

lessi macedoni, cioè nella grande, ma non certo esclusiva, parte che esercitano le idee di Isocrate e anche confrontando la rozzezza delle pretese egemoniche e depredatorie della alta ufficialità, cioè della aristocrazia macedone.

Tuttavia l'intero problema viene spesso visto nel solo ambito della politica macedone, la quale, d'altra parte, non si può ancora dire perfettamente nota, almeno dal punto di vista delle interrelazioni giuridiche e di poteri rispettivi fra basileus e aristocrazia. Deve invece essere tenuta anche presente la posizione dell'elemento greco, sia dal punto di vista ideologico, ben oltre il contrasto fra Demostene e Isocrate, sia dal punto di vista dei rapporti economici e culturali greco-persiani. Per questo, v. ora, in "Iranica antiqua", XI (1976) e XII (1977), il lavoro di Ch. G. Starr, Greek and Persians in the fourth Century B. C. a story of cultural contrasts before Alexander, I (XI, pag. 39 e sgg.) e II (XII, pagg. 49 e sgg.).

Lesław MORAWIECKI

HERCULES AS A SYMBOL OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT'S PERSIAN WAR

In his preface to Flavius Arrianus' Anabasis¹ Professor Józef Wolski stresses the interest in the history of Alexander the Great, which was aroused in the second century A. D. when the Roman Empire was facing armed confrontation with the Parthian state. At that time, "Alexander the Great became the symbol of Roman policy following in the footsteps of this conqueror". Five centuries earlier Alexander the Great was looking for a symbol to express his intentions. He found it, it seems, in the figure of Hercules².

Such an interpretation of the figure of Hercules, is particularly interesting when confronted with the representations on the coins of Alexander the Great. Alexander's most popular coins were silver tetradrachms with the image of Hercules's head covered with a lion's skin on the obverse and the figure of a seated Zeus Aetophoros on the reverse³. They appeared at the very beginning of Alexander's reign and were already struck in Pella in 336 B. C.⁴. An attempt to shift this date, undertaken recently by G. Kleiner, who related the coins as Reichsmünzen to the period after 331 B. C., has proved unsuccessful⁵.

However, the results of such analysis of the meaning of monetary interpretation are less certain. On the one hand, attempts are made to pre-

sent Hercules as the ancestor of the Macedonian kings, whereas on the other hand he is interpreted as a panhellenic hero attributed to Alexander's person⁶.

Alexander's personal ties with Hercules have induced further investigations. It is emphasized that the siege and conquest of Tyre in which Hercules played a decisive part became the turning point in their relationship⁷. The agonistic element which was developed by Alexander who wanted to equal and excel Hercules is also of great importance⁸. This could provide a motive for the siege of Aorime, a fortress which Hercules himself was not able to conquer⁹. Particularly close connections have found their expression in the sacrifices offered to Hercules by Alexander¹⁰, as well as the fact that he gave his son, born of Barsina, the name of Hercules¹¹. Alexander himself even started to wear a lion's skin¹².

Hercules also played a significant part in the process of Alexander the Great's deification¹³, since he was the link between earth and heaven as the only hero possessing a dual nature, both divine and human¹⁴. He occupied a very special position on earth as "the best of men"¹⁵.

The image of Hercules on coins, which has been elaborated, according to M. Bieber, by Apelles and Pyrgoteles¹⁶, has assumed some characteristic features which permitted the formation of the hypothesis that it represents Alexander the Great as Hercules¹⁷. All this has prompted V. Ehrenberg¹⁸ to propose that at the beginning of his reign Alexander identified himself with Achilles, then after the conquest of Tyre with Hercules and finally at the end of his reign, with Dionisos.

The figure of Zeus is, in turn, commonly interpreted as an expression of panhellenic tendencies¹⁹, and G. Kleiner rightly stresses the relationship with Hercules²⁰. After having defeated the Geths on the Istrus in 335 B. C., Alexander gave thanks to god Istrus and to Zeus and Hercules²¹. He did likewise ten years later after his victory in Karmania²².

Alexander the Great himself was painted by Apelles with a thunderbolt in his hand, a divine symbol of Zeus²³, and Pyrgoteles was the author of a sculpture with a similar theme²⁴. A sculpture depicting Alexander the Great as Zeus was put up in Corinth in 324 B. C.²⁵. Alexander was depicted in the same way in a gem from IVth-IIIrd Century B. C.²⁶.

All these significative aspects of the figure of Hercules and Zeus are very important for the definition of the ideological implications of coins struck in the later years of Alexander the Great's reign. They cannot, however, help decisively to determine the role and importance of the issues which were struck just after his ascension to the throne. Therefore, only through analysing the meaning of Hercules and Zeus and by the process of elimination, will it be possible to trace those elements which decided the character of the first issues. Here we should take into account the Macedonian coin-tradition and the tendencies of contemporary propaganda, which are known mainly from literary sources.

The first allusion to Hercules can already be found on the coins of king Alexander the First struck in the years 480/479 - 477/476 B. C. On the obverse of these heavy tetrobols, there appears a horseman holding two spears and on the reverse a lion's head, or its protome, placed in quadratum incussum²⁷. The issue of this type of coin was renewed in the years 460-451 B. C.²⁸ as well as during the reign of the subsequent ruler, Perdikkas²⁹. During the last years of his reign an issue of trihemioibols was also struck, depicting for the first time on the obverse a typical representation of Hercules' head covered with a lion's skin. The symbols, a bow and a club, were on the reverse³⁰. Since that time, Hercules' head, together with a club, a bow, or a wild boar³¹, appeared quite often on coins of the Macedonian kings. We can notice its absence only on the coins of Amyntas the Second³² and Pausanias³³. Sometimes it appeared together with representations of a horse or an eagle³⁴.

It is commonly accepted, that the representation of Hercules was connected with the ancient myth, according to which the Macedonian kings were descended from the house of Temenids of Argos³⁵. Its founder was Temenos, one of the Heraclids³⁶. The reference to this myth was to stress the hellenic ancestry of the royal family and thus to strengthen its position³⁷. The same meaning, however, is ascribed to the symbol of a lion, in this way identifying it with the representation of Hercules himself³⁸. This is a little doubtful especially if we compare the latter issues on which the Hercules' symbols serve as some kind of a complement to his representation. The appearance of the lion itself has not been adequately explained so far.

D. Raymond, who rightly doubts if it could happen under the influence of Herodotus who had spoken about the attack on Xerxes' trains by a pride of lions³⁹. Since the chronology of the coins struck on these territories is still incertain, it is also difficult to say that the appearance of the lion's representations on Alexander the First's coins has been caused by borrowing of this motif.

It is possible, although I stress that it is only my supposition, that the lion was in this case the symbol of the Macedonian royal family. We know from Plutarch that Philip the Second possessed a ring with a representation of a lion⁴⁰. We also know that a famous fortune-teller, Aristander, who was also mentioned by Aristotle, compared Alexander's nature to that of a lion⁴¹. Thus it is possible that a lion was the symbol of the whole family of Temenids. If this was the case, it was in the first place a proprietary or a distinctive sign, and its connection with Hercules would have been derivative in character.

Such a solution accounts for the occurrence of both symbols on one coin. For example, we may mention the issue of gold hemistaters which had Hercules' head on the obverse and the lion's protome on the reverse⁴². In this case, the image of Hercules points to the beginnings of the royal family, and the lion is probably Philip's seal. It is difficult to interpret the lion as a symbol connected with Hercules, since on the issues of gold coins with a nominal value of 1/8 stater, there appears the same type of obverse, whereas on the reverse there are various symbols which are not connected with Hercules, although we know little or nothing about their actual meaning⁴³.

It is also doubtful that Hercules' head stressed exclusively the Hellenic ancestry of the Macedonian royal house⁴⁴. By way of example, we may take the mintage of Philip the Second which was used as a vehicle for the king's political programme, making use of the representation of Hercules as a form of ideological influence. His head was depicted on the obverse of the coins struck after 348 B. C. at Philippi, whereas on the reverse we can see a tripod, an attribute of Apollo of Delphi. This issue is in memory of the myth of the fight for the Delphic tripod between Hercules and Apollo⁴⁵.

We cannot put forward a clear interpretation of various didrachms and drachms which have the head of Hercules on the obverse, and an aphebe

on horseback⁴⁶ or a galloping two-wheeled cart on the reverse⁴⁷. The iconographic motifs of these reverses were repeated on the other issues, the obverses of which depicted the head of Zeus or Apollo⁴⁸. Some scholars connect them with the victory of Philip's horses in the Olympic games, but others see in these coins traces of prohellenic slogans propagated by Philip⁴⁹.

When we take into account the whole body of political ideas propagated by means of the coins struck by Philip the Second, we can see that in no case the contents of the coins depicting were the head of Hercules exclusively connected with the ancestry of the royal family or the question of its Hellenic origin, but have always alluded to the trends in the actual propaganda.

This tendency can be more easily noticed in literary sources. The example of Hercules, as Philip's ancestor, has never been used to stress this tradition, but, on the contrary, it has always served as a justification of Philip's, and later on Alexander's political endeavours. Thus Isocrates exhorted Philip to follow in his divine ancestor's wake and to march out with all the Greeks against those, whom he, as Hercules' descendant, should fight with⁵⁰.

He meant, of course, a campaign against the Persians. Both Philip and Alexander justified it as a revenge for the insults the Greek gods suffered during the occupations of Hellad by the Persians. At the same time in accordance with Isocrates' instructions⁵¹ they changed this war into a universal campaign of reconciled Greeks against the barbarians. Thus, Alexander's Persian war was the fight of the coalition of Europe against Asia, a fight in which, as in Homer, the gods were to take part as well. At the head of them was Zeus, as the highest authority among the Panhellenic gods and Hercules, who was the first to have attacked Asia⁵².

This event remembered by Isocrates who quoted the fact that Hercules had reconciled the Greek states which were fighting each other, and had set an example for future generations to show them whom they should fight with and against. It was he who had set out against Troy which at that time was the greatest power in the whole of Asia. He had conquered it, killed Antheus, and helped Priam to ascend to the throne⁵³. According to Saint Hieronymus, this event took place in 1244 B. C.⁵⁴.

Since that time, the motif of this first Trojan expedition spread among the Greeks as a symbol of a fight against Asia and was accordingly treated in Greek art.

In the years 490-480 B. C., Hercules was depicted fighting with the Trojans in the east pediment of the Temple of Athena Aphaia. It was undoubtedly an allegory expressing the victory of the Greeks over the Persians during recent fights⁵⁵.

Another monument, described by Pausanias⁵⁶, expressed the same idea in another way. The painting from the Stoa Poikile showed the respective phases of the battle of Marathon, in which Marathon, Theseus, Athena and Hercules personally took part. Their appearance can be interpreted as the support of the gods of protection of the battlefield itself and of the whole Attic land. But in the case of Hercules it seems more probable that the artist had in mind the fact that the hero was the first to set out against Asia and now he was assisting Europe against Asia's revenge.

Such a motif of the conflict between Europe and Asia had already been spoken of by Herodotus and it is gladly accepted by modern historians. Thus they are of the opinion that the campaign of Hercules against Troy, and then the Trojan war itself, were the cause of the revenge of Asia which assumed the form of the campaigns of Darius and Xerxes. In turn, Alexander the Great's campaign was to take revenge for those who had been killed by the barbarians⁵⁷.

Moreover, it should be stressed that Hercules being a symbol of the fight between Europe and Asia, was at the same time an expression of Panhellenic ideas. He was the only example of a hero who had managed to overcome the quarrels dividing small Greek states since he became the common property of not only local but all the poleis. Thus his character was cosmopolitan and he personified, at least since the Vth Century B. C., virtues which Achilles did not possess⁵⁸.

This Panhellenic aspect has also been emphatically stressed by Isocrates who considered the unity of the Greeks to be the most important condition for the campaign's realisation⁵⁹.

Here we should consider the possibility of influence of Isocrates' theory upon Alexander. In his argumentum to Isocrates' speech "Philippos" an un-

known scholiast has written that Philip, having read this speech, did not obey Isocrates and kept delaying the outbreak of hostilities. Then the scholiast added: ὕστερον δὲ ὁ παῖς ὁ σούτου Ἀλέξανδρος

ἀναγνούς τὸν λόγον καὶ ἐρευνήσας ἐδράστει κατὰ Δαρείου τοῦ ὕστερου καὶ λεγομένου Ὠχου.

Of course, such a statement cannot be taken at its face value. It was formed much later a posteriori. Professor T. Sinko has written that ... Alexander preferred to read about the Trojan War than about the Philocrates' Peace, although the latter was to prepare the war with Persia⁶⁰. It is quite possible. Nevertheless, it is striking that all the elements from the speech to Philip, namely Panhellenism, the campaign against Asia, the example of Hercules, were used in Alexander's propaganda programme. The similarity was easy to notice even for a later scholiast and is still obvious today.

One must also understand the conception of this Panhellenic idea. It has often been connected with the special position of Athens. It was Athens which have saved Greece in the wars against the Persians in the Vth Century B. C. and besides they were a model of the state whose characteristic features represented the Greek past. For Demosthenes and Isocrates panhellenism, although different as far as contemporary Persia was concerned, has always been connected with Athens, being some kind of a continuation of former Athenian patriotism⁶¹.

The idea expressed by Hercules, such as the idea of a campaign against the East, the Panhellenic idea and connected with in the special role of Athens, were the main theme of Alexander's propaganda activity immediately before going to war against Persia. It is especially evident when we compare the tetradrachms in question with the issues of gold staters which were struck at more or less the same time. On the reverse there was Athena's head and on the obverse Nike holding a stylis⁶². They are interpreted exclusively in the context of Alexander's campaign and the presence of Athena is explained as an attempt to gain the Athenians' favour. It found its expression on the reverse where we find a representation referring to the victorious traditions of the Athenian fleet which formed the essential

part of Alexander's naval forces. In this context, it becomes quite understandable why at the beginning of his campaign Alexander offered sacrifices to Zeus, Athena and Hercules at the Hellespontus-crossing points ⁶³.

To sum up, it seems that the representation of Hercules on the first issues of Alexander the Great, expressed first of all the idea of the campaign of the united and reconciled panhellenic forces against the East. All other aspects of this representation developed in a later period under the influences of Alexander's legend, which had already appeared during his lifetime, because of the differences in the philosophical interpretation of Hercules' figure as well as under the influence of his cosmopolitan character. Hercules did not belong exclusively to the Greeks; in all eras and every civilised part of the world there have been reflections of his image since he was identified with the Egyptian Shou or Khonsu ⁶⁴, Asiatic Bel-Marduk, Cylician and Lydian Sandon ⁶⁵, Melquart of Tyre ⁶⁶ and Celtic Ensus ⁶⁷.

Notes

¹ Flawiusz Arrian, Wyprawa Aleksandra Wielkiego, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1963, p. XII.

² L. Morawiecki, The Power Conception of Alexander the Great and of Gaius Julius Caesar in the Light of Numismatic Sources, "Eos" LXIII, 1975, p. 104-105.

³ On the reverse we always find a monogram or a symbol which allows us to identify the mint.

⁴ E. T. Newell, Alexander Hoards, II Demanhur, New York 1923, p. 25, 32.; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Burton Y. Berry Collection I, Macedonia to Attica, New York 1961, pl. 8, no. 204-206.; G. Le Rider, La date des premières monnaies d'Alexandre, Cercle d'Étude Numismatique, vol. 8, no. 4, 1971, p. 65-66.

⁵ G. Kleiner, Alexanders Reichsmünzen, Berlin 1949, p. 23.

⁶ P. R. Franke, M. Hirmer, La monnaie grecque, Paris 1966, p. 102.

⁷ Plut. Alex. 24, 5.; Curt. Ruf. IV, 2, 17.; Arr., Anab. II, 16, 7.; 18, 1.; 24, 6.; III, 6, 1.

⁸ See Alexander's speech to the mutinous soldiers Arr. Anab. V, 26, 5.; Curt. Ruf. IX, 2, 29.

⁹ Curt. Ruf. VIII, 12, 2.; Ps.-Callisth. II, 4, 9.; Arr. Anab. IV, 28.; Epit. rerum gest. Alex. Magni 46-47.; Just. XII, 7, 13.

¹⁰ Arr. Anab. VI, 3, 2.

¹¹ Just. XI, 10, 2-4.; H. Berve, Das Alexanderreich, Berlin 1926, vol. II, p. 168, no. 353.

¹² Athen. XII, 537, e-f.

¹³ Arr. Anab. IV, 11, 7.; Ps.-Callisth. II, 30, 15-16.; Epit. rerum gest. Alex. Magni 95; 112.

¹⁴ W. K. G. Guthrie, The Greeks and their Gods, London 1968, p. 231-241.

¹⁵ G. Murrey, Greek Studies, Oxford 1947, p. 106-126.

¹⁶ M. Bieber, Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art, Chicago 1964, p. 49.

¹⁷ M. L. Bernhard, Sztuka grecka IV w. p. n. e., Warszawa 1974, p. 517.

¹⁸ V. Ehrenberg, Ost und West. Studien zur Geschichtlichen Problematik der Antike, Prag 1935, p. 154.

¹⁹ Ch. Seltman, Greek Coins, London 1965, p. 205.

²⁰ G. Kleiner, op. cit., p. 4.

²¹ Arr., Anab. I, 4, 5.

²² Arr. Anab. VI, 28, 3.; Ind. 36, 3.

²³ Plin., N. H., XXXV, 92.

²⁴ Plin., N. H., VII, 125.; Apul., Flor. VII, 24.

²⁵ Paus. V, 25, 1.

²⁶ O. Neverov, Antique Intaglios in the Hermitage Collection, Leningrad 1976, no. 53.

²⁷ B. V. Head, A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Macedonia, London 1879, p. 161, no. 20 (cited as BMC Macedonia); E. Babelon, Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines, Paris 1907, vol. I, p. 1094-1095, no. 1537-1538.; D. Raymond, Macedonian Regal Coinage to 413 B. C., New York 1953, p. 82, pl. V.

²⁸ Raymond, op. cit., p. 128, no. 118-121.

²⁹ Babelon, op. cit., vol. I, p. 1095.; IV, p. 466-467.; no. 787-796.; p. 470, no. 801, 803-804.; Raymond, op. cit., p. 140.

³⁰ BMC Macedonia, p. 163, no. 3.; Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 470, no. 805.; Raymond, op. cit., p. 164, pl. XI, f. On Hercules skinning the Nemean lion and its use as clothing see Diod. IV, 11, 4.; Apollod. Biblioth. II, 66.

- 31 BMC Macedonia, p. 165, no. 10-11.; p. 166, no. 12-13.; p. 172, no. 9.; p. 174, no. 23.; Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 475, no. 816-819.; p. 479-482, no. 823-824. On Hercules making himself a club in Nemean wood, see Apollod. Biblioth. II, 71.
- 32 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 483.
- 33 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 486.
- 34 BMC Macedonia, p. 171, no. 1; 5.
- 35 Herod. V, 22.; VIII, 137.; Porph. Tyrius, 1.
- 36 Diod. VII, 13; 17.; Apollod. Biblioth. II, 8.; V, 3.
- 37 P. R. Franke, Geschichte, Politik und Münzprägung im frühen Makedonien, "Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte" III/IV, 1952/1953, p. 107-108.
- 38 Raymond, op. cit., p. 60.
- 39 Herod. VII, 125.
- 40 Plut. Alex. 2-3.
- 41 M. Plezia, De Aristandri vaticinio, "Eos" LIX, 1971, p. 227-230.
- 42 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 511-514, no. 864 ff.
- 43 These symbols are: a bow and arrows, a kantharos, a trident, a bunch of thunderbolts, see Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 513-514, no. 865-869.
- 44 S. Perlman, The Coins of Philip II and Alexander the Great and their Pan-Hellenic Propaganda, "Numismatic Chronicle" 1965, p. 57.
- 45 G. Kleiner, Der Olynthische Apollon und der Philippische Herakles [in:] Studies Presented to D. M. Robinson, vol. II, Saint Luis 1953, p. 187-196.
- 46 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 525-528, no. 881, 884-885.
- 47 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 527-528, no. 882.
- 48 Babelon, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 518-526, no. 871-878.
- 49 West, The early Diplomacy of Philip II Illustrated by his Coins, Numismatic Chronicle 1923, p. 181 ff.
- 50 Isoc. V, 113-115.
- 51 Isoc. V, 16.; see R. Turasiewicz, Życie polityczne w Atenach V i IV w. p. n. e. w ocenie krytycznej współczesnych autorów antycznych, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1968, [= Prace Komisji Filologii Klasycznej PAN, Oddział w Krakowie, 8], p. 246.
- 52 Such an opinion is reflected in Isocrates' speech ad Nicoclem where while praising the monarch he mentions Zeus who reigns over other gods (II, 26).
- 53 Isoc. V, 111.; IX, 16.; see Apollod. Biblioth. II, 134-136.; Diod. V, 32, 4.

- 54 Hieron. Chron. p. 57, b, 6-7.
- 55 M. L. Bernhard, Sztuka grecka V w. p. n. e., Warszawa 1970, p. 148; 150.
- 56 Paus. I, 15, 4.
- 57 L. v. Ranke, Alexander der Grosse, Berlin 1942, p. 44.; A. T. Olmstead, Dzieje imperium perskiego, Warszawa 1974, p. 242.
- 58 Murray, op. cit., p. 110-111.
- 59 Isoc. IV, 15.; see Epist. ad Phil. III, 2. probably inauthentic, T. Sinko, Historia literatury greckiej, Kraków 1932, vol. II, 2, p. 692.
- 60 Sinko, ibidem.
- 61 J. Luccioni, Démosthène et le panhellénisme, Paris 1961, p. 39-69. It is quite another matter that Demosthenes contrasted the position of old Athens fighting for the law of others with the present when they allowed Philip to enslave Greek cities.
- 62 B. V. Head, A Guide to the Principal Coins of the Greeks, London 1965, p. 49, no. 2.
- 63 Arr. Anab. I, 11, 7.
- 64 W. W. How, A Commentary on Herodotus, vol. I, Oxford 1957, p. 187.
- 65 How, op. cit., p. 56.
- 66 How, op. cit., p. 188. Such an identification of Hercules was transferred to all other territories under the influence of Phoenician culture, see G. Maspero, Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient, Paris 1893, p. 235.; S. Moscati, Świat Fenicjan, Warszawa 1971, p. 163.
- 67 Lucian, Herc. 1. identifies Hercules with Celtic Ogmios. But this proposition is also not certain.

Postscriptum

M. J. Price's (Alexander's Reform of the Macedonian Regal Coinage, "NC" 1982, pp. 180-190) and R. Ross Holloway (Alexander the Great's Choice of Coin Types, "Annali di Istituto Italiano di Numismatica", vol. 27-28, 1980-1981, pp. 57-60) publications of the Alexander's coinage came out too late for me, since my completed typescript was already with the editor and I did not anyway learn of these reports until a considerable time later.

M. J. Price and R. R. Holloway accepted an opinion that the first tetradrachms emissions of Alexander the Great were issued in 336/335 B. C. (against Zervos' opinion). According to Price "it is Zeus and

Heracles therefore, and no other deities, who feature prominently at the beginning of his (Alexander's) reign and it is clearly in their protection that Alexander had faith". In Holloway's opinion "the same heroic genealogy which made the Macedonia Kings descendants of Heracles and Zeus was shared by another royal lineage who members had led the Greeks in the Persian Wars [...] The propagandistic point to be made in 336 was that another Heraclid, from Macedonia, was ready to lead the united Greeks against Persia". On the other hand F. De Callatay suggests that the first Alexander's attic tetradrachms appeared in 333 B. C. (La date des premiers tetradrachms de poids attique émis par Alexander le Grand, "RBN", CXXVIII, 1982, pp. 5-25).

Edward DĄBROWA

LES PREMIERS "OTAGES" PARTHES À ROME

La prise d'otages était l'une des pratiques les plus fréquentes de la diplomatie romaine dans le cadre des rapports avec les Etats et les peuples qui s'étaient trouvés dans l'orbite des intérêts de Rome, soit à la suite d'une conquête, soit comme résultat de l'élargissement de la zone de ses influences. Ces otages qui étaient d'ordinaire membres de la famille la plus proche du monarque de l'Etat dépendant ou du chef d'une tribu vaincue, devenaient garants de la loyauté de ceux-ci et de leur obéissance à l'égard de Rome. L'efficacité de cette méthode de protection des intérêts romains était si grande qu'Auguste en fit l'un des outils principaux de sa politique envers les voisins de l'Etat romain. Son application eut pour effet la présence permanente à Rome - à l'époque de son règne - d'un groupe important d'otages¹. Vers l'année 10/9 av. J.-C., il s'accrut de quelques membres de la famille des Arsacides². Il est vrai que ceux-ci n'étaient pas des otages au sens propre du mot, néanmoins les Romains les considéraient comme tels³.

Ces membres de la famille des Arsacides n'étaient pourtant pas ses premiers représentants qui se fussent trouvés à leur insu dans la capitale romaine. Vers l'année 31 av. J.-C.⁴, une guerre civile éclata dans l'Etat parthe entre Phraatès IV qui régnait et Tiridatès I, usurpateur soutenu par une partie de l'aristocratie⁵. Au bout de quelques années, cette guerre se ter-