

ANNALS 14.26 AND THE ARMENIAN SETTLEMENT OF A. D. 60

additum et praesidium mille legionarii, tres sociorum cohortes duaeque equitum alae, et quo facilius novum regnum tueretur, pars Armeniae, ut cuique finitima, Pharasmani Polemonique et Aristobulo atque Antiocho parere iussae sunt. Corbulo in Syriam abscessit, morte Umuidii legati vacuum ac sibi permissam.

(Ann. 14.26)

With these words Tacitus ends his account of events on the eastern frontier in A.D. 60 and of the first major phase of Corbulo's Parthian campaigns. Immediately upon coming to power in A. D. 54, Nero was faced with a crisis in Armenia, where Tiridates, brother of the Parthian king Vologeses I, had been recently established as king. By A.D. 60 the Romans had dislodged Tiridates and installed as ruler of Armenia their own nominee, Tigranes, great-grandson of both Herod the Great¹ and of Archelaus, last king of Cappadocia.² The position of Tigranes, an outsider to the realm, was extremely tenuous, and to protect him, as the *Annals* show, Corbulo left a garrison of 1,000 legionaries, three cohorts of infantry and two *alae* of cavalry. He also, it appears, placed the border areas of Armenia under some sort of control by the neighbouring client-kings. Tacitus' account is familiar, since it appears in the form quoted above in all standard editions, and it comes almost as a surprise to note in the apparatus critici that the names of Pharasmanes and Polemo do not appear in the text of the *Annals* as originally transmitted; *Pharasmani Polemonique* is, in fact, an emendation, first suggested by J. F. Gronovius in 1672, of the Medicean's *pars nipulique*.³

If often happens that an old emendation can eventually acquire an authority almost equal to that of a transmitted text. This process can be especially dangerous in the case of historical authors, since modern authorities at times state as historical facts material adduced from *emended* texts, without acknowledging, or perhaps without realizing, that an emendation is involved. This seems to have happened almost universally in the treatment of the passage of the *Annals* under discussion; for the purpose of illustration, I provide some examples from influential works. Th. Mommsen, in his *Römische Geschichte*,⁴ states, 'Ein Theil der Grenzlandschaften ward von Armenien abgetrennt und vertheilt unter die benachbarten Könige Polemon von Pontus und Trapezus, Aristobulos von Klein-Armenien, Pharasmanes von Iberien und Antiochus von Kommagene.' *PIR* (1898) states under Pharasmanes, 'partem aliquam Armeniae accipit a Nerone a. 60. Tac. a. 14.26', and under Polemo, 'Nero partem Armeniae ei donavit a. 60. Tac. a. 14.26'. More recently, J. G. C. Anderson asserts in the *Cambridge Ancient History* that 'the neighbouring client-kings who had co-operated in the war—Antiochus, Aristobulus, Polemo and Pharasmanes—were rewarded by the grant of portions of Armenia adjoining their territories',⁵ and D. Magie, in *Roman*

¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 18. 139–40.

² Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.2, calls Tigranes 'regis Archelai nepos', where *nepos* should strictly speaking be *pronepos*.

³ It should be noted that *pars Armeniae ut*

is an emendation (universally accepted), made by F. Puteolanus in 1475, of the Medicean's *pars Armenia eunt*.

⁴ (Berlin, 1919⁸) v. 387.

⁵ (Cambridge, 1934) x. 765.

Rule in Asia Minor, tells us that, 'As a means of ensuring support in the event of a Parthian attack a sort of partition of northern and western Armenia was effected, by which the interest of the neighbouring client-kings in the new arrangement might be secured. Territory bordering on Iberia was given to Pharasmanes, while the western part of the country was divided between Polemo of Pontus and Aristobulus.'⁶ An even more dangerous situation can arise when scholars begin to base fresh hypotheses on such 'transmitted facts'; H. Seyrig, the distinguished numismatist, notes the oriental character of the title *Μέγας Βασιλεύς* on one of the coins of Polemo: 'cela fait penser que Polémon a dû frapper notre pièce comme roi d'une partie de l'Arménie, dont Néron lui avait fait cadeau en 60.'⁷

These examples show the extent of the historical problem raised by this passage of Tacitus; it is worth noting, however, that this emendation has effected scholars' views not only of Roman history. The text as emended produces a bold *constructio ad sensum*, since the loss of *pars* from *pars nipulique* means that the initial *pars* must govern a plural verb, *iussae sunt*.⁸ Yet in his introductory section on Tacitean style and syntax, H. Furneaux singles out the passage as emended as a 'very strong instance' of this device in Tacitus.⁹

Since such fundamental assumptions have been made about Roman eastern policy on the basis of a textual emendation, it is clearly important for us to assess how convincing Gronovius' conjecture is. In the first place, while it must be conceded that unfamiliar names are prone to textual corruption, the one other reference to Polemo in the *Annals* (2.56)¹⁰ is correctly transmitted, and in the twelve references to Pharasmanes in the *Annals* there is only one corruption (and a minor one, at that) in the Medicean, the loss of an *s* in *Faramanen* at *Ann.* 12.48 (*F* and *Ph* are used arbitrarily to begin his name).

However, the arguments against Gronovius are historical, rather than palaeographical. Careful attention should be paid to the client-kings used in the initial campaign against Tiridates in Armenia.

(a) In A. D. 54 Antiochus IV of Commagene was ordered to hold his troops in readiness for an invasion of Parthia (*Ann.* 13.7) and we are told at *Ann.* 13.37 that Corbulo ordered him to march into the 'proximas sibi praefecturas' ('the districts of Armenia nearest to him'). Antiochus IV was the son of Antiochus III, on whose death in A. D. 17 Commagene, presumably, became a Roman province.¹¹ The kingdom was restored to Antiochus IV by Claudius (it had been temporarily restored by Gaius, only to be confiscated shortly afterwards by the same emperor).¹² Nero was to call upon the services of Antiochus IV later, since the king supplied troops to assist Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, in dealing with

⁶ (Princeton, 1950), p. 557.

⁷ 'Monnaies Hellénistiques', *Rev. Num.* 11 (1969), 46.

⁸ Because of this, C. Halm, *P. Corn. Taciti Libri Qui Supersunt* (Leipzig, 1850), ad loc., felt the need of a further emendation of *pars Armeniae* to *partes Armeniae*. He seems to have been followed only by J. Madvig, *Adversaria Critica* (Copenhagen, 1873; reprinted Hildesheim, 1967) ii. 553.

⁹ *The Annals of Tacitus* (Oxford, 1896²)

i. 54.

¹⁰ The allusion is to Polemo I, grandfather of Polemo II, king of Pontus in A. D. 60, but the palaeographic significance remains the same.

¹¹ *Ann.* 2.42.

¹² Dio 60.8: καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τῷ τε Ἀντιόχῳ τὴν Κομμαγενὴν ἀπέδωκεν (ὁ γὰρ Γαῖος, καίπερ αὐτός οἱ δούς αὐτὴν, ἀφῆρητο) . . .

the insurrection in Judaea in A.D. 66.¹³

(b) Aristobulus, son of the later Herod of Chalcis, was granted Armenia Minor by Nero in A.D. 54.¹⁴ He was cousin to Agrippa II (Herod of Chalcis and Agrippa I were brothers). His later career is uncertain, but he may well be the Aristobulus who assisted Caesennius Paetus in his invasion of Commagene in A.D. 72/3.¹⁵

(c) During Corbulo's first eastern campaign Pharasmanes, king of the Iberians, took some sort of military action against the Armenians: 'adversos Armenios odium promptius exercebat' (*Ann.* 13.37). To a very large degree, however, it was Pharasmanes who had precipitated the crisis in Armenia. He had persuaded his son, Radamistus, to dislodge Mithridates, his brother and Radamistus' uncle, from the throne of Armenia, where he (Mithridates) had been established by Claudius with Pharasmanes' support.¹⁶ Radamistus did not hold the throne for long, and it was as a result of his expulsion by Vologeses I that war broke out between Rome and the Parthians. Before engaging in the campaign, Pharasmanes put Radamistus to death to curry favour with the Romans: 'interfecto filio Radamisto quasi proditore, quo fidem in nos testaretur'. His later career is unknown, except that he seems to have died before A.D. 75.¹⁷

Two other kings were involved in the Armenian campaigns. Agrippa II was also ordered to make ready his troops for an invasion of Parthia (*Ann.* 13.7).¹⁸ In the same year Sohaemus of Emesa was made king of Sophene in the south-west of Armenia.¹⁹ Since both Agrippa and Sohaemus ruled territories that were geographically distant from Armenia they would presumably have returned to their kingdoms once the settlement was reached. Aristobulus and Antiochus, who had been commissioned by the Romans to take part in the military campaign, might logically be called upon to play some sort of role in the defence of Armenia, whose territory bordered on their own. What of Pharasmanes? His reliability, to judge from his past record, was open to serious question. Corbulo did not formally request his intervention in Armenia, and both Furneaux and E. Köstermann²⁰ (ad loc.) point out that the *nam* of *nam Pharasmanes* (*Ann.* 13.37) is intended to show that Pharasmanes acted *on his own initiative* and not as part of Corbulo's over-all strategy. Polemo II's case is even weaker. While Tacitus records the names of lesser monarchs who participated in the Parthian campaign, he nowhere mentions the participation of Polemo II, nor indeed does any other source mention Polemo II in connection with the Parthian campaigns. This does not, of course, *prove* that Polemo did not participate, but the silence over an extremely important client-king, a man who remained loyal to Gaius, Claudius, and Nero, and whose career is otherwise well documented, does pose a problem.²¹

¹³ Josephus, *BJ* 2.500; 3.68. In A. D. 72/3 Antiochus was suspected of plotting with the king of Parthia against Rome (Josephus, *BJ* 7. 219–43). He was deposed from his throne but lived as an honourable exile in Rome.

¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 20. 158–9; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.7.

¹⁵ Josephus, *BJ* 7.226, says that Paetus was aided by a τῆς μὲν Χαλκιδικῆς λεγομένης Ἀριστόβουλος.

¹⁶ *Ann.* 11.8.

¹⁷ Dessau, *ILS*³ 8795, which is dated to A. D. 75, speaks of Pharasmanes' son,

Mithridates, as ruler of Iberia.

¹⁸ For Agrippa II's domain see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.138, 158–59; *BJ* 2.247,252.

¹⁹ *Ann.* 13.7. That the Sohaemus of Emesa and the Sohaemus of Sophene are almost certainly one and the same person, is argued by A. A. Barrett, 'Sohaemus, King of Emesa and Sophene', *AJP* 98 (1977), 153–9.

²⁰ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales* (Heidelberg, 1968), Band iv.

²¹ Madvig (see n. 8) suggests a compromise emendation, *Pharasmanique*.

Even if we grant that Corbulo did decide to use Pharasmanes and Polemo II, what would have been his strategic purpose in so doing? Despite what the scholars cited earlier have claimed, there can hardly be any question of a partition of Armenia or of a transfer of part of its territory to other client-kings. Tacitus makes it clear that the use of client-kings was intended to protect (*tueretur*) the *novum regnum*, not to effect its diminution. The latter meaning is possible only if we assume that Tacitus is using *tueretur* ironically; there is, however, no indication whatsoever that any irony was intended. It is more likely that the kings would have some sort of jurisdiction over their *immediate* border areas (*finitima*) and that this jurisdiction would be of a military rather than a sovereign nature. It is worth noting that when Aristobulus and Sohaemus are granted sovereignty over their territories Tacitus uses the very precise expression, 'cum insignibus regis mandat' (*Ann.* 13.7); at *Ann.* 14.26, however, he uses the much less explicit 'parere iussae sunt'.²² It may, in fact, be possible that Corbulo's use of the client-kings was simply a continuation of the strategy adopted during the hostilities, when he ordered Antiochus IV to cross the border and 'proximas sibi praefecturas petere' (*Ann.* 13.37).²³ The right of a king to lead troops over his border in a crisis and to command local troops without prior permission from the ruler of the territory (or from Rome) could make a great deal of strategic sense. But while Pharasmanes might have provided a service in protecting Armenia from the hostile tribes in his *hinterland*, it was in this hinterland and not on the Armenian border where the danger lay. It is difficult to think of any strategic role that Polemo II might have been able to play in the north-west of Armenia.²⁴ The Roman garrison would, of course, have been particularly concerned about invasion from the south, from the Parthians; accordingly, the south-west of Armenia, which borders on the kingdoms of Aristobulus and Antiochus IV, would have been considered of special importance. This area contains Sophene, in which was located the most important crossing point of the Euphrates river by the main highway of the east, and which could control movement from Mesopotamia into Armenia through the pass of Ergani. It was doubtlessly the strategic importance of this area that led Nero to create a separate kingdom of Sophene at the outbreak of hostilities. With the departure of Sohaemus, which we must assume took place in A.D. 60, Sophene was presumably reincorporated into Armenia, and Corbulo would have felt it prudent to commission the neighbouring kings to provide supervision in this sensitive area.²⁵

²² The most natural way to understand the passage is to assume that the subject of *tueretur* at *Ann.* 14.26 is *praesidium*. This emphasizes the notion that the neighbouring kings were to be used in a military, rather than a sovereign, role.

²³ Pliny, *N. H.* 6.9.27, informs us that Armenia was divided into 120 'districts': 'dividitur, quod certum est, in praefecturas quas strategias vocant . . . barbaris nominibus CXX'.

²⁴ Since the position of Tigranes in Armenia was very weak it might have been sound strategy for the Romans to have assumed authority in Armenia in the event

of a revolt that grew out of Tigranes' control. In that case all four kings could have played a role. But Tacitus clearly speaks not of some sort of contingency plan for the general supervision of Armenia, but of the exercise of *actual* authority ('parere iussae sunt'), which authority, as has been shown, must have been limited to the immediate border area.

²⁵ In the subsequent campaigns, Corbulo stationed Legio III in Sophene, as we know from an almost identical pair of inscriptions, *CIL* 6741 (= *ILS*³ 232) and *CIL* 6742, found at Chaput (or Hisn Ziād). The site has been identified with the fortress of Ziata mentioned by Ammianus 19.6.1.

The arrangements of A.D. 60 were not destined to last for long. Rome became embroiled in further hostilities with Parthia, in consequence of which Corbulo was given supreme command over provincial governors in the east, as well as over 'tetrarchis ac regibus' (*Ann.* 15.25). The forces under Corbulo's command were mustered at Melitene, just west of Sophene, in preparation for the crossing of the Euphrates, and these forces included the 'auxilia regum in unum conducta' (*Ann.* 15.26). No attempt is made by Tacitus to identify the kings and it is not unreasonable to assume that they would have included the *reges* who participated with Corbulo in the first campaign. For Aristobulus and Antiochus to have mustered at Melitene makes perfect sense, since it lies between their kingdoms, only a few miles from the borders of each. It would have been much more unusual from a strategic point of view for Polemo II and Pharasmanes to have moved their troops from the north and north-west of Armenia to Melitene, and, indeed, it would have been counter to their supposed role of controlling the border areas of Armenia. This is, of course, an argument from silence, but it is far more logical for Tacitus to have remained silent about Aristobulus and Antiochus IV, whose presence at Melitene could naturally be assumed. His silence about Polemo II and Pharasmanes reinforces the notion that they had not been used by Corbulo in the first place.

In sum, it makes sound strategic sense for Corbulo to have continued to use Aristobulus and Antiochus in his frontier policy, just as the transmitted text of the *Annals* tells us. On the other hand the case for Pharasmanes is weak, and the case for Polemo II is even weaker. I have no simple solution to offer, but we should, at all events, resist the temptation to accept Gronovius' emendation simply because it offers the comfort of substituting familiar names for an unfamiliar phrase that might conceal the name of some otherwise unknown ruler or geographical region. The best remedy might be to print at *Ann.* 14.26

. . . finitima † pars nipulique † et Aristobulo . . .

and to relegate Gronovius' emendation to the apparatus.

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