

Ilkka SYVÄNNE* (University of Haifa, Israel)

The Eyes and Ears: The Sasanian and Roman Spies ca. AD 222-450¹

Keywords: Rome, Persia, Iran, intelligence gathering, espionage, scouting, police, secret service, military intelligence, internal security, external security, religion, religious police, justice

1) INTRODUCTION

The article *The Eyes and Ears*: 1) Provides a brief analysis of the several parallel security organizations of the two superpowers of antiquity during the time when both were still at their prime; 2) Discusses both internal and external security matters; 3) Analyzes separately the military and civilian intelligence; 4) Examines the role of the religious organizations, ‘heresies’ and security; 5) Discusses briefly the ways in which the intelligence was obtained, analyzed, assessed and disseminated, and for what purpose; 6) Provides an overview of the successes and failures and of the limits of intelligence; 7) Demonstrates some similarities between modern and ancient practices.

This study will use modern terminology and examples to describe the contents because it is written for modern audience. The general tendency among the ultraconservative branch of the Classicists tends to consider the use of modern terms such as network, system, professional, and secret service anachronistic because the terms are modern, but this is grave mistake when one analyses the phenomena for the modern audience. Anyone who understands anything about military practices and espionage understands that the Romans understood grand strategy, strategy, operational art of war, tactics and espionage even if they did not possess modern theoretical concepts for these. The evidence on the ground, narrative sources and military manuals all include material which would be categorized with these terms if one were to describe similar policies today. A good modern example of this folly would be to claim that the methods which are typical for the very recently invented term Hybrid Warfare would not have been followed in the past because the term is modern. The *kataskopoi* (spies) who were maintained by the state were a professional secret service even if the word Procopius (*Wars* 1.21.11-16, *Anecdota* 30.1ff.) uses for those is spies. The reason why these ultraconservative Classicists fail to see the forest from the trees results usually from the way they approach the material. It is all too typical for them analyze the words and language from the philological point of view, and not the content. This is actually very odd because one of the first things which is taught in translation studies is that when one translates a foreign language one should try to find the closest native modern word or term to describe what is translated.

2) ROMAN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN CA. 222-284

The Beginning

The Roman intelligence gathering network was the creation of Julius Caesar and Augustus. Augustus’s own contribution to the system was to make it a formal part of the imperial administration which was maintained by the state. The intelligence gathering of the Roman Empire came to consist of

* ilkkasyvanne@yahoo.com

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the generous support given by the ASMEA Research Grant in 2015 for the author without which this article would not have been written. I would also like to thank my anonymous peer reviewers whose comments forced me to improve my argumentation, which in most cases has meant long explanations and analyses in the footnotes to explain why I do not agree with the fashionable consensus view. I am very grateful for their comments even when we sometimes disagree. It is also thanks to their comments that some mistakes were corrected. None of them bears any responsibility for any remaining mistakes.

six basic components: 1) The bodyguards; 2) Troops quartered at the *Castra Peregrina/Peregrinorum* (Camp of the Foreigners); 3) Regular military forces; 4) civilian policemen and paramilitary forces; 5) Religious control wielded by the emperor as *Pontifex Maximus* (High Priest); 6) informers. The first four organizations were used for both internal and external security functions while the numbers five to six served only the internal security needs.²

The Bodyguards and the Military

Under Augustus and his successors the Senate became a mere rubber stamp for the decisions made in the household of the emperor. The most important matters of the state, including all details related to espionage, were discussed and analyzed in the *Consilium* (Council) of the emperor. The principal security concern of Augustus was to secure his own position against domestic enemies among the senatorial class. It was thanks to this that he set restrictions on the movement of senators and created the professional armed forces (army and navy). This monopoly on violence secured Augustus's position against any possible usurpers. In addition to this, Augustus made the Praetorians and foreign bodyguards permanent units. The 300 *Speculatores* (Spies) formed Augustus's personal bodyguards. All of the bodyguard units and regular soldiers could be used as undercover operatives to spy upon the populace and for any variety of other missions even if most of the really secret missions like assassinations or arrests were usually entrusted to the Praetorians and/or *Speculatores*. Each legion had a detachment of ten *Speculatores* to serve as spies and secret police. The *statores* were the regular military police. From the reign of Commodus (AD 180-193) onwards, the emperors were in the habit of creating new units of bodyguards for their own safety. The late Roman bodyguard units, the *Protectores Domestici* and *Scholae* both had their origins in the third century. During the third century the bodyguard units were commanded by one to three praetorian prefects. This made the praetorian prefects the most powerful persons right after the emperor and was the reason for the division of the office and also for the posting of the *Legio II Parthica* close to Rome at Alba by Septimius Severus (AD 193-211) in about 202.³

² See SYVÄNNE (2015-.)

³ SHELDON (2005) 143ff.; AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995), 109ff.; SYVÄNNE (2015-.) Vol. 1, 159, 162-167, 224, 416; SYVÄNNE (2017). It is often assumed by those who follow the ultraconservative version of the Classicist school that the *Scholae* were created by Constantine the Great because these are for the first time mentioned in the sources for his reign, but this results from our different approaches to the methodology and sources. I and quite a few other historians are ready to employ also sources overlooked by these ultraconservatives. These sources include later 4th or 11-12th century sources which refer to the existence of *Scholae* for the third century, but the ultraconservative Classicists interpret all of these to be anachronistic because the sources are late. This approach fails to take into account three things: Firstly, the later sources had access to period sources which are no longer extant; Secondly, there are several sources that state the same; Thirdly, there also exists period evidence for the existence of the *Scholae* in the form of inscriptions, but these are interpreted to be officers' clubs because Augustus was first to organize those (see e.g. LeBOHEC (1994) 159, 192; This fails to take into account the fact that the soldiers of the new elite bodyguard units could be considered to have had the minimum rank of centurion like the *Leones* of Caracalla or the *Evocati Augusti* (these 'Augustus's Reservists' belonged to the Praetorian Guard. They were first created by Augustus who recalled back to service former veterans or allowed Praetorians to continue to serve as *evocati* after they had completed their regular service). It is in fact quite possible that the officers' clubs called *Scholae* (schools) became to be associated with the new units of bodyguards thanks to the fact that the members of the new bodyguard units attended those clubs. For additional details regarding the creation of the new bodyguard units (not included in Sheldon), see my studies which include further references to other studies and sources.

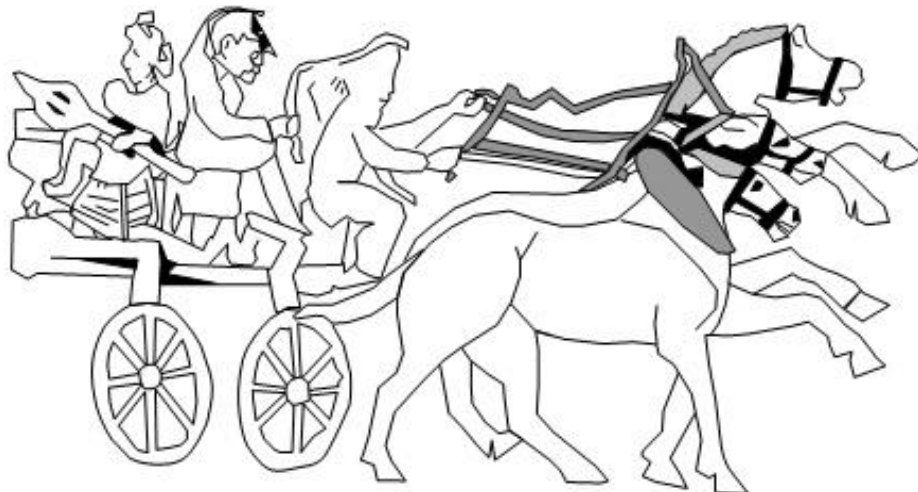


Fig. 1. Tombstone of Lucius Blassius Nigellio, a *speculator* of the *Legio VII Claudia* (Viminacium, Upper Moesia, Mod. Kostolac, just east of Belgrade). The tombstone shows him on a mission in his official transport. He is protected by a guard armed with a spear who appears to be a *beneficiarius*. The *beneficiarii* were detached soldiers who performed special missions of espionage. On the basis of this, it is probable that the *beneficiarii* operated under the *speculatores* of their units (© Dr. Ilkka Syväne 2014)

Internal Security

The creation of the Principate meant the loss of freedom of speech for the Roman aristocrats and people. The opinions and actions of the people and in particular of the upper classes were controlled through a variety of means: 1) secret agents, police forces/firemen (*Vigiles*) and military forces (*Urbaniciani*) operated by the Urban Prefect; 2) censorship of the literary works and other works of art; 3) private informers (*delatores*) who were encouraged to come forth with rewards; 4) soldiers or bodyguards disguised as civilians;⁴ 5) religious institutions which were apparently controlled personally by the emperor through his office as *Pontifex Maximus*.

Since the emperors retained a monopoly on the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, it is very probable that they ran a religious spy network through their *pontifices* (priests). The evidence for the religious police operated by the *Pontifex Maximus* is scanty and based solely on the continuous reports made by the soothsayers, oracles, seers and astrologers to the imperial authorities regarding the questions made by the upper class Romans on questions of possible political importance. This would also have been the reason for the imperial opposition to all new religious cults like Christianity. It was only when the emperors thought that the new cult could be controlled and used to obtain the goodwill of the populace that it was accepted – when doing this the emperors usually (but not always) also took into account the possible reaction of the conservative elements within the senatorial class. It should be stressed, however, that the soothsayers etc. were not religious police like the Persian magi. The emperors were not interested in religious purity – but primarily in personal security.⁵

⁴ SHELDON (2005) 150ff.

⁵ The role of the *Pontifex Maximus* in this is uncertain, but since Augustus considered it necessary to include its powers among his own it is probable that it did have some role in this – after all it meant that the emperors were the High Priests of Rome and its religions. The sources are full of references to the instances in which the consultation of an oracle or soothsayer etc. for the wrong reasons caused the death of the person who did that. I include here only a sample of examples: Tacitus, *Annals* 3.22, 13.22, 16.14; Dio (Loeb ed. p. 330, p.336); Ammianus 26.4.4 with Zosimus 4.1, PLRE 1 Maximus of Ephesus and Priscus 5 with additional sources therein; Ammianus 29.1.5-29.2.28; And further references to the laws against magic in OGDEN (2002), esp. pp. 280ff. See also SYVÄNNE (2017) and SYVÄNNE (2015-). It was also possible to use the religious establishments for the dissemination of secret information so that it was hidden as a prophecy to hide the name of the informant. For

Augustus also created public post to communicate with provincial officials which included very important intelligence dimensions. Thanks to the public post Augustus was able to obtain accurate intelligence reports in a timely manner and to disseminate official propaganda where needed. From the reign of Hadrian onwards the public post was governed by the Prefect of the Vehicles. The messengers of the public post travelled on wagons and carts all the way up to the person to whom they were to inform so that the messenger could be interrogated in person for additional pieces of information. In addition to this, there existed a separate network of horse stations for military messages which needed to be delivered fast by mounted couriers. According to the sixth century historian Procopius (*Anecdota* 30.1ff.), the couriers (*kataskopoi*, the spies, were in late Roman times called as the *Agentes in Rebus*) could be expected to travel at a speed of about 200 – 250 Roman miles (300 – 375 km) per day. If the information was not adequate, the emperors were in the habit of sending investigators to obtain additional information. The Romans used secret ciphers to hide the content of the message from the prying eyes when necessary. The Romans did also use a system of guard towers placed at strategic locales along the frontiers to transmit messages of approaching enemy forces by using fire or smoke signals, or by using mirrors. It was possible to send an advance warning of the invasion quickly with this system, but the means of delivery meant that such messages could not contain many details.⁶

The most notorious intelligence gathering organization of the early emperors was the unit of *Frumentarii*. They were housed in the *Castra Peregrina/Peregrinorum* (Camp of the Foreigners) on the Caelian Hill in the city of Rome. The *Frumentarii* were used as messengers, spies and assassins. The *Frumentarii* consisted originally of the soldiers who were in charge of purchase and distribution of grain (*frumentum*) for the troops so that some members of the corps were always located in Rome while others were with their unit or on a mission, but from the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) onwards they were increasingly used to spy upon the army, administration and populace so that in the eyes of the people they eventually became synonymous with the abuse of power. The *Castra Peregrina* had received its name from the *Peregrini*, but it is not known who these mysterious men were. The usual guess is that the *Peregrini* consisted of all of those soldiers who had been detached to Rome from their mother units so that they consisted of the *Frumentarii*, *Speculatores* (housed in the same camp), and of any other detached soldiers, but it is also possible that there existed a separate group of *Peregrini* who served as a sort of secret service.⁷

Foreign Intelligence

In my opinion it is probable that these *Peregrini* formed the mysterious group of Roman spies who operated in foreign lands disguised as traders, but it is even more likely that the *Peregrini* included also actual foreigners who served as spies in their own countries under their Roman handlers (the *Speculatores*). There is no doubt that the best agents were always those who were native to their own lands and who spied against their own countrymen – they were the traitors who served the Romans. It was and is very difficult for a foreigner to pass as a native, hence the need to recruit foreigners and hence the name *Peregrini*.⁸

further details, see esp. SYVÄNNE (2017) and SYVÄNNE (2015-.) Dio's referral (56.23, also in OGDEN (2002) 281 to Augustus' ban on divination is enlightening for the reasons behind his thinking. Augustus did not himself believe in divination, but made the ban anyway. Those who consulted the oracles, astrologers and seers to ask the wrong questions (e.g. how long the emperor would live or would he become an emperor etc.) were naturally considered enemies of the state because of the questions they made. This would not mean that there would not have been superstitious emperors too who really believed in such magic, but Augustus' example shows us that the initial and main reason for all of the above was purely internal security.

⁶ SHELDON (2005) 143ff.; PATTENDEN (1983) 258-299; It is unlikely that the speed of the couriers would have changed from the early Principate to the sixth century, because the means of travel for the *kataskopoi*, the horse, remained the same.

⁷ SHELDON (2005) 250-260; BAILLIE REYNOLDS (1923) 168-189; SYVÄNNE (2015-.) vol. 1, *Caracalla*.

⁸ Examples of earlier use of foreigners: SYVÄNNE (2009) 9-23.

The only source to mention the existence of the spies (*kataskopoi*) maintained by the Roman state since ancient times is Procopius (*Anecdota* 30.1ff., esp. 30.12-14).

According to Procopius: “And the matter of the spies is as follows. Many men from ancient times were maintained by the State, men who would go into enemy’s country and get in to the Palace of the Persians, either on the pretext of selling something or by some other device, and after making a thorough investigation of everything, they would return to the land of the Romans, where they were able to report all the secrets of the enemy to the magistrates. And they, furnished with this advance information, would be on their guard and nothing unforeseen would befall them. And this practice had existed among the Medes also from ancient times. Indeed Chosroes, as they say, increased the salaries of his spies and profited by this forethought. For nothing [that was happening among the Romans escaped] him. [Justinian, on the other hand, by refusing to spend anything at all on them] blotted out from the land of the Romans [even the very] name of spies ...”⁹

Unfortunately Procopius (*Wars* 1.21.11-16, *Anecdota* 30.1ff.) fails to state precisely how this spy network was organized. The magistrates appear to mean the Roman leadership in the collective sense led by the emperor, but one may make the educated guess that the spies in question probably consisted of the *Peregrini* and *Frumentarii* collectively because they were housed in the same camp in Rome and probably also of the *Speculatores*. From the third century onwards the spies in question are likely to have included also the *Protectores Domestici*. The *Agentes in Rebus* (see later) replaced the *Frumentarii* in about 284. It was thanks to the ability of the spies to penetrate the palaces that the Romans and Persians sought to use disinformation and secrecy to hide their plans.

The Romans obtained intelligence from foreign lands through a variety of means: 1) military expeditions; 2) by sending spies (included diplomats etc.) and scouts and patrols (*Exploratores*) over the border; 3) by interrogating prisoners; 4) by questioning foreign embassies and traders and travelers; 5) by interrogating their own traders and merchants; 6) from intelligence reports sent by their foreign allies; 7) from Greek geographical works or narrative histories. The regular intelligence gathering operations along the frontiers were controlled by the local governors and their staffs, but there were occasions when the imperial government sent its own operatives to obtain additional information.¹⁰

Civilian Police Forces

The last but not the least of the security arms of the emperor were the civilian police forces, which went with different names. The civilians were responsible for the regular police work under the guidance of the governor and soldiers detached for this duty. The civilians were required to man guard stations; patrol the roads and rivers; exact tolls and customs; and follow the orders given by the detached soldiers. The civilians were thereby made responsible for the intelligence gathering along the roads, coasts and frontiers against domestic and foreign enemies, but with the difference that they apparently did not conduct any active operations across the border.¹¹

The Failure of the System

Rose Mary Sheldon correctly points out that the internal security system of the Roman emperors was not a great success despite the vast amounts of money spent. The principal problem was that the reliance on the security forces made the emperors entirely reliant on the loyalty of these very

⁹ Procopius *Anecdota* 30.12-14. See also NECHAEVA (2004) 137-147, available online at academia.edu. Note, however, that it is probable that Procopius was correct in stating that Justinian scaled down the intelligence services. The reasons for this were probably the so-called eternal peace between Rome and Persia and economic problems.

¹⁰ SHELDON (2005) 143ff.; SYVÄNNE (2004); SYVÄNNE (2015-) vol. 1, *Caracalla*. For the use of diplomats as spies and special operatives, see also NECHAEVA (2012); SYVÄNNE (2004) and NACHAEVA include further references to important studies of A.D. Lee.

¹¹ FUHRMANN (2012) esp. civilian policing 21-87; ISAAC (1990); SYVÄNNE (2015-) vol. 1, *Caracalla*.

same forces. And when the internal security failed to function properly, the external security suffered as well. The best proof of this is the third century crisis from ca. 235 until 284.¹²

And, this was not even the whole extent of the failure of the internal security apparatus. One of its main functions was to prop up the official religion and to prevent the spreading of foreign cults like Christianity. In fact, the persecution of Christians had the exact opposite result. It increased the popularity of Christianity among the downtrodden populace amidst all the crises¹³. The cult of martyrdom in particular contributed to its popularity.

3) THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE 284-450

Background

Between the years 284-324 two remarkable emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Constantine (306-337) the Great corrected the failings of the earlier security services. Diocletian was well placed to do this because he was the commander of the bodyguards (*Comes Domesticorum*). He created the Tetrarchy to satisfy the wishes of his generals, but in truth his reforms were cosmetic – Diocletian retained the real power in his own hands. The highest ranking generals became emperors and the names of the units and officers were changed and offices were multiplied to bribe the personnel (each emperor had to have his own administration), but the basic structure of the organization remained the same with the exception that *Magister Offiorum* (Master of Offices) became the head of most of the security organs¹⁴.

Internal and External Security, and the Civilian and Military Intelligence

There existed no clear divisions between internal and external security and civilian and military intelligence gathering so that it was possible for the civilian and military administrators to collect civilian, military, domestic and foreign intelligence. It is therefore not surprising that the Romans used both civilians and soldiers as their special operatives and as diplomats/spies.¹⁵

The sources prove that the emperors were usually directly involved in the intelligence gathering and special operations like assassinations and that they were often assisted in this by the members of the Consistory and by those who were called to take part in its sessions, and/or by their closest trusted friends. The sources also prove that the generals and high ranking civilians like the praetorian prefects, vicars and governors conducted active intelligence gathering operations and special

¹² SHELDON (2005) 270-271. Sheldon is certainly correct in stating that the emperors spent vast amounts of money on their security apparatus, which consisted of the army, units of bodyguards, public post and spies. These are known to have consumed most of the state revenue. The main drains for the Roman taxes were the army and security apparatus, imperial court, food handouts for major cities like Rome, and the civil servants. By far the most expensive of these were the first.

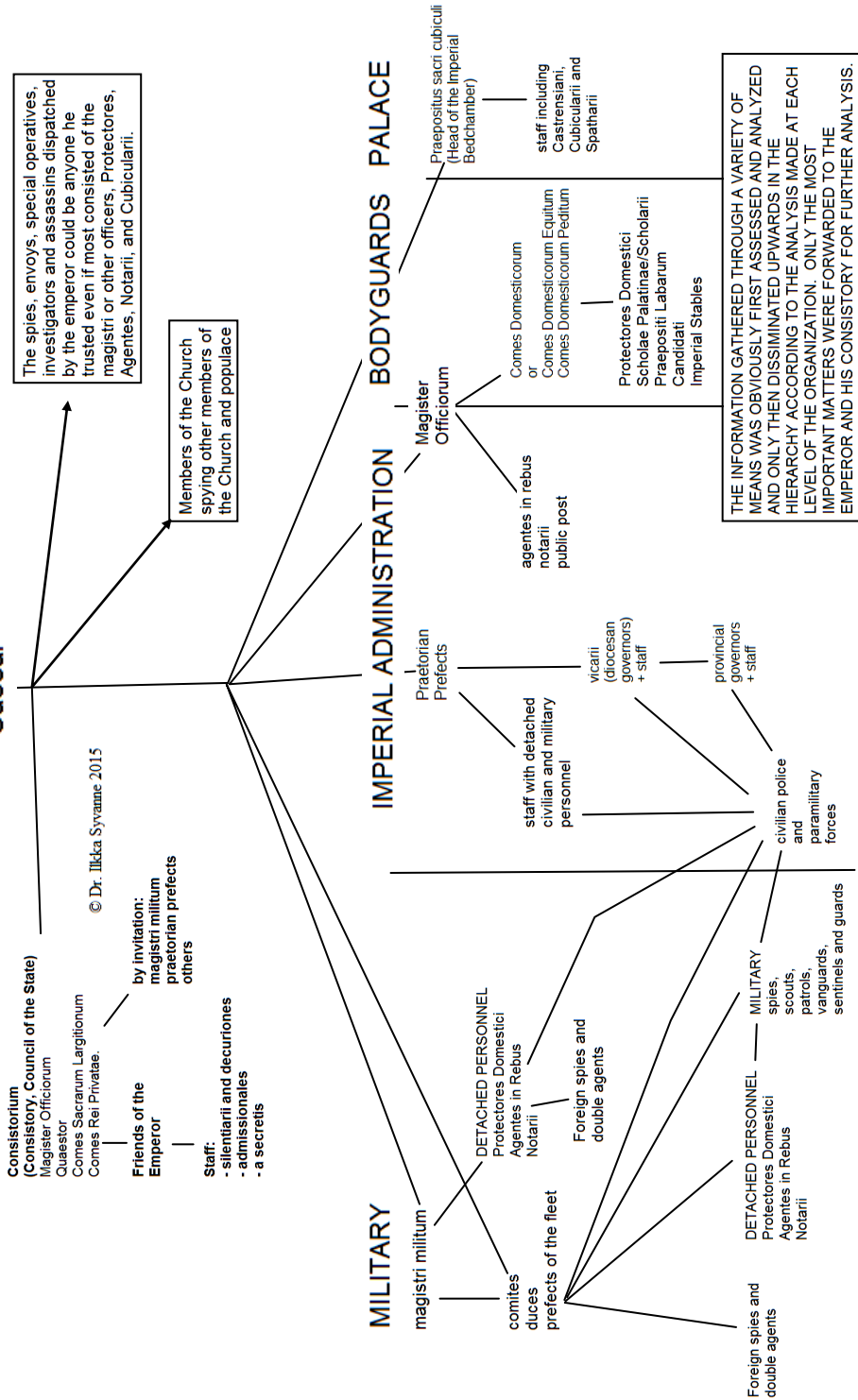
¹³ Good examples of this Christian tendency can be found e.g. in the PLRE 1 *Saturninus Secundus Salatus* 3 (reign of Julian) and BIRLEY (2000) 177-180.

¹⁴ See e.g. SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol.1 (esp. pp. 2-3, 177-181, 189, 419). There were no real differences in the organization between the bureaus (or ministries or departments) of the second, third and fourth centuries because their functions remained the same and even the office of the *Magister Militum* appears to have been created in the third century. A fuller discussion can be found in the SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol.1 (pp. 2-3, 181, 189 with notes).

¹⁵ See e.g. Ammianus, 16.9, 17.5.12, 17.5.15; AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 220-221, 228-230; SYVÄNNE (2015-). For the use of diplomats as spies and special operatives, see also NECHAEVA (2012).

THE LATE ROMAN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING NETWORK

Augustus
Caesar



operations (both in Roman territories and abroad) and that they used military men (*protectores* and regular armed forces), civilians and professional spies (presumably the *Agentes in Rebus* possibly with the *Protectores*) for these missions as needed.

The generals had in their staffs both natives and foreigners that they could use for these special missions. It is quite possible or even probable that the *Peregrini* became part of the new *Agentes in Rebus* at the same time as the *Frumentarii* were officially disbanded (in truth only renamed as *Agentes in Rebus*). The sources also prove that the late Romans took seriously the importance of counter-intelligence operations, and that they compartmentalized their information, used double-agents, and used ciphers and other means to hide the contents of their messages.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ammianus, 15.5 (esp. 15.5.21ff.), 18.3.8, 18.6.8-18.7.6; Zosimus, 3.7, 4.38.1-39.5; CTh 6.24.1; Procopius, *Wars* 1.21.11-16, *Anecdota* 30.12-14 (see above); AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 221-226; SYVÄNNE (2004); earlier example in SYVÄNNE (2009a) 5-16; PLRE 1 *Charietto*; Some examples of later East Roman practices to obtain double-agents in NECHAEVA (2004). I disagree with the conclusion of AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 233, that the system of spies recorded by Procopius would not have existed in the fourth century on the basis of the evidence they present. Their evidence demonstrates the exact opposite. They note that the spies (*speculatores*) of the Praetorian Prefect Strategius and local military *dux* reported back to their superiors separately that the Persian ruler was facing trouble at the other end of the Empire in 355 (Ammianus 16.9.2-3). We can equate these *speculatores* with the *kataskopoi* of Procopius. It is unfortunate that we lack precise details of how these *kataskopoi/speculatores* were organized. It is possible that the military *dux* and the Praetorian Prefect employed a different set of spies so that the *dux* employed military *speculatores* (or detached *protectores*) belonging to his units and the Praetorian Prefect the *Agentes in Rebus*, or that both employed spies belonging to the same organization, the *Agentes in Rebus*. In fact, since both the *Agentes in Rebus* and *Protectores* were officially under the *Magister Officiorum*, one can actually consider that the latter is true even when the *dux* would have employed the *Protectores* and the Prefect the *Agentes*. What is certain, however, is that the Praetorian Prefect employed a person who is likely to be an *agens in rebus* to obtain intelligence from across the Euphrates in 355. See PLRE 1 *Clematius* 2. The problem with this is that Clematius had been initially dispatched by Constantius II to carry a letter to the Prefect, and it is probable that in this case Clematius was used as a special operative by Constantius. AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 220-221, suggest that the Prefect just used Clematius only because he was there. In my opinion this is unlikely because Clematius had been dispatched by the emperor and it was after this that the Prefect started to seek peace with Persia which must have resulted only from the imperial order carried by Clematius. Clematius was clearly an imperial special operative in charge of observing the situation like so many other *agentes*, *notarii* and *protectores* dispatched by the emperors. Regardless, it is still very probable that the persons that the prefects used for intelligence gathering missions consisted mainly of the *agentes* because there were always *agentes* in their staffs. This is also noted by AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 220, but they fail to draw the obvious conclusion from this. The same legislation noted by Austin and Rankov on page 220 also proves that there were *agentes* in the staffs of the vicars, governors and military *duces*, which means that the spies/*speculatores* of Ammianus are likely to have consisted of the *Agentes in Rebus*. In fact, Procopius' referral to the speed of travel of the *kataskopoi* proves quite clearly that they were *agentes*. Despite the fact that I consider Christopher Kelly's monograph (2004), esp. 206-210 with endnotes) to be a good introduction for readers into the workings of the Roman Empire, I disagree in the strongest possible terms with his conclusion that the *Agentes in Rebus* cannot have functioned effectively as "secret service or internal security police force" because there were too few of them and they needed to travel vast distances and carry vast amounts of information (p. 207). He bases his claim on a set of assumptions like on a modern estimate of their numbers and not on period sources, which are quite specific about the fear that the *agentes* caused when they acted as special operatives of the emperor and kept watch over the different branches of the government together with the *notarii* and how they abused their vast powers. Kelly even quotes some of these, but only for the reason to claim that their claims cannot be true (p. 207). This fails to take into account the actual security needs and what the period sources state. The placing of these spies in the staffs of all important officials and officers was enough from the point of view of internal security because it took a while for a plot to be formed. For example, the success of the revolt of Julian against Constantius II did not result from any slow speed of couriers or because there would not have been adequate numbers of spies in Julian's staff. It resulted from Constantius' foolish decision not to trust the reports and recommendations that he had been given. In short, in most cases the failures of the security services resulted from incompetence or corruption of some individuals or from the faulty interpretation of the intelligence received. [See SYVÄNNE (2004) with SYVÄNNE (2015-.) Vol.1 with the index] This is only to be expected when humans are involved. Modern organizations with their vastly improved technologies and communications can also make

The overlapping of the duties was meant to ensure greater security for the emperor.

The Civilian Secret Service

At the very beginning of his reign Diocletian disbanded the *Frumentarii* to gain the support of the upper classes, but this was only a cover up for the creation of even more powerful secret service called the *Agentes in Rebus* (General Agents) who acted as: messengers; inspectors; spies who read the mail of others; controllers of movement of people and goods and information; policemen; undercover agents; informers; spies abroad; diplomats, and as assassins. Despite being officially soldiers like all civil servants of late Rome, the *Agentes in Rebus* were in practice civilians. The second civilian branch of the secret service were the *Notarii* (scribes) who performed similar missions as the *Agentes*. The *Notarii* were ideally placed to spy upon their superiors. The official head of both of these organizations was the *Magister Officiorum* (Master of Offices) who also became the official commander of all bodyguard units after 324. In practice, however, the *Agentes* and *Notarii* could be given independent missions or be detached to serve under other officials and officers. Unsurprisingly, both of these organizations became corrupt. The posting of the *Agentes* and *Notarii* in the various staffs of various officials and officers resembles the Soviet use of political commissars. They were to keep an eye on their superiors.¹⁷

The powers of the civilian secret services were severely curtailed by Valentinian I (365-375) in 365. The key event was the execution of former *agens in rebus* Diodorus together with three men dispatched by the *Vicarius* of Italy to arrest an unnamed military Count who then made a complaint about this (Amm. Marc. 27.7.5). This signaled to all high ranking officers that they could now enrich themselves without any fear as long as they would not attempt to usurp the power.¹⁸

The *Agentes in Rebus* and other civilian organizations could no longer investigate the generals for corruption. This is not surprising because Valentinian I's position as emperor was entirely dependent on the support of the top brass. This was very unhappy decision for the military effectiveness of the armed forces. When the massive corruption of the officers was added to

quite bad mistakes! The curtailing of the powers of the *agentes* and other civilians vis-à-vis the top brass by Valentinian I in 365 was the main problem and not the number of *agentes* or the distances covered.

¹⁷ SHELDON (2005) 261-265; SYVÄNNE (2015c); SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol. 1 (esp. 12-13, 180ff.) with forthcoming vol. 2 and previous note.

¹⁸ This event was told by Ammianus precisely because it signaled to the top brass that it was possible to ignore the *agentes in rebus*. Contrary to what some historians think, single events do have importance beyond their normal importance when these events give a signal what can or cannot be done. It is for this reason that single persons or groups of persons are used to make an example so that one would not need to resort to the use of more violent methods. In this case, however, the message was negative. It is was after this that Ammianus went on to list the cases of corruption that caused wars and revolts. The top brass abused their powers without fear of being punished with dire consequences. See Ammianus 27.7.4-5 with 27.9.4-5, and 30.4 and 30.9.1 with the indexes in the Loeb ed. of Ammianus referring to the cases of corruption in North Africa, Britain and elsewhere for the reigns of Valentinian I and Valens 365-378. Roman Empire was never corrupt free, but the level of corruption among the top brass reached such levels that the Romans had never before seen anything like it. Libanius' *Orationes* 47 (ca. 389-392) and 2 (ca. 380/1) are good examples of the results of the massive corruption of the top brass. The level of corruption among the top brass under Constantius II was still tolerable and did not cause the same kind of massive problems that can be detected under Theodosius. It was not without reason that Ammianus referred to the well-to-do soldiers of Constantius II at a time when he wrote during the reign of Theodosius I. At that time the soldiers had already been fleeced poor by their officers. Thanks to the fact that Ammianus wrote in a dictatorship, he could not point his finger to culprits and the problem directly but had to use contrasts to criticize his own times. More detailed discussions can be found in SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol. 1, esp. pp. 390-391 and vols. 2-3 (the publisher has both in line to be published). In other words, I agree with Ramsay MACMULLEN's (1989) basic argument that the late Roman Empire was badly affected by massive corruption, but I disagree with him on the timing of the problem. I date it to have taken place only after 365. I also disagree with him on the results of this massive corruption. The field army sizes did not diminish, but actually increased thanks to the fact that more poorly motivated and equipped soldiers were needed to face the enemies in the field. The overall cost of all of this was ruinous and contributed to the willingness of the populace to change rulers.

the corruption of civilian officials, the cost was just too great for the taxpayers. Valentinian III's (425-455) *Novella* 28 (11 Sept. 449) shows how weak the *Agentes* had become by mid-fifth century. He legislated against the avarice of the judges so that the privileges, subsistence allowances and other emoluments of the *principes* of the *Agentes* could be protected. The secret service had become too weak to protect itself and this at a time when internal security was more important than ever thanks to the presence of the barbarian Federates inside the borders!¹⁹

Despite the general weakness of the *Agentes in Rebus* after 365, there were some famous and remarkable individuals who made all the difference. The best example of this is the fame of the *agens* Palladius (Socrates 7.18-19 with the PLRE1 Palladius 5). Theodosius II (408-450) and the Roman top brass used Palladius as their trusted courier to carry the most important messages in the early 5th century. This man was able to reach the eastern frontier in three days and then return back to the capital in three days.

The first signs of the alienation of the population took place under Theodosius I (379-395) in 380. The cities of Thessaly and Macedonia asked the Goths to assist them against the imperial taxmen dispatched by the Emperor. Libanius' *Orations* 47 (ca. 389-392) and 2 (ca. 380/1) prove beyond doubt that the corruption of the top brass had reached such levels under Theodosius that the situation was fast becoming unbearable. The military protection rackets were led by the *magistri* who acted as godfathers for their subordinates. Theodosius legislated against the corruption, but was clearly unwilling to enforce it because he relied on the support of the generals. The situation got only worse under Theodosius's successors. The corrupt security apparatus could not secure the safety of the Empire when the military effectiveness of the native troops suffered from corruption and when the generals relied more and more on foreign mercenaries and when the civilians started to see their own armed forces as their real enemy. It required a great balancing act by the rulers to keep the different powerbrokers in check. In the east the emperors were successful, but in the west they were not. The desperate Arcadius was even forced to seek help from Persia to keep the generals in check.²⁰

Despite its moralizing tendencies Salvian's *On the Government of God* (written ca. 440-451) is a key text when one attempts to analyze the causes of the fall of West Rome (esp. 5.4ff.). The populace preferred the life in the wilds as *Bacaudae/Bagaudae* (self-governing bandits) or they fled to the areas governed by the Goths or Vandals. The Germanic barbarians were more law abiding and less morally corrupt than the imperial tax collectors, the armed forces, and Roman upper classes. It is no wonder that the internal and external security apparatuses proved powerless in the face of this.

¹⁹ See the previous note.

²⁰ Zosimus, 4.31-32; Libanius, *Orations* 2 and 47; SYVÄNNE (2015) 71-102. In this context I need to correct one very important mistake made by a number of ultraconservative Classicists which is to claim that the foreign component would not have risen dramatically in the course of the fourth century and that it would have decreased by the sixth. The only portion of this claim which is true is that the foreign component decreased in the East after Theoderic I had taken his Ostrogoths to Italy in about 489. Here it suffices to note that those who think that the number and importance of the barbarians in the Roman armed forces did not increase after 378 should answer the following questions: Why it was that Stilicho was known for his employment of Huns and other barbarians? Why it was that Stilicho needed Alaric against the East Romans and then against the usurper Constantine III and why he was forced to obtain the services of so many other barbarians against the usurpers? Note that Alaric was a king of the Goths and his followers were called Goths despite the fact that his army included also other tribes and even Romans, which means that the vast majority of his followers were Goths. Similarly, there are no good reasons to doubt the claims in the sources that Stilicho really called the tribes that invaded Gaul to do so because this same ploy was used also by earlier emperors. Summary of the sources can be found PLRE 1 *Stilicho* and PLRE 2 *Alaricus*. Similarly why it was that the West Romans were unable to oppose Alaric and his Goths after they had foolishly killed the families of the barbarian soldiers and had refused to accept the services of Sarus (another Gothic or Alan leader)? Why it was that the East Romans faced so many troubles in dealing with the Gothic Gainas (note that the sources call his followers Goths despite the fact that these were supposed to consist of regular praesental forces) that they were forced to admit him and his Goths inside Constantinople? Why it was that Aetius was forced to rely on Huns and then on other barbarians when he fought against the Huns? Why it was that the East Romans had to recruit Isaurians to oppose the Germanic and Alanic element in the fifth century? These examples abound and it is a great folly to claim that all of the sources that we possess would be at fault with their statements.

The central government recognized the problem and legislated against the corruption (e.g. NVal 1, 4, 6.3, 7.1-3, 10), but every new layer of inspectors or changes in the organization only added to the cost as they too demanded their bribes. Therefore the real cause of the fall of West Rome was the presence of Germanic barbarians inside the Empire, which made it possible for the disaffected to flee the clutches of the imperial security machine. The only thing that kept the Roman commoners from flocking to the security provided by the barbarians was the religious divide between the Catholic/Orthodox Romans and Arian Germans. The population has to have a will to resist and only the Catholic faith gave them that. East Rome did not face similar troubles because the presence of the Gothic Federates became a problem only after the murder of Aspar in 471 and because the harsh way of life among the Huns and Persians offered very few attractions for those who had tasted the Roman way of life. The Federates in the east were more closely integrated into the regular state apparatus, which meant that these did not offer any place of refuge for those who disliked the imperial authorities. It should be noted that the presence of the barbarian kingdoms inside the Empire also weakened the economic potential of the Empire by denying its tax collectors access to the resources located in those areas.²¹

²¹ In addition to the sources mentioned see, Procopius, *Wars* 2.28.25ff.; Paulinus, *Eucharisticus* 496ff.; SYVÄNNE (2015b) Paulinus' text offers a very good view into the mindset of the Gallic youth at the time. Two of his sons, who belonged to the upper class and cannot be considered to have been destitute, decided to seek their fortunes among the Gothic settlers because they yearned for freedom. I consider the evidence presented by Salvian and Paulinus to be of utmost importance because both explain quite well why some of their contemporaries failed to oppose the barbarians and why so many sought employment and better life among them. It is not known why the Persian way of life was so unattractive, but one may make the educated guess that the control exercised by the magi over the daily lives of the inhabitant made it quite unbearable. The control of these magi extended to every part of human existence because each village had one priest to exercise religious control over its inhabitants. See below. It appears to be a common misunderstanding among at least some of the Classicists that the instance in which Priscus met one happy Greek merchant from Viminacium among the Huns would mean that the Romans in general would have been eager to seek liberty among the Huns. In order to remove this false perception I need to quote Priscus at length (Priscus frg. 11.232-235, 11.368-372, 11.407ff. the excellent English tr. by BLOCKLEY pp. 259, 265, 267-269 with my additions in Italics inside parentheses): "... While we were discussing these things, some of Attila's men came and said that neither Vigilas nor ourselves were to buy any Roman prisoner, or barbarian slave, or horses, or anything else except for food until the disputes between the Romans and Huns had been settled. [*This shows how the Roman and barbarian prisoners wanted others to ransom them when they had been captured by the Huns*] ... The builder of the bath had been taken prisoner at Sirmium, and he hoped to gain his freedom as a reward for his inventive work. But he was disappointed and fell into greater distress than slavery amongst the Scythians. For Onegesius made him bath attendant, and he waited upon him and his followers when they bathed. [*This clearly proves that this man did not want to live among the Huns.*] ... As I was waiting and walking about before the circuit wall of the palace, someone, whom I took to be a barbarian from his Scythian dress, approached me and greeted me in Greek, saying "*khaire*" ("Hello"). I was amazed that a Scythian was speaking Greek. Being a mixture of peoples, in addition to their own languages they cultivate Hunnic or Gothic or (in the case of those who have dealings with the Romans) Latin. But none of them can easily speak Greek, except for those whom they had taken prisoner from the sea coasts of Thrace and Illyria; and whoever met them could easily recognize them from their tattered clothes and filthy hair as persons who had fallen into adversity. [*Note that all other Greeks in Hunnic lands were prisoners in flighty cloths. There were no real turncoats or refugees. Life among the Huns was not appealing.*] This one, however, was like a well-cared-for Scythian with good clothing and his hair clipped all around. ... He laughed and said that he was a Greek and for purposes of trade had gone to Viminacium, the city in Moesia ... When the city was captured by the barbarians, he ... was assigned to Onegesius ... in the division of spoils. ... Having proven his valour in later battles against the Romans and the nation of the Akatiri, ... he had won his freedom. He had married a barbarian wife and had children, and, as a sharer at the table of Onegesius, he now enjoyed a better life than he had previously. ..." In sum, this instance does not prove that the Romans in general would have wanted to live amongst the Huns. On the contrary it proves that all East Romans in the Hunnic territories were prisoners-of-war and not refugees or turncoats as in the West and even this single exception accepted Priscus' counterarguments (frg. 11.454ff.) accurate even if he at the same time said that the Roman authorities were ruining it by not following the precedents (i.e. the massive corruption was ruining it). The option of reinstating universal conscription to expel the barbarians was not an option available for the late Roman emperors or for the Roman warlords who ruled the West, because it would have been very

The late Romans continued to use the civilians for intelligence gathering as regular police forces and as paramilitary forces. They operated under the governors and local military commanders and detached soldiers just as they did before.²²

The Imperial Bodyguards, the *Protectores Domestici* and Military

Constantine the Great and his successors made additional changes to the military organization. The *Praetoriani* were disbanded in 312 and replaced by the *Protectores Domestici* (possibly the successors of the *Speculatores*) and *Scholae*. This reorganization meant that the praetorian prefects had no longer permanent units of their own, but only such as were designated to them by the emperor so that they could carry out their duties. This does not mean that the praetorian prefects would not have performed internal or external security functions – they did – but it meant that the commanders of the new bodyguard units were now the persons responsible for the personal safety of the emperor and all that it entailed.²³

The official commander of all bodyguards was the *Magister Officiorum*, but since he was usually a civilian, the bodyguards were in practice usually commanded by the *Comes Domesticorum* (Count of the Household) or *comites domesticorum* (counts of the household). The *Protectores* were the principal intelligence gathering arm of the armed forces. Its members served as: staff officers and bodyguards in the court; officers of the *Scholae* and other units; staff and intelligence officers for generals; diplomats, special operatives and assassins. The *Protectores* were the ancient equivalents of the modern Soviet NKVD/KGB/Spetsnaz forces.²⁴

dangerous for them to arm the populace when it was very unhappy with their rulers. The other reason for this was the resistance of the senatorial class against conscription on their lands [e.g. MATTHEWS (1975/2001)]. In contrast, in 238 the Italians could still be mobilized to fight against the professional Roman army led by the barbarian emperor Maximinus Thrax (235-238). The contrast could not have been greater. Now the Germanic kingdoms offered for the Romans a chance to escape the oppression of the Roman Empire. It should be noted that the views that I have adopted here go against the current consensus opinion among the ultraconservative branch of the Classicist school (which in my opinion is based on faulty approach to the sources). I base my conclusions on various sources and on the events on the ground and not on some fashionable modern theories. However, my views are actually not that far away from the opinions adopted by the historians before the 1980s. I am just taking the arguments much further than ever before by stressing the importance of the hearts and minds in the fall of Rome. In order for any Empire to survive it needs willing defenders and these were now lacking. A good modern example of the importance of this is the collapse of the Soviet Union and its East European Empire. The contrast between east and west was just too obvious for any security apparatus to hide. All empires need willing defenders! One should not overlook the evidence presented by the Christian sources, when these are actually backed up by the events on the ground. There was no massive native rising against the barbarians (or barbarian ruler like there was in 238). Most of those who opposed the barbarians belonged to the senatorial class (note e.g. that some of the cities of the east saw the Goths as their protectors against the taxmen in 380) and the result of their racist attitudes and opposition to the raising of taxes and conscription on their lands was the collapse that took place during the reign of Honorius which led to the creation of the barbarian kingdoms that then offered the people a place of refuge. The Germanic kingdoms were eager to receive these refugees because the extra inhabitants brought economic prosperity. We should not draw from this the conclusion that the refugees of today would automatically bring similar outcome because modern European countries are required to provide a living for the refugees and we are here also dealing with persons who come from an alien culture and not with native refugees as in the late Roman times. East Rome avoided similar problems because Arcadius was married to a daughter of a Frankish general Bauto so that his son Theodosius II could be considered to have been a half or quarter barbarian (we do not know whether Bauto was married to a barbarian or Roman woman). It was primarily thanks to this that the East Romans integrated their barbarian warriors more fully into the society until the murder of Aspar changed the situation. More detailed argumentation for all this can be found in SYVÄNNE (2015-) and MATTHEWS (1975/2001) e.g. 277-278.

²² SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol. 1, 49-55.

²³ SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol.1, 254ff.

²⁴ FRANK (1969); AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 225-226; SYVÄNNE (2015-) for the vol. 1, see the index); *KGB Alpha Team Training Manual* (Boulder 1993).

The standard sources of intelligence for the military were the same as before: 1) the information provided by the civilians, traders, travelers and civilian spies; 2) the information obtained from military spies, scouts, land patrols and naval patrols, and sentinels/guards posted on guard towers and walls; 3) the information provided by allies. The regular military forces, including the *Vigiles* and *Urbaniciani*, continued to be used for internal security missions just as before. The late Romans retained all the same systems of transmission for the messages and intelligence reports. There were towers placed at strategic locales along the borders which were used to transmit messages with smoke signals, fires and mirrors; The military couriers transmitted messages by using relays of horses; The slow moving postal wagons were still used for the less urgent messages. On campaign the commanders sometimes reconnoitered/spied in person, but it was more usual for them to obtain information from their spies, scouts, patrols and vanguard.²⁵

Despite the fact that the Roman military and civilian intelligence apparatuses with their overlapping duties usually performed as expected, the late Roman period includes several examples of gross incompetence that caused massive damage to the security. The most famous of these instances is the mistaken report given by the vanguard/skirmishers (*procursores*) of the emperor Valens just prior to the battle of Adrianople in 378 (Amm. Marc. 31.1.3ff.). The end result was the destruction of the Roman army with its emperor. Most of these instances took place during the reigns of Valentinian, Valens, and Theodosius I, which may mean that the quality of the military spies and scouts and vanguards (*procursores*) was lower during those years thanks to the wide-spread corruption of the top brass. The emperors may also have been aware of the problem because Valentinian chose to be his own scout in 368 (Amm. Marc. 27.10.8ff.) and Theodosius his own spy in 391 (Zosimus 4.48). In both cases the emperors' suspicions were correct. The Huns were also able to surprise the Romans in 395 and so were the Persians in 440. It is probable that the latter failure were caused by human mistake, because the East Roman intelligence gathering network performed relatively well in other cases possibly as a result of the East Roman efforts against corruption after 395.²⁶ All intelligence organizations are liable to make mistakes because the interpretation of the evidence is always subject to human error.



Fig. 2. Shield emblem of the *Protectores Domestici Equites* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. One would expect that the corps which had a pink shield with hearts and angels, and emperors embracing each other to be always loyal to their ruler, but this was obviously not always the case.

(© Dr. Ilkka Syväne 2014)

²⁵ SYVÄNNE (2004) summarizes *Vegetius, Peri Strategikes* and *Strategikon*.

²⁶ SYVÄNNE (2015-) vols.3-4. The efforts of the East Roman government to curb the military corruption (and corruption of the *curiosi/agentes*) can be seen in their legislation (e.g. Codex Theodosianus 6.29.10, 7.1.27-32, 7.7.4-5, 7.11.1, 7.4.30, and 7.4.35-36). The East Romans did not pay the same amount of attention to the corruption of the civilian administration (e.g. Synesius' Letter 73 with SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol.3, Appendix 3), but it should be noted that the problems started really with the rise of military corruption after the year 365. The West attempted to follow similar policies, but with less success. The East Roman armies were clearly more effective than the West Roman ones, but part of the reason for this was that the East Romans were far more successful in their incorporation of the Goths and Alans into their army. The main reason for this was that Arcadius' government did not follow the same kind of racist policies as Honorius thanks to the fact that Arcadius was married to the daughter of Bauto who was a Frank.

Emperor's Special Operatives

The sources also prove that the emperors were in the habit of employing the heads of the imperial bedchamber (*Praepositi Sacri Cubiculi*), masters of offices, praetorian prefects, bodyguards, and members of his Consistory for any security duties even if this in most cases meant only cases of internal security, but this was not the entire extent of the organization employed by the emperors, because they could basically choose to use anyone that they trusted for any mission they desired. The best example of this are the vast powers of investigation (included even the use of torture and execution) granted to the notorious Paul the Chain who was only a lowly *notarius*. There were also occasions in which all main branches of the security services were ordered to work together for a common purpose. The highest ranking civilian administrators, military officers, friends of the emperor, and members of the aristocracy were also quite eager to act as informers for their own benefit so there was no shortage of informers and accusers.²⁷

Christianity and State Security

The making of Christianity state religion was the most pivotal of the changes instituted by Constantine. Constantine and his immediate successors remained high priests of the Roman Empire so that they could retain the support of the traditionalists and could obtain the above-mentioned intelligence, but from the reigns of Gratian and Theodosius I onwards the emperors considered this unnecessary. It was now considered more important to obtain information of the Christian heretics, because most emperors did not tolerate any dissenting views. The churchmen of the emperors' favorite faction were used to control other priests and populace. These churchmen could even use military forces in the performance of their duty (Socrates 4.15; Sozomen 4.21).

It should be noted, however, that the information the emperor and administration could obtain through the network of bishops and priests was limited. If the dissident had the support of significant sections of the society, including members of the secret service and military, the emperors could not achieve their aim. The best example of this is the ability of St. Athanasius to hide from the Arian churchmen and authorities. On top of that, the most influential religious persons could form their own intelligence gathering networks inside the imperial administration. The best example of this is the intelligence gathering network of St. Ambrose who managed to plant his own spies inside Theodosius I the Great's Consistory (St. Ambrose, *Letter 51.2*).²⁸ It is probable that these persons consisted mostly of the devout Catholics who were quite prepared to disclose their secrets to the Bishop. This problem became less important after Theodosius I. Theodosius's harsh measures against the pagans and heretics ensured the ultimate victory of the Catholic/Orthodox faith. The churchmen were obviously always divided in their religious views, but the measures adopted by the emperors to promote the Catholic/Orthodox faith were still sufficient from the point of view of internal security. The religious dissents lacked the strength to challenge the majority opinion when it was supported by the state. From the point of view of internal security it became more important to try to stem the most violent actions of the fanatic Christians against the religious minorities, but these incidents were not a threat to the emperor and therefore not a high priority.

²⁷ For example: Ammianus, 14.5.6ff., 14.10.4, 14.11.21, 15.5.12, 16.8, 20.2.2; AUSTIN, RANKOV (1995) 221-226.

²⁸ Despite the fact that we lack precise knowledge of how St. Ambrose obtained his intelligence it is probable that he must have organized his large household and Church staff in such a manner that all confidential information flowed secretly and efficiently into his hands, hence my term network. His informants and sources would obviously not have been considered officially sanctioned spies, but we should still remember that all officially sanctioned spies would also have maintained their own networks of informal and formal sources. This official system is not that different from the systems maintained by some powerful individuals in the past (e.g. by Julius Caesar and the private informers of the emperors, see my academia.edu material with the forthcoming books). It is quite clear that St. Ambrose was in a position to order priests and monks to gather information by various means in the name of the Church and the sources also prove that he was well informed of all events that took place in the Empire.

The different factions of Christians were not the only groups that had infiltrated the imperial administration. The emperors were usually ready to hire talented persons regardless of their faith, which meant that there were also pagans in the administration. These pagans actually formed a cabal to restore the ancient religion and worked actively to achieve this already during the reign of Constantine the Great. The most serious of the plots was formed in about 354 by Julian and his philosopher friends against Constantius II, which resulted in the death of the latter. It is probable that Julian in his turn was killed by the Christians belonging to the bodyguards. His successor Jovian was also killed by the bodyguards, but his death was caused by infighting among the military factions for primacy. However, the pagans remained unsatisfied with the situation. The gravest of the subsequent pagan conspiracies was the so-called Great Pagan Conspiracy of the year 371/2 against Valens. The resulting purge of the pagans removed the pagan threat in the east forever. The final nail in the coffin of the pagans in the west was the victory of Theodosius I over the pagan general Arbogastes in 394. After this, there existed no real threat of major pagan conspiracies to restore the pagan faith among the imperial bodyguards. All emperors were expected to be Christians.²⁹

²⁹ Ammianus 22.1.1-2, 28.1.1ff., 29.1.5-29.2.28; Libanius *Orations*, 18.118, 18.21-27; Nazianzus, *Oration 4 Against Julian* 1.47-48; Tougher in *Julian the Apostate*, ed. and comm. S. Tougher (Edinburgh 2007), 38-39; SYVÄNNE (2015a); SYVÄNNE (2015c) with SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol. 1. esp. 387-388 with index, vols. 2-3. It is also quite obvious that Jovian was murdered even if modern research has not understood this. Ammianus (25.10.12.1ff.) gives three theories for the death of Jovian: Jovian had died as a result of a recently plastered bedroom; Jovian's head had swollen as a result of asphyxiation caused by carbon monoxide; he had died as a result of overeating. However, we are here once again dealing with a situation in which Ammianus was not free to disclose the truth in plain language but had to use roundabout means to do this. When one does this it becomes apparent that Jovian died as a result of a conspiracy. Firstly, Ammianus noted that Jovian's death resembled that of Scipio Aemilianus because no investigation was ever made into the cause or circumstances of their deaths (Scipio's death was considered to have been a murder). Secondly, he stated that Jovian's father Varronianus (former *Comes Domesticorum*) had learnt what would happen long beforehand from a dream, and had told this to two of his confidential friends, but had then died before he could meet his son. I would suggest that the 'dream' represents a way in which Ammianus could convey to his readers the information that Varronianus had learnt of the plot to kill Jovian, but had then been murdered before he could meet his son. One or both of Varronianus' confidants must have belonged to the conspiracy. Thirdly, Valentinian, the future emperor and the man who had survived the revolt in Gaul against Jovian, had conveniently been left behind at Ancyra so that he could not be implicated in the matter. Fourthly, Ammianus (26.1.1) himself notes the dangers of disclosing the truth in the same context of events. In sum, there is no doubt that Valentinian's supporters murdered Jovian and then raised him on the throne. There is one possible later attempt made by a pagan against emperor in the east. HOLUM (1982/1989) 82, has noted in his ground-breaking monograph that the Neoplatonist Damascius' Life of Isidore suggests a possibility that Lucius, who was a pagan and *Magister Utriusque Militae*, attempted to murder Theodosius II in his palace. According to the story told by Damascius, on one day Lucius went into the imperial apartments with the intention of killing the emperor, but the attempt failed because Lucius was unable to draw his sword from the scabbard despite attempting to do that three times. After this he fled. The reason for this was that Lucius supposedly saw a giant and burly woman standing behind the emperor with her protective arms around him. As noted by Holum, the woman undoubtedly represented the Fortune/Tyche of the emperor, who prevented the killing. The real life woman could have been the emperor's sister Pulcheria. It is impossible to know whether this was just wishful thinking by Damascius or a real event in which Lucius could have attempted to take revenge against an emperor who had sacked his patron Anthemius (and possibly executed because he disappears from the sources?) but then failed to carry out his intentions. If true, it is unlikely that even if the murder would have been a success that the pagans could have reinstated their dominance because by then the vast majority of the population, army, barbarian Federates and upper classes were Christians. For further details, see the forthcoming SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol.3. As regards Alan CAMERON's (2013), I am not convinced by his arguments that there would not have existed a pagan attempt to restore their position in the late 4th century. His claims are based on a set of assumptions, which do not stand closer scrutiny. I give here only some examples, because to do otherwise would require a book length commentary. Firstly, the assumption that the closer to the period the source is the likelier it is to be true is based on a completely faulty approach to the sources – sometimes the exact opposite is true. In modern context, it suffices to note that the later authors are actually likely to be closer to the truth because the Secrecy Acts usually limit the availability of evidence for the period authors. Secondly, the set of assumptions which attempt to refute the paganism of Arbogastes are completely faulty. There are no good reasons not to accept

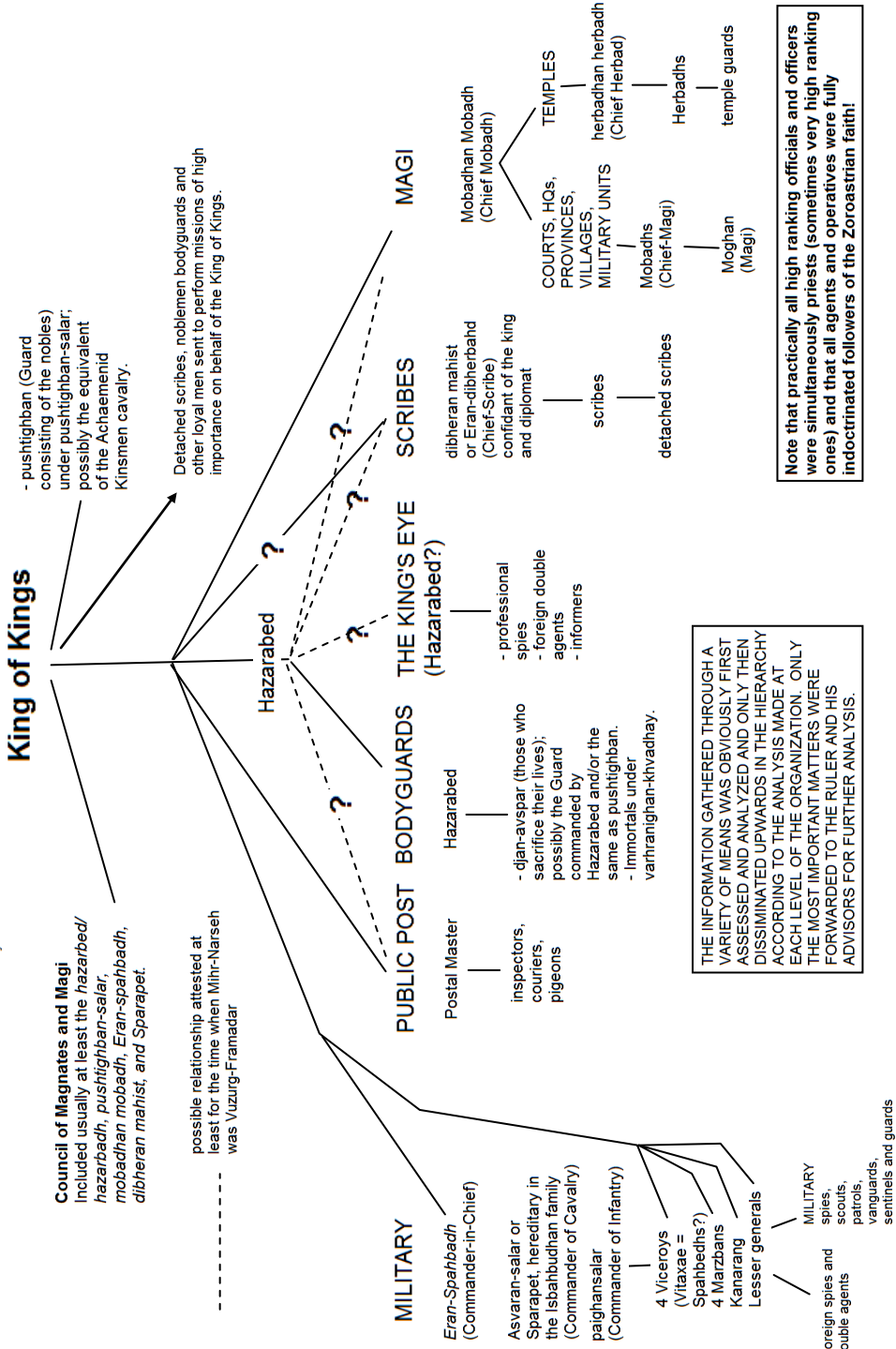
The above instances prove that the religious convictions – the blind faith in their own cause – were far more powerful forces than all the laws and security services put together. These religious persons worked for the benefit of their own religion and sabotaged the workings of the security services whenever this was in their interest. In light of this, it is not surprising that the emperors attempted to make certain that all of their subjects followed the religious doctrine followed up by them. It proved impossible to follow the policy of religious freedom, because the empire was full of religious bigots at all levels of the society who opposed all tolerance towards the different faiths. This left the emperors with only one option which was to choose which version of the Christian faith they would follow. In the end, the emperors chose to follow the most popular version of Christianity, the Catholic-Orthodox faith, because this gave them the support of the vast majority of the society – a wise choice from the point of view of internal security. The support given by the emperors after Valens to the Catholic/Orthodox faith was also important for another reason: it enabled the emperors to widen the gap between the Catholic population and Arian Germans in a situation in which the imperial authorities had lost the support of the populace as a result of their complete moral corruption. By associating themselves closely with the Catholic/Orthodox faith, the emperors acted as the protectors of the faithful against the heretics – even if there is no definite evidence for this it is possible that this was a cynical move in a situation in which the emperor’s representatives were fleecing the populace mercilessly, but a wise policy move from the point of view of internal and external security. It should be noted, however, that the emperors continued to employ persons of other faiths even after they had chosen to follow the Catholic doctrine. This was particularly true of the barbarian soldiers because the emperors needed their services. The only exception to the rule were the Jews who from the beginning of the fifth century were subjected to ever increasing persecution probably as a result of the influence of bigoted Catholics on the emperors, which led to alienation of the Jewish population.³⁰

Paulinus’ and Orosius’ statements that he was. It is uncertain whether he was the son of Bauto and even if he was it does not follow from this that Arbogastes would not have been a pagan. It was entirely possible for the pagans (e.g. Athanaric and Fravitta) and Arians (Christian Goths) to rise to high positions under Theodosius I despite the latter’s vehement support of Catholic faith. The fact that both armies at the battle of Frigidus included Christians and pagans does not mean that Arbogastes’ army would not have presented a very real danger for the Christians. The view adopted by all Christian sources is a proof enough. They clearly saw a very real danger even if the Christians shared the same cultural background with the pagans – anyone who is familiar with the Christian doctrine also knows that the ancient philosophies have had very direct influence on the development of its doctrines. The pre-battle ceremony, the taking of the haruspices (it is probable that Cameron is correct to call it such), conducted by the pagan Praetorian Prefect Flavianus in the full view of the army can have taken place only with the acceptance of Arbogastes and his puppet emperor Eugenius. It is also certain that Flavianus did indeed conduct the pagan ceremony in question because the Christian sources are unanimous that he did. Such pagan ceremony was a clear break with the standard military practices of the time. The fact that the Christian ceremonies had been mixed into the older military practises does not mean that these would still have been pagan ceremonies. All military ceremonies were now Christian ones, which is well shown by the practices followed by Theodosius I. It is also very likely that Flavianus’ pagan ceremony lowered the morale of the Christian soldiers in Arbogastes’ army to such an extent that some of them deserted to the other side during the following night (after their commanders had been bribed), and sealed the fate of the usurper and his pagan supporters. For the sources, see PLRE 1 Arbogastes, Eugenius 6, Flavianus 15.

³⁰ The Jews were accepted to serve in the security organs until April 22, 404. It was then that the imbecile Honorius gave an Edict to remove all Jews and Samaritans from the School of *Agentes in Rebus* (CTh 16.8.16). The order to expel the Jews from the *Agentes in Rebus* and Elite forces was repeated by Honorius on March 10, 418 (CTh 16.8.24). No reason for the decision is given, but one may hazard a guess that the bigoted Catholic priests may have had a role in the decision. None of the sources even hints that the Jews would have been disloyal. Their loyalty is actually proven by the fact that those in service were allowed to complete their terms of service. Similar intolerance was shown by the East Roman government when it was led by Pulcheria. There were also restriction placed on pagans, but in practice these were accepted into service. See e.g. PLRE 1 *Fravitta*, PLRE 2 *Marcellinus* 6, *Litorius* with SYVÄNNE (2017). The entire chapter, which is a summary of the evidence presented, is at odds with the ultraconservative consensus opinion among the Classicists, but is closer to the views held by the previous generations of researchers even if it looks at the evidence from different perspective – namely from the perspective of internal and external security. It is a historian’s job to see past the fashionable trends and not follow those blindly.

PROBABLE INTELLIGENCE GATHERING NETWORK OF THE SHAHANSHAHS

© Dr. Ilkka Syväske 2015



4. PERSIAN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING 224-450

Ardašīr I's Creation: the Zoroastrian Empire³¹

The Sasanian society with its administrative and military structures was the creation of the founder of the dynasty Ardašīr I. He belonged to a priestly family. It is therefore not surprising that Zoroastrian clergy were to play a pivotal role in the new Empire. Zoroastrian faith was the law of the land and its priests were used to control all civilian and military activities. Ardašīr created also regular civilian and military secret services, but their members were also required to be devout Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian priests played the same role in Persia as the mullahs in modern Iran.

The Roman sources make it clear that the second cornerstone of Ardašīr's new Empire was its Achaemenid (Persian/Parsig) propaganda. Ardašīr represented himself as the rightful heir of the Achaemenids and as the restorer of the former Persian Empire. This required military campaigns.³²

The third cornerstone was the deal made between the Sasanians and the Parthian magnates according to which the highest offices of the Empire were reserved to the latter.³³ The Parthian warrior nobility could be kept happy only by showing them proper respect and by conducting offensive military campaigns that brought prestige to the warrior class.

In sum, the ruler's safety depended on the support of the Zoroastrian clergy and Parthian nobles, which could be obtained only through the persecution of other religions and with successful wars.

Civilian Intelligence Gathering Network

The extant texts give us a relatively good overall picture of the multilayered civilian intelligence gathering network created by Ardašīr I. The only problem is the identity of the "King's Eye".

According to the *Letter of Tansar* (24-26), all men were trembling with fear because Ardašīr had informers and spies everywhere. The text consoles the readers with the claim that the innocent and upright men had nothing to fear because the ruler chose as his eyes and informers only those who were trustworthy, obedient, pure, devout, learned, religious and abstinent in worldly things. In other words Ardašīr required all of his agents to be religious men on the grounds that these were supposed to be upright persons – a silly proposition as we shall see.

The Armenian and later Muslim sources suggest that the *hazāruft/chiliarchos* (Prime Minister/Commander of Thousand) was the principal spy master of the *šāhānsāhs*. This was not his only function. He oversaw the peasantry, economic activity and collection of taxes, and was the commander of the bodyguards and the head of the administration while also being a Priest or High Priest – in some cases even the Chief Magus/ *mōbadh* of all clergy. It is therefore quite possible that the *hazāruft /chiliarchos* was the so-called King's Eye (the Civilian Spy Master), the other possible alternative being the Chief-Scribe. This collection of offices meant that some *hazārufts* like Mehr-Narseh were able to amass all power in their hands – a situation which spelled trouble for the rulers. And this was not even the full extent of the mixing of the religion with the positions of power. The evidence suggests that all local generals and governors were also required to be Zoroastrian priests

³¹ With the exception of the Roman and Armenian sources, the other sources used here for the analysis of the Sasanian intelligence gathering apparatus have been written during the Muslim period. All of these contain material from the Sasanian times that is missing from the other sources and are therefore very valuable. It is the duty of all self-respecting historians to use these and not discard this evidence solely on the basis that it is late as is all too often being done. For a fuller discussion of the sources and methodology to be followed, see my *Bahram V Gōr SYVĀNNE* (2015) and the previous notes.

³² Some historians do not accept the Achaemenid connection, but I do. The Roman sources are quite unanimous and the numerous organizational similarities between the two support the same conclusion.

³³ For an excellent analysis of the relationship between the Persian monarchs and Parthian nobility, see *POURSHARIATI* (2008).

or at least thoroughly indoctrinated in its central doctrines. The same sources also prove that the Persians required all of their spies and double agents, foreigners included, to be indoctrinated in the Zoroastrian faith. It is obviously clear that some of the agents were undercover initiates so that they could work below the radar, because all knew full well that the magi were all spies and were also treated as such by their enemies.³⁴ This indoctrination of the populace and office holders in the Zoroastrian faith clearly resembles the methods followed in modern Iran and Soviet Union – dictatorships which are based on religion/ideology tend to follow the same principles.³⁵

We have also every reason to believe that the inspectors/judges/counselors, who were all members of the clergy, were all members of the secret service organized under the Chief Judge who doubled as Chief Magus/*mōbadh*. These priests were attached to every province, local court, and larger unit of the army like in modern Iran. All legal actions and the making of any kind of treaty required to be confirmed by a member of the clergy so there was almost nothing that escaped their attention. The scribes were also used as spies just like the Roman *Notarii*. Firdawsī's referral to the use of the scribes as envoys, witnesses, false deserters, and spies confirm this. Unsurprisingly, the scribes were also priests by training.³⁶

According to Mirkhond (p.281)³⁷, Ardašīr introduced a system of inspectors who operated under the Head Postmaster. Ardašīr expected to hear the daily intelligence briefings from his Head Postmaster every morning immediately after he had woken up. The inspectors were placed everywhere to keep an eye on the general mood of the populace and to report all matters of interest every morning. The inspectors sent their reports to their superiors, the local postmasters/intelligence officers, and they in their turn dispatched matters of importance forward every morning to the Head Postmaster and the King of Kings. Mirkhond claims that Ardašīr expected to be able to learn of the events that had taken place in the farthest corners of his Empire within a period of about 24-48 hrs. It very unfortunate that he fails to explain how the system operated, but considering the speed of delivery the only possible explanations are the use of: fire/smoke signals as used by the Achaemenids;³⁸ relays of courier pigeon housed in towers spread throughout the Empire in the same manner as was used during the Caliphate. See the illustration of the pigeon tower (source: Jane Dieulafoy, *Perse*. Paris 1887). It should be noted that the skilled rebels could cut off the information flow to the ruler simply by posting horsemen throughout the countryside to intercept all messages (Firdawsī, p.762).

Mirkhond (p.281) also notes how Ardašīr sought to ensure that his ambassadors were loyal and honest, and reported accurately what had been said. The reason for this was that inaccurate messages could result in unwanted wars. The ambassadors were legalized spies³⁹ and appear to have worked under the direct control of the ruler and *hazārufi*.

³⁴ *Ghazar P'arpe'i's History of the Armenians*, tr. by R. Bedrosian. New York (1985) available online at rbedrosian.com (partial tr. also in Elishe, 251ff.) Part Two, 20ff., or 60ff., or g37ff., [104ff, esp. 104-108], 32ff. (esp. 32), g59ff. (esp. g59-g62); Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, Partial English tr. D. Davis (New York 2007), e.g. pp. 721, 724 (Complete translations and editions available online); Elishe, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, tr. by R.W. Thomson. (Cambridge, London 1982), 192ff. esp. 202; *The History of al-Tabari Vol. V*, tr. C.E. Bosworth. New York (1999); *Vol. XII*. tr. by Y. Friedmann (New York 1992), i.861, 869.

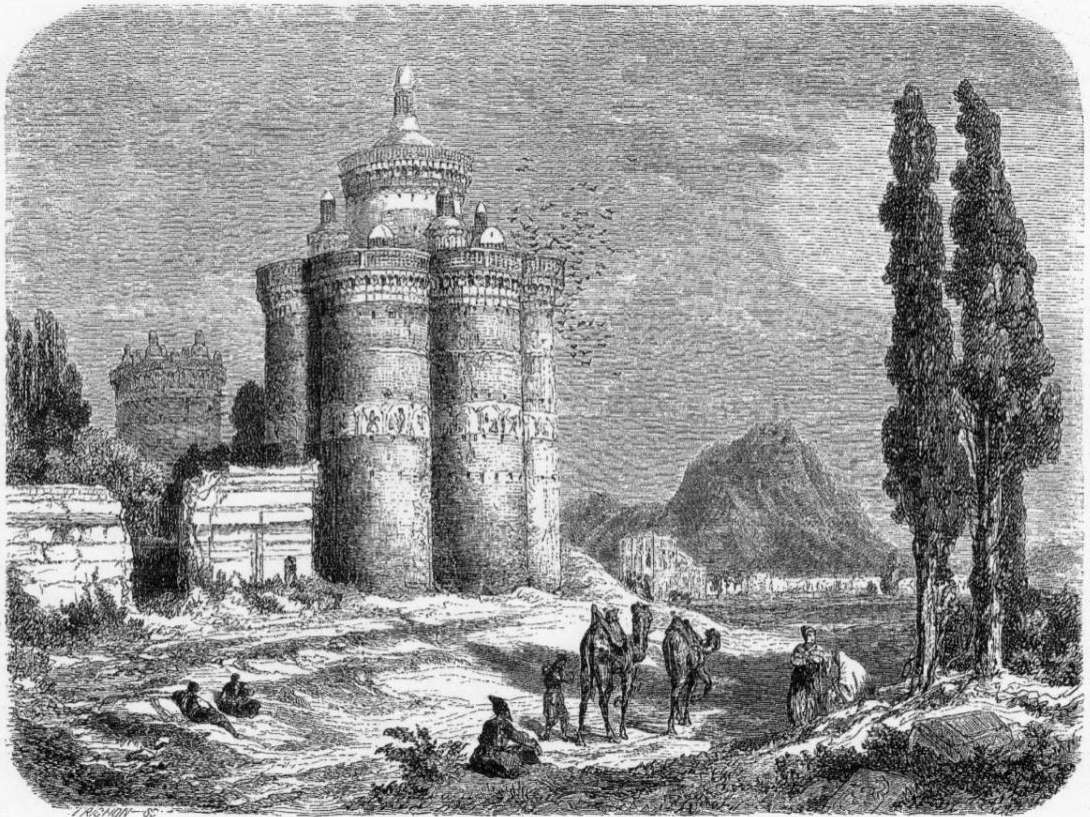
³⁵ See e.g. WARD (2009) 211ff.

³⁶ SYVÄNNE (2015-) vol.1; Ferdowsi e.g. 724, 730-34, 739-40, 754-55, 760-62; Agathias, 2.26.2-5; DARYAEE (2009) 53.

³⁷ MIRKHOND (1713).

³⁸ For Achaemenid practices, see DVORNIK (1974), 23-34.

³⁹ The envoys/diplomats/ambassadors were (and are) legalized spies in the sense that they are allowed to enter foreign territory with the acceptance of its government and all of them had (and have) the duty to report back all of their observances and to gather as much information as possible for later use by their employers.



UN PIGEONNIER DU HÉZAR DJÉRIE. (Voyez p. 285.)

Nizam al-Mulk⁴⁰ claims that the ancient system of agents and informers used by the Persians was so efficient that if anyone wrongly took so much as a chicken or a bag of straw from another that the ruler would know about it and could have the offender punished. This is clearly an exaggeration, because it is clear that the local agents and judges would have punished the minor offences on the spot so that only the most important matters were reported further up in the chain of command. Nizam states also the obvious: The informers were expected to be men who were completely above suspicion and self-interest; They were directly responsible only to the King of Kings, who in his turn was expected to pay them a monthly salary.

Military Intelligence Gathering

Military intelligence gathering naturally exploited the above-mentioned civilian sources to obtain information of matters of importance, but the information provided by the sources suggest that in addition to this the ruler and the military employed spies of their own.

As has already been noted Persia employed undercover agents abroad most of whom were disguised as merchants or as envoys. These appear to have consisted of two types of military or civilian agents: a) those dispatched by the central government for some specific purpose; b) those who were operated by military officers along the frontiers.

⁴⁰ Nizam al-Mulk, 66-67.

As regards the former, the sources demonstrate that the *šāhānšāh* sometimes operated their own spies. For example, Bahrām V Gōr used his own operative to collect information on Turks in 422. This was even more important when the rulers faced internal threats. In those cases they used their own trusted men who usually consisted of the courtiers/noblemen, scribes or chief-scribes who were present in their court. My own educated guess is that we should equate the noblemen of the court with the *pushtighban* Guard, which would therefore have been the successor of the Achaemenid institution of Kinsmen cavalry (the ruler's personal bodyguards).⁴¹

Ammianus gives us some very important details of the espionage along the Persian border. His account shows that the Persians employed spy networks along their borders which were organized and operated by the local military commanders and governors and who were then directly answerable only to the King of Kings even if it is likely that they also informed their immediate superiors, the viceroys, on a need to know basis.⁴²

The most detailed accounts of the way in which the Persians conducted intelligence gathering operations during their military campaigns are late, but undoubtedly relevant also to the earlier period. One of the most detailed accounts is Tabari's (i.2214ff.) description of the battle of al-Qadisiyah⁴³. He shows (i.2244) that the Persian supreme commander Rustam was also an astrologer and priest. In light of the above, this is to be expected⁴⁴. In the course of the campaign, he used all the standard means of gathering information: 1) The commander of the vanguard was ordered to capture Arab prisoners for interrogation (i.2253-54; the commander of the vanguard was undoubtedly the local spy chief); 2) He dispatched a spy inside the Muslim camp (i.2291); 3) He reconnoitered the enemy positions in person (i.2267); 4) He used the regular spy network (i.2255) but was not aware of a double agent (i.2252-53). In sum, it appears probable that the Persian field armies had two persons in charge of intelligence gathering: a) the overall commander; b) the commander of the vanguard. Both had at their disposal professional spies and special elite forces that could be used as spies and scouts.

The Achaemenid Connection

Since we know that Ardašīr modelled many facets of his administration after the Achaemenid system, the best proof of which are the similarities, one may make the educated guess that he divided his intelligence services into separate organizations according to the same model⁴⁵:

1) King's personal bodyguards under the Commander of the Bodyguards (*Pushtighban-salar* who performed also spying/security functions around the court); the Achaemenid Kinsmen.

2) King's other bodyguards (including the 10,000 Immortals) who served under the *hazārufi/chiliarch*.

3) The eyes and ears of the king operating under the mysterious 'King's Eye'. It is possible that the King's Eye should be equated with the *hazārufi*.

⁴¹ E.g. Tabari (i.864, i.996) and Ferdowsi (pp.717-720, 724, 730-34, 739-40, 754-56, 760-62, 768-69) and SYVÄNNE (2015) 88.

⁴² Ammianus 18.6.16 with SYVÄNNE (2015-) vol.1 (361ff.); PLRE 1 *Tamsapor* and *Nohodares* with the addition of Ammianus, 17.5.12. See also NECHAEVA (2014). Ammianus describes also the use of Roman *Protectores* in counter intelligence operations and also the indoctrination process used by the Persians.

⁴³ For the battle, see SYVÄNNE (2014).

⁴⁴ At the time the spy organizations were divided into two factions, which do not concern us here. For these questions, see Tabari (I.2252-53) with Pourshariati.

⁴⁵ For the Achaemenid system, see: DVORNIK (1974) 23-34. I agree with Dvornik that Herodotus' (1.114) account of the young Cyrus the Great proves that there existed separate offices: Builder of the Houses, Commander of the Bodyguards, King's Eye (Spy-Master), and Postal Master. This means that the Commander of the Bodyguards (chiliarch), King's Eye, and Postal Master were all separate offices. Nicholas Sekunda's *The Persian Army 560-330 BC* (1992) provides a very useful synthesis of the Achaemenid army and its different units. This monograph is recommended reading for those who want to obtain more information regarding the Achaemenid armed forces. For the offices mentioned general information can be found in N. Garsoïan's translation *The Epic Histories of Pawstos of Buzand* (Cambridge 1989) and CHRISTENSEN (1936) and SYVÄNNE (2015-) Vol. 1, 97-129.

4) The scribes under the *dibheran mahist*. It is possible that we should equate the *dibheran* with the King's Eye.

5) Couriers/spies operating under the Postal Master.

6) The religious police consisting of the various branches of the clergy but so that the *herbeds* headed by Chief-*hērbēdān* were responsible for the religious terror (Tabari i.991). What is notable about the Sasanian system is that practically all leading members of the administration and military were simultaneously priests. The likely reason for this is that religious indoctrination was considered essential part of the education just like in modern Iran.

7) The military and civilian spies along the frontiers controlled by generals who reported directly to the monarch.

The above-mentioned instances suggest that powerful *hazārufs* like Mehr-Narseh could usurp control of all of the security organs, which means that the division of the security apparatus and intelligence gathering into separate organizations was not always successful as a precaution. It is therefore no wonder that the rulers needed their own separate unit of bodyguards and used their military retainers, trusted friends, scribes and other persons as their spies separately from those controlled by the *hazāruf* or other spy masters. Most importantly, most of the rulers also maintained tight control over the military intelligence, but we should not forget that the members of the military were similarly indoctrinated as the rest of the society so that the soldiers did not feel any loyalty towards any ruler considered a "sinner".⁴⁶

5) THE TWO INTELLIGENCE GATHERING SYSTEMS COMPARED

Despite the similarities of the administrative systems, which probably resulted from the Roman imitation of the Persian system, there existed fundamental differences between these.

The Persian society, with its laws and its security apparatus, was entirely based on Zoroastrian faith. With the exception of some rulers like Ardašīr I, Šāpur I and Xusrō I, most of the Persian *šāhānšāh* were hostages of their clergy. The magi had so much power that they could pressure the weak rulers to do their bidding, which meant the persecution of religious minorities and offensive wars with neighbors. Those rulers who did not follow their wishes are invariably called as sinners in the extant sources and practically all of them met violent end at the hands of the magi and nobles. The religious persons in the security apparatus did not feel any loyalty towards such sinners. There was very little chance of the Zoroastrian faith spreading abroad without violence because it placed so many restrictions on individual freedoms. It is not a coincidence that the religious laws still govern every aspect of life (even the waging of warfare) in the Middle East even today.

In contrast, the Roman emperors were never hostages of their priests. They could choose their own religious views. The Roman laws, society and way of life were not based on any particular religion even if the emperors in the end chose to follow the mainstream Catholic-Orthodox doctrine.

Most of the Persian kings of kings were also hostages of their feudal magnates. The warrior caste was similarly bellicose and promoted war with neighbors, and if these wishes were not met, the ruler faced trouble. The rulers could suppress the nobles and magi temporarily with their own forces, but it was extremely rare for such rulers to die a natural death as for example the deaths of Yazdgerd I and Bahrām V Gōr show.

In contrast, the Roman emperors could appoint whomsoever they wished to any office – the religious views and birth could have an impact on the choice, but pagans, Catholics, Arians and foreigners did find their place in the emperor's service. Their principal risk was a usurpation attempt by an ambitious general/emperor with large numbers of troops at his disposal.⁴⁷ Most of the security measures were meant to ensure that such things would not take place. This worked sometimes and sometimes it did not. The emperor had to keep the military (especially the top brass) happy if he

⁴⁶ My forthcoming *A Military History of Sasanian Iran* will discuss these matters in greater detail.

⁴⁷ The emperors could also be usurpers when for example a Caesar (junior emperor) rose against an Augustus (senior emperor) or Augustus attacked another Augustus. The victor then decided who the usurper was in the eyes of the law.

wanted to survive – foreign enemies and religious views were not considered as important. The late Roman emperors made this their prime concern with the result that they faced far fewer military revolts than their predecessors or the Persians. However, the favoritism of the top brass at the expense of the rank-and-file after the year 365 proved costly. It alienated the rank-and-file and population, which ultimately led to the fall of West Rome.

It is clear that the rulers of both dictatorships⁴⁸ suffered from the same basic weakness, which was their complete reliance on the security apparatus. The problem was that they had no alternative for this. The power of all dictators is based on the control of the security services. Both empires were therefore far more successful in their efforts to detect foreign threats than they were in detecting internal threats. The Persian *šāhānšāhs* had most to fear from their priests and nobles, while the Roman emperors had most to fear from their generals and co-emperors. In neither case could the rulers trust their security organs. And, when the measures put in place to control the internal security failed, the result was usually a civil war which the foreign enemies could then exploit. This was a vicious cycle. Ironically, both dictatorships had come into existence to end civil wars and to defend their countries against external enemies.

Bibliography

Sources

- Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque*, ed. R. KEYDELL, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 2, Berlin 1967.
- Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. W. SEYFARTH, Leipzig 1978.
- Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. MOMMSEN, Berlin 1962.
- Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, tr. E. CARY, London/New York 1917.
- Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, ed. R. W. THOMSON, Cambridge, Mass. 1982.
- Firdawsī, *Shahnameh*, Partial English tr. D. DAVIS, New York 2007.
- Ghazar, P'arpets'i, *History of the Armenians*, tr. by R. BEDROSIAN. New York 1985.
- Gregory Nazianzenus, *Discours 4–5. Contre Julien*, ed. and tr. J. BERNARDI. Paris 1983.
- Julian the Apostate*, ed. and comm. S. TOUGHER, Edinburgh 2007.
- Letters of Synesius of Cyrene*, ed. H. MILFORD, London 1926.
- Libanius, *Orationes*, ed. R. FOERSTER, 7 vols., Leipzig 1903-1913.
- Nizam al-Mulk, *Siaysat-nama*, tr. H. DARKE, New Haven 1960.
- Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticus*, ed. and tr. H. G. EVELYN WHITE, Cambridge, Mass., 1961.
- Priscus of Panium, [in:] *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols, R.C. BLOCKLEY, Liverpool 1981-1983.
- Procopius, *Anecdota*, ed. and tr. H. B. DEWING. Cambridge, Mass., 1935.
- Procopius. *History of the Wars*, ed. and tr. H. B. DEWING, Cambridge, Mass. 1914-1940.
- Tacitus, *Annals*, tr. J. JACKSON, London/New York 1931.
- The Epic Histories attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')*, tr. N.G. GARSOIAN, Cambridge, Mass., 1989.
- Tabarī, *The History of al-Tabarī, The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, ed. C. E. BOSWORTH, New York 1999.

⁴⁸ Contrary to the popular view among the ultraconservative branch of the Classicists, the question of republic vs. dictatorship had relevance also in the late Roman context because there existed a viable alternative to the centralized Roman and Persian empires. The self-governing communities of Bacaudae bandits and barbarian kingdoms presented a clear alternative to those Romans who sought freedom from the oppression of the corrupt imperial machinery. The Bacaudae were Romans who chose to rise against the authorities so that they could form free communities of their own. Most of the Germanic societies elected the best leader to be their king and they could also overthrow those leaders who they considered weak. Some of these societies did not even have kings, the best example of this phenomenon being the Tervingi Goths who were ruled by the senate of elders and an elected judge. It was because of this that the Baltha Alaric was able to become the King of the Visigoths only after he had proven himself as a commander. The hostility of the Romans against all of the barbarian tribes strengthened the position of all rulers among the tribes, but never to such an extent that the tribes would not have retained their traditional freedoms to choose rulers from the fourth to the sixth centuries. The best example of this is that the Ostrogoths chose Belisarius as their king.

Literature

- AUSTIN N. J. E., RANKOV N. B. (1995), *Exploratio. Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*, London/New York.
- BIRLEY A. R. (2000), *Septimius Severus*, London/New York.
- CAMERON A. (2013), *Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford/New York.
- CHRISTIANSEN A. (1936), *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhagen.
- DARYAEE T. (2009), *Sasanian Persia. The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, London/New York.
- DVORNIK P. (1974), *Origins of Intelligence Services*, New Brunswick.
- FRANK R. I. (1969), *Scholae Palatinae*, Rome.
- FUHRMANN C. J. (2012), *Policing the Roman Empire*, Oxford.
- HOLUM K. G. (1982/1989), *Theodosian Emperresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley.
- ISAAC B.H. (1990), *The limits of empire: the Roman army in the East*, Oxford.
- KELLY CH. (2004), *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge/London.
- KGB Alpha Team Training Manual* (Boulder 1993).
- LEBOHEC Y (1994), *The Imperial Roman Army*, London/New York.
- MACMULLEN R. (1989), *Corruption and Decline of Rome*, New Haven.
- MATTHEWS J. (1975/2001), *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, Oxford.
- MIRKHOUD (1713), French tr. by A.I.S. DE SACY in *Mémoires sur diverses antiquités de la Perse, et sur les médaillons des rois de la dynastie des Sassanides*, Paris.
- NECHAEVA E (2012), *Les activités secrètes ambassadeurs dans l'antiquité tardive*, [in:] *Ambassadeurs et ambassades au cœur des relations diplomatiques. Rome – Occident médiéval – Byzance (VIIIe s. avant J.-C. - XIIIe s. après J.-C.)*, A. BECKER, N. DROUCOURT (eds.), Metz, 183-202.
- NECHAEVA E. (2004), *Double Agents in the Intelligence Service under Justinian. Evidences of Procopius of Caesaria*, „Živa Antika-Antiquité Vivante”, 54 , 137-147.
- NECHAEVA E. (2014), *La traversée de la frontière par les 'émigrants' en fuite, selon Ammien Marcellin*, [in:] *Voyages, déplacements et migrations*, F. DEROCHE, M. ZINK (eds.), Paris, 89-107.
- OGDEN D. (2002), *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds. A Sourcebook*, Oxford.
- PATTENED P. (1983), *The Byzantine Early Warning System*, „Byzantion”, 53, 258-299.
- PLRE 1 - *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, t. 1 (260-395). Cambridge 1971.
- PLRE 2 - *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, t. 2 (395-527). Cambridge 1980.
- POUSHARIATI P. (2008), *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, London/New York.
- REYNOLDS BAILLIE P. K. (1923), *The Troops Quartered in the Castra Peregrinorum*, „Journal of Roman Studies”, 13, 168-189.
- SECUNDA N. (1992), *The Persian Army 560-330 BC*, Oxford.
- SHELDON R. M. (2005), *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome*, London/New York.
- SYVÄNNE (2015c) I., *Agens in Rebus*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of the Roman Army*, Y. LE BOHEC (ed.), Chichester.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2004), *The Age of Hippotoxotai*, Tampere.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2009), *Teutoburg Forest 9 AD*, „Saga Newsletter”, 119 June 2009, 9-23.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2009a), *The Campaign and Battle of Sambre/Sabis in 57 BC*, „Saga Newsletter”, 117, 5-16.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2014), *Persia, la caída de un imperio*, „Desperta Ferro”, 24.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2015-), *Military History of Late Rome 284-641* (six volumes (AD 284-361, 361-395, 395-425, 425-518, 518-565, 565-641), Pen & Sword Publishing forthcoming. The Vol. 1 was published in 2015.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2015), *Bahram V Gōr: The Revitalization of the Empire through Mounted Archery*, „Historia i Świat”, 4, 71-102.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2015a), *La campaña de Juliano en Persia (363 d.C.). Un análisis crítico*, „Desperta Ferro”, 29.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2015b), *Foederati*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of the Roman Army*, Y. LE BOHEC (ed.), Chichester.
- SYVÄNNE I. (2017), *Caracalla: A Military Life* (Pen & Sword Publishing, Barnsley) forthcoming in 2017.
- WARD S. R. (2009), *Immortal*, Washington.

Summary:

The Eyes and Ears: The Sasanian and Roman Spies ca. AD 222-450

The article *The Eyes and Ears*:

1) Provides a brief analysis of the several parallel security organizations of the two superpowers of antiquity when they were still at their prime;

- 2) Discusses both internal and external security matters;
- 3) Analyzes separately the military and civilian intelligence;
- 4) Examines the role of the religious organizations, 'heresies' and security;
- 5) Discusses briefly the ways in which the intelligence was obtained, analyzed, assessed and disseminated, and for what purpose;
- 6) Provides an overview of the successes and failures and of the limits of intelligence;
- 7) Demonstrates some similarities between modern and ancient practices.

Keywords: Rome, Persia, Iran, intelligence gathering, espionage, scouting, police, secret service, military intelligence, internal security, external security, religion, religious police, justice