides.

Soaemia and Mamaea were mothers with the best part of their being, but they were no more than this. What one spoiled with her complete indulgence of her son, the other spoiled also by pampering hers. The power of the Emesena dynasty rested on

other foundations. From the weak succession that Julia Maesa found in her daughters and grandchildren, her own personality, not far removed from greatness, stands out. She, too, was very bent on accumulating gold and property, but, unlike Mamaea, she knew how to make use of them.

As sister of the empress, she had lived at court for a long time. Her son-in-law, husband of Soaemia and father of Heliogabalus, was a man of multiple occupations in the financial administration: he was the first to declare publicly, in addition to his functions, the salary he earned... Maesa was able to accumulate wealth and it is easy to imagine how he managed to do so. But then came a fall. Following the assassination of Caracalla, she was overtaken by the expulsion order of the new ruler. She then returned to her homeland, taking all her patrimony with her: another Leticia Bonaparte, thus paving the way for the rehabilitation of her dynasty. But contrary to the Corsican, she had caused it herself.

In Emesa, Maesa lived with her relatives. She, who had been sovereign, found it unbearable to have to adapt to the life of a subject. That is why she observed with hidden joy, Macrino's mistakes, which distanced him from the sympathy of the soldiers: his dull way of life, his neglect of his business, his luxurious and unmilitary clothing. Maesa did not take long to hatch an open conspiracy.

Near Emesa was quartered a legion, and every time his soldiers went to the city, they saw Heliogabalus, grandson of Maesa, in full splendor of his High Priesthood: His beauty won him the sympathy of the man in the street, and the Syrian intriguer immediately put into circulation rumors about the alleged paternity of Caracalla. She counted on the affection that the soldiers had for the emperor, who was still on everyone's lips, and her hopes were not disappointed.

One night Mamaea appeared with his men in the barracks of that troop, and Heliogabalus was proclaimed emperor. The

antipathy to Macrinus, the memory of Caracalla's generosity, and Maesa's money attracted many sympathizers. Macrinus did not care much for the uprising. When, at last, he sent a military unit to quell it, they showed Heliogabalus, from the top of the fences, to the advancing unit. Next to him they had erected a portrait of the young Caracalla, to emphasize by physical resemblance the affiliation of Heliogabalus. The measure was not entirely in vain. Macrinus' soldiers were deprived of the desire to fight. However, good fortune seemed to smile on the latter once again. In the decisive battle before the gates of Antioch, the ranks of Heliogabalus' co-religionists became disorganized. Maesa and Soaemia then descended from the chariot: by dint of promises and entreaties, they succeeded in stopping the retreat. As for Macrinus, it was he himself who decided the defeat. Prematurely he considered the fight lost; disguised and beardless he was about to flee, when what fate had in store for him happened.

Maesa had achieved his purpose. Again, however, everything seemed in jeopardy. The women tried to rule Heliogabalus as best they could, but not even Maesa's objections could stop their scandalous behavior. She could see how the emperor's unpopularity was increasing; she sensed the outcome. Before her eyes the specter of a relapse into the existence of a subject arose again.

In this pressing situation he decided to eliminate Heliogabalus, replacing him with the docile son of Mamaea. No decision could have cost him more: for all his life had been dedicated to live, to plan, to act for the blood of his blood. But she understood, with visionary clarity, that the gangrenous limb had to be separated from the trunk to save the latter. Maesa lived long enough to witness the realization of her work: the ascension of Alexander and the ignominious disappearance of Heliogabalus. There is no record anywhere that she intervened in what had to happen inevitably. She reappeared only when

everything had already happened. Of course she took over the reins of government again. She allowed the memory of the fallen to be condemned, for a happier regime seemed to have been inaugurated, and the rule of her dynasty, it seemed, was definitely assured. For four years more he was granted to enjoy the government; fate spared him from witnessing the sunset.

IV

The successors to the throne of the Syrians were the Bedouins. Maximinus, to whom Severus Alexander succumbed, the emperors invested by the Senate who eliminated Maximinus, were but an intermezzo. The successor of them all, Philip, came from southeastern Syria. His birthplace was at the foot of the Druze mountain range.

The ancient trachonitised territory is part of the border regions that later become desert; in the volcanic wastelands of central and western Arabia it finds its continuation. Gray-blackish rock covers the fields and imprints its characteristics on the villages built from it. It accumulates in the Djebel Drus in erect masses of bold rock formations, vaults, domes and temples of shades between charred black and sulfur-colored. In this dreary, deserted and cruel region, Philip the Arab was born.

Ancient tradition believed he knew that his father had been a bandit. Nomad and highwayman, landowner and despot, notable and bandit, are concepts that in this territory coincide and complement each other in an inescapable way. It may be that the man really began his career as a Bedouin sheikh; but as the urban way of life was gaining ground everywhere, as the Djebel Drus was being covered with towns, the sheikh of yesteryear

became a member of the municipal aristocracy. His son dedicated a cult to him in their hometown.

Philip meant for the Empire what the rise of the Palmyrene archers had meant for military history. Here as there, the semi-barbarous border strips near the desert became the fertile land of eastern Syria. The peculiar and gloomy character of the trasonite landscape, its harshness and inexorability were transmitted to its inhabitants. Philip aspired to the throne with a cold and calculating mind; and to secure it he proceeded without mercy or consideration.

Gordian III had ascended the throne at the age of thirteen. His two co-regents had fallen victims to the brutal arbitrariness of the Praetorians; and it was precisely the latter who elevated Gordian to occupy the position of the murdered victims. Kept under strict guardianship since his childhood, the imperial groom was, finally, under the direction of Timisitheus, his prefect of guard. Although the latter had the power concentrated entirely in his hands, he refrained from taking the last step. He limited himself to marrying the young emperor to his own daughter. Effective power was enough for him, which he knew how to manage intelligently for the benefit of the sovereign and the Empire.

In the middle of the successes of the Persian war Timisiteo died and Filipo succeeded him. By intentional reduction of food, he was able to incite the army against the young and inexperienced Gordian. As in the case of Heliogabalus and Alexander, it was up to the soldiers to decide who would be emperor; the legitimate bearer of the title or the subject constituted in usurper. Popular opinion turned out to be against Gordian. He is said to have pleaded that, if they did not want him as Augustus, they should at least keep him as Caesar. Or else give him the post currently occupied by Philip or some other function. He ended by begging to be allowed to escape with his life. Everything was denied him. Philip attended the

humiliating scene, silent and apparently disinterested, but secretly maneuvering everything. For a moment he pondered the advisability of showing mercy. But then he ordered the wretch, who was wailing aloud, to be taken away, stripped of his imperial insignia, and put to death.

The new sovereign did his best to wash away the stain connected with his ascension to the throne. He organized a solemn burial for the murdered predecessor, promoting him to the rank of god; he was determined to please as much as possible the Senate that hated the upstart. But nothing could bring oblivion. At that time, then, despondency and melancholy came to take deep root in the emperor's mind. Thus the busts show it to us; characterized by the deep vertical wrinkle on the start of the nose, by the eyebrows of angular line, the mouth of sullen expression, pouting. As in many of his tribe, his profile recalls the tormented and misanthropic expression of the dromedary... Little by little, Philip was stripping himself of all the personality he had acquired. He showed sympathy for the Christians, for having grown up on the borders of the Holy Land, he felt more sympathy for the Christianity proclaimed by all the places of that region, than for the Roman religion with its pompous ostentation. In Baalbek he had the hexagonal atrium built, an image of Baal and the gods of the stars; he dedicated himself to the worship of his family and of his hometown.

The new Philippopolis rose at the foot of the Druse Mountains; being an imperial foundation, it had been built in metropolitan, not indigenous, style. The temple containing the tomb of Philip's father occupied half of it; portraits of the whole family were arranged in it. The sheikh and highwayman of old had been elevated by his son to the rank of god. But Philip's attachment to his own family was not limited to worship and monuments. He also turned to his family when it came to occupying decisive positions. He entrusted his brother with the lieutenancy of the entire East; to his brother-in-law he gave

supreme command over the territory of the lower Danube. Thus two of the great frontier armies were in the hands of the emperor's closest relatives, apparently immunized against the danger of secession.

However, it was precisely there that the uprising against Philip broke out. The choice of his brother had not been a wise one. A ruthless tax pressure that had its beginning in the East, under his command, caused no less than two candidates to assert their claims to that office; neither could be suppressed. The rise of the Danube legions seemed to have had a better result: shortly afterwards they killed the emperor of their choice. And yet the fate of Philip had to be fulfilled as a result of that same uprising.

To restore order, the emperor sent his most trusted man to the Danube frontier. Decius was also an Illyrian and knew the conditions; he warned his sovereign of what was inevitably about to happen. He proceeded with severity against the undisciplined and defeated the foreign enemy. But those who had thus become his subjects proclaimed Decius emperor, compelling him to accept the office. In this pressing situation, Decius appealed to the confidence of his sovereign. Let Philip not worry; as soon as he, Decius, arrived in Rome, he would divest himself of the insignia of his illegitimate office. ... he was not a man to trust anyone; he believed he possessed better guarantees. He had long since gathered troops in the northeast region to protect Italy. So the only solution left was to decide the matter by force of arms. The "Arab" fell before Verona, fighting bravely in the front line. However, this was not to put an end to the Eastern regime. The center of gravity came to move to the homeland of the emperor. Eastern Syria became the center and starting point of a new dominion. Within ten years of Philip's death, Odenatus laid the foundations of Palmyra's power. And just as in the case of Julia Domna and her sister Maesa an ambitious woman stood by his side and then succeeded him on the throne.

Having been, from Tiberius to Hadrian, a subject city only and exclusively, Palmyra was promoted by Hadrian to the category of sovereign city; by Septimius Severus, to that of colony. It was only after the middle of the ninth century that a desire for independence began, prepared by the elevation of a few people from Palmyra to high municipal and imperial offices.

"Odenatus, Son of Hairan, Senator", according to his name on a tombstone dating back to 230, was the first of a series whose last was the eponymous founder of Palmyra's power; the title had been given to him under the Syrian emperors. The son of Odenatus was Septimius Hairan, senator like his father, as well as "Exarch of the Palmyrenes". In such a denomination is manifested the desire to ensure Palmyra and its ruling dynasty an independent role. It was the same period in which two usurpers arose in Emesa. In both neighboring cities local potentates arose; in Palmyra with more foresight and better fortune than in the small homeland of the Phoebeus.

When, following the catastrophe of Valerian, the domination of Rome over the East seemed to disintegrate, the right man appeared at the right time. Odenatus, more brother than son of the "exarch", openly called himself master of Palmyra. The actions of this man corresponded to his claim. In the struggle between Persia and Rome he had declared himself in favor of the latter, rejecting the Persians, and extending his own domination over the East while appearing to serve Rome.

Palmyra's economic interests were concentrated in lower Iraq and the Persian Gulf. The tombstones reflect the extent of their commercial relations. The caravans, following the current of the Euphrates River, reached as far as Chat el-Arab; everywhere the Palmyrenes had their fondouks, and on the coast they possessed their own shipyards. From Spasinu Charax and Forat, ports located on the shores of the Persian Gulf, they undertook their voyages to India. The main import item was Chinese silk, which arrived in the west via Ceylon. Incense also came from

Hadramaut, its country of origin, to the mouth of the Euphrates River, passing through Gerrha, the commercial metropolis.

The newly created power of the Sassanids threatened this vital artery of Palmyra. Ardahir I had occupied Spasinu Charax and Forat. Odenatus tried to reach an agreement with Sapor I, but was rejected by the haughty king. So the armed encounter took place, three times Odenatus entered Persian territory. He did not succeed in taking Ktesifona, but he reopened the road to the Persian Gulf and revived the commercial traffic with caravans by that route.

However, Odenatus was not content with this. Once victorious, he adopted the title of king, supposedly as a defender of the Arsachid cause against the Sassanids. It is recorded that his closest collaborators were refugee supporters of the Arsacids, who still in Palmyra made use of their Iranian titles and had themselves portrayed in Iranian national costume. To these refugees, their lineage and other similar factors corresponding to their former importance, had ensured a good reception.

According to its name, Odenato was Arab. As in Emesa, in Palmyra also the upper social stratum was of Bedouin origin. It was the same stratum from which Philip the Arab also came. Therefore, the enlisted archers among the tributary vassals of Palmyra, Bedouins and semi-Bedouins, constituted the base of the military contingent. But with them the splendid mounted armies of the Sassanids could not be defeated. Odenatus had created a troop of cataphracts in the Iranian image and likeness, probably following the advice of trusted Parthians. This put him in a position to fight against Sapor I with greater intensity.

Everywhere he took charge of the tasks with which he had been confronted since the catastrophe of Valerian. As *Doge Romanorum*, the remnants of the Eastern Roman army were subordinated to him. He erected buildings in the Limes of Chalchis, in addition to inaugurating in Damascus, Emesa and other cities of Syria buildings in the name of Gallienus. Finally,

he also undertook the fight against Goths who had invaded Asia Minor. Nowhere did he oppose the central Roman power. Odenatus must have believed that self-interest coincided with the interest of the Empire until further notice. He was hardly unaware that one day the time would inevitably come when his own power would be at odds with Roman aspirations.

The defection occurred only during the regency of Zenobia, wife and successor of Odenatus. The latter had always had his sights set on the neighboring Sassanids, had always felt himself to be their adversary and rival; under his wife, on the other hand, the West and Rome came to the fore. Zenobia aspired for her sons, in whose name she held the regency, the title of Augustus. Imperial insignia appeared on the coins of Palmyra, and the Roman ceremonial came to replace the Iranian. Zenobia adopted the tradition of the great empresses of the Emesenid dynasty.

This woman with the penetrating gaze of an eagle, regal gestures and a warm, sonorous voice, was clearly born for the position she occupied. She derived her lineage from Cleopatra. But unlike the Ptolemaic, she rode well on horseback and walked even better, in addition to knowing how to defend herself admirably both hunting and drinking. She knew the value of money and knew how to manage it; it rarely happened that she made excessive expenses. He mastered Greek better than the language of Rome, but for that reason he never lost sight of the great past of the latter. It is recorded that he tried to write the history of Alexandria and of the East in general.

Her participation in the literary life of that time constituted another feature that differentiated her from Odenato. Another Julia Domna, she surrounded herself with a group of intellectual men. The Neoplatonist Longinos, a native of Emesa on his father's side, was Zenobia's preceptor and political advisor. When, after the death of Plotinus, his pupils were dispersed in all directions, Longinus tried to regroup the acephalous by taking them to the East. Amelius responded to the call and

settled in Apamea. Likewise Porphyry, a Tyrian by birth, was invited to do the same, but without deciding. Palmyra was neither Rome nor Athens; the interest in philosophy was only a mask. Not even Amelius was deluded in this respect.

Zenobia was also mother and sovereign at the same time. It is said that she gave herself to her husband for the sole purpose of procreating her own tribe. To her children she gave the Latin education that she herself lacked, thus preparing them for the role of sovereigns, even Romans. When Zenobia's generals subjugated Egypt, she had coins minted with the effigy of Emperor Aurelian on one side and that of her son Vaballatus on the other. Then she took the decisive step: she suppressed the effigy of the Roman on the coins. In the spring of 271 he began to mint independent coins, and the emancipation took place.

Aurelian was the most dangerous adversary she could have chosen. After a period of domination that barely lasted a year, Egypt was lost; soon after the Roman army was at the gates of Palmyra. Zenobia left the besieged city mounted on a dromedary, but the pursuers caught up with her. Displaced and humiliated, in the power of the enemy, she was no longer more than a weak woman. Taken to court, she blamed all those who had advised her and suggested her actions. She saved her own life, but the most intimate of her advisors, Longinus, died at the hands of the executioner.

Some say that Zenobia had participated in the triumphal procession of Aurelian. Covered with gold and jewels, the women of Palmyra paraded when they were still allowed to wear their foreheads high. They were seen resplendent diadems of precious stones, gold-embroidered ropes of tunics, pins, bracelets; necklaces of four turns, they were not rarities. With all this the vanquished was adorned, to humiliate her. Her hands and feet were imprisoned by gold crickets, and a Persian mocker carried the queen by a gold chain. The enormous amount of jewels she carried forced the stout woman repeatedly to interrupt

her march, because her body was not strong enough to support the weight.

Zenobia was defeated by the force to which Mamaea and Alexander had previously succumbed; the Illyrian-Danubian empire. This constitutes the transition to a new world, from a feminine world to a masculine one, from the East to the West and the North.

CHAPTER VII

ILLYRIAN EMPERORS

I

Severus Alexander owed his rise to absolute sovereignty to the Illyrian Guard. Once elevated to the status of arbiter of the destinies of emperors and empires, the latter was able to retain its ^{power}¹. Although Alexander may have sinned of excess in his regard for the Praetorians, mutual relations remained strained.

With the frontier armies something similar happened. It was not that Alexander had despised the Illyrian legions: on the occasion of his Persian campaign, they constituted the nucleus of the army. These legions put their courage to the test, but the setbacks of the ill-fated enterprise wounded that *elite* of brave soldiers to the core; moreover, the climate and the food contributed to decimate their ranks.

Alexander was not a soldier, nor did he intend to be one. His mother, with her education, had seen to it that he was. Alexander interrupted the Persian campaign, and only felt at ease again when he was again surrounded by the luxury of Antioch. Still less did he like the fact that, shortly afterwards, the Germanic danger required his presence on the banks of the Rhine. There the open indignation of the army broke out. The list of complaints against him was long, starting from maternal domination and his lack of enthusiasm for war, to the attempts to avoid war by paying tribute. Very harassing Pannonian recruits became spokesmen, expressing the general discontent. "Effeminate Cachafaz" and "cowardly Mozalbete" were the exclamations that sprang from their ranks, and the military were

already about to postulate an emperor of their own selection. In vain did Alexander attempt to avert the danger by payments. As the clamor of arms announced the coming of the usurper, even the last faithful deserted Alexander.

The new man, Maximinus, was sovereign to the taste of his soldiers. Being himself a native of the Danube, he represented in every respect the opposite of the Syrians and their regiment of women. He had risen through the ranks of military service. He had participated in the Persian campaign, and at that time he was entrusted with the training of recruits. Maximinus was a shining example of his military men; as a fellow soldier he shared all the fatigues and struggles of the private soldier.

Even as emperor he maintained this attitude. Before the senatorial curia he had his exploits represented in paintings of supernatural size: Maximinus, while leading the assault against the Germans, despite having sunk his horse in a swamp up to his belly; Maximinus, while encouraging the army to follow him along a dangerous path. Maximin never visited Rome in the capacity of emperor. He felt more in his element in the midst of his army and surrounded by the dangers of war: on the banks of the Rhine, or the Danube, the river of his homeland.

What was the origin of this man? He had been raised to his rank by Pannonian recruits and was rooted in the Danube countries. Sirmium was his headquarters; from there he intended to subjugate the Germans as far as the northern ocean. Ancient tradition designates him as a Thracian, but not a native of the province of that name, but of the *Thracian ripa*, in the lower Messia, south of the mouth of the Danube. It was believed to be known for certain that the father of Maximinus had been a Goth and his mother an Alana. There is no reason to doubt such a statement, since it fits into the general conditions then prevailing in the lower reaches of the Danube. In the century of the ascensions of African, Syrian, Illyrian military units, followed by appearances of emperors of analogous origin, the son of a

Goth on the throne corresponded to the military importance conquered by the Germans. Maximin himself used free Germans, in large numbers, in the army.

Perhaps it was no mere coincidence that it was precisely under the reign of Maximinus that a new legal basis for ascension to the imperial throne emerged. For the first time in Roman history, it happened that a sovereign had been appointed exclusively by the army, without the approval of the Senate. The pure and simple acclamation of the assembled troops included the acceptance of the pretender as the best, called to rule and authorized to demand unconditional adherence from his subjects. Making a comparison with the Germanic conditions, the analogy is obvious.

Tacitus makes a distinction between kings of Germans and warlords of voluntary proselytes. Caesar describes how one of the nobles appears before the assembled national and military assembly. He offers himself on his own initiative as the leader of a warlike enterprise. Whoever has confidence in the proposal and in the leader, stands up, committing himself by this very gesture to follow him unconditionally. If he does not abide by the commitment thus made, he is considered a traitor and disloyal. Two ideologies stand out: first, that a warlord is worthy of trust: he must have proven himself as a warrior, and must have acquired a good reputation both in combat and in command. In addition, the loyalty that binds the followers to the leader recognized by them corresponds to him.

To be the leader of a group of Germanic henchmen is one thing and to rule over a worldwide empire is another. Perhaps for this reason no one dares to establish, without more or less, a relationship between them. And yet it exists, and in a very evident way. Maximinus had won the sympathy of his soldiers by his excellent military behavior. When he presented himself before the assembled soldiers, they covered him with purple and proclaimed him emperor. Here again the proven man, whose

personality and suitability inspire confidence, is called to occupy the first position. Maximinus must also have relied on the fidelity of his henchmen, who had affirmed their loyalty to him. For he always had the greatest confidence in those who had raised him to the throne, pledging to face any danger for him. They were his henchmen, bound to him by his own free will.

From this institution, described by Caesar and Tacitus and which Maximinus was the first to transpose to a larger scale, the monarchy arose by the grace of the Germanic henchmen. It was supported by the approval of groups of young warriors, ready to throw themselves into combat and in pursuit of conquests under a proven command, to conquer a new empire. Ariovistus, who crossed the Rhine to establish in Gaul a new domain for himself, or Philimer, who conquered for the Goths a new homeland in southern Russia, belong to the category of these kings who owed the throne to their henchmen; likewise Ermanaric and Theodoric, Gunter and Rolf Krake.

Because of his Gothic origin, Maximinus must have known this type of militant and conquering monarchy. Hence it is understandable that Maximinus renounced the approval of the Senate, his opinion that the proclamation by the army was sufficient legalization. After the death of Probo, when Caro was elevated to the throne, the same method was used again, keeping it for the future. Maximinus, of course, incurred the bitter enmity of the Senate and of those who saw in it the entity of supreme authority in the Empire.... . The emperor's eagerness to fight and conquer also fits into this panorama. Maximinus, who never visited Rome, who spent the years of his rule exclusively in the military camps on the banks of the Rhine and the Danube and dreamed of subjugating the Germans as far as the North Sea, was also in this respect the champion of the monarchy by the grace of the henchmen.

Maximinus was Danubian, but his Gothic blood placed him on a special plane. The Illyrian emperors were considered

champions of Roman grandeur and tradition, conscious representatives of the Roman concept as there were few; in Maximian, however, there was none of this. Precisely the defenders of Romanity had risen up against him.

II

His soldiers adored Maximinus, and even his adversaries beyond the frontiers respected him. However, the feelings of the metropolitan population were very different. Maximin lacked sympathy for the peaceful citizen, and the latter repaid him in kind. The rule of Maximin weighed heavily on the educated and wealthy classes. The emperor did nothing to win their sympathy. His noblest aspirations were to be supported by the army. All the money was earmarked for military purposes; where the demands of the army were to be met, he used ruthless means. The complaints of the population resounded everywhere; even the military saw fit to moderate their pretensions.

Finally, indignation broke out. When the African estates were expropriated to satisfy the imperial demands, the youngest of the landowners armed their slaves and laborers, killed their oppressors and offered the crown to the lieutenant M. Antonio Gordiano Semproniano. This old man from a noble and wealthy family was caught completely off guard by such an offer. But the dilemma in which he found himself made him docile. From Tisdrus, his official headquarters, he led the insurgents against Carthage.

The movement spread quickly. The insurrectionists managed to eliminate the prefect of Maximian's guard in Rome, and immediately, the Senate pronounced itself in favor of Gordian. It welcomed him and his namesake son as emperor, proclaimed Severus Alexander a god and his assassin Maximinus a public

enemy. Most of the provinces went over to the Gordians. But at the same moment the situation in Africa itself changed. The insurgent army met, in full advance against Carthage, with the feared Moorish cavalry and dispersed fleeing; Gordianus Minor fell fighting, the Major committed suicide.

Thus it turned out that the uprising against the militarism of Maximinus seemed to have failed in its beginnings. A peaceful population had lacked the necessary strength to shake off the yoke. Then the surprising thing happened: the Senate, in the capital, decided to continue the struggle. The defense of Italy was entrusted to twenty men, for an act of revenge was expected from Maximinus, deeply wounded in his self-respect, and rightly so. The whole of the army stationed along the Danube was destined for the march against Rome.

A tornado seemed to be unleashed against the cities and the Italian lands. Germanic cavalry constituted the vanguard; battle-hardened cohorts proud of past victories immediately followed. Maximinus advanced like a Nordic military king. But the Senate was not discouraged. From its own bosom it promoted to emperors two senators, M. Clodius Pupianus Maximus and D. Celius Calvinus Balbinus; at the request of the population of the capital and of the military units quartered there, they added to them, as Caesar, the nephew of Gordianus Major, third of his name. Pupianus had the task of organizing an army against Maximinus. The point of concentration was Ravenna; the nucleus of the new army was composed of Germans.

However, before the armed clash, the impact of the assault broke against the fortified Aquileia. The strength of its fences, the courage of its inhabitants, and the prudent measures taken by the Board of Twenty created insurmountable obstacles. In the ravaged and exploited country, tortured by hunger, decimated by attacks against the impregnable fortress, his own army finally rose up against Maximinus. The emperor and his son, who was also in the camp, were killed. Their heads were hoisted on spears

and displayed outside the fences of Aquileia, in testimony of what had happened. Then the portraits of the hated emperors invested by the Senate were lowered from the battlements so that homage could be paid to them. And that army-which had gone so sure of its victory, and had now lost its leader and all confidence in itself-was so demoralized, that it did as it was commanded.

This time, the population had won over the army. The courage of a citizenry and the firmness of the Senate had defeated the tyrant. It was not in vain that Italy had been invoked: the days of former greatness seemed near again. With the election of two emperors, the most august institutions of Rome were called upon, and in deliberate contradiction to that dynastic policy, relatives were excluded from the government and the succession to the throne.

The victory of a hierarchy that consciously relied on examples from ancient Rome had to be short-lived. In that century, the days granted to the emperors invested by the Senate were of short duration; Pupianus and Balbinus did not last more than three months. When Maximinus was overthrown, the concord between the two came to an end. Both succumbed to the Illyrian guard brought from Aquileia and reincorporated into the Roman garrison. These insubordinate, unable to forget their defeat, stormed the palace, seized the emperors, mistreated them by dragging them through the streets and then killed them. His successor was Gordian III, the only survivor and puppet in the hands of the powerful until he was eliminated by Philip the Arab.

And yet, this intermission was not unimportant. During the first half of that century, the Senate seats were occupied mostly by Syrians, Africans and men from Asia Minor (the Italic element had been temporarily reduced to a third). But all came from social classes not alien to Latin culture. Their career as civil servants contributed to their awareness of the greatness of

Rome and the concept of the Empire as the dominant idea. They did not hesitate to make use of this idea in the fight against the barbarian emperor, even more: against him they invoked Roman forms of ancient tradition.

As a representative of Romanity, the Orientalized Senate has achieved its victory.

A trend that consciously pretended to be Roman and knew how to fascinate the Orientals cannot have arisen by chance. We have to look for its roots in the preceding era.

III

The victory of the East over Antiquity and the West, in the centuries corresponding to the end of the imperial era, is a common phenomenon. A drawing depicts Rome "embraced by the East". Among the determining aspects are the infiltration of Eastern gods and their mysteries, as well as the arrival of the religion that had to overcome all its competitors. On the other hand, the symptoms that at that time showed that Rome was remembering its own values, were noticed to a much lesser degree.

Indeed, it seemed at times as if the gods of Rome were about to be swept away by the current of alien forces. Oriental forms infiltrated the structure of state religion everywhere. The foundation of the temple of Serapis, by Caracalla, was the first infraction of the rule, according to which foreign cults were kept at bay from the precincts situated within the sacred limits of the city of Rome. The Alexandrian god was worshipped in a sanctuary built on the model of an Egyptian one from the New Empire. Hierodules were in charge of the cult, thaumaturges knew how to cite a specific daimon, upon request (as they did for Plotinus). In short: just as the emperor granted the right of

Roman citizenship to all foreigners by the Antoninian Constitution, so he allowed the naturalization in Rome to the Egyptian gods and foreigners in general.

Another great "Alexandrian" gesture came to capture the imagination of Caracalla: the introduction of Serapis, the Constitution or the colossal style of the baths. According to later opinion, Alexander's true goal was the amalgamation of all men into a monolithic unity, and the reconciliation of nations. Even the god Serapis, introduced only by the first Ptolemy, was attributed to Alexander. The recently found fragment of a novel about Alexander, corresponding to the time of Caracalla, presents the king praying to Serapis precisely in Alexandria. When Caracalla erected the Quirinal temple to that god, possibly he believed he had thus imitated his great idol, the Macedonian.

The projects of conquests in Eastern lands conceived by Caracalla, also following the footsteps of Alexander, constitute a further step. By marrying a Parthian princess he intended to become personally an example of the amalgamation of the West and the East. At the same time, Curtius Rufus retold the myth of the great campaign to the East, of the world conquest, embellishing it with all the variegated details considered attractive at the time. Philostratus, the celebrated leader of the second Sophistic, had preceded him with the description of the life of Apollonius of Tyana, giving literary expression to the longing for oriental wisdom.

In addition, other factors contributed to the deviation of the paths followed by the religion inherited by Rome. An openly manifested Christianity was nothing new to the Easterners who occupied the imperial throne. Caracalla had been raised by a Christian wet nurse. The famous dialogue on the laws of the countries, attributed to Bardesanes, was dedicated to the emperor, and the link with that amalgamation and reconciliation of nations projected by him was not long in establishing. For the

dialogue proclaims a religion of worldwide scope, above all borders and laws of individual countries: Christianity.

Under the empire of Heliogabalus, the wave rose again. But when he extended his hands towards the supreme, and when it seemed that Jupiter in the Capitol was going to have to pass to the second plane displaced by the solar god emeseno, the setback took place. In March 222 Heliogabalus was assassinated; his memory was cancelled and the sacred stone was returned to its original place. The successor, Severus Alexander, consecrated the abandoned sanctuary in honor of avenging Jupiter. That emperor, a descendant like Heliogabalus of the dynasty of Emessene priests, had no choice but to recognize the strength of the Roman national reaction and serve it as a docile instrument. In this way he again adopted the attitude always observed by Septimius Severus, and abandoned only by Caracalla and Heliogabalus.

The first Severus was more deeply rooted in the Oriental than any of his predecessors. However, astrology and dream interpretation, fatalism and magic he dealt with only within his private precincts. This man, however unscrupulous he may have been in other respects, guarded himself well from touching the religious tradition of Rome. The second repetition of the regular Augustan festival was celebrated with minute observation of all the details integral to an antiquated rite. With astonishment one could hear the emperor recite a prayer imploring for Rome the obedience of the Latins for all time. These words, by which the Augustan celebration tried to legitimize itself as a continuation of a very ancient celebration, a reflection, already at that time inconceivable, of conditions corresponding to the dawn of the Roman era, were repeated at a time when the Empire had reached its greatest extension up to that date.

Such an attitude was not an isolated case. Records preserved on tombstones of the Farmer Brothers, one of the noblest priestly orders, record details of the cult with meticulous

accuracy. The ancient song of the Brotherhood, which it sang year after year, although its members no longer understood it, was carved in stone at that time. The same observation of the rite of the dawn of the Roman era, its particularities and its cumbersome forms prevailed as in the centennial celebration of the year 204. The vehemence with which the Latin fathers of the church, first and foremost Tertullian, attacked the Roman gods and the Roman cult, fits into this picture.

When the attempt of Heliogabalus failed, Severus Alexander immediately returned to his previous attitude. This corresponded to the diligent respect he had for the Senate. For its members were members of the ancient priestly orders of metropolitan Rome; they were attached to the traditional religion. Representative of this group was the historian Dion Cassius, at the same time a close friend of the emperor. In his account, Dion Cassius inserted a speech in which Maecenas warns Augustus of the danger of foreign religions, inviting him to strengthen the Roman religion. Dion's antipathy embraced the cult of Isis and Osiris as well as that of Liber and Hercules.

The coins minted by Alexander reveal the care with which he proceeded. In them he carefully refrains from any representation that could be interpreted as a profession of faith in favor of the religious problems of the time. The emperor, of whom it was said, as of his mother, that he had Christian sympathies, had his figure minted on his coins as a priest of Eternal Rome, thus initiating a policy later pursued by Philip the Arab with much more intense energy. Even this one manifested with respect to Christianity an attitude of complacent tolerance, and the rumor of having embraced the new faith pursued him even more tenaciously. But as a head of state, he complied with the national postulates. It was granted to him to celebrate the millennium of Rome in the year 248.

This celebration deeply moved the contemporary world and the succeeding era. Under the pressure of a painful present,

people turned to the future, filling it with hopes and aspirations. A new century seemed to have begun, much bigger and more far-reaching than previous centennial celebrations had led us to believe. One hundred years later, this celebration could be described as the only true one, unlike the Republican and Augustan celebrations.

Even Christian Rome again remembered its own Romanness, and abandoned the Greek tradition. Rome became a Latin community. A list of Latin popes was compiled; Pope Cornelius was the first to have a Latin inscription on his tombstone. Simultaneously, a more accentuated vindication of the Roman church manifested itself in the disagreement with Carthage.

At that time it happened that the Easterners withdrew, and with Decius came to the throne a series of Illyrians interrupted only rarely. Immediately this fact had repercussions on the concept of Rome. Up to that date this concept had enjoyed prudent tolerance, of pondered recognition; instead, then, it came to occupy a preeminent position.

The countries bordering the Danube have always been able to combine the preservation of their own individuality with a strong inclination towards true Romanity. Italic imports, Roman coins and the Latin alphabet had taken root in those territories from very early on, and the population adopted the Latin language from the very beginning. Above all, the Pannonians claimed to be authentic, full-blooded Romans. Aeneas and Anchises, as well as the she-wolf and her twins, frequently appear on tombstones. Following the accession of the Pannonian emperors to the throne, coins and reliefs on imperial harnesses depicted the legendary nurse of Rome.

In Noric and Dalmatia the situation was similar. The Messian provinces along the lower Danube and Thrace, on the other hand, constituted a domain of Greek culture. A change occurred when Dacia, recently conquered under the empire of Trajan, despite the fact that its inhabitants were related to the Thracians,

opted for the Roman and not for the Greek. Also in that region the inhabitants pretended to be Romans, which was decisive for the whole Danube territory. In Dacia, almost all inscriptions on tombstones are Latin. The veneration of Eastern deities was everywhere at its height in the n and m centuries. In Dacia, however, the inscriptions dedicated to them amounted to only one-fifth; those dedicated to Roman gods, on the other hand, to a full half of those preserved. There, too, the Roman she-wolf can be found everywhere; embedded in the wall of a farm in Transylvania, it still surprises visitors today. The Romanian language has absorbed voices originating from the Roman religion; Diana has given its name to the "fairy" in modern Romanian.

All this shows that everywhere there were beginnings of a Roman activity, which determined the emperors originating from the Danubian countries. Decius minted a series of coins with the effigies of the emperors promoted to gods and adopted the name Trajan, which was equivalent to a program. Claudius and Aurelian banished from a long oblivion the solemn oracle of the Sibylline. They relate that Claudius, before leaving to fight against the Goths, had consecrated himself to death to satisfy the postulates of the oracle. The days of the Decians of ancient Roman times seemed to have returned: heroism willing to sacrifice his life in exchange for the security and welfare of the State celebrated its renewal in this Illyrian. When in Julian's "Symposium" Caligula appears, all the gods turn their backs on him; instead, they turn to Claudius and admire him for his patriotism. At that time coins were minted dedicated to the protective gods of the emperor and the Empire, or to Eternal Rome. Next to him appears the Joba with Romulus and Remus, confirming the eternal character of the city due to its divine origin.

To the intentionally manifested Romanism, on the one hand, corresponded the repudiation of Christianity on the other. In this,

Decius, Claudius and Aurelian coincided. In the case of Decius, the controversy with his predecessor Philip the Arab, who relied on the eastern archers, was added to this. Above all, the Osroenan units must have had many Christians in their ranks. The decisive factor, however, was the state's claim to the worship of its gods, to which the Christians were subtracted. Previously, because of their small numbers, these rebels were not bothered. However, they had increased so much in number that under the reign of Decius the time of tolerance came to an end: they proceeded to demand the sacrifice of the Christians. Since among the gods counted the august person of the emperor, refusal was tantamount to revolt against the authority of the State.

The Christians did not shrink from any consequence. The public flogging, humiliating and doubly humiliating punishment for a woman, appears as a glorious mention on the tombstone of the martyr Elia Afanasia. To the emperor, as an earthly savior, Christianity opposed his heavenly counter-figure, as a greater pretension. Christ is stronger than the emperor and all his officials, said Origen, stronger than the Senate and the Roman people. The struggle for the recognition of the new religion became a struggle against the sovereignty and omnipotence of the State. It is understandable why determined representatives of the Roman concept, such as the Illyrian emperors, remained intransigent.

The position was not only against Christianity; with the disappearance of the Syrian emperors, the Syrian gods also lost their support in the army. As far as Jupiter Dolichene is concerned, the inscriptions were interrupted shortly after the middle of that century. Where his cult still continued to exist, as for example in Rome, people of insignificant environment, reluctant to abandon something to which they had gained sympathy, dedicated themselves to him. The lack of any polemic in the writings of the Fathers of the Church clearly demonstrates

the little importance that was given to that god at that time. And yet, in the time of the Severan dynasty, he had begun an unparalleled triumph. Thrace and both Moesias, Dacia, Dalmatia and Pannonia, as well as the Noricum and all the bordering territory along the Rhine, distant Brittany and Numidia, Italy, including Sardinia, and, finally, Rome itself, had produced monuments to his cult.

The peculiarity of the Illyrian Romanity requires an explanation. It lies in the strength, and, if I may say so, in the indestructibility of the concept Rome. Originally linked to a particular nationality, it began to become a spiritual form with an independent existence. Such forms obey a law other than the organic one, which merely knows birth, maturation and decline. They endure as an invitation to an ever new understanding and penetration; they constitute the norm and the pattern for the molds in the present and in the future. The concept of Rome as a spiritual and political form has won over the Illyrians.

IV

The problem posed by the destiny to which the countries of the Danube had been confronted, found its repetition in the emperors native to them. Just as the countries had to decide for Greece or for Rome, so did Claudius, Aurelian and Probus. Hellenism once again demanded of them the solution of difficulties from which the Empire and the ancient world in general suffered, although it was a Hellenism, of course, of a particular nature.

According to his origin, Gallienus was not an Illyrian; moreover, he was fought by them and, finally, eliminated by a conspiracy of the generalate. And yet the history of his adversaries and successors cannot simply do without him. For he has created the military premises for the reconstruction of the

Empire, forcing them politically and spiritually to the great decisions.

The origins of Valerian, father of Gallienus, are not known. The son was called Falerius by nickname, and tradition informs us, moreover, that he came from Etruria. The lineage of Egnatia, his mother, was native of the surroundings of Faleri, and in general of Etruria. Decius himself was Illyrian, but his wife was of Etruscan origin. Her name, Herenia Cupresenia Etruscila, that of her eldest son, Herennius Etruscianus, and the cognomen of the youngest, who was Perperna, leave no room for doubt. Likewise, the successor of Decius and predecessor of Valerian, Trebonianus, descended from Pe-rusia, from the family of the Vibios, highly respected in that Etruscan city. All these sovereigns were united by close ties. They are revealed as a group belonging to the senatorial nobility, with most of their properties located in Etruria, or related to the noblest lineages of the country.

Suffice it to say that Gallienus was wholly or partly of Etruscan blood. Faleris, the place where he was born, belonged to a tribe related to the Latins, but from the sixth century BC there has been a constant superimposition of Etruscan language and culture. Even today, Civit  Castellana gives the impression of being an Etruscan city. The Soracte, sanctuary of a local god, equated to Apollo, dominates everything. In the panorama of the mountain of the god, the rapture is matched by a demonic mystery, the brilliance of the white rock with its deadly rigidity, the unreachable remoteness with a threatening omnipresence.

The Etruscan element has been preserved in Italy with an astonishing persistence. There are men and times to whom the spontaneous appearance of that nationality imprints its character. Who would deny that Maecenas of Arezo, or Persius of Volterra, were Etruscan? Likewise, Gallienus represents a resurrection, an astonishing sign of the vital force of Etruria. It can be compared to that in which it is believed to recognize a

similar resurgence: the urban constructions and paintings of Tuscany, the beauty of its women and the Dantesque visions of hell.

The personality of Gallienus was already discussed in antiquity. Tensions abounded in it, which gave rise to the most diverse interpretations. To condemn him or to redeem him, as it has been tried to do until very recently, lacks purpose; it is necessary to understand this character in his multiple aspects. The Etruscan origin of Gallienus is the key.

For the same abundance of tensions that characterizes Gallienus is reproduced in this people. Etruscan was the eagerness to enjoy the pleasures of life: of banquets, women and handsome waiters, of cruel or burlesque games, of gladiatorial fights, circus and farce, of leisure.... . On the other hand, Etruscan was also the chivalrous hero with his singular prowess in combat, thirsty for glory and adventure, diametrically opposed to the obedient and disciplined soldier in the Roman style. Just as Etruscan life unfolded within the contrasts between laughter and cruelty, pleasure and adventure, leisure and consciousness of heroism, there was an analogous process in the contrast of knight and lady. The woman dominated the husband and his household; she also appeared in public. A feminine vision of the world developed everywhere; not only in the chivalrous forms of manners and the heroism of a knight-errant, but also in art, in clothing and, finally, in the way of assimilating the Greek element.

The biography of Gallienus, preserved up to our days, transmits us a long list of his "vices". It underlines the emperor's laziness and indifference; his sensuality and his eagerness for pleasures; his love of the circus, the theater and gladiatorial wrestling; of unseemly jokes, banquets, parades and pompous exhibitions. The "almost Homeric chivalry" with which he had to invite Postumus, his counter-emperor, to the duel, an invitation that the latter rejected with the scornful reply that he

was not a gladiator... thus alluding to the love of gladiatorial games of the emperor of Etruscan origin. However, this same chivalry manifested itself in the emperor's appreciation of chivalry and his personal involvement in military operations. The sarcophagus of the Ludovician battle, which dates back to the time of Gallienus, shows the general surrounded by his paladins, actively participating in combat. And he died in the same chivalrous manner that had determined his life and his combats. Heeding a false alarm, he quickly ran to the front rank of the combatants, where he succumbed to the conspirators. If Galieno lacked neither courage nor talent, but the necessary stability, this only confirms that he was a gentleman of pure stock.

The situation outlined above also allows us to understand Gallienus' struggle for the spiritual foundations of Rome and the Empire, of Antiquity in general. Again he waged the struggle in his own way. This is revealed in his behavior towards Christianity.

The persecution imposed by his father Valerian was suspended by him. Everywhere the Christian communities were restored to the kidnapped patrimony, granting them, likewise, the right to congregate. The intention of Gallienus was to win, rather than by force, by the use of spiritual weapons. In this aspect the tendency of his time favored him. For a process had already begun, on the part of Antiquity, of returning to its origins.

At the beginning of the first century, the impending storms were not yet present. Philostratus shared with Pliny the Younger or Favorinus, the candid pleasure in literary activity and being figures of the day, the acceptance, exempt from all criticism, of a presumed intellectual apogee, the vain narcissism. It was still possible to believe that science was not dead. The collector's zeal and the interest in a select erudition managed to register a certain apogee. The light and pleasant style of these collection

works, which presented their material in a loose, attractive and varied form, characterizes the literature of that time.

In later times, Philostratus and Favorinus were considered the great philosophers. Their dynasty was said to have ended with such men. In reality they were about to emerge. When the celebrities of the second sophistic were in full indestructible, everything else is transience and death, flowering, Plato's future renovator lived still hidden. Anonymous individual. Ammonius Saocas loaded bags in the warehouses of Alexandria.... However, by the end of the century the change had taken place. The coexistence of literary talents was displaced by the only exalted personality who gathered in himself all the intellectual wealth.

Plotinus, as a mystic, means a misinterpretation of what mysticism is. What was interpreted as such was "theory", i.e., plasmatic intuition and, therefore, the inherited form of all Greek cognition of god. However, the discourse about the mystic possibly deliberately touches on an essential point, i.e., that he seems to be free of any connection with the epoch. One might believe that Plotinus had been transplanted by chance to that ruthless century ¹.

However, relations with the epoch are not limited to a mere process of insertion in, or absorption by, the epoch. The contrary element to that mechanism that struggles to overcome and tries to dominate, is a force that is difficult to underestimate. The knowledge of it must have taken hold of Plotinus, molding him in such a way that it put him in a position to penetrate into those enclosures whose essence is not becoming or change, but being; not movement or noise, but silence; not success, but greatness.

His position within his epoch seems that of a loner. And yet, it is possible that it will constitute the justification of that same era when it, like others of its kind, will appear before its Judge.

That time was full of activity and active beings. In the person of Plotinus a contrary tendency arose, and before the world of

the spirit, the only self-sufficient one, the other seemed to disintegrate like a fragile spider's web. Before his distant, untouchable world, Plotinian thought is also mortal. But here death does not mean appearance or corruptibility, but the remoteness and greatness of death, inherent to Apollonian cognition. It might be that a man, after spending his life in thought and research, would see at a stroke that all that he had hitherto conceived as fragments, as obscure groping rather than cognition -integrates a whole- that he would see the senseless become sententious, contradiction into harmony. In a single flash the divine organization of the world would then become clear to him. It could be so, and yet there would be no one capable of resisting the grandeur of such a vision. For the extreme cognition is unrepeatable; it is cognition relative to death. Nevertheless, it is advantageous to the transitory in that it has the stigma of its greatness imprinted upon it when confronted with death.

Plotinus is Apollonius, his last flash in history. As always, he remains remoteness and sublimity that does not lower himself to the human struggle, nor does he pretend to organize or administer it sententiously, but God makes it stand out in its fragmented and doubtful form, in what it has of disfigured and disproportionate; he opens at once the abyss that separates the divine being from man. But in a century like that it was necessary to open that abyss so that what is mortal and what is eternal, what has greatness and what does not have it, could be well defined.

Gallienus understood what this man represented. In Campania, the emperor tried to give reality to the "Platonopolis" of Plotinus. The Neoplatonic school supplied him with the appropriate comilitones for the struggle he proposed. And yet there remained an impassable gulf separating the ruler of one worldly empire from another whose empire was not of this world. The emperor with a romantic look, with sensitive lips,

lacked the Apollonian hardness of the other. Likewise, he lacked that touching simplicity oriented towards the essential that characterized Plotinus even in his external customs.

In his struggle for spiritual renewal, Gallienus relied on Hellenism. But what attracted him was not the clarity and severity of thought, *more geometric* realization, inseparable from the classical creations of the Hellenes. The ostentation and the grand gesture, the impressive and the striking, impressed the emperor, thirsty and enthusiastic for beauty, more than the sober dignity of the elevated style. Hellenism offered him what he needed. Above all, in the coins minted by him, the imitation of Alexander and the diadochs appears unmistakable. The upward gaze of the effigies that appear on reliefs and coins can only be interpreted as an imitation of Hellenic models.

The philhellenism of Gallienus - as is beginning to be revealed - could not simply be equated with Hellenism. This is made clear by a later case. The emperor's noblest ally in his efforts to renew the traditional religion was Eleusis. The local clergy, represented by its great families, had long since entered into an alliance with philosophy. Both led to immortality and union with God, though by different paths. With his promotion of the mysteries, Gallienus could refer to Hadrian and the Antonines. But his interpretation again took a particular form.

The deities of Eleusis, mother and daughter, were feminine, and not only in their external appearance: a feminine vision of the world was externalized in the myth and in the cult. Coins depicting Galienus with his forehead girded with a crown of spikes like Demeter, with a woman's hairstyle and feminine features, reveal to what extent this vision of the world influenced him. The legend "Galiene Augusta", which was only later replaced by the male form, shows that Galieno identified himself with Demeter, mistress of the mysteries. This phenomenon had no equal before or since, and to understand Galieno in general, we must go back to his origins.

Etruscan legends on tombstones show a peculiarity that has no parallel either in Rome or in the rest of Italy: that is, the indication of the ancestry of the deceased on the mother's side. The conception of the relationship between man and woman, of the special position of the woman in the home and within the lineage, which is expressed in this way, has been preserved in the nomenclature up to the time of the emperors. The Italic municipal nobility gave evidence of maternal ancestry in a second nickname. Gallienus followed this example. Not only was he of Etruscan origin, but his own name contained that of his mother. Already ancient historiography refers to him in the terms "effeminate emperor", and the equating with Demeter, as well as the forms of the simultaneous art, confirm that the expression was quite accurate. The feminine element is manifested in the curly, abundant, and carefully manicured hairstyles and beards, as well as in the smooth and soft faces. The portrait of that time, including that of the emperor himself, was intended to express sensitivity and romanticism instead of the hardness of the positive and strong-willed man.

The identification with Demeter had its parallels. In a cameo appears the emperor playing the role of Minerva; it also seems that, from time to time, he manifested special veneration for Diana. All these are phenomena that are not simply derivable from some cause, but find their only explanation in the origin of Gallienus. And from this point the contrast with Plotinus is understood in its full extent. Next to Apollonius came to be placed his divine counter-figure. The feminine element was as much a part of Galienus as of the young Dionysos: of the god who had contemplated madness and annihilation in its horrible manifestations, deriving his creative force from that vision.

Decisive events in the life of this emperor were the following: the catastrophe of his father, the first and only emperor to fall alive into enemy hands; loss of the territories located on the right bank of the Rhine, rebellion of the countries of the Danube,

secession of Gaul and constitution of a separate Empire; the death of his son in the war against Postumus; the irrepressible rise of Palmyra. Nothing was spared Gallienus, whose sensitivity and impressionability must have doubly resented each of the blows that fate dealt him. Nevertheless, this "effeminate" character rose up after each of these catastrophes with double tenacity. The indestructible generative and recuperative force, characteristic of women, he also possessed. It was only the blows of destiny that brought Galieno to the category of a man of high maturity, who is portrayed on the medals corresponding to his last years.

Gallienus turned his back on his father, who had made the Roman reputation in the East an object of scorn. He never attempted to rescue him from captivity. Gallienus' goal was to achieve the unity of the Empire. He was never lacking in projects or ingenuity to achieve this; in talent he outstripped all his competitors, and was often rewarded for his efforts with a brilliant victory. To the last moment he must have been confident of his star. The mysteries of which he was an adept preached faith in the salvation of the individual mystic, because his god had also been saved. Above all, there lived in that man, who intended to participate in the foundation of the ideal community according to Plotinus' conception, the faith in an order, in the best State and in its realization. The coins of Gallienus reveal that he wished to be a new Augustus who would heal the world and initiate a golden age. Even the coins minted during his last years, a period of new and serious setbacks, depict details that allude to imminent happiness.

¹The following words are attributed to K. Kerényi.

For the Illyrian successors of Gallienus, these ideas constituted a strange world. A deep gulf separated them from the Hellenic revival. Hellenism, like the Roman concept, had become detached from its ethnic base. The followers of Plotinus were mostly Syrians, and at the court of Zenobia the league of philosophers, dispersed in the wake of the decline of Gallienus, was trying to regroup. Longinus became the head of Palmyrene politics. All this collapsed again under the impact of the Illyrian fist. Aurelian was opposed to everything that was not Roman; he was opposed to the Christians and the political literati, to Syrian inconstancy and to Zenobia's dreams of power. As a teacher and advisor to these elements, Longinus was condemned to death; it was the emperor himself who inflicted the sentence.

Along with the philosophical renaissance, a renaissance in art had begun. The voluptuousness of the man of antiquity was once again highlighted by the pleasure of contemplating the beauty of form and appearance. The mastery in the treatment of surfaces, the turgid contours of the skin and mouth, the splendor of abundant hair, the static gaze lost in the distance, the sublimated materiality of this art, all this ended with the death of Gallienus. A period of mournful grandeur began, bordering on melancholy: in the effigies of the Illyrians, even the tetrarchs give the impression of violence rather than seduction. The hair appears short; stiff, severe, and cogotudos, of square head and pronounced profile: thus the effigies show Aureliano and Probo.

These men were of a different fiber than the philosophers and artists who had surrounded Gallienus, and were likewise distinguished from him. They were less sensitive and impressionable individuals, and also less gifted. But the Illyrian emperors proved to be of a vigorous, active and energetic nature, resembling in this respect the Romans of old. They realized that

the struggle henceforth was the sole and exclusive law, and that all dreams of Greek revival belonged to the past. As officers they had followed General Gallienus as long as possible. On the other hand, in the face of his Hellenism they must have had an attitude of repudiation and indignation. By conquering power themselves, they did not pretend to be anything other than Romans, in accordance with the Illyrian tradition.

Restoration of the Empire was the task that Aurelian had set himself. The grandiose past of Rome, the unity of the ecumenes and of humanity peremptorily pointed him to this path. The all-obscuring sun seemed to him to represent such unity. Both Greek and Roman worshippers could coincide with the Eastern venerators Heliogabalus and Mithra under this sign. The emperor believed himself to be guided by the sun god to victories and successes; to him alone he owed his throne.

In this way, Aurelian anticipated a fundamental concept of the Constantinian monarchy. God gives the purple to the sovereigns, he said, and fixes the duration of their government. In Constantine, this idea returns in a Christian variation: Constantine considered himself an instrument of God in the struggle for the victory of the Church; he was subordinated to the will of the Almighty, who in reality embodied that same will in the world and in history. For Aurelian, the God of the Sun guaranteed the loyalty of his troops and concord for the good of the Empire recovered for the Empire the lost East. As the owner of the Roman Empire, the sun shines on its coins, and as its vicar on earth, the emperor guided the history of the world.

In this respect, the faith given by the coinage, and the lapidary and literary tradition, are both unequivocal and uniform. To think that the religious reforms were dictated by political expediency alone, must be excluded in Aurelian as well as earlier in Augustus. One does not worship a God of one's own making. The intensity with which the new idea took hold of his contemporaries is attested by Constantine, who followed this

God by subordinating his own Empire to him. Even after the conversion to Christianity, the worship of the sun remained latent in the mind of the emperor, remaining anchored in the most intimate part of his being? A man of Aurelian's rectitude and unconditionality must have been moved and impelled throughout his career by the magnitude of such a conception; he must have conceived it as a divine postulate and a divine promise.

Superficially judging, Aurelian went back to the failed enterprise of Heliogabalus. The Phoebus of Emesa again made his entry into Rome. On December 25, the birthday of all the Eastern sun gods, a sumptuous feast was celebrated every four years thereafter in honor of the Deus Sol Invictus. And yet, decisive changes had taken place.

The failure of Epheliogabalus had not discouraged the native clergy. While in Rome all vestiges of the dethroned god were being removed, a new revolution was being projected in Emesa. It always proceeded by postulation of pretenders to the throne, both in the time of Severus Alexander and in the time of Philip the Arab and Valerian. None of them succeeded in the test. Nevertheless, the prestige of the god increased: Gallienus and Claudius minted his effigy on coins. So did the eastern and western counter-emperors. Although politically there was no departure from the example of Heliogabalus, religious propaganda had managed to work successfully in favor of the god by appropriate means. The Ethiopian novel of Heliodorus, written before the middle of that century, characterizes the change. Written under the impression of Heliogabalus' failed enterprise, it indeed highlights the most striking differences.

Heliodorus avoided the Roman world, the starting point of all resistance. He contented himself with conquering the Greek East. The new Helios could suit both Greeks and Orientals. He had been elevated from the oriental orgiastic underworld and equated with the purest, most remote, most spiritual among the

Greek gods. He was not bound to any place, like the celestial star itself. He neither inhabited a sacred stone nor had wives to celebrate weddings. When Selene stood beside Helios, it was not as a wife: equated with the chaste Artemis, she received virgin offerings just like Helios. And the deity chose as his priests a couple still intact.

Like Heliogabalus, Heliodorus bore the name of the sun god in his name. However, neither the god nor his servant had a Syrian name. Not even the name Emesa appears. Or to be more precise: it appears only at the end. The reader realizes with astonishment, after having been conquered by that purest god of Heliodorus, by that portrait of the Hellenic Apollonius, that it is in fact the god of Emesa. It is a surprise that Heliodorus reserved until the end. It is impressive, but it also shows how carefully he had to proceed to win followers to this god in new clothes.

When the Syrian sun god arrived for the second time in Rome, his figure corresponded to the purified concepts that Heliodorus had brought about. No one thought anymore of the return of the sacred stone or of scandalous rites, of wives or of an indigenous name. In this aspect, Heliodoro's novel had had the desired effect. But the idea that Aureliano had of his god was too strange and too defined to be limited to the acceptance of a heterogeneous ideology.

Heliodorus meant conversion by literary means. The novel as an instrument of mission was no longer anything out of the ordinary, since Apuleius and Xenophon of Ephesus had paid homage to Isis, and since Philostratus had recounted the life of Apollonius of Tyana. Emesa had taken this path only after realizing that others were not passable. Epochs that had a compact vision of the world and whose deity was present in a direct way, did not know the novel. On the other hand, the epochs during which the decline of an old order took place, epochs destined to wander and search, did know the novel. The novel is the expression of an open vision of the world, if

possible, and, moreover, also the creation of an era based on the book. The real event is replaced by the event narrated in the book: the novel is read. The novel, although oriented towards a wide circle of readers, led to isolation. Where it had missionary intentions, it struggled to convince the individual.

The novel meant breaking ties where they still existed. It meant escape from a burdensome present and from any community. But, precisely for this reason, the novel was able to satisfy the pretensions of the time. In Emesa, the instrument of disintegration offered by the novel was used diligently and correctly. For the decline of an old world and the longed-for birth of a new one seemed to be motivated by each other.

Under the firm hand of Aureuanus the course of events changed radically. The sun-god was taken away to his private enclosure and promoted to imperial god. Instead of existing in the world of books, far from the reality created by the novel, a new reality was being shaped with his help. Above all, the god was provided with a myth, which, being Roman, at the same time had to be historical.

In Emesa, the Palmyrenees had faced Aurelian to fight the decisive battle. The city constituted, so to speak, the door that led to their city. It was the main seat of the sun-god, but the Palmyreneans also worshipped him. In this battle it was up to the god to decide whether he was on the side of Aurelian or Zenobia.

At the hour of combat, the Roman cavalry faltered and was already contemplating the possibility of escape. Then, a divine apparition joined the infantry exhorting it to resistance. The conqueror made his entry into Emesa and recognized in the Phoebus of that city that vision that had helped his own. In his honor, then, Aurelian erected the temple of Rome, on the slope of the Quirinal.

The Roman forms took hold not only of the myth, but were also transmitted to the cult of the newly introduced god, to

embody it. Aurelian's sun owner received a public temple, while Heliogabalus had built his sanctuaries on land privately owned by the emperor. This new god remained without wife and offspring, in the style of the Roman public gods, especially the Capitoline Jupiter. The new owner was an abstract, spiritual and political symbol, equal to Jupiter even in this detail. The cult was not in the hands of Syrians, but of Roman senators. They were equal to the very venerable pontificals and formed a college of Roman priests.

By elevating the divine lord of Emesa to the category of imperial god, the emperor has done more than carry out a mere Roman reform. We have already emphasized that this god was a universal entity. Indeed, Aurelian gave a homogeneous god not only to the Romans and the inhabitants of the eastern part of the Empire, but also to the Illyrians, Celts and Germanic peoples. In this particular is revealed the rank that these peoples had conquered within the army, and within the structure of the Empire in general.

The coat of arms symbols of the Roman army dating back to the late Roman Empire have been handed down in a number of monuments (among others in the recently found mosaic of Piazza Armerina in Eastern Sicily), but first and foremost in the Public and Military Manual, which in the form preserved to date was completed between 428 and 429. Its twenty-two pages contain over three hundred coat of arms symbols relating to troop units, in color. Many of these symbols are of Central or Northern European origin. Several animals and crowns of rods, in common use among horsemen-peoples, are distinguished, as well as Germanic runes. Military coats of arms related to the sun and its trajectory, with the stars in general, occupy an important place. The Celtic sun wheel or concentric circles can be seen as symbols of the sun in Scandinavian cave paintings, but also in Celtic and Illyrian art. A round disk, raised on a pole, meant for other Illyrian tribes the symbol under which the sun was

worshipped; the same symbol returns in cave paintings but also, in frequent variations, among military coats of arms. It is here that Illyrians meet again with Germanic tribes.

Part of the shield symbols may have been created or granted only in the 4th century. But most of the solar symbols on the coats of arms can only have originated from a shaping will, for which the sun was at the center of its religious, political and military ideology. An army with such symbols on its shields had to be an army of the sun. It belonged to him and obeyed him, it fought under his command. It can only be a question of the army of Aurelian. Just as Constantine ordered his soldiers to mark their shields with the sign of the cross, Aurelian had done it before, with the only difference that this last one imparted to the shields of his army a manifest solar symbolism. To the Christian God there, corresponded the divine sun here. He was the master of the Empire, and had given the emperor the order to unify the globe again. For this reason, the comilitones of Aurelian carried on their shields the symbol of their link with the sun. The fact that Illyrians, Celts and Germans were in this respect in the first place, was in accordance with the existing conditions.

The historical tradition was unfavorable to Aurelian, preserving few of his personal traits for posterity. Contrary to the numerous details transmitted about Septimius Severus and Caracalla, Maesa and Heliogabalus, almost nothing is known about the greatest of the Illyrians. And yet there was a longing to get something out of the scanty data available. It already meant a great deal to have succeeded in capturing the fundamental religious thought of that man, if it has been achieved at all.

The comparison with Galieno again imposes itself. In the latter, his individuality was pleasing, which, ample and prodigal, absorbed in itself all the great thoughts of the time. He was a receptive, romantic man of fine sensibility (bordering on susceptibility), but he rarely knew how to impose the necessary restrictions on himself. His energy did not abandon him even in

his last hour, but it was an energy whose vigor was not invariable. It was sustained by the consciousness of personal superiority, and not by supra-personal forces. And in this very thing lay the importance of Aureliano.

What he lacked in sentiment and receptivity he made up for in toughness and overall harmony. Aurelian was exclusively a military leader and statesman, and the former more than the latter. Galieno was reflected in an abundance of deities, which he related to his own person. Aurelian knew only one divine lord. The formed personality given to the enjoyment of itself, came to be replaced by the awareness of being the instrument of a higher will. This is a contrast that invariably induces reflection: a contrast that tends to stand out precisely in times of transitions.

Aurelian's creation was oriented in a different direction. He turned to Rome's great past in an attempt to fill it with new life. But the national foundations had disappeared. Rome, once a pictorial reality, had become the concept of Rome. The Illyrian renaissance, so to speak, was the first of a long series of Roman renaissances that were to follow. It no longer had an ancient character, but a Western-European one. Where it seemed to look backwards, Aurelian took it forward, towards the future.

Several times there were cases of anticipation of measures and ideas that reappeared under Constantine in a Christian version. Likewise, by making use of the Germans for the defense of the Empire and by understanding them religiously, Aurelian was a precursor of Constantine. These two aspects place both in the process of transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. With the difference that the latter's ties with the Roman element were already loosening, and Aurelian, on the other hand, kept them firm.

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