

## NOTES

1. Published in *Kulturele Kontaktsituasies* (Communications of the University of South Africa B 11 [1960]), 5-17.
2. *Greeks Invading the Roman Government, 7th Brademas Lecture* [1982], 19 = *Roman Papers* 4 (1988), 11. Cf. *Tacitus* (1958), 510ff. He was referring to C. Julius Quadratus Bassus (*AE* '34, 176; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 508) commanding an army in Dacia under Trajan.
3. *IGR* 3, 173ff.; *ILS* 8826; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 573.
4. *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 500 = I 136. R.D. Sullivan, *ANRW* 2, 8 (1977), 937, suggests that he was a king in Cilicia.
5. *OGIS* 533.
6. 'Sed ego hospiti ueteri et amico munusculum mittere uolui leuidense crasso filo, cuius modi ipsius solent esse munera.' Although, as M. Gelzer (*RE* 7A [1939], 1026), points out, the depreciation may not have been entirely unintentional, since the letter (*Fam.* 9. 12) was written to a noted Caesarian — Dolabella.
7. W.E. Heitland, *The Roman Republic* 3 (1909), 361.
8. *RE* 4 (1903), 2401ff.
9. T. Petersson, *Cicero: A Biography* (1920), 508.
10. Even Cicero admits Caesar's anger with Deiotarus (cf. *Deiot.* 3. 8).
11. Suet. *Jul.* 44. 3.
12. Cf. e.g. *Fam.* 15. 1. 6; *Att.* 5. 18. 2; *Deiot.* 14. 39.
13. *BAlex.* 67. 1. Strabo 12. 5. 1, *par.* 567 refers to the period after Caesar's death, but is still relevant. For the earlier period and Deiotarus' acquisition of Lesser Armenia, cf. F.E. Adcock, *JRS* 27 (1937) 12 ff. Cf. generally D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (1950), 373f; 1237; 413; 1267; H.-W. Ritter, *Historia* 19 (1970) 124ff.; A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East* (1984), 228; 299ff.
14. Cf. above, page 88.
15. On Deiotarus' legal obligations, cf. P.C. Sands, *The Client Princes of the Roman Empire under the Republic* (1908), 18f. There was no binding alliance — the senate 'requested' assistance from the king (*Cic. Phil.* 11. 12. 31) in 43 against Antony. At Pharsalus Deiotarus had acted as an 'amicus' (*Deiot.* 5. 13), and was not under compulsion.
16. *BAlex.* 67. 2.
17. *o.c.* (n.7), 361.
18. *Cic. Att.* 14. 9. 3.
19. 'At misit ad Caecilium nescio quem; sed eos, quos misit, quod ire noluerunt, in uinclā coniecit' (*Deiot.* 8. 23).
20. Deiotarus' client relationships with individual Romans fall outside the scope of this article. He had established connections with nearly all the generals sent to the East from Sulla onwards (*Cic. Phil.* 11. 13. 33). Naturally the most important of these was Pompey, but other figures like Cicero and Brutus (Magie, *o.c.* [n.13], 396; 413; 1267) must not be disregarded. Deiotarus was also prepared to act the client to Caesar at times, a fact which Cicero emphasises in *Deiot.* 5. 13f. Nothing definite is known of his connections with Bassus, though the latter may have been able to persuade the King that the old 'Pompeian' cause had re-asserted itself in the East, and that Caesar's power was on the wane. One might even ask whether the juxtaposition of the names of Bassus and Deiotarus in *Phil.* 11. 13. 32-3 is entirely accidental. *Phil.* 2. 37. 94 may also be noted, where Cicero includes Deiotarus among the 'republican' foes of Caesar like the Massiliots and others 'quibus rem publicam

- populi Romani caram esse'. But this is conjecture. Obviously the situation was very complex.
21. Cic. *Phil.* 2. 37. 94. Cf. Magie, *o.c.* (n.13), 425–6; 1275f.
  22. Cic. *ibid.* 95: 'At ille' (Caesar) 'numquam — semper enim absenti adfui Deiotaro — quicquam sibi, quod nos pro illo' (D.) 'postularem, aequum dixit uideri.'
  23. *BAlex.* 68. 1 may be compared for Caesar's censure of Deiotarus in 47 B.C. Cf. further on the trial, D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (1984), 166; K. Bringmann, *Hermes* 114 (1986) 72ff.
  24. This and the following quotations are taken from Petersson, *o.c.* (n.9), 507ff. The theme of the criticism of Caesar's position in Rome as tyrannical is explored with subtlety by E. Olshausen, 'Die Zielsetzung der Deiotariana', in *Monumentum Chilonense ... Festschrift für E. Burck*, ed. E. Léfevre (1975) 115ff.
  25. Cf. e.g. *Marc.* 2. 4; *Lig.* 3. 6ff.
  26. *Deiot.* 12. 33: 'te ... statua posita animos hominum uehementer offensos, plauditi tibi non solere.' cf. Gelzer, *l.c.* (n.6), 1027. H. Boterman, *Gymnasium* 99 (1992) 340ff., lays great weight on Cicero's references to Caesar's unpopularity in Rome and to his tyrannical tendencies.
  27. 'ex urbanis maleolorum sermunculis haec ... esse collecta'.
  28. *Att.* 12. 47. 3; 45, 2; 13. 37. 2; 44. 1.
  29. *Deiot.* 3. 10: 'is rex, quem senatus hoc nomine saepe honorificentissimis decretis appellauisset ...' Cf. 14. 40; Sands, *o.c.* (n.15), 140ff.
  30. The distinction is drawn by Scipio in Livy 27. 19. 5; cf. A. Erskine, *CQ* 41 (1991) 106ff.
  31. Cf. Cic. *Deiot.* 13. 35.
  32. *l.c.* (n.8), 2401.
  33. Cicero goes on to define it as a form of self-control: 'ego tamen frugalitatem, id est modestiam et temperantiam, uirtutem maximam iudico' (*ibid.*). Boterman, *l.c.* (n.26), 331, has shown that Cicero's emphasis on Deiotarus' 'frugalitas' and other virtues is influenced by his philosophical interest in defining the Roman *sapiens*.
  34. 'Magno animo et erecto est, nec umquam succumbet inimicis, ne fortunae quidem' (13. 36).
  35. 'Te eius di penates acceperunt, te amicum et placatum Deiotari regis arae focique uiderunt' (3. 8).
  36. 9. 26; cf. 10. 28, where Deiotarus had had the right kind of military education, so useful in a client prince. In this connection naturally Cicero makes no reference to Deiotarus' Greek education (Niese, *l.c.* [n.8], 2401; cf. Magie, *o.c.* [n.13], 1238). With 10. 28 *BAlex.* (34. 4) should be compared, where the author notes the Roman character of the king's army. Is it pressing 6. 18 too far to suggest that by his reference to 'Iouis illius hospitalis' Cicero implies that Deiotarus was Roman enough to feel a deep Roman scruple?
  37. 'Per dexteram istam te oro, quam regi Deiotaro hospes hospiti porrexisti ...' (3. 8).
  38. 'quocum erat non hospitio solum uerum etiam familiaritate coniunctus' (5. 13).
  39. Of course these 'friendships' were not disinterested. Services were rendered on both sides. In the speech we learn that Deiotarus had long served the interests of Rome (9. 27; cf. 1. 2; 2. 6; 8. 22), as well as those of individual Romans like Pompey (5. 13) and Cicero (14. 39) and especially Caesar (5. 13–14). Much is made of the last point — cf. above p. 95, n. 20.
  40. Note 'error' in 13. 36 and *Phil.* 11. 13. 34.
  41. *Lig.* 6. 17.
  42. Cicero refers to the letter in *Lig.* 3. 7.

43. Cf. above, p. 91f.
44. Note the tone of 3. 10; 5. 14. There is nothing discreditable in the phrase 'regio animo et more' of 7. 19.
45. Cf. Fausset's comment on 9. 27: 'Observe that Deiotarus is invested with the national virtues of the old Roman'.
46. Similar phraseology occurs in *Phil.* 2. 37. 93; 11. 13. 33-34, a glowing account of Deiotarus' many services to Rome.
47. *Fam.* 15. 2. 2. Cf. 15. 1. 6.
48. Cicero's censure of Caesar's treatment of Deiotarus may be noted in passing: 'Caesarem eodem tempore hostem et hospitem uidit — quid hoc tristius? ... spoliatum reliquit (Caesar) et hospitem et regem'. Cf. too the description in 1. 15. 26.
49. *Att.* 14. 1. 2.
50. Cicero, *Brut.* 5. 21; Tac. *Dial.* 21.
51. Cf. e.g. Suet. *Aug.* 48; Sands, *o.c.* (n.15), 142.

*HISTORIA AUGUSTA:*  
THE 'NOMEN ANTONINORUM' THEME

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In AD 138 Antoninus Pius became emperor, a man 'in cunctis postremo laudabilis et qui merito Numae Pompilio ex bonorum sententia comparatur'.<sup>1</sup> This was the beginning of the 'Golden Age of the Antonines'.<sup>2</sup> He was succeeded by Marcus Antoninus, 'qui sanctitate vitae omnibus principibus antecellit',<sup>3</sup> and Verus, who 'neque inter bonos, neque inter malos principes ponitur'<sup>4</sup> — the first time that the Roman Empire was ruled jointly by two emperors.<sup>5</sup> Marcus Aurelius, in turn, was succeeded by his son Commodus, who 'turpis, improbus, crudelis, libidinosus, ore quoque pollutus et constupratus fuit.'<sup>6</sup> 'Thus in the darkness of disillusionment ended the enlightened monarchy of the Antonines'.<sup>7</sup> According to Mason Hammond,<sup>8</sup> the Antonine dynasty ends with Severus Alexander in 235; according to the *HA*, it ends with Heliogabalus, 'ultimus Antoninus'.<sup>9</sup>

According to the *HA* there were eight Antonines, whom the author divides into two groups:<sup>10</sup> firstly the 'Antonini veri',<sup>11</sup> that is Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus,<sup>12</sup> and Antoninus Commodus, those who had the 'nomen Antonini' as a 'verum' (or 'proprium') 'nomen',<sup>13</sup> and secondly the pseudo-Antonines,<sup>14</sup> that is Antoninus Caracallus, Antoninus Geta, Antoninus Diadumenus, and Antoninus Heliogabalus, who had the 'nomen' only as a 'praenomen'.<sup>15</sup> The 'nomen Antoninorum' theme is the most conspicuous single theme in the *Historia Augusta*, and it turns specifically upon these pseudo-Antonines. The 'extravagant play'<sup>16</sup> with the Antonines appears in the series of lives from Septimius Severus to Severus Alexander. It will be worthwhile to have a closer look at the references to the theme.

In the *vita Severi* there are seven references to the 'nomen Antonini': 10.3–6; 14.3; 16.4; 19.2–3; 22.2 and 24.2.

In 10.3 the author relates that Severus gave his eldest son, Bassianus, the name Aurelius Antoninus and the title of Caesar, in order to foil his brother

Geta's aspirations to the throne. This idea is then pursued further in 14.3: Severus caused the senate to give Bassianus Antoninus the title of Caesar and grant him the imperial insignia.<sup>17</sup> In 10.4 it is stated that Severus had dreamed that he would be succeeded by an Antoninus. Because of this dream, according to some people ('quidam ... putant'), Geta was also called Antoninus, in order that he, too, might succeed to the throne (10.5-6).<sup>18</sup> According to other people ('aliqui ... putant'), however, Bassianus was given the name Antoninus because Severus himself wished to change over to the family of Marcus Aurelius.<sup>19</sup> This statement is repeated in 19.2-3, with the additional suggestion that Severus thought that all emperors should in future assume the name Antoninus just as their predecessors had adopted that of Augustus. This explanation of how Geta got the Antoninus name clashes with the claim in 16.4 that the soldiers gave Geta the name Caesar and also called him Antoninus. This statement is repeated in the *vita Caracalli* (1.1) and explains some of the soldiers' anger at Geta's murder (*Cc* 2.4-8; *G* 6).

The assertion that Severus himself gave Geta the name Antoninus (*S.* 10.5-6; 19.2-3) is continued in the *vita Getae* (1.3-2.5). Several reasons are adduced: 'Ex paterna cogitatione', or because his wife, Julia, desired it (*G* 1.3). Further reasons link up with the two above-mentioned passages from the *vita Severi*: because Severus purposed that every emperor from that time onwards should be called Antoninus, just as they had previously been called Augustus (in other words, he had in mind that Geta should succeed him — *cf.* *S* 10.5 and 19.3); out of love for Marcus Aurelius (*cf.* *S* 10.6 and 19.3). Then the author develops a new idea: perhaps ('dicunt aliqui') the use of the name was not so much in honour of Marcus Aurelius, but rather in honour of Antoninus Pius, who had granted Severus his first opportunity in public life, and at the same time because no emperor seemed to him more auspicious for lending his name than one whose personal name had now been borne by four of the emperors (*G* 2.3-5). Thus the author suddenly struck on the idea to make Severus a second Pius:<sup>20</sup> just as Pius had left two Antonini to rule the empire jointly after his death, so Severus should also leave two Antonini to rule the empire jointly. This links up with the long *excursus* in the *vita Severi* (*S* 20-21)<sup>21</sup> that Severus was very delighted at the time of his death because he was leaving two Antonini to rule the state with equal powers, herein following the example of Pius, but that he rejoiced so much the more because Pius had left only two adopted sons while he was leaving sons of his own blood; he was, however, grievously deceived in these hopes because practically no great man ever left a son who was of any value to the state.

There are two more references in the *vita Getae* to the fact that Geta himself was called Antoninus by his father: 5.3: 'Post Parthicum bellum ... Geta quoque Caesaris et Antonini, ut quidam dicunt, nomen accepit',

and 3.5: one of the omens reported after Geta's birth portended his future rule: a lamb was born on the same day and time as Geta, with purple wool on his forehead, on the farm of a plebeian called Antoninus. The whole *vita*, however, gives the impression of an afterthought, hastily composed, patched together with material taken mainly from the *vitae* of Severus and Caracallus, and it never becomes a real biography.<sup>22</sup> This *vita* was probably written after completion of the whole series Septimius Severus to Severus Alexander, and then inserted into the group. One gains the strong impression that this whole idea gradually took shape while the author was composing the series. At some stage he came upon the idea of composing the history of the pseudo-Antonine dynasty in the same way as that of the original Antonine dynasty: Severus would be a second Pius and founder of another Antonine dynasty, who left two sons, Antonini, to rule the empire with equal powers. And, as he had composed the *vitae* of Pius' two successors, Marcus and Verus, he had to compose the *vitae* of Caracallus and Geta, the successors of Severus, the second Pius, as well: Caracallus as a second Marcus and Geta as a second Verus.<sup>23</sup> The author, however, was in too much of a hurry, or too careless (or simply lost interest) to round off the *vita* completely. This life was written primarily for the sake of the theme.<sup>24</sup>

There are three references to the 'nomen' in the *vita Caracalli*: *Cc* 8.3: Papinianus had been entrusted by Severus with the specific care of the two sons and thus always tried to reconcile them; *Cc* 9.2: Heliogabalus was called Antoninus because the name had become so dear to the people; *Cc* 8.10: Macrinus gave the name Antoninus to his son Diadumenus because the praetorian guard desired an Antoninus as emperor.

In the *vitae Severi*, *Caracalli* and *Getae*, there are two distinct lines with regard to the 'nomen Antoninorum' theme. One, historically correct, concerns Bassianus, the other one, fictitious, concerns Geta, and there are discrepancies between these two lines which represent two phases in the composition of the series.

The composition of the series might then be reconstructed as follows. When the author reached Septimius Severus he was very well aware of the fact that Bassianus had been given the name Antoninus by his father. This fact must have struck him, and because the Antonine dynasty was so famous he decided to let it play a key role in the biography. *S* 10.1-6, the passage in which the event is described when Severus named his son Bassianus Antoninus — after the war against Niger, just when he had received the disconcerting news that Albinus had also rebelled against his rule — became the focal point of the life of Severus. 10.3 belongs to the original conception of the *vita*. This is the only instance where the fact is mentioned that Severus gave his son Bassianus the name Antoninus. This idea is developed further in 14.3 where it is stated that Severus forced the

senate to give Bassianus Antoninus the title of Caesar and to grant him the imperial insignia. The fact that Bassianus was an Antoninus is mentioned here without any further explanation, and was also part of the original conception. 10.4 and 10.6 can also be regarded as belonging to the original conception. 10.5, however, breaks the train of thought in the passage 10.1–6. If this sentence is taken out of the text, 'illum' in 10.6 refers to Bassianus, and it then links up with the statement in 19.3 (that all emperors should in future be called Antoninus) and concurs with Aurelius Victor 19.30. Syme<sup>25</sup> also regards 10.5 as a later insertion.

*S* 16.4 states that the soldiers gave Geta the name Caesar and furthermore called him Antoninus. This statement contradicts *vita Getae* 1.3–2.5, where it is argued that Severus himself gave Geta the name, and also *S* 10.5. It is repeated in *Cc* 1.1. Therefore this can also be regarded as belonging to the original conception. It is quite possible that the author could have found it in one of his (now lost) sources: 'ut plerique in litteras tradunt' (16.4). Syme's assertion<sup>26</sup> that this is also a later insertion is therefore probably not correct. It is unlikely that the author would have made contradictory insertions. It is more probable that the author found this statement in one of his sources and that it gave him the idea to make Geta an Antoninus.

*S* 19.2–3 also belongs to the original conception, with the exclusion of the words 'cui et ipsi in honorem Marci Antonini nomen imposuit' (*S* 19.2b). This phrase corresponds with *S* 10.5 ('unde Getam etiam quidam Antoninum putant dictum'), which is clearly an insertion and is repeated in *G* 2.1.<sup>27</sup>

In 22.2, as one of Severus' 'omina mortis', it is related that Severus had a vision that he was placed between the Antonines by Jupiter, and in 24.2 it is stated that he was buried in the tomb of the Antonines. It is possible that these two references also belong to the original conception, and may have contributed to the author's idea of a second Antonine dynasty.

After completion of the *vita Severi*, the author immediately proceeded with the *vita Caracalli*. In *Cc* 1.1 it is briefly stated why Caracallus was called Antoninus: 'alterum pater dixit', agreeing with *S* 10.3, and why Geta was named Antoninus: 'unum Antoninum exercitus . . . dixit', in agreement with *S* 16.4. *Cc* 1.1 thus links up directly with the original conception of the *vita Severi*.<sup>28</sup> There are two further references to the 'nomen' in the life of Caracallus: 8.9–10: Macrinus called his son Diadumenus Antoninus because the praetorian guard wanted an Antoninus as emperor,<sup>29</sup> and 9.2: Caracallus' son Heliogabalus was called Antoninus because the name had taken root in the hearts of all, even as had the name of Augustus. Syme,<sup>30</sup> probably correctly, suggests that these two references are additions, inserted after a revision of the series at a later stage.

In the *vita Macrini* there are many more references to the 'nomen Antoninorum' theme, and it seems that, at this stage of the composition of the series, the idea had more or less taken on a final form. The author wanted to point out that Macrinus' rule depended, just as had that of Severus, on the 'nomen Antoninorum'. First he called himself Antoninus (*OM* 2.1),<sup>31</sup> and thereafter, like Severus, he gave the name to his son (*OM* 2.5).<sup>32</sup> In a long *excursus* (*OM* 2.5–3.9) the author lists the reasons why Macrinus named his son Antoninus, and at the same time he explains the origin of this obsession with the name: the priestess Caelestis at Carthage, when consulted, uttered the name Antoninus eight times, and, says the author, if all who bore the name Antoninus were to be counted, this would be the number; another possible reason: to remove the soldiers' suspicion that he (Macrinus) had slain Antoninus (that is Caracallus); and a third reason: the love for this name was so great among the people and soldiers that they would not deem a man worthy of the imperial power if he were not called Antoninus. In *OM* 5.1 it is repeated that Macrinus ordered the soldiers to give him the name Antoninus and *OM* 6 consists of a letter to the senate in which Macrinus deplores the death of Caracallus and attempts to compensate for this loss by naming his son Antoninus 'ne vobis desit Antoninorum nomen, quod maxime diligitis' (6.7). *OM* 7.5–8 is another *excursus* on the 'nomen' theme: the Antonini in fact gradually degenerated and the whole obsession with the name actually became senseless. *OM* 9.1–6 relates how Heliogabalus got the name: his mother spread the story that he was the son of Caracallus. In *OM* 10.6 the author says of Diadumenus: 'non enim aliquid dignum in eius vita erit, quod dicatur, praeter hoc quod Antoninorum nomini est velut nothus appositus' — an indication that a *vita* of Diadumenus will also be written and an explanation why this *vita* would be unsatisfactory. And lastly, in *OM* 14.1, it is stated that Diadumenus was an Antoninus only in his dreams.

It seems then that the *vita Macrini*, with the exception of the *excursus* *OM* 2.5–3.9, was written immediately after the *vita Caracalli*, but before the *vita Getae*. This *excursus* was added later, after the complete development of the theme, that is after the *vita Alexandri*, and after the *vita Getae* had been added to the series. It is quite possible that it replaced a short paragraph, or perhaps only a sentence, which stated that Diadumenus was called Antoninus because of the obsession with the name. The *excursus* *OM* 7.5–8 could also have been added to the *vita* at a later stage, but since the name of Geta does not appear in this list of Antonini, it is possible that it was part of the original conception of the *vita*. In any case, it must have been written before the *vita Getae* was added to the series.

Since the author had already written a *vita* of Caracallus, as the Antoninus son of Septimius Severus, he was obliged to write a *vita Diadumeni* as well, as the Antoninus son of Macrinus.<sup>33</sup> He does apologise, however:

'Antonini Diadumeni pueri . . . nihil habet vita memorabile, nisi quod Antoninus dictus est et quod ei stupenda omnia sunt facta imperii non diutini' (*Dd* 1.1). Compare this with the statement in *Dd* 6.1: 'Haec sunt quae digna memoratu in Antonino Diadumeno esse videantur. cuius vitam iunxissem patris gestis, nisi Antoninorum nomen me ad edendam pueruli specialem expositionem vitae coegisset'. In *Dd* 1.2-8 a careful explanation is supplied why and how Diadumenus became an Antoninus. In *Dd* 2.3-4 Diadumenus undertakes to act in a manner which is worthy of the 'nomen Antoninorum'. *Dd* 6.2-8.1 is another long *excursus* on the theme: the 'Antonini veri' had the name as a 'nomen proprium' while the pseudo-Antonini, that is Caracallus, Geta and Diadumenus (Heliogabalus is not listed here) bore the name as 'praenomen'. This *excursus* is an expansion on the first *excursus* (or both) in the *vita Macrini*. It looks like a passage that had been added to the *vita* at a later stage, probably together with the *excursus* in the *vita Macrini*, to round off the theme.

At this stage of composition the author could have conceived the idea to write a *vita Getae* as well. This would enable him to compose a series on the pseudo-Antonini similar to that on the real Antonini, as a group of four, with Heliogabalus as the last Antoninus. This would at the same time enable him to set Severus Alexander, in his opinion an ideal emperor and an antitype to Heliogabalus,<sup>34</sup> apart from the rest. Alexander would then refuse to be an Antoninus although he was entitled to the 'nomen' and although the senate urged him to assume it.<sup>35</sup>

All the references to the 'nomen' in the *vita Heliogabali* point to the fact that Heliogabalus was the last (and the worst) of the Antonini; that he was not really an Antoninus, but rather a Varius or Heliogabalus. After a short introduction (*Hel* 1.1-3), there follows a long explanation on Heliogabalus' names (1.4-3.3). It is stated that he became emperor simply because he was regarded as the son of Caracallus, and that he assumed the 'nomen Antoninorum' 'vel in argumentum generis vel quod id nomen usque adeo carum esse cognoverat gentibus, ut etiam parricida Bassianus causa nominis amaretur' (1.4-5).<sup>36</sup> His real name, however, was Varius, probably 'quod vario semine, de meretrice utpote, conceptus videretur' (2.2). Later on he got the name Heliogabalus because he was a priest of the sun (1.5). He was the last of the Antonines (1.7) and a smirch on the 'nomen' (2.4). Yet everybody was excited about this new Antoninus, because he had the name 'quod non solum titulo, ut in Diadumeno fuerat, sed etiam in sanguine redditum videbatur' (3.1). The people, however, were soon disappointed in their high expectations (3.3 ff.).

In *Hel* 8.4-5 a vicious attack is launched on the reputation of Macrinus, and Diadumenus is called a pseudo-Antoninus. This paragraph is out of context and, therefore, probably a later insertion.

In *Hel* 9 it is related that Heliogabalus associated himself with Mar-

cus Aurelius, although 'hic Varius et Heliogabalus et ludibrium publicum diceretur, nomen autem Antonini pollueret, in quod invaserat' (9.2). After his death, 'nomen eius, id est Antonini, erasum est senatu iubente remansitque Varii Heliogabali, si quidem illud adfectato retinuerat, cum vult videri filius Antonini' (17.4).<sup>37</sup> In 18.9 the author repeats that he was the last of the Antonini and that the senate took the name away from him, and then proceeds: 'quem nec ego Antoninum vocassem nisi causa cognitionis, quae cogit plerumque dici ea etiam nomina, quae sunt abolita' (18.2). And instead of the name Antoninus, a number of abusive names are attributed to him (17.5). *Hel* 33.8 concludes the *vita Heliogabali*: 'hic finis Antoninorum nomini in re p. fuit, scientibus cunctis istum Antoninum tam vita falsum fuisse quam nomine.'

The whole passage *Hel* 34 and 35 is an appendage, probably added to the *vita* when *S* 20 and 21 were written. In *Hel* 34.6 it is stressed once more that Heliogabalus was the last of the Antonines and that this name was never again used by an emperor, not even by the Gordiani, for they were definitely not Antonini.

In the biography of Severus Alexander it is emphasized that Heliogabalus should rather not be called Antoninus (*SA* 1.1-2); in fact, he not only sullied the name of the Antonines but also brought shame on the Roman Empire (*SA* 2.1). Severus Alexander, on the other hand, had more right to the name than Heliogabalus, and therefore the senate urged him to accept it. He refused, however (*SA* 5.3). Alexander's refusal was of great importance to the author of the *HA*, and therefore he devoted much attention to it — six chapters (*SA* 6-12). In this way he stressed the fact that the Antonine dynasty was past and that a new era had started with Alexander.<sup>38</sup> Alexander had just as much right to the name as had Heliogabalus, but since the Antonine dynasty was a degenerating dynasty, and Alexander was an ideal emperor, he had to refuse the 'nomen'.

In chapters 6 to 12 of the *vita Alexandri* the author writes elaborately on the matter. The senate was adamant that Alexander should accept the 'nomen' so that he might restore its reputation which had been disgraced by Heliogabalus, and also to avenge the wrongs against the good Antonines (*SA* 7 and 8.3).<sup>39</sup> Alexander was not willing to take such a burden on himself, since he would not be able to do justice to so great a name (*SA* 8.3-4).<sup>40</sup> The senate, however, insisted. They reminded him of the 'pietas' of Pius, the 'doctrina' of Marcus, the 'innocentia' of Verus and the 'fortitudo' of Bassianus;<sup>41</sup> Commodus was rejected because of his depravity and Diadumenus had been too young and moreover never had had the opportunity to demonstrate his attitude towards the 'nomen' (*SA* 9.1-3).<sup>42</sup> Alexander reminded the senate of the fact that the previous bearer of the 'nomen' had been 'non solum bipedum sed etiam quadrupedum spurcissimus' (*SA* 9.4); not that he himself expected to become like him (*SA* 9.7)

— the senate did not expect it either (*SA* 9.4–5) — but he did not want the ‘nomen’ in any case (*SA* 9.7), since Pius, Marcus, and Verus had received the name through adoption, Commodus had inherited it, Diadumenus had assumed it, Bassianus had pretended it, and in the case of Varius (that is Heliogabalus) it had been a mere mockery (*SA* 10.3–6).<sup>43</sup> He would rather endeavour to make the name which he brought to the office a name coveted by future emperors (*SA* 11.1). Thus the author stresses again that a new era in the history of Rome starts with Severus Alexander.

The ‘nomen Antoninorum’ had become the name of a dynasty. This was one of the reasons why Heliogabalus was given the name (*Hel* 1.4) and also the reason why the senate urged Alexander to assume it (*SA* 5.4). It is this idea the author wanted to emphasise. And this is also the reason why he put forward the idea that the next line of hereditary rulers in Roman imperial history, the Gordiani, were also regarded as Antonini.<sup>44</sup> This ‘fact’ is then used to lend weight to his opinion that Heliogabalus was the last Antoninus, whatever other people might think. This idea occurs for the first time in *Hel* 18.1 and again in *Hel* 24.6. These were probably later insertions into the text, when the author made certain adaptations to round off his theme. It appears also in the *excursus* in *OM* 2.5–3.9 and is repeated in the *Gordiani Tres* 4.7 and 17.1.

To conclude: the development of the theme can be reconstructed as follows. The *vita Severi* was written first, without 10.5,<sup>45</sup> 19.2–3, and 20–21. Then followed the *vita Caracalli*; then the *vita Macrini*, without at least the *excursus OM* 2.5–3.9, instead of which there might have been a single statement that Macrinus called his son Antoninus.<sup>46</sup> Then followed the *vita Diadumeni* without the long *excursus Dd* 6.2–8.1. Upon this followed the *vita Heliogabali*, without 24, 25, and 28.1. Chapter 8.4 may also be a later insertion.

It seems that, at this stage of the composition, the theme became clear to the author. To round it off, he went back and added certain parts to the already composed lives. First he wrote a *vita Getae*. In this way he was able to elaborate his idea of a second Antonine dynasty, consisting of four Antonini. The logical corollary to this idea, namely that Severus emulated Pius and left two sons (but not adopted sons) to jointly rule the empire, necessitated certain additions to the *vita Severi*, *S* 10.5 and 19.2–3, as well as the long *excursus S* 20–21.

A synthesis of the whole theme became necessary at this stage. This was effected by means of two long *excursus* in the *vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenus (*OM* 2.5–3.9; *Dd* 6.2–8.1), cleverly done in such a way that these two *vitae* give the impression of having been composed around these *excursus*. More or less at the same time the additions to the *vita Heliogabali* (14–15, 18.1 and possibly also 8.4) were added.

With skilful manipulation of historical data and strategically placed references to the 'nomen Antoninorum', the author succeeded in joining together the *vitae* of nine emperors into a separate theme within the corpus of 30 biographies, constructed ingeniously as a ring composition. The theme begins with Septimius Severus, the first person to make use of the 'nomen Antoninorum' as a political instrument to safeguard his own rule and to found a dynasty. The theme ends with Severus Alexander who was fully entitled to use the 'nomen' as well, but who refused it and preferred to be emperor in his own right and under his own name. The pivotal point of the composition is the *vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenus. Their rules represent an historical interlude, and the author made their *vitae* a literary interlude. These *vitae* contain the synthesis of all the different threads of the theme. The Lives of Caracallus/Geta and Heliogabalus, the first and last emperors of the pseudo-Antonine dynasty, form a parallel pair on both sides of the interlude.

Schematically this can be represented as follows:

	<p>Septimius Severus      not an Antoninus, but the first man who made use of the 'nomen' as a political instrument.</p> <p>Caracallus/Geta      the first Antonini of the pseudo-Antonine dynasty; Antonini for political reasons; 'bad' emperors.</p> <p>Macrinus/Diadumenus      historical and literary interlude; contains the synthesis of the theme.</p> <p>Heliogabalus      last Antoninus of the pseudo-Antonine dynasty; Antoninus for political reasons; a 'bad' emperor.</p> <p>Severus Alexander      could have been Antoninus by precedent; refused to abuse the 'nomen' for political reasons; beginning of a new era.</p>
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From the reconstructed development of the theme it is clear that the author did not have a clear conception of the theme at the outset, but that it gradually took shape while he was at work. After completion, however, it presented at least a sensible structure: seven biographies had been ingeniously structured around a single theme, the 'nomen Antoninorum'. One gains the impression that these *vitae* were written in the first instance for the sake of this theme, the most conspicuous single theme in the whole corpus. But it is not an isolated, detached theme; it is the synthesis of an idea that runs like golden threads throughout the *Historia Augusta*: the author's views on hereditary succession.

Hereditary succession is an undesirable practice and it is detrimental to the state, because it is a 'historical fact' that practically no great man has ever left the world a son of real excellence or value.<sup>47</sup> A name or reputation does not guarantee good government. Therefore it is just as undesirable for a person to try to attach himself in an artificial way to a dynasty. A dynasty degenerates of necessity; even an adoptive dynasty: neither Augustus nor Trajan could find suitable adoptive successors.<sup>48</sup>

The most obvious disadvantage of a dynasty is that it reduces 'imperium' to a personal possession. Hadrian realised it when he undertook to administer the 'res publica' in such a way that men would know that it was not his own property, but that it belonged to the people.<sup>49</sup> With regard to the adoption of Aelius, Hadrian stated expressly that he was looking for an heir, not for his personal belongings, but for the 'res publica'.<sup>50</sup> When Tacitus was made emperor he was warned 'ne parvulos tuos, si te citius fata praevenierint, facias Romani heredes imperii, ne sic rem p. patresque conscriptos populumque Romanum ut villulam tuam, ut colonos tuos, ut servos relinuas. quare circumspecte, imitate Nervas, Traianos, Hadrianos. ingens est gloria morientis principis rem p. magis amare quam filios'.<sup>51</sup> And Florianus is reproached for seizing the imperial power after the death of Tacitus 'quasi hereditarium esset imperium'.<sup>52</sup>

Commodus became emperor for the sole reason that he was Marcus Aurelius' son. And what could have been more fortunate for Marcus than not to have left Commodus as his heir?<sup>53</sup> And Marcus should have known better, for he had been concerned about his son's behaviour.<sup>54</sup> When Verus warned Marcus against Avidius Cassius, he replied, 'plane liberi mei pereant, si magis amari merebitur Avidius quam illi, et si rei publicae expediet, Cassium vivere quam liberos Marci'.<sup>55</sup> And still he bequeathed the 'imperium' to Commodus — with tragic results. Valerianus was an excellent emperor, but his son Gallienus, who *inherited* the 'imperium', was an evil man who 'moribus rem p. perdiderat'.<sup>56</sup> And the result of his evil rule was the period of the *Tyranni Triginta*, as stated over and over again.<sup>57</sup> Carus can be regarded as a good rather than a bad emperor, but he would have been much better, had he not left Carinus to be his heir.<sup>58</sup>

Adoptive succession is preferable: Marcus Aurelius is proof of that.<sup>59</sup> In the *vita Aureliani* the advantages of adoption are listed.<sup>60</sup> But since it primarily concerns the 'gloria' of a family, it is not infallible,<sup>61</sup> as several examples show. In his choice of a successor, Hadrian was influenced by personal considerations. Aelius' sole recommendation was his beauty,<sup>62</sup> and Hadrian was concerned about him.<sup>63</sup> Fortunately Aelius died an early death.<sup>64</sup> Even Marcus Aurelius, an adopted successor and excellent emperor, could not act against his wife's immorality, for then he would also have lost his dowry, the 'imperium'.<sup>65</sup>

This brings us to two other *vitae* within the ambit of the theme, those

of Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus.<sup>66</sup> Since these *vitae* are of very little value to an historian,<sup>67</sup> their inclusion in the series must be for a literary purpose,<sup>68</sup> in contrast with the *vitae Caracalli* and *Getae*. The clue is to be found in *S* 20–21: Severus thought that he had improved on Pius in that he had left two natural sons as successors, whereas Pius had but left two adopted sons. The implication is that Severus would have done better, had he left two adopted sons. Pescennius Niger, the model militarist and exponent of military discipline,<sup>69</sup> and Clodius Albinus, protagonist of the authority of the senate,<sup>70</sup> represent two important attributes of the 'princeps optimus' and illustrate the statesmanship of the good emperors in the *HA*, viz. Severus Alexander,<sup>71</sup> Claudius,<sup>72</sup> Tacitus,<sup>73</sup> and Probus.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, both had an excellent reputation,<sup>75</sup> were popular,<sup>76</sup> and had already given proof of their statesmanlike ability.<sup>77</sup> Severus at one time even seriously considered adopting them as successors.<sup>78</sup>

The author of the *HA* was no genius; he was inaccurate, careless, hasty, and definitely not interested in finishing touches. But he was no fool either. Despite his failings, he succeeded in composing nine *vitae* around a central theme, which represents the synthesis of his ideas on the appointment of emperors, spread throughout the corpus. This is not history. History to him was merely a means to a literary end. And to attain that end, he had no scruples about inventing or distorting facts.<sup>79</sup> Even his choice of genre was in fact not determined by his intention to write biographies as such: these were actually only a handy instrument for his purpose. 'Scribe ut libet' was, after all, the advice he had allegedly received from Iunius Tiberianus.<sup>80</sup>

## NOTES

1. *HA*, *AP* 2.2. All references to the *Historia Augusta* are according to the abbreviations of Carolus Lessing, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae Lexicon*, Leipzig 1901–1906.
2. Cf. H.M.D. Parker, *A History of the Roman World, AD 138–337*, London 1969, ix, and Wolfgang Seyfarth, *Römische Geschichte, Kaiserzeit I*, Darmstadt 1974, 174.
3. *MA* 1.1.
4. *V* 1.3.
5. *MA* 7.5–6; cf. also Mason Hammond, *The Antonine Monarchy*, American Academy at Rome 1959, 2–3.
6. *C* 1.7.
7. Parker, *op. cit.* (n.2) 35.
8. *Op. cit.*
9. *OM* 8.8. Cf. also *Hel* 1.7; 18.1 and 34.6.
10. *OM* 3.3–4; 7.5–8; *Dd* 6.2–10.
11. *OM* 3.7.
12. Verus, of course, was no historical Antonine (cf. Ronald Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, Oxford 1971, 79), but the *HA* calls him Antoninus several times: *AP* 4.5; 6.10; 10.3; *MA* 6.7 and *V* 1.3. It is possible that the author got the idea from

Eutropius (8.9.1); on the other hand, it suited his theme to regard Lucius Verus as an Antoninus. It seems that the theme gradually took shape while the author was writing and it is possible that, when the theme was fully developed, the author returned to the lives of Pius and Marcus to add these references. Syme (*op. cit.* 87) argues that the references to Verus in the lives of Pius and Marcus are later insertions. It is, of course, also possible that the author found this in his lost sources and initially got the idea for the theme from them.

13. *Dd* 6.4-8.
14. Cf. *Hel* 8.4.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Syme, *op. cit.* (n.12) 84.
17. Henceforth he was officially called Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Caesar. Cf. Dessau, *ILS* 419.
18. There exists no inscriptional or numismatic evidence that Geta was ever called Antoninus.
19. See also Dio Cassius 75.7.4 and 76.9.4.
20. The impression is strong that the author developed the idea while writing, but that he was too careless in the end to carry it through completely and to iron out all the inconsistencies which had inevitably arisen.
21. It probably prompted the writing of this long *excursus* which was then added to the life of Severus after completion of the life of Geta.
22. Or dictated, cf. *T* 33.8.
23. As a contrasting pair, as well.
24. Just as the life of Diadumenus, equally inadequate as a biography.
25. *Op. cit.* 82.
26. *Loc. cit.*
27. Syme, *loc. cit.*; 'In honorem Marci' refers to Bassianus.
28. Syme (*op. cit.* 86), however, regards this also as a later insertion.
29. Note the interesting resemblance to Aurelius Victor 22.2.
30. *Op. cit.* 86.
31. On inscriptions he was called 'imp. Caes. M. Opellius Severus Macrinus Pius Felix Aug.' He never had the name Antoninus; cf. Dessau, *ILS* 462,463,464,465.
32. His official names were M. Opellius Antoninus Diadumenianus Caesar; cf. Dessau, *ILS* 465.
33. As he has already stated in *OM* 10.6.
34. Cf. Werner Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser*, Darmstadt 1972, 3-4, 304 ff.
35. *SA* 5.3.
36. On inscriptions (Dessau, *ILS* 466,367,467 et al.) he was called 'imp. Caes. M. Aurelius Antoninus Pius'.
37. On several inscriptions the name Antoninus has been erased; cf. Dessau *ILS* 466,468, et al.
38. One gets the impression that the author is polemising against an idea that Severus Alexander was also an Antoninus. While Heliogabalus was still alive Severus Alexander was called 'Antonini filius' (cf. Dessau *ILS* 466,474: 'imp. Caes. M. Au[rell. An]tonini Pii Felicis Aug. fil.'). but he was indeed never called Antoninus. As emperor his official title was 'imp. Caes. Aurelius Severus Alexander Pius Felix Aug.' (cf. Dessau *ILS* 375, 479, 480 et al.).
39. It is rather odd that Bassianus is mentioned here among the good Antonini. This is contrary to the tenor of the *vita Caracalli* and the *excursus* in the biographies of Macrinus and Diadumenus.

40. Diadumenus, on the other hand, accepted the 'nomen' and expressed the hope that he would be able to do justice to it: *Dd* 2.3.
41. The same idea is expressed in *Dd* 7.4, but Bassianus is not mentioned there.
42. On Commodus, cf. *Dd* 7.1-4.
43. Cf. also *Dd* 6.1-10 as an extension on *OM* 3.7.
44. The idea of the Gordiani as Antonini was probably fictitious, or the author may have got the idea from Aurelius Victor's (26.1) *Antonius* Gordianus. The similarity between Antoninus and Antonius could have induced him to make use of it in order to stress the idea of a continuing dynasty.
45. Possibly 10.4-6.
46. The second *excursus* in the *vita Macrini* (7.5-8) may also be a later insertion, but since the name of Geta is absent in the list of Antonini there, I would rather regard it as part of the original conception.
47. *S* 20.4.
48. *S* 20.3.
49. *H* 8.3.
50. *Ael* 4.5.
51. *Tac* 6.8-9.
52. *Tac* 14.1; cf. also *Cl* 12.2-3 with regard to Quintilius.
53. *S* 21.5; cf. also *MA* 28.4.
54. *MA* 17.1-12; 18.10.
55. *AC* 1.7-9 and 2.8.
56. *Gall* 1.1.
57. E.g. *Gall* 21.3: 'nunc transeamus ad viginti tyrannos qui Gallieni temporibus *contemptu mali principis* exstiterunt'. Also *T* 3.3-4; 5.1-7; 8.9; 9.1-4; 10.1-2; 11.1; 12.1-2; 22.5; 23.2; 26.1; 29.1; 30.1; 31.1.
58. *Car* 3.8.
59. Cf. the request to Tacitus, *Tac* 6.9.
60. *A* 14.5-7.
61. *A* 14.5.
62. *H* 23.10-12.
63. *H* 23.14; *Ael* 3.7-4.6.
64. *Ael* 4.1-8; *H* 23.16. It is possible that the *vita Aelii* was written specifically to illustrate what could happen in the case of an injudicious adoption.
65. *MA* 19.8-9.
66. They have been classified as secondary or ancillary lives, 'Nebenviten' (cf. Mommsen, *Hermes* 25 [1890] 243 ff. = *Ges. Schr.* 7 [1909] 316 sqq.) a somewhat unfortunate misnomer since it often causes these lives to be studied as a separate group (cf. Ronald Syme, *op. cit.* 54) without regard for their connection with the so-called main lives.
67. Johannes Hasebroek, *Die Fälschung der Vita Nigri und Vita Albi in den Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Berlin 1916. Also cf. Norman H. Baynes *The Historia Augusta. Its Date and Purpose*, Oxford 1926, 88 ff., and Syme, *op. cit.*, 60 f.
68. Cf. Baynes, *loc. cit.* and Syme, *op. cit.* 66.
69. Cf. *PN* 3.3-127, 7-9; 10.1-7 and 11.1-6.
70. Cf. *ClA* 12.1-14; 13.3-14.6.
71. As to the senate: *SA* 19; 21.3-5; 52.2; as to the army: 12.4-5; 25.1-2; 50.1; 51.5-8; 52.1; 53-54; 59.4-5.
72. As to the senate: *Cl* 3.1-2; 4; 18.1-2; as to the army: 11; 12.5.
73. *A* 11, and the whole *vita Taciti*.

74. As to the senate: *Car* 1-2; *Pr* 11.2-4; 13.1; 24.4; as to the army: *Pr* 8; 20.3-6; 22.4; 23.
75. Pescennius Niger: *PN* 33.9-12; 4.1-5; 12.4-8; Clodius Albinus: *CIA* 2.1-5; 6.8; 10.4-11.1.
76. Pescennius Niger: *PN* 2.2-4; 3.1-2; Clodius Albinus: *CIA* 3.5; 7.2; 12-14.
77. Pescennius Niger: *PN* 7.2-6; Clodius Albinus: *CIA* 13.3-10.
78. *PN* 4.7-8; *CIA* 3.4; 6.8; 10.3.
79. Cf. Frank Kolb, *Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta*, Bonn 1972.
80. A 2.1.

## AMMIANUS' TERMINUS AND THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS I

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The long and fruitful association between Ammianus Marcellinus and Charles Naudé has been recently acknowledged in an authoritative study by J.F. Matthews.<sup>1</sup> One of the subjects which has occupied Prof. Naudé and other scholars is the composition of Ammianus' last books.<sup>2</sup> My scope here is considerably narrower and touches only on the last paragraphs of Ammianus' history. The thirty-first book of Ammianus describes the battle of Adrianople, the death of Valens, and the defeat of the eastern Roman army in 378. It then proceeds to highlight the activities of the victorious Goths, their siege of Adrianople, their plundering of the Thracian countryside, and their march to the imperial capital, Constantinople. Ammianus then leaves the Goths outside the city walls, fighting the Saracens and plundering the countryside, and transfers his story to the further parts of Asia Minor where a local commander, Iulius, orchestrates a massacre of all the Goths stationed in the region.<sup>3</sup>

Iulius' story is also narrated by Zosimus.<sup>4</sup> The two historians differ, however, in their chronology. Ammianus seems to place the episode fairly soon after the battle of Adrianople, and before the accession of Theodosius I; Zosimus postpones it to the period following Theodosius' elevation.<sup>5</sup> Modern scholars have generally favoured Ammianus' chronology.<sup>6</sup> But Ammianus is not always right and Zosimus is not invariably wrong. In what follows I propose to re-examine the chronology of events immediately following Adrianople, with particular attention to the accession of Theodosius I.

By any reckoning the story of Iulius, coming, as it does hard on the heels of the dramatic events taking place in other parts of the eastern empire, is anti-climactic. Its appearance at such an important junction in Ammianus' narrative has been explained on personal grounds. Ammianus approved of Iulius' action since, to his mind, it saved the eastern regions of the empire

from the fate of Thrace.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, his own city, Antioch, remained secure as a result of Iulius' initiative.<sup>8</sup>

Whether Ammianus composed his last books in the late 380s or the early 390s, he was then in a position to evaluate the policy which Theodosius adopted vis-à-vis the Goths throughout the 380s. Coming to power at a critical moment in the history of Rome, the emperor could scarcely afford to resort to the tactics adopted by Iulius. Instead, Theodosius' Gothic policy rested on a series of agreements which allowed the Goths to settle on Roman soil under their own leaders in return for supplying recruits to the Roman army. But these developments fell outside the scope of Ammianus' narrative. His annalistic framework was essentially complete with the death of Valens in August 378. It seems, however, possible to speculate that if Ammianus had treated his readers to a full recital of the events between Adrianople and the formal accession of Theodosius in January 379, he would have faced a problem. Hence, the careful selection of facts which he did choose to include, and the silence which envelops the rest.<sup>9</sup>

The commonly accepted version of this event starts with Gratian summoning Theodosius from his self-imposed exile in Spain, proceeds with the grant of a military command, and ends with Theodosius' appointment in Sirmium as Augustus of the eastern Roman empire on January 19, 379.<sup>10</sup> Matthews' detailed and authoritative analysis of the period further conjures up a whole network of Gallo-Spanish Theodosian supporters at the court of Gratian.<sup>11</sup> Among these were relatives of the future emperor, some of whom were then in key positions at court; several eminent Gallic nobles; and possibly even two military figures, Fl. Timasius and Magnus Maximus. Timasius had served under Valens, but is absent from the pages of Ammianus and probably did not hold an important command before the 380s.<sup>12</sup> Magnus Maximus' military career was confined to the west.

None of the members belonging to the presumed Theodosian party was in Sirmium when Gratian decided to recall Theodosius.<sup>13</sup> It is unlikely that they had engineered the move before the crisis of Adrianople. Moreover, none of the military men connected with this faction had then enough influence either to suggest Theodosius' recall or to prevail upon the army to accept the choice. In fact, the eastern army, or what was left of it, has been strangely absent from the modern list of Theodosian supporters. Are we to believe that the decision to recall Theodosius, to put him in charge of military operations, and to elevate him to the imperial throne, was tacitly if not happily accepted by the sorely tried commanders of the eastern army and their soldiers?

If the influence of a Gallo-Spanish court party on the proceedings in Sirmium is largely discounted, how does one explain the startlingly fast sequence of developments which resulted in the elevation of a semi-retired

young commander? Theodosius was the son of a general who had been executed at the beginning of Gratian's reign.<sup>14</sup> Assuming that the execution of the elder Theodosius was meant to secure the fragile dynasty of Valentinian, it is extremely difficult to envisage Gratian bowing to the pressure of his own court to recall Theodosius' son barely three years afterwards. If an experienced man was needed at that moment, Theodosius was hardly likely to have been Gratian's first choice.

In a speech delivered in 389 in front of Theodosius at Rome, the Gallic rhetor Pacatus recalled the events of 378 and 379. He also supplies an interesting detail unattested elsewhere. According to Pacatus, there were three candidates to the imperial throne and Theodosius was only the third on the list.<sup>15</sup> We do not have the names of the other candidates, although a guess can be hazarded (see below). However, Pacatus' statement, made in public and in the presence of the emperor himself, was not likely to have been an outright lie or mere rhetorical convention. It hardly contributed to the imperial majesty of the reigning emperor to be publicly revealed as a last choice.

Pacatus, our main source for Theodosius' elevation, has several other curious details. When offered the throne, Theodosius declined, and persisted in his refusal for some time.<sup>16</sup> Gratian made his offer publicly, surrounded by soldiers of possibly both the eastern and western armies.<sup>17</sup> Although the theme of 'recusatio imperii' is common enough, Pacatus' emphasis on Theodosius' hesitation and its public nature, coupled with his reference to three imperial candidates, raises doubts about the hitherto accepted version of what happened in Sirmium between Adrianople (August 378) and the formal accession of Theodosius on January 19, 379.

For the year 379 the chronicler Hydatius records two events. The first entry covers the association of Theodosius with Gratian in the imperial rule, and echoes a similar statement of the Gallic chronicler, and of Prosper.<sup>18</sup> Hydatius' second entry refers to the appointment of Theodosius as Augustus.<sup>19</sup> Thus Hydatius seems to point to two distinct stages in the process of Theodosius' imperial elevation: first, an informal sharing of power; secondly, the formal acknowledgement of a *fait accompli*. A juxtaposition of the evidence of Pacatus and Hydatius raises suspicion of usurpation. Is it possible that Theodosius reached the throne originally as a usurper whom Gratian was compelled to accept? What really happened after the battle of Adrianople?

Among the survivors of Adrianople three men stand out: Victor, Saturninus and Richomer. In 378 Victor was *Magister Equitum* of the east, after a long and successful career in the eastern army under both Julian and Valens.<sup>20</sup> In 369 he became consul. In 378 he was one of the few who managed to salvage his own troops from the disaster of Adrianople. After the battle, Victor and his soldiers joined Gratian in Sirmium. Flavius

Saturninus was appointed *Magister Militum* just prior to Adrianople.<sup>21</sup> Before this he had been *Comes* and, like Victor, withdrew in time to save his soldiers from dying at Adrianople. Flavius Richomer advanced through the ranks of the western army and became *Comes Domesticorum* under Gratian.<sup>22</sup> Before Adrianople he had volunteered to go as a hostage to the Gothic camp but found himself in the middle of the battlefield fighting the Goths with the eastern army. The emperor Gratian, who had left Gaul in order to help his uncle, remained in Sirmium after the death of Valens. In September, more than a month after the battle, Gratian issued *CTh* 10.2.1 in the name of three emperors: himself, his brother Valentinian II, and . . . the dead Valens.

These were the chief actors in the drama that unfolded in Sirmium.<sup>23</sup> All three survivors, Victor, Saturninus, and Richomer, were in a position to exert pressure on the young emperor to promptly address the problems which the eastern provinces faced and, above all, to restore the confidence of the demoralised troops of the eastern army. A solution clearly called for the appointment of an experienced commander acceptable to the soldiers, preferably one with a record untainted by the recent defeat. Theodosius had been military commander (*Dux*) in Moesia (Prima) between 373 and 376. His record would have been familiar to Victor, then *Magister Equitum* of the east, and possibly also to Saturninus. In 378, the remnants of Valens' army reassembled in Moesia and their commanders debated the military succession in Sirmium. The name of the former *Dux Moesiae* must have come up immediately.

Theodosius was then recalled from his Spanish estates, and appointed *Magister Militum*, possibly of Thrace. The move indicated that Gratian was not then looking for an imperial candidate but for an emergency appointment to secure the region against the barbarians and to rally the eastern troops. Although there is no information about the early campaigns of Theodosius, it can be assumed that he won a victory over the Sarmatians, perhaps in September or October of 378.<sup>24</sup> His grateful soldiers reacted in a time-honoured way and offered their victorious general the imperial throne. After all it had been empty since the beginning of August.

Gratian found himself in an unenviable position. He had a brother who had already been Augustus but was far too young to assume sole control over the east. A compromise was clearly called for. Gratian offered the throne to two people whom he trusted, at least more than he did the son of a disgraced general. This is the point where Pacatus' reference to three imperial candidates, including Theodosius, makes some sense. Whoever the other two may have been, they prudently declined the purple. Perhaps one of them was Saturninus. His loyalty to Theodosius, dating to the very first days of his usurpation, was amply rewarded in 383 with the consulship.<sup>25</sup> Gratian had eventually to capitulate and to bestow approval on his newly

elected imperial partner. Though Pacatus graced the period between the usurpation and the imperial acknowledgement with the title of 'recusatio', the doubts must have been all on Gratian's side. But by 389, when Pacatus addressed the victorious Theodosius, Gratian had been dead for over five years, and few would have remembered or cared to contradict his account.

Is it possible to attach a date to the usurpation? In the early years of Theodosius two dates stand out. The first is his elevation or recognition by the ruling Augustus in January 19, 379, an arrangement which a year later was formalised by their joint consulship;<sup>26</sup> the second when, nearly two years later, on November 24, 380, Theodosius finally entered Constantinople, his capital, a week after imperial victories over the Goths, Alans and Huns had been proclaimed.<sup>27</sup> Yet what was there to prevent him from waiting another eight weeks and entering the capital in time to celebrate the end of his first consulship and the beginning of his third regnal year? Perhaps then the day of November 24th may have represented for Theodosius a crucial turning point in his career: the moment when his soldiers had acclaimed him in 378. In later years the two months which elapsed from the date of the usurpation to Theodosius' formal accession blended into one event. But both Pacatus, a contemporary, and Hydatius, a century later, preserved echoes of the problems which followed the death of Valens and the choice of his successor.

The strongest condemnation of Theodosius' usurpation can be gleaned from the stony silence of Ausonius, Gratian's pupil and chief minister. In the middle of 379 Ausonius composed a lengthy speech of thanks to Gratian, his imperial benefactor. Among topics of contemporary interest which the consul found worthy of inclusion were Gratian's military achievements on the Rhine and the Danube, the avenging of his uncle, and the organisation of the east.<sup>28</sup> Amidst such a remarkable record, it is surprising, to say the least, that Theodosius is altogether absent. The Treveran court must have been well informed of the proceedings in Sirmium. By the time Ausonius delivered his oration, Theodosius had been legally installed for at least six months.<sup>29</sup> Here was ideal material for a panegyric, strangely passed over by the panegyrist. Pacatus, Ausonius' fellow-teacher from Bordeaux, indirectly praised Gratian for choosing a man who was not related to himself.<sup>30</sup> In 383 Themistius praised Theodosius for appointing as consul a man unrelated to the imperial family, and in a year which marked the emperor's quinquennialia.<sup>31</sup> Ausonius' reticence is best explained in the light of the circumstances which carried Theodosius to the throne. Rather than depict his much admired emperor Gratian in a helpless position, Ausonius chose to ignore both the usurpation and Gratian's forced acquiescence in it.

Eunapius, who had little interest in the affairs of western emperors and no sympathy with Theodosius, condensed the chain of events into a single reference recording Theodosius' appointment 'as an associate in the empire'.<sup>32</sup>

Gratian, he claims, was unequal to the task of controlling both parts of the empire. If Eunapius is to be believed, even Theodosius underestimated the barbarian threat. Iulius, the commander of Asia Minor, whose massacre of the Goths there elicited so much praise from Ammianus, did not bother to consult the emperor but instead obtained permission to execute his plan from the senate in Constantinople.<sup>33</sup> Modern scholars have been understandably unhappy with the Eunapius/Zosimus version of the events. Yet, Eunapius betrays a state of affairs in which the supreme authority was not yet vested in the hands of a clearly designated individual. This situation fits the two months of uncertainty when Theodosius and Gratian wrangled over the issue of legitimacy. Eunapius was right to place Iulius' action after Theodosius' accession, but he failed to distinguish between its two phases, the early usurpation and the formal elevation. His error, however, dates the episode of the Gothic massacre in Asia Minor to some time between the end of November 378 and of January 379. Had Theodosius then been already installed as legitimate ruler of the east, Iulius would have met the fate that awaited Gerontius in 380.<sup>34</sup>

Ammianus, who probably knew what had taken place in Moesia, was able to skip the early imperial career of Theodosius. His imperial annals were brought to a conclusion with the death of Valens. Perhaps it is also possible to detect here the personal disappointment of a soldier turned historian who, after testifying to a promising beginning of the commander Theodosius, saw him leading a Roman army to victory only twice more, on each occasion over another Roman army. At the risk of ending his great work with an anti-climax, Ammianus chose to conclude with the story of Iulius. Writing, as he did, at least a decade after the events, he was able to gauge the merits and failures of the emperor's Gothic policy. Direct criticism was clearly too risky. But as far as Ammianus was concerned, the only solution to the Gothic problem was the one adopted by Iulius. Iulius, then, and not Valens or Theodosius, served as the terminus for his history. And by concluding with a bloody massacre rather than with a story of peaceful settlements, the aged soldier expressed his dissatisfaction with current imperial policies. Theodosius, he seems to imply, should have followed the Gothic policy of Iulius.

#### NOTES

1. J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, Baltimore 1989, 558.
2. *Ibid.*, 20–7, for 390 or 391; C.P.T. Naudé, 'The Date of the Later Books of Ammianus Marcellinus', *AJAH* 9 (1984) 70–94, for the late 380s.
3. 31.16.8.
4. 4.26.
5. 31.16.8: 'his diebus'; Zos. 4.24.4 records the elevation of Theodosius.

6. F. Paschoud, *Zosime. Histoire nouvelle* 2.2, Paris 1979, 388f., n.154; Matthews, *Ammianus*, 513, n.45; H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, Berkeley 1988, 130, who also believes that this unauthorised action cost Iulius his command. P. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489*, Oxford 1991, 149.
7. Matthews, *Ammianus*, 417, 16, 227.
8. Recently Antioch has been rejected in favour of Alexandria as the historian's birth-place, G. Bowersock, 'Review of Matthews' *Ammianus*', *JRS* 80 (1990) 244-50. If true, one reason at least for the inclusion of the Iulianic episode can be eliminated, since Alexandria was hardly menaced by the Goths.
9. Cf. silence on the end of the general Theodosius.
10. G. Kaufmann, 'Wurde Theodosius von Gratian zunächst zum Magister Militum und erst nach einem Siege über die Sarmaten zum Kaiser ernannt?', *Philologus* 31 (1872) 473-80; Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, Oxford 1975, 91, n.3.
11. Matthews, *Aristocracies*, 94-7; *idem*, 'Gallic Supporters of Theodosius', *Latomus* 30 (1971) 1073-99.
12. *PLRE* 1, 914. Timasius' connection with Valens is based on Zosimus 5.8.3. Lippold, *RE Suppl.* 13, 953 doubts his Spanish connection.
13. Indeed, the only high-ranking civil servant whose presence is securely attested in Sirmium is the ubiquitous Olybrius, then Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum in that year. *PLRE* 1, 641.
14. The story is obscure. Orosius 7.33.7 and Jerome, *Chron.* s.a. 376 are the main sources. Among modern discussions, A. Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire*, Oxford 1952; A. Demandt, 'Der Tod des älteren Theodosius', *Historia* 17 (1969) 598-626; C.P.T. Naudé, 'Flavius Merobaudes and the Death of the Elder Theodosius', in L. Cilliers and A.H. Snyman (eds.), *Varia Studia in honorem W.J. Richards*, Bloemfontein 1987, 388-99.
15. 12.1: 'solus omnium qui adhuc imperaverunt ut princeps esses praetistiti. alios empta legionum suffragia, alios vacans aula, alios ad finitas regia imposuere rei publicae; te nec ambitus nec occasio nec propinquitas principem creaverunt. nam et eras a familia imperatoris alienus et adsciscebaris TERTIUS (my emphasis) et cogebaris inivitus...'
16. *Pan. Lat.* 12.11.1 (Galletier).
17. *Ibid.*, 11.2. C.E.V. Nixon, *Pacatus. Panegyric to the Emperor Theodosius*, Liverpool 1987, 64, n.40, based on Ausonius' *Gratiarum Actio* 9.
18. *CM* 2, 14: 'in consortium regni adsumptus'; *CM* 1, 646; 1, 461.
19. *CM* 2, 14: 'Gratiano Augustus appellatur'.
20. *PLRE* 1, 957-9.
21. *PLRE* 1, 807-8.
22. *PLRE* 1, 765.
23. Although the presence of Saturninus and Richomer is not attested directly, it can certainly be assumed.
24. *Pacatus* 10.2; Ausonius, *Grat. Actio* 2. Note the doubts justly cast by Kauffmann on the date of the Sarmatian victory, above n.10.
25. Themistius indicates that the consulship had been originally reserved for Theodosius himself, as part of his quinquennialia, *Or.* 16.202d-203a, 205b-c (Downey).
26. Had Theodosius already been destined for the throne in 378, he would surely have become consul in 379. The decision to appoint two westerners was taken by Gratian in Sirmium, after Adrianople. Ausonius, *Gratiarum Actio*.
27. *Cons. Const.* s.a.379, 3; Wolfram (above, n.6), 131. These were won by Theodosius' general, with the emperor safely ensconced in Thessalonike.

28. *Grat. Actio 2*. Note the title Sarmaticus which Ausonius bestowed on Gratian, and which the emperor probably owed to an early victory of Theodosius.
29. On the date, R.P.H. Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, Oxford 1991, 537.
30. *Pan. Lat.* 12.12.1.
31. Themistius (above, n.25). The choice of a private citizen does seem unusual for Theodosius, who filled the *fasti* of 381 and 382 with relatives.
32. *Zos.* 4.24.4.
33. *Idem* 4.26.
34. *Zos.* 4.40, with A. Ehrhardt, 'The First Two Years of the Emperor Theodosius I', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964) 10–11, on the date.

THE PLATAEAN *ELEUTHERIA* AND THE 'DAY OF THE  
VOW' IN SOUTH AFRICA:  
A HISTORICAL PARALLEL AND THE CASE FOR  
HISTORICAL ANALOGY

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Occasionally our patchy knowledge of ancient institutions may be illuminated by an analogy from a modern, non-industrial society. We know from the canonic account of the great Persian invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.,<sup>1</sup> that

the campaign of Plataea was the finest achievement of Greek unity . . . . They had remained loyal to Zeus Hellenios, the God of the Greeks whom the Athenians had once invoked in the allied cause. They fulfilled the oath to which they had solemnly pledged themselves before crossing Mt. Cithaeron: 'I shall fight to the death, I shall put freedom before life, I shall not desert colonel or captain alive or dead, I shall carry out the generals' commands and I shall bury my comrades-in-arms where they fall and leave none unburied' . . . .

After the battle . . . *the member states of the Greek League entered into a covenant, that on every anniversary of the victory the political and religious representatives of the Greeks should meet at Plataea to offer thanksgiving to Zeus the Liberator and to conduct games in honour of liberation; that the Plataeans should be dedicated to Zeus as an inviolable and sacred people; and that the Plataeans should offer sacrifice to Zeus and Hermes on behalf of the Greek dead. These ceremonies were maintained for many centuries, the chief magistrate of Plataea ending the sacrifice with the words 'I drink to the men who died for the Freedom of the Greeks'.*

The above is essentially the version of Diodorus<sup>2</sup> which is enshrined in some of the popular, or standard, handbooks on Greek history,<sup>3</sup> namely, that on the eve of the last great land battle (Plataea 479) the so-called

'council of the Hellenic league'<sup>4</sup> decreed to fight the Persians to the finish and to vow to the gods that if they were victorious the Greeks would unite in celebrating the 'festival of liberty' (*Eleutheria*) on that day every year for the rest of time.<sup>5</sup>

The Greeks gathered in congress decreed to make common cause with the Athenians and advancing to Plataea in a body, to fight to the finish for liberty, and also to make a vow to the gods that *if they were victorious the Greeks would unite in celebrating the Festival of Liberty on that day and would hold the games of the Festival in Plataea*. And when the Greek forces were assembled at the Isthmus, all of them agreed that they should swear an oath about the war that would make staunch the concord among them and would compel them nobly to endure the perils of the battle. The oath ran as follows: 'I shall not hold life dearer than liberty, nor will I desert the leaders, whether they be living or dead, but I will bury all the allies who have perished in the battle; and if I overcome the barbarians in the war I will not destroy any one of the cities which have participated in the struggle; nor will I rebuild any one of the sanctuaries which have been burnt or demolished, but I will let them be and leave them as a reminder to coming generations of the impiety of the barbarians' (emphasis added).

We also know that various versions of what purported to be the text of this covenant were circulated in later centuries<sup>6</sup> and that in the 2nd century A.D. the commemorative festival of the *Eleutheria* was, according to Plutarch, still being observed.<sup>7</sup>

After this (the battle) there was a general assembly of the Hellenes at which Aristides proposed *a decree to the effect that deputies and delegates from all Hellas convene at Plataea every year, and that every fourth year festival games of deliverance be contested — the Eleutheria*; also that a confederate Hellenic force be levied ... to prosecute the war against the barbarians, also that *the Plataeans be set apart as inviolable and consecrate, that they might sacrifice to Zeus the Deliverer on behalf of Hellas* (emphasis added).

As early as the fourth century B.C. the historian Theopompus dismissed this oath as an Athenian fraud.<sup>8</sup> Modern scholars either defend the authenticity of the oath or reject it as Theopompus once did.<sup>9</sup>

Even the sceptics agree however that there is a core of truth in the legend and although, as some believe, the original version of the oath is not recoverable, it has been argued that the wording of the extant versions was modified in accordance with the propagandistic needs of the periods in which the oath was resurrected.<sup>10</sup> Both camps therefore agree on one

point: that there was an original text of the oath, if not in 479, then at some later time.<sup>11</sup>

I believe that we can go some distance in resolving the crux and thus better understand the nature of the Hellenic covenant, by studying an episode from South Africa's history. Although historians should be extremely cautious in adducing modern analogies for past circumstances, there are nevertheless certain cases where the circumstances of ancient and modern events are demonstrably similar and where the modern events (which generally are well documented) can be used as a model by which we may explain the ancient, poorly documented events.

The events and circumstances surrounding the Covenant of Blood River (December 16, 1838) are remarkably similar to those of 480/79, not only in the fact that in both instances we have a small, outnumbered group of defenders (in 1838 the band of Voortrekkers under attack from Dingane's Zulu *impi*) successfully defeating a numerically superior force of 'barbarians', but also in the fact that the anniversary of the battle of Blood River (as it is called), December 16, has until very recently been observed in South Africa as a religious holiday in fulfilment of a vow allegedly made by the defenders on the eve of the battle. Here then we have a parallel for the festival of the *Eleutheria* which was observed in Plutarch's day, allegedly in fulfilment of the vow made in 479.

Building on the pioneering work of South African historians after the 1960s<sup>12</sup>, Leonard Thompson shows how the canonic version of the battle of Blood River, as taught in South African schools and disseminated in popular history books at the time he was writing, about a decade ago, differs profoundly from the facts as revealed by primary sources.<sup>13</sup> He also shows how the propaganda of political groups between the 1840s and 1980s created, modified and elaborated on the myth to suit current ideological tendencies.

In the case of the controversy surrounding the Covenant of Plataea certain historians (starting with Theopompus), as indicated above, maintain that the documents (such as they are) are forgeries.<sup>14</sup> But may we make the same assertion in the case of the far more numerous primary documents relating to the Covenant of Blood River?

I would argue that in both cases we are dealing not with mere forged documents or barefaced lies, but with a universal and historical phenomenon — the making of political myth. The modern analogy may prove, against the arguments not only of the defenders of the historicity of the Oath of Plataea but also those of their opponents, that we should be thinking not so much in terms of 'authentic texts' of either covenant, but rather of constructs — myths or fictions — synthesized out of known facts or events. In other words, the traditions, of both the ancient covenant and its modern counterpart, grew out of events that were initially obscure and perhaps

even insignificant at the time they occurred. I propose then that modern analogy proves (*contra* Siewert and others, who vouch for the historicity of the Plataea 'text') that the wording of any particular extant version of the oath can only be fiction; and also that it suggests that the myth of the panhellenic Oath of Plataea probably had a very simple, local origin, as in fact Herodotus (7.132) and Thucydides (2.71) lead us to believe.<sup>15</sup>

Some of our sources have given rise to the general belief that at some stage during the Persian invasion of Greece the patriotic Hellenes swore some kind of oath and made a covenant, either in order to strengthen their resolve or to create a deterrent for those states which contemplated surrender to the barbarian without a struggle.<sup>16</sup> The earliest tradition, essentially, is that the Hellenes vowed that in the event of their defeating the enemy, they would 'tithe' the traitors (i.e. slaughter, or enslave the inhabitants, raze the land and dedicate it to Apollo<sup>17</sup>). This much Herodotus tells us, writing a generation after the actual event:<sup>18</sup>

The Hellenes who had undertaken to fight the barbarians swore an oath. The oath was as follows: *as many as surrendered themselves to the Persians, being Hellenes, without compulsion and when things were well-disposed for them, these they would tithe to the God of Delphi.* Thus was the oath of the Hellenes (emphasis added).

The fact (i.e. the swearing of the oath) is, as we have seen above, embellished in Diodorus' account: the Greeks, if victorious, would commemorate the occasion in future by the regular celebration of festival games at four-yearly intervals. This latter part of the vow (not in Herodotus) is explicitly associated with the decisive land battle of Plataea in 479. Some sources place the vow immediately before the battle, some after it.<sup>19</sup>

Thus an account conflated out of these widely differing *testimonia* constitutes the popular notion perpetuated in some modern histories of the Greeks<sup>20</sup> and, as we indicated above, is derived principally from the account of Diodorus, who himself adopted and adapted Ephorus, a fourth-century historian, who was in turn influenced not only by the circumstances and institutions of his own day, but also by Isocrates. He would therefore also reflect the panhellenic sentiments which the latter propagated.<sup>21</sup> Thus, although there are no primary sources for the Covenant of Plataea, there are nevertheless various versions of it which appear in a number of extant ancient literary and epigraphic sources, from the time of Herodotus until well into the Roman Empire.

The discovery in 1932 of the Ephebic Inscription at Acharnai — a fourth-century composite document comprising a dedication, the text of an oath traditionally recited by Athenian Ephebes on their induction into the army, and what purports to be an oath sworn by the Athenians when they were on the point of engaging in battle with the barbarians — intensified discussion

about the historicity of the Covenant of Plataea and promoted the notion that the epigraphic version is in fact the 'original'. After all, things always look more authentic when written on stone! The fourth century epigraphic version of the oath is as follows:<sup>22</sup>

The oath which *the Athenians swore when they were going to fight against the barbarian*:  
 I shall fight as long as I live and shall not consider it more important to be alive than to be free and  
 I shall not fail the *taxiarch* or the *enomotarch*, be he either alive or dead  
 and I shall not go away unless the *hegemones*  
 lead the way and I shall do whatever the generals command. Those who died of our comrades-in-arms, I shall bury on the spot and I shall leave no-one behind unburied. *And after defeating the barbarians in battle I shall tithe the city of the Thebans and I shall not destroy Athens or Sparta or Plataea nor any of the other cities of those who shared in the fighting ...* (emphasis added).

Siewert attempts to prove that the oath on the stone was indeed the original one that was sworn by the Greeks before the battle of Plataea (just as Diodorus says). He argues that its wording is very similar to, and in many places identical with, that of the literary versions of the oath which we find in Diodorus — and in the fourth-century version included in Lycurgus' speech *Against Leocrates*.<sup>23</sup>

It was for this reason ... that all *the Hellenes exchanged this pledge at Plataea, before taking up their posts to fight against the power of Xerxes*. The formula was not their own but an imitation of the oath which is traditional among you ... for though the events of that time are ancient history by now, we can discern clearly enough in these recorded words the courage of our forefathers. Please read the oath:

OATH. I shall not consider life more important than freedom. I shall not forsake the *hegemones* be they either alive or dead, but I shall bury all those of the allies who were killed in the battle. And having conquered the barbarians in the war, *I shall tithe all those who sided with the barbarian. And I shall not rebuild a single one of the temples burnt and razed by the barbarians but I shall allow them to be left for future generations as a memorial of the barbarians' impiety* (emphasis added).

The above may be a literary version of the oath, possibly derived from Ephorus. For it is far closer in wording and content to that of Diodorus,

than to the epigraphic version.<sup>24</sup> The clause about the rebuilding of the shrines, for instance, is common to both Diodorus and Lycurgus. The salient difference however consists in the less specific tone of Lycurgus' version. In other words Thebes is not singled out as the villain, as it is in the inscription.<sup>25</sup>

Siewert's main argument is based on the fact that the vocabulary and style of the epigraphic text is decidedly non-literary and 'archaic' — that is, it bears verbal and stylistic similarities to other allegedly 'archaic' Greek documents — though he admits it shows instances of contamination, or 'Modernisierung', notably the line which singles out Thebes for punishment by tithing.<sup>26</sup> His hypothesis has not however found wide support in recent years (M. Ostwald is the exception).<sup>27</sup>

The more widely accepted interpretation (reflected principally in the works of Habicht, Robertson and Raaflaub)<sup>28</sup> is that *none* of the extant versions is the 'original', but that all reflect the efforts of later propagandists to use the original oath for political and ideological needs on particular occasions. They also argue for example that the reference to Thebes in the epigraphic version accords very well with the events of the late 370s, when the Athenians and Spartans were sinking their long-standing differences in the face of mounting Theban imperialism and aggression. Xenophon in fact twice refers to the notion of 'tithing' Thebes in the context of events leading up to the battle of Leuctra.<sup>29</sup> Moreover the clause which prohibits the destruction of Athens and Sparta reflects the friendly attitude that prevailed between the once deadly enemies. This friendly attitude resulted in the Alliance of 369.<sup>30</sup> However, even the more critically-minded scholars still presuppose that there was an *original* oath of Plataea — an 'Ur-Text' of the Hellenic Oath, which forms the core of the later variants. Yet apart from Herodotus' version,<sup>31</sup> written a generation after the event and in a highly rhetorical and ideological context which has no pretensions of chronological exactitude but is intended as a prelude to the formation of the so-called Hellenic league, there is not a trace among our fifth century sources of anything like the oath or the covenant as it is known.<sup>32</sup> Even Thucydides, who had ample opportunity for expanding on the theme in his Plataean *logos*, gives us a vastly different picture from that of the vulgate — derived from Diodorus: Thucydides tells how the Plataeans try to dissuade Archidamus from ravaging their land.<sup>33</sup>

For Pausanias . . . when he had freed Hellas from the Persians together with such of the Hellenes as chose to share the danger . . . offered sacrifice in the market-place of the Plataeans to Zeus Eleutherius and calling together all the allies restored to the Plataeans their land and city to hold and inhabit in independence and no one was ever to march against them unjustly or for their enslavement, but in that case the

allies then present were to defend them with all their might. These privileges your fathers granted to us on account of the valour and zeal we displayed amid those dangers . . . .

After their city has been captured the Plataeans make the following defence:<sup>34</sup>

Turn your eyes upon the sepulchres of your fathers, slain by the Persians and buried in our land, whom we have honoured year by year with a public offering of raiment and other customary gifts . . . . You will be bringing desolation upon the temples of the gods to whom they prayed when they conquered the Persians and you will be robbing of their hereditary sacrifices the people who founded and established them.

In the *Plataicus*, published c. 373, Isocrates moreover concurs with Thucydides: for he does not mention a covenant of the kind we read about in Diodorus, Lycurgus or the Acharnai inscription.<sup>35</sup> Moreover Isocrates mentions nothing about a quinquennial festival (*Eleutheria*) or the consecration of the Plataeans, even though both Thucydides and Isocrates refer to an oath (or sacrifice) and to some kind of *μνημεῖα* connected with annual honours which the locals paid to the dead.<sup>36</sup> In Thucydides' account the Plataeans are pleading in their own defence and for their lives, while in Isocrates' work they are pleading for the reinstatement of their *polis*. Had the Plataeans, in either instance, used in their arguments the details mentioned in Diodorus and Plutarch, they would surely have aided their own cause. Both Thucydides and Isocrates wrote τὰ δέοντα. If they had known about the covenant and its particular terms they surely would have mentioned them. Thus we are still faced with the question of whether there ever was a 'Covenant of Plataea' and, if there was, whether we have any means at all of retrieving it from our sources.

Since we have no primary sources, our chances are practically nil. Consequently, our principal task should not be speculation about the existence of an 'Ur-Eid' or an 'Ur-Dokument', but rather should we be looking for the historical circumstances and events — the raw materials — which could have given rise to the notion, or the *myth*, of a Covenant of Plataea. Henry Tudor observes that there is no 'original' in a political myth — as far as content is concerned it is 'not the origin that defines its character or direction; the myth is shaped and reshaped by the men who pass it on and they shape it in accordance with their own presuppositions and in response to their particular experience of the world'.<sup>37</sup> In other words, a myth on the first occasion of its telling is no more true or authentic than that of any of its subsequent re-tellings.

Let us examine our specific example more closely: the notion of a beleaguered or surrounded community, united and outnumbered in the face of

a horde of attacking barbarians is a potent and useful theme for political propagandists; reinforced by such a notion, the prospect of danger (real or imagined) can be used to create singleness of purpose in a community towards the achievement of a particular political goal, while the history of the successful aversion of such a danger provides an argument that can be used, in retrospect, to justify the political ideologies of any party which chooses to use it.<sup>38</sup> The circumstances which generated the Covenant of Plataea, as well as the political myths which evolved from the latter, find a close parallel in South African history.

In February, 1838 Piet Retief, the leader of one of a number of bands of Voortrekkers, together with his senior-ranking advisors was murdered during a negotiating session with, and at the instigation of the Zulu king, Dingane, who then sent his forces to wipe out the Voortrekker encampment. Survivors of the massacre joined forces with another group under Andries Pretorius and determined to avenge the treacherous attack and to establish a permanent foothold in Natal. A commando of about 460 Trekkers advanced into the heart of the Zulu kingdom and challenged and defeated the mighty army of Dingane. Their laager was situated on the banks of the Ncome, a small stream, which, because of the immense carnage inflicted on the Zulus on 16 December, 1838, became known as Blood River.<sup>39</sup>

According to prevailing popular historical traditions about both the defeat of the Persians at Plataea, on the one hand, and the Zulus at Blood River on the other, the victory over 'the barbarians' was attributed to divine assistance in fulfilment of a covenant or vow, which each group made before the decisive battle. After the event, the conditions and circumstances of the alleged vows were either created or adapted and manipulated as a means of justifying or sanctioning political policies and ideologies. Since the historical situations of the Greeks in 479 and of the Voortrekkers in 1838 are similar in this one respect and since, in the latter instance, we have primary sources in which we can observe the evolution of the political myth from events or facts documented in primary sources, we may, by analogy, postulate and reconstruct a parallel process for the Covenant of Plataea.

In his analysis of the South African covenant, Thompson observes that the classic political myth has three hallmarks: these are (a) partial concordance with historical reality, (b) delayed codification, followed by (c) rapid development for political purposes and adaptation to changing circumstances.<sup>40</sup> He then shows that the account of the battle of Blood River and the Covenant associated with it fulfils these conditions and thus qualifies as a political myth. Our extant testimony for the Covenant of Plataea indicates that it, too, may exhibit these three characteristics. Thompson shows that the myth of the Covenant of Blood River was actu-

ally created by the political and historical circumstances which prevailed in South Africa at least forty years after the event and that over the past century it has still undergone (and continues to undergo) striking transformations in accordance with the ideological and propagandistic requirements of the government in power. The myth of the Covenant of Plataea, as our evidence leads us to believe, was generated by the political circumstances of the fourth, rather than the fifth century<sup>41</sup> — circumstances that prevailed over a hundred years after the actual battle of Plataea — and it too underwent codification (that is, the epigraphic version of the Oath) as well as numerous transformations during that century and into Hellenistic and Roman times.

Let us examine first the details of the South Africal model. In South Africa December 16, the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, is still (to the best of my knowledge, at the time of writing) a 'religious' holiday. This holiday is called the Day of the Vow<sup>42</sup> because of the pledge allegedly made by the defenders before the battle, to the effect that if God granted them victory they and their descendants would celebrate the anniversary for all time to come. This is the fully fledged political myth — it is the version of the oath which appears in the vulgate tradition of South African history, which is taught in schools and told to tourists and to the world at large.<sup>43</sup> For the modern English-speaking world it has been canonized by the novelist James Michener:<sup>44</sup>

When all the details were perfected, the time was ripe for the crucial moment in Boer history . . . The Voortrekkers . . . had numerous men who knew the Old Testament almost by heart, and *one of these was Sarel Cilliers*, an educated farmer of deep religious conviction, and *upon him fell the responsibility* of reminding his fellow Voortrekkers of the sacred mission upon which they were engaged, and he *recited those passages from the thundering Book of Joshua* which presaged the forthcoming battle . . . Then Cilliers climbed upon the carriage on which a beloved cannon named *Ou Grietjie* (old Gertie) rested, and repeated for the last time the Covenant upon which the Voortrekkers had agreed: 'Almighty God, at this dark moment we stand before you, promising that if You will protect us and deliver the enemy into our hands, we shall forever live in obedience to Your divine law. *If You enable us to triumph, we shall observe this day as an anniversary in each year, a day of thanksgiving and remembrance, even for all our posterity.* And if anyone sees difficulty in this, let him retire from the battlefield.'

The canonic 'epigraphic' form of the oath, as it appears in the Voortrekker Memorial Church in Pietermaritzburg, reads as follows (in the official English translation): 'Here we stand before the holy God of Heaven and Earth

to make Him a vow that if He will protect us and deliver our enemies into our hands, we will observe the day and date each year as a day of thanks, like a Sabbath, and that we will erect a church in His honour wherever He may choose and that we will also tell our children to join with us in commemorating this day, also for coming generations. For His name will be glorified by giving him all the honour and glory of victory'.<sup>45</sup>

From 1952 December 16 was known as the Day of the Covenant — when the holiday was accorded full 'religious' status along with Christmas, Easter and Ascension Day. Before then it was called Dingaan's Day and it had no ideological or political significance outside the Afrikaner nationalist movement.<sup>46</sup> Since the 1920s however it had been customary among the Afrikaners to celebrate it with local festivals,<sup>47</sup> which included 'boeresport' and 'volkspele' as well as political and sentimental speeches by religious leaders, academics and cabinet ministers, which related the events of 1838 to current political ideology and aspirations.<sup>48</sup> Such rhetoric continues to the present day. On 16 December, 1983, for example, the leader of the conservative opposition party, Dr. A.P. Treurnicht, reacting against the liberal tendencies of the then Prime Minister, Mr. P.W. Botha, referred to the white Afrikaner nation as 'a surrounded and threatened people' and referred specifically to the Voortrekkers at Blood River, '... in its hour of utmost need, in a struggle for life and death, a surrounded and threatened people placed its dependence in God ... Today again our people are a surrounded people'.<sup>49</sup> More recently, in 1988, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River, the Prime Minister specifically referred to the (hitherto ignored) 200 black and coloured servants of the beleaguered trekkers: 'On 16 December 1838 (he said) white, brown and black stood together in the laager at Blood River; it was not only a trek for Afrikaners'.<sup>50</sup> Here then is a striking example of a myth being adapted to suit the official policies of a specific period.<sup>51</sup>

Now the vow itself — and we have excellent primary evidence in support of its authenticity — was only publicly or generally observed a generation after the event, in the late 1870s, when it obtained the status of a political myth in the Transvaal Republic under the presidency of Paul Kruger and under the ever-encroaching shadow of British Imperialism.<sup>52</sup>

Let us examine the earliest primary source which mentioned the vow — an entry, dated 23 December, 1838, from the journal of Andries Pretorius, commandant of the 'Wenkommando'. It was written, in retrospect, a week after the battle and published in the anti-British Cape Town journal *Zuid Afrikaan*, in February 1839.<sup>53</sup>

I also wish to inform you that we have decided among ourselves to make known the day of our victory, being Sunday, the 16 of this month of December, among our entire community and that *we shall*

*consecrate it to the Lord, and celebrate it with thanksgivings, since, before we fought against the enemy we promised in public prayer that should we manage to win the victory, we should build a house to the Lord in memory of his name, wherever He shall indicate it. Which vow we now hope to honour, with the help of the Lord now that he has blessed us and heard our prayers.*

The text clearly states that there were two separate vows; *before* the battle, it was vowed to build a church and it was only *after* the victory that it was decided to 'make known and *consecrate the day of victory*'. There is no mention of any decision to regard its annual celebration 'as a Sabbath' as the developed myth has it.<sup>54</sup>

Now compare this passage with the official version written some months later by Jan Bantjes (Pretorius' secretary and amanuensis), who claimed to have joined the latter's commando for the express purpose of recording its proceedings. This claim implies that Bantjes had conscious historiographical pretensions, that is, he purports to recount events that are linked in a coherent and chronologically ordered narrative. This implies a degree of abstraction from — and thus distortion of — reality. Bantjes' report was published in the Minutes of the Volksraad of the Natal Republic, eighteen months after the event.<sup>55</sup>

That Sunday morning, before service began the chief commandant called together the men who would conduct the service and told them to suggest to the congregation that they should all pray to God ... for his help in the struggle. ... *He wanted to make a vow to the almighty (if they were all willing) that 'should the Lord give us the victory, we would raise a House to the memory of His Great Name wherever it shall please Him. And that they should also invoke the aid ... of God to enable them to make it (sc. the victory) known even to our latest posterity, so that it might be celebrated to the honour of God'* ... Messrs. Cilliers, Landman and Joubert were glad to hear it. They consulted their congregations about it and obtained their general consent. After that, when divine worship began *separately*, Mr Cilliers conducted the one that took place in the tent of the chief commandant, where he started with the singing of Psalm 38.12-16, then delivered a prayer, and *preached about the first 24 verses of the Book of Judges; and then followed the prayer in which the aforementioned vow was made to God*, with fervent supplication for God's help and assistance in its fulfilment. The 12th and 21st verses of the said 38th Psalm were sung again and he ended the service with the singing of Psalm 134 (emphasis added).

First, the two separate parts of the covenant, as reported by Pretorius, which were made before and after the battle respectively — the building of

the church and the undertaking to celebrate the anniversary of the victory — are combined into one episode and set on the Sunday before the battle, the 9th December. Again, there is no mention of observing the anniversary of the battle as a Sabbath in the future. Second, the initiative for, and wording of, the vow are ascribed specifically to Pretorius. Thirdly, Sarel Cilliers is only one of three ministers who administer the vow *separately* to their own congregations. Cilliers leads the service in the commandant's tent, which could have held little more than a dozen men. There is no mass rally, address from a gun carriage, or thundering verses from the Book of Joshua, as one version of the myth has it.

Three years after the battle, the church was in fact built in Pietermaritzburg, but after only 5 years it fell into disuse and was sold. It was then used for a number of secular purposes until 1908, when it became the Voortrekker Museum, which it remains to this day. A second 'Church of the Vow' was built on another site in 1861. It was demolished in 1955 and the present Church of the Vow, next door to the original church was built in 1961.<sup>56</sup> The promised solemn and communal commemoration of the anniversary however never publicly took place. A few individuals, including Sarel Cilliers, are nevertheless alleged to have piously observed it in private.<sup>57</sup> No one else took any notice of the vow until 1877, when H.J. Hofstede, in the first historiographical work to be written in South Africa, from an Afrikaner, i.e. nationalistic, point of view, *A History of the Orange Free State*, written in Dutch, included an extract from a journal allegedly written by Sarel Cilliers on his deathbed<sup>58</sup> — and on that account surely true!<sup>59</sup>

It was on the 7 December. I complied to the best of my weak capacity with the wish of all the officers, and I knew that the majority of the burghers concurred in the wish. *I took my place on the gun-carriage. The 407 men of the force were assembled around me.* I made the promise in a simple manner, as solemnly as the Lord enabled me to do. As nearly as I can remember my words were these: 'My bretheren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a promise, *if He will be with us and protect us, and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we shall observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year, and a day of thanksgiving like the Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they may take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him retire from the place*

....

According to Cilliers, the vow was confirmed each evening and on the following Sabbath.<sup>60</sup>

This autobiographical document is nevertheless the earliest written manifestation, or formulation, of the canonic vow and the myth in the history of South Africa. The actual document which Hofstede quoted in his work is no longer extant, and as far as I know, no-one else saw it. The witnesses whom Hofstede cited were all dead at the time he wrote his history.<sup>61</sup> The story is therefore unverifiable. It is quite obvious however how utterly this historiographical account differs in tone and content from the contemporary versions — not only is it more political in intent, but it is also, in short, pure fiction, even though it is based on individual facts that may well in themselves be true. Its overall conception and publication in the context of Hofstede's patriotic history, moreover, is closely linked with contemporary circumstances. The British annexed the Transvaal Republic in the same year, and it was in the Transvaal that the myth was first put to political use.

In 1880, President Paul Kruger announced that Britain's annexation of the Republic was God's punishment for the Afrikaners' failure to honour the vow made 40 years before and in the same year the vow was formally renewed in a ceremony at Paardekraal.<sup>62</sup> This was also the year in which the First War of Independence began (1880–81) — an astoundingly successful guerilla conflict which resulted in Britain's granting autonomy to the Republic. The victory was linked with the vow, and Kruger instituted an elaborate festival of Thanksgiving — an 'Eleutheria', one might say — which was to be held every five years, on the four days leading up to 16 December. An eyewitness account informs us that on each day specific activities were arranged, culminating in a solemn address by a minister, which explained the significance of the celebration.<sup>63</sup> The mood and procedure, if not the details, are strikingly similar to the programme of the Plataean *Eleutheria* as held in Plutarch's day.<sup>64</sup> In the 1890s, after the discovery of gold, and with the inevitable prospect of British intervention and re-annexation, the quinquennial festivities were discontinued and an annual religious holiday was instituted. In 1891, for the first time, Cilliers' 'death-bed' version of the myth was actually circulated at the unveiling of a monument commemorating the victories of 1838 and (more particularly) 1881.<sup>65</sup> After the Second War of Independence (the 'South African War') and under the Union Government, 'Dingaan's Day' as it was called, continued to be observed, but as a secular public holiday, except by the more ardent Afrikaner nationalists, who used it for an occasion on which to promote the myth of the Covenant and the destiny of the Afrikaner nation.<sup>66</sup> And in 1952, four years after the Nationalist party came to power and four months before the first General Election under the new government, the anniversary of the victory at Blood River was once again instituted as a religious holiday to be observed by all ethnic and cultural groups in the country.<sup>67</sup>

Can the myth of the Covenant of Blood River tell us anything about the evolution of the myth of the Covenant of Plataea? I believe it can in the following respects. First, like the modern example, the ancient covenant may have originated in circumstances quite different from those conveyed in the formulated myth. We have seen how Bantjes, in his historiographic account combined two separate vows of Andries Pretorius into a single vow just before the battle; we also see how many years later one author (Hofstede), in a quite different historical context, elevated and dramatized the concept of the vow, citing a venerable eye-witness as a documentary source, and gave it a more universal and ideological application.<sup>68</sup> The aspect which was emphasized in the primary sources — the building of the church — is completely ignored in the myth, while the dominant role of Sarel Cilliers and the institution of a 'sabbath' — absent from the primary account — is emphasized with the citation of 'documentary' evidence<sup>69</sup> (cf. the tithing-clause in the Ephebes' oath). The myth of the Covenant of Plataea, I suspect, may have had its origin, first, in the two comparatively minor statements which Herodotus attributes to the Spartan general Pausanias just before the battle of Plataea, when he appealed to the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians for solidarity in the struggle against the barbarians (emphasis added):<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile Pausanias sent a horseman to the Athenians at the time when the cavalry fell upon him, with this message: '*Men of Athens, now that the great struggle has come which is to decide the freedom or slavery of Hellas, we two, Lacedaemonians and Athenians, are deserted by all the allies . . . must endeavour to defend ourselves and to aid each other*' . . . (61) (After a series of unpropitious sacrifices) *Pausanias raised his eyes to the Heraion of the Plataeans and calling the goddess to his aid, he besought her not to disappoint the hopes of the Hellenes;*

and, second, in the tithing oath (quoted above). This vow, although Herodotus emphasizes it and gives it a dramatically prominent position in the narrative, provides no precise chronological point of reference. Possibly the vow was formulated after the victory to justify Spartan and Athenian reprisals against Thebes, Thessaly and the Ionian states which had medized but this cannot be verified. The concept of a tithing oath in 480/79 was certainly used as a means for justifying reprisals against Thebes in the late 370s and possibly it was remodelled by Alexander the Great after its destruction, when Medism was a serious problem.<sup>71</sup> We do not know precisely when the Plataean *Eleutheria* were instituted; Thucydides knew nothing about them, neither did Isocrates in the late 370s, but we have epigraphic evidence that the *Eleutheria* were being celebrated around the middle of the third century.<sup>72</sup> Possibly the festival was connected with

Alexander's rebuilding of the walls of Plataea, as Plutarch says.<sup>73</sup> The version of the myth found in Plutarch *Arist.* 21 (cited above) may have been intended either to promote Athenian *prostasia* over the *Eleutheria* at some stage — since he attributes the covenant and the founding of the festival to Aristides the Athenian —, or to emphasize the glory of the Greek past during the Roman imperial age.

To conclude. The surviving evidence for the festival of the *Eleutheria* and the Covenant, especially if one takes into account the evolution of its modern parallel, suggests that there was probably no single covenant or Oath of Plataea made on one specific occasion and under a single specific set of circumstances. The epigraphic text, by which Siewert sets so much store, as well as the literary versions of the oath, are as much a fiction as Sarel Cilliers' alleged death-bed testimony of the Covenant of Blood River, or the more recent myths that descended from it.

## NOTES

1. Thus N.G.L. Hammond, *History of Greece*, 3rd ed., 1986, 250 (emphasis added).
2. The second section is derived from Plutarch, *Aristides*, 21 (quoted below).
3. Cf. E. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta*, Lund, 1965, vol.1, 208.
4. On the fictitious nature of this 'league' and its council, cf. A. Tronson, 'The Hellenic League of 480 — Fact or Ideological Fiction?', *AC* 34 (1991) 93–110.
5. Thus Diodorus 11.29: ἔδοξε τοῖς συνέδροις τῶν Ἑλλήνων παραλαβεῖν τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, καὶ πανδημῆι προσελθόντας εἰς τὰς Πλαταιὰς διαγωνίσασθαι περὶ τῆς ἐλευθερίας, εὐξασθαι δὲ καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς, ἐὰν νικήσωσιν, ἄγειν κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν τοὺς Ἑλληνας ἐλευθέρια κοινῆ, καὶ τὸν ἐλευθέριον ἀγῶνα συντελεῖν ἐν ταῖς Πλαταιαῖς. συναχθέντων δὲ τῶν Ἑλλήνων εἰς τὸν Ἴσθμόν, ἐδόκει τοῖς πᾶσιν ὄρκον ὁμοῖα περὶ τοῦ πολέμου, τὸν στέζοντα μὲν τὴν ὁμόνοιαν αὐτῶν, ἀναγκάσσοντα δὲ γενναίως τοὺς κινδύνους ὑπομένειν. ὁ δὲ ὄρκος ἦν τοιοῦτος· οὐ ποιήσομαι περὶ πλείονος τὸ ζῆν τῆς ἐλευθερίας, οὐδὲ καταλείψω τοὺς ἡγεμόνας οὔτε ζῶντας οὔτε ἀποθανόντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας τῶν συμμάχων πάντας θάψω, καὶ κρατήσας τῷ πολέμῳ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐδεμίαν τῶν ἀγωνισαμένων πόλεων ἀνάστατον ποιήσω, καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων οὐδὲν ἀνοικοδομήσω, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγινόμενοις ἔασω καὶ καταλείψω τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας (Translated by C.H. Oldfather, *Diodorus Siculus*, vol. 4, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass./ London, 1946). Except where otherwise indicated, translations of all authors quoted are those of the Loeb Classical Library.
6. E.g. 11.29; Lycurgus, *In Leocr.* 81; Tod *GHI* 2, 224 (the 'Acharnai inscription') and the so-called 'Glaukon inscription' of the Chremonidean war (See R. Etienne and M. Piérat, *BCH* 99 [1975] 51). The other *testimonia* are cited by P. Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai*, München, 1972, 12ff.
7. Plut. *Aristides* 21.1 (translated by B. Perrin): ἐκ τούτου γενομένης ἐκκλησίας κοινῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἔγραψεν Ἀριστείδης ψήφισμα συνίναί μὲν εἰς Πλαταιὰς καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος προβούλους καὶ θεωρούς, ἄγεισθαι δὲ πενταετηρικὸν ἀγῶνα τῶν Ἑλευθερίων, εἶναι δὲ σύνταξιν Ἑλληνικὴν μυρίας ... ἐπὶ τὸν πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους πόλεμον, Πλαταιεῖς δ' ἀσύλους καὶ ἱεροὺς ἀφίεσθαι τῷ θεῷ θύοντας ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος. See also Paus. 9.2.5–6; Strabo 9.2.31.

8. *FGrH* 115 F 153: ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς ὄρκος καταψεύδεται, ὃν Ἀθηναῖοί φασιν ὁμόσαι τοὺς Ἑλληνας πρὸ τῆς μάχης τῆς ἐν Πλαταιαῖς πρὸς βαρβάρους ... 'The Hellenic oath is a fabrication, which the Athenians say the Hellenes swore before the battle of Plataea against the barbarians' (tr. C.A. Fornara, *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1983, p.56).
9. Among its defenders, e.g. J.A.O. Larsen, 'The Constitution and Original Purpose of the Delian League', *HSPH* 51 (1940) 175–212; H.W. Parke, 'Consecration to Apollo', *Hermathena* 72 (1948) 82–114; 106f; G. Daux, 'Serments amphictioniques et serment de Platées', *Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson* 2, St. Louis, 1953, 775–782; A. Raubitschek, 'The Covenant of Plataea', *TAPA* 91 (1960) 178–183; P. Siewert (1972) and M. Ostwald, *Autonomia*, Athens, Ga., 1981, 177. Among its detractors are Ch. Habicht, 'Falsche Urkunden zur Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter der Persenkriege', *Hermes* 89 (1961) 1ff; N. Robertson, 'False Documents at Athens', *Historical Reflexions* 3 (1976) 5ff and K. Raafaub, *Die Entdeckung der Freiheit*, München, 1985, 127. Detailed references for the above may be found in N. Robertson and K. Raafaub, locc. citt.
10. E.g. A.R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, 2nd ed., 1984, 544; R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire*, 506f, and Raafaub, 127.
11. Robertson (1976), for instance, argues that the document originated between 378 and 368.
12. In particular, F.A. van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1868–1881*, New York, 1961; *Id. The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History*, Cape Town, 1964; *Id. 'A Historical Mirror of Blood River'*, in A. König and H. Keane (edd.), *The Meaning of History*, Pretoria, 1980, 11 ff; B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, Pretoria, 1977 and A. du Toit, 'No Chosen People: the Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', *AHR* 88 (Oct., 1983) 920–952.
13. L. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, New Haven, 1985, Chapter 5.
14. See note 8.
15. These texts are quoted and discussed in detail below.
16. As in the case of Herodotus (see text below). In the case of Diodorus, only the first objective is implied. Plutarch puts the covenant after the battle.
17. For the meaning of δεκατεύειν, see Parke (1948).
18. Hdt. 7.132: ἐπὶ τούτοις οἱ Ἕλληες ἔταμον ὄρκιον οἱ τῷ βαρβάρῳ πόλεμον ἀειράμενοι· τὸ δὲ ὄρκιον ὧδε εἶχε, ὅσιν τῷ Περσῇ ἔδοσαν σφέας αὐτοὺς Ἕλληες ἐόντες μὴ ἀναγκασθέντες, καταστάντων σφι εὖ τῶν πρηγμάτων, τούτους δεκατεύσαι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖσι θεῷ. τὸ μὲν δὲ ὄρκιον ὧδε εἶχε τοῖσι Ἕλλησι.
19. See note 16.
20. As in the case of Hammond, cited above.
21. Cf. for instance, F. Jacoby, *FGrH* 70 II C, 22f. Moreover, Diodorus, who lived during the last years of the Roman republic, would also have developed and elaborated the tradition in his own way; cf. K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century*, Princeton, 1990, 5f; cf. 29f.
22. Tod *GHI* 2, 204, lines 21–35. Translation by Fornara (1983), p. 57: Ὀρκος ὃν ὤμοσαν Ἀθηναῖοι ὅτε ἤμελλον | μάχεσθαι πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους· υ·υ·υ·υ·υ·υ·υ· | Μαχοῦμαι ἕως ἂν ζῶ, καὶ οὐ περὶ πλέονος | ποιήσομαι τὸ ζῆν ἢ τὸ ἐλεύθερος εἶναι, | καὶ οὐκ ἀπολείψω τὸν ταξίλοχον οὐδὲ τὸν ἐνωμοτάρχην οὐτε ζῶντα οὐτε ἀποθανόντα, καὶ οὐκ ἄπειμι ἔαμ μὴ οἱ ἡγεμόνες | ἀφηγῶνται, καὶ ποιήσω ὃ, τι ἂν οἱ στρατηγοὶ παραγγείλωσιν, καὶ τοὺς ἀποθανόντας τῶν συμμαχεσασμένων θάψω ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ ἄθραπτον οὐδένα καταλείψω· καὶ νικῆσας μαχόμενος τοὺς βαρβάρους δεκ· ατεύσω

τῆν Θηβαίων πόλιν, καὶ οὐκ ἀνασ|τήσω Ἰθάνας οὐδὲ Σπάρτην οὐδὲ Πλαται|ῶν οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων τῶν συμμαχε|σμένων οὐδεμίαν . . .

23. In *Leocr.* 80–81, delivered c. 330. The oath reads as follows: ΟΡΚΟΣ. οὐ ποιήσομαι περὶ πλείονος τὸ ζῆν τῆς ἐλευθερίας οὐδ' ἐγκαταλείψω τοὺς ἡγεμόνας οὔτε ζῶντας οὔτε ἀποθανόντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας τῶν συμάχων ἅπαντας θάψω. καὶ κρατήσας τῶ πολέμῳ τοὺς βαρβάρους τῶν μὲν μαχησαμένων ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος πόλεων οὐδεμίαν ἀνάστατον ποιήσω, τὰς δὲ τὰ τοῦ βαρβάρου προελομένας ἀπάσας δεκατεύσω. καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐδὲν ἀνοικοδομήσω παντάπασιν, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις εἶσω καταλείπεσθαι τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας.
- The version is probably not by Lycurgus himself but was added by whoever prepared the extant version of the speech for publication.
24. See Siewert's detailed comparison, *op. cit.* 9–11.
25. Since Thebes had been annihilated by Alexander and 'the Corinthian League' in 334 (cf. Diod. 17.9ff; Plut. *Alexander* 11.4f; Arrian *Anab.* 1.8; Justin 11.3.8), the clause was no longer relevant.
26. Siewert (1972), 75.
27. See above, note 9.
28. See above, note 9.
29. *Hellenica* 6.3.20; 5.35 (presumably reflecting contemporary propaganda).
30. Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.33ff.
31. Hdt. 7.132, quoted above.
32. The closest is Pausanias' appeal (just before the battle) for Athenian and Spartan cooperation (Hdt. 9.60) and his prayer to Hera (9.61), texts quoted below, note 70: but this certainly does not constitute a formal covenant.
33. Thuc. 2.71.2: Πausανίας γὰρ . . . ἐλευθερώσας τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἀπὸ τῶν Μῆδων μετὰ Ἑλλήνων τῶν ἐθελησάντων ζυνάρασθαι τὸν κίνδυνον τῆς μάχης ἢ παρ' ἡμῖν ἐγένετο, θύσας ἐν τῇ Πλαταιῶν ἀγορᾷ ἱερὰ Διὶ ἐλευθερίῳ καὶ ζυγκαλέσας πάντας τοὺς ζυμμάχους ἀπεδίδου Πλαταιεῦσι γῆν καὶ πόλιν τὴν σφετέραν ἔχοντας αὐτονόμους οἰκεῖν, στρατεύσαι τε μηδένα ποτὲ ἀδίκως ἐπ' αὐτούς, μηδ' ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀμύνειν τοὺς παρόντας ζυμμάχους κατὰ δύναμιν.
34. Thuc. 3.58.4: ἀποβλέψατε γὰρ εἰς πατέρων τῶν ὑμετέρων θήκας, οὓς ἀποθανόντας ὑπὸ Μῆδων καὶ ταφέντας ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἐτιμῶμεν κατὰ ἔτος ἕκαστον δημοσίᾳ ἐσθήμασι τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις νομίμοις . . . (58.5) πρὸς δὲ καὶ γῆν ἐν ἣ ἡλευθερώθησαν οἱ Ἕλληνας δουλώσετε, ἱερὰ τε θεῶν οἷς εὐξάμενοι Μῆδων ἐκράτησαν ἐρημοῦτε καὶ θυσίας τὰς πατρίους τῶν ἐσσαμένων καὶ κτισάντων ἀφαιρήσεσθε.
35. *Plataicus* 58–62 (c. 373 B.C.).
36. See especially 59: τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα τρόπαια πόλει πρὸς πόλιν γέγονεν, ἐκεῖνα δ' ὑπὲρ ἀπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος πρὸς ὅλην τὴν ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας δύναμιν ἔστηκεν . . . (60) ἄξιον δὲ καὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῶν ἡρώων μνησθῆναι τῶν ἐκεῖνον τὸν τόπον κατεχόντων καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν τὰς τιμὰς αὐτῶν καταλυομένας, οἷς ὑμεῖς καλλιεργασάμενοι τοιοῦτον ὑπέστητε κίνδυνον, ὅς καὶ τούτους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας Ἕλληνας ἡλευθέρωσεν. This is the context in which one would expect to find a specific reference to a covenant and to an annual panhellenic festival.
37. H. Tudor, *Political Myth*, London, 1972, 37 f.
38. Cf. Thompson (1985), 3–7.
39. For details see *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Oxford, 1978, vol.1, 355–61.
40. *Ibid.* 12–18 and 146.
41. Cf. Robertson, 1976, among others.
42. Afrikaans: 'Geloftedag'. The official English translation of the holiday is now 'the Day of the Vow'; however, until about a decade ago the title 'Day of the

- Covenant' appeared in calendars. The Afrikaans word 'gelofte' means both 'vow' and 'covenant' (cf. D.B. Bosman, I.W. van der Merwe and L.W. Hiemstra, *Bilingual Dictionary*, 8th edition, Cape Town, 1984). In English, the words 'vow' and 'covenant' do not have precisely the same meaning: 'vow' means 'a solemn pledge or promise binding the person making it to perform a specified act or behave in a certain way' (thus *Collins' Dictionary*, 2nd edition, London, 1986, s.v.), while a covenant is the agreement itself, 'the contract between two parties' (*ibid.*, s.v.). The substitution of the English term 'covenant' by 'vow' suggests a recent tendency to emphasize the human, rather than the divine role in the act, that is, that it was a one-sided gesture. I do not know whether any official explanation was given for the change in the English nomenclature.
43. Cf. the official Guide for the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria, c. 1961 (cited by Thompson [1985] 188). In the 'Hall of Heroes', one of the friezes depicting the history of the Afrikaner nation shows Sarel Cilliers enunciating the oath. He stands on a gun-carriage with his arms outstretched to heaven. Seven men look on reverently. The Guidebook has the following commentary: 'Sarel Cilliers has mounted Old Grietjie the Voortrekker gun and repeats the vow that if the Lord gave them victory over the enemy, they would consecrate that day and keep it holy as a Sabbath in each year and that they would build a church to the glory of God'.
  44. James A. Michener, *The Covenant*, New York, 1980, 484f. (emphasis added). Michener does not refer to the promise to build a church.
  45. In the official English guidebook the text of the oath is preceded by the epigraph 'The Covenant'. In the actual Afrikaans inscription however there is no epigraph.
  46. Cf. Thompson (1985), 178ff.
  47. The publication of Gustav Preller's *Voortrekkermense* (volumes 1-6, Pretoria, 1918-38), in which he refers to the vow in much detail (vol.2), possibly gave impetus to the resurrection of the myth. Cf. See also G.J. Preller, *Andries Pretorius: Lewensbeskrywing van die Voortrekker Kommandant-Generaal*, Johannesburg, 1940, 48ff.
  48. Cf. van Jaarsveld (1964), 78-87 and Thompson (1985) in reference to the quinquennial festival at Paardekraal, near Krugersdorp.
  49. Cited by Thompson, *ibid.* 226.
  50. Quoted in Graham Leach, *The Afrikaners: Their Last Great Trek*, Johannesburg, 1989, 3. In 1983 the Botha Government conceded limited political rights to Coloureds and Indians.
  51. Compare, for example, the emphasis on the reconciliation between Athens and Sparta against the common enemy, Thebes, in the 370s version of the Oath of Plataea.
  52. Cf. Thompson (1985), 170.
  53. Although an English version of the journal entry appeared in *Zuid Afrikaan*, I quote Thompson's more accurate translation from the original Dutch (emphasis added).
  54. See above and note 45.
  55. *S.A. Archival Records: Notule van die Natalse Volksraad 1838-1845*, ed. J.H. Breytenbach, Cape Town, c. 1958, 270-73, 282-85, 290, 293f; cf. also J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, vol. 1, 453-58, cited by Thompson (1985), 172; see also G. Preller, *Andries Pretorius*, 32ff.
  56. An imposing inscription containing the canonic text of the 'Covenant' (see above) dominates the entrance of the church. The date is significant. On May 31, 1961, South Africa became an independent republic outside the British Commonwealth. A large majority of the (white) electorate, in a referendum held the previous year, gave the Prime Minister, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, the mandate for implementing his grand design of 'Separate Development'. Amidst growing opposition from the rest

- of the world and increasing internal unrest, the ruling party, thus 'beleaguered', continued to implement this policy for over a quarter of a century.
57. Cf. F. Lion-Cachet, *De Worstelstrijd der Transvaler*, 3rd ed., Amsterdam, 1900 (the first edition was published in 1882), 201, note 1.
  58. H.J. Hofstede, *Geschiedenis van den Oranje-Vrijstaat*, The Hague, 1876; the Celliers journal is cited *verbatim* pp. 50-66. The translated version (here quoted) is from J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, vol.1, 238-52 which Thompson cites. The truth or otherwise of 'deathbed' statements (the dying, like kings, may not tell lies!, cf. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.1) is not the point at issue here (cf. note 59, below). It is Hofstede himself who refers to the document as a 'deathbed statement' ('Ik laat hier het journaal woordelijk volgen van den Heer Charl Celliers ... een stuk, dat op zijn sterfbed door hem geschreven is ...'). This fact is not evident however from the text itself, although the author swears that his account is true (p. 50, '... want onzen God heeft "de waarheid lief"'). Whether he did stand on a gun-carriage in 1838 and utter the precise words he cites in the present context, we have no way of establishing. But in a historiographical (or mythographical) sense the account is true as far as the circumstances which prompted its writing required it to be.
  59. We should not let the solemnity of the supposed circumstances surrounding the composition of the document cloud our critical judgement. A deathbed account of an episode in the life of its author, like a last will and testament, does not necessarily have to be written when one is literally breathing one's last! It is a literary artefact in which the author leaves a lasting image which he or she wishes to project to future generations. The *Res Gestae* of Augustus is an example which springs readily to mind. Michael Millgate (*Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy*, Oxford, 1991, 2) writes as follows: 'Valedictory gestures are not confined to the elderly ... and the apprehension of death ... can operate very much like old age itself in shaping what may prove, irrespective of age, to be the final phase of a writer's working life'. He also makes the following comment (p.5): 'We have been taught to respect and revere the words and actions of the dying and the legal and ethical significance accorded to last wills and testaments has doubtless had its effect upon the standard editorial privileging of authors' "final intentions". But it ought to trouble us more than it customarily does that we automatically approach a number of major writers ... by way of the texts, commentaries, and canonical frameworks they established only in late career, and that we unreflectingly depend upon literary biographies that may be largely based on immaculately laundered archival evidence and on uncheckable assertions emanating from the subject's famous but not necessarily scrupulous old age — or from a widow, widower, child, or other dubiously authoritative relict or representative'. This opinion no doubt applies to any author who tries to reconstruct himself and his actions with a view to a literary *Nachleben*.
  60. If this was the case, then Pretorius did not bother to mention it and Bantjes did not know about it.
  61. W.S. van Rijnveld, who signed the *verbatim* copy of the document which Hofstede cited, was also dead. (Hofstede, 66).
  62. Thompson (1985), 170.
  63. *Ibid.* 171f.
  64. Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Aristides* 21.3, quoted above.
  65. Thompson (1985), 171.
  66. *Ibid.* 179f. See also Leach (1989), 10-12.
  67. On this occasion the name of the holiday was changed from Dingaan's Day to 'Geloftedag', which was considered more appropriate.

68. As Plutarch attributes the initiation of the Covenant to the Athenian Aristides and makes it into a universal institution applying to all Hellenes, not merely to Plataeans (as we find in Thucydides)
69. Cf. F. Lion Cachet (1900), 200f; the same tendency is apparent in other patriotic/nationalistic literature published after the 1880s (e.g. J.C. Voigt, *Fifty Years of the History of the Republic of South Africa*, 2 vols., London, 1899; 2.87).
70. Hdt. 9.60 and 61: 'Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀγῶνος μεγίστου προκειμένου ἐλευθέρην εἶναι ἢ δεδουλωμένην τὴν Ἑλλάδα, προδεδομέθα ὑπὸ τῶν συμμάχων ἡμεῖς τε οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ὑπὸ τὴν παροικομένην νύκτα διαδράντων. νῦν ὦν δέδοχται τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν τὸ ποιητέον ἡμῖν· ἀμυνομένους γὰρ τῇ δυνάμεθα ἄριστα περιστέλλειν ἀλλήλους ...' (61) ὥστε ... ἀποβλέψαντα τὸν Πausanίην πρὸς τὸ Ἡραῖον τὸ Πλαταιέων ἐπικαλέσασθαι τὴν θεόν, χρήζοντα μηδαμῶς σφέας ψευσθῆναι τῆς ἐλπίδος.
71. Cf. note 25, above.
72. *BCH* 99 (1975) 51 (? after 261). Decree of the 'Hellenic league' honouring Glaukon, son of Eteocles in that:

he has contributed to making more lavish the *sacrifice in honour of Zeus Eleutherios and Concord and the contest which the Greeks celebrate on the tomb of the heroes who fought against the barbarians for the liberty of the Greeks.*

... καὶ τὸν  
ἀγῶνα ὃν τιθέασιν οἱ Ἕλληες ἐπὶ  
τοῖς ἀνδράσιν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ ἀγω  
νισαμένοις πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους  
ὅπερ τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερίας.

Translated by M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, Cambridge, 1980.

73. Plutarch, *Life of Aristides* 11.8.  
The above essay is based on a lecture-discussion presented for the Department of Classics at the University of South Africa in July, 1990. I am much indebted to the comments and suggestions of the participants on that occasion, especially Professors Ursula Vogel-Weidemann and C.P.T. Naudé, who also commented on a draft of the lecture. The views here expressed are entirely my own, as are any errors and misinterpretations.



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