



CHAPTER 5

Wars, Trade and Treaties: New, Revised,
and Neglected Sources for the Political,
Diplomatic, and Military Aspects of
Imperial Rome's Relations with the
Red Sea Basin and India,
from Augustus to Diocletian

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COSMAS AND CONTEXT

In the autumn of 518, an Alexandrian spice trader, later nicknamed Cosmas Indicopleustēs (i.e. the voyager to India), sailed into the Gulf of Zula on the African coast of the southern Red Sea. On his arrival at the Axumite trade centre in Adulis he became aware of preparations, which King Kaleb Ella Asbeha, the ruler of the Christian kingdom of Axum was undertaking for a military campaign he intended to lead against the Himyarites in South Arabia.¹ King Kaleb, it seems, aimed to reinforce or re-establish a still young Christian presence and pro-Byzantine political course at the Himyarite court in South Arabian Zafar. For Axumite and Byzantine ambitions, Christian rulers at Zafar

¹ For the following see Cosmas, *Christian Topography* 2, 54ff. with Robin 2010: esp. 69ff. 78ff. and Bowersock 2013: esp. 34ff. 92ff. and (however, adhering *ibid.* 92 to the traditional date of 523/524 of Cosmas' arrival at Adulis). See also Hatke 2013: esp. 37ff. 150ff. Phillipson 2012: 63ff. Power 2012, 46ff. Nebes 2010. Fauvelle 2009. Beaucamp/Briquel-Chatonnet/Robin 1999-2000: 73ff., all with further bibliography.

offered promising prospects since the earlier Jewish rulers of the Himyarites were considered to be hostile to the Byzantine Empire and allies of the Persians.² While preparing for his expedition across the Red Sea, Kaleb instructed his governor Abbas at Adulis to send him copies of two ancient Greek inscriptions that stood at the western gates of this old trade centre, by the side of the road leading to the royal capital at Axum. Both monuments evoked Greek gods, glorified military campaigns from the distant past and contained references to the African Red Sea coast. Moreover, the throne served as a setting for the public execution of criminals. Originally, the road-side position of these two inscriptions was probably chosen in order to address and impress either members of a local Greek-speaking community or travellers (merchants and diplomats) on their way from Adulis to the Axumite royal capital. The older text (from around 244 BCE) was inscribed onto a stele of local basalt and gives an account of a campaign, which Ptolemy III (246-222 BCE) led into Mesopotamia against the Seleucids.³ The second inscription dates from a few centuries later, but unfortunately it neither bears a date nor a clear reference to known events.⁴ This text was inscribed onto a marble throne and contains the account of the military exploits of a local African king on both sides of the Red Sea.⁵ The Axumite king Kaleb, it seems, sought inspiration from such ancient epigraphic records, presumably for political justification and perhaps also for the composition of an inscription that would relate the accounts of his future victories in Africa and in Arabia.⁶ At any rate, Kaleb surely had a fair idea of the contents of both Greek inscriptions and obviously considered them

²John Diakrinomenos in Theod. Anagnost, *Kirchengeschichte* (ed. Hansen 1995), p. 157 (cf. p. 152). See also Procop., *Bella* 1,19,1. Bowersock 2013: 93ff. Robin 2010: 75f. Beaucamp/Briquel-Chatonnet/Robin 1999-2000: 73ff.

³Cosmas, *Christian Topography* 2, 58-9. OGIS 54 = SB 8545a = RIÉ 276. Cf. Bowersock 2013, 34ff.

⁴Cosmas, *Christian Topography* 2, 60-3. OGIS 199 = SB 8545b = RIÉ 277. Cf. Bowersock 2013: 44ff. Hatke 2013: 38ff. Cf. also below at nn. 70 and 110.

⁵On such thrones see Phillipson 2012: 132ff. Breyer 2012: 111ff.

⁶Robin 2010, 77. Kaleb's inscription: compare RIÉ 191 (for an English translation see e.g. Munro-Hay 1991: 230).

very relevant to his plans, although he (and most of his contemporary countrymen, it seems) did not understand Greek.⁷

Cosmas (and even more so his fellow merchants on the South Arabian side of the Red Sea) could expect turbulent times to begin, and their end was not foreseeable.⁸ As it happened, the spice trader became more than a passive witness of these earliest stages of historical events that were, over the course of the following years, to radically change the political and religious landscape in the countries around the southern Red Sea.⁹ For Cosmas got directly involved in Kaleb's preparations, as Abbas, the governor of Adulis, passed the king's order to produce a transcription of the two Greek inscriptions on to Cosmas and his companion Menas. Both inscriptions are now lost, but Cosmas' transcription survives and thus his epigraphic mission at Adulis turned out to be of great importance for our current knowledge of the history of the southern Red Sea basin in Antiquity. Yet the episode is also remarkable for exemplifying many of the characteristic traits, which connected the African and the Arabian coasts of the Red Sea in late Antiquity, and which linked this entire part of the Ancient World in pre-Islamic times both with India and with the political, cultural and religious developments of the Eastern Mediterranean basin under Byzantine domination. At the same time, however, the episode also points to the old age of the overlapping entanglements between the Mediterranean world and the Red Sea countries and to their manifestations in regional and international politics and warfare, religion and long distance trade with India, Hellenistic culture, the Greek language, or the importance of epigraphic commemoration.

For the first three centuries of Roman rule, the by far best researched phenomenon that linked the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and even to countries beyond the Bab el Mandeb is, of course, the sea-bound Indo-Mediterranean trade. Scholarly contributions to this fascinating feature of the Ancient World have reached large numbers and steady progress in our understanding is being made. Other related

⁷Malalas 18, 56. On the use of Greek in Axum see most recently Phillipson 2012: 54f.

⁸Cf. *Mart. S. Arethae* (ed. Detoraki 2007) 2.27.

⁹For recent accounts see Bowersock 2013, Robin 2010, Nebes 2010.

phenomena have seen less scholarly consensus in the past decades. In particular, the extent and the means by which Roman imperial governments and foreign powers consciously and purposely interfered with the dynamics and the contexts of the Indo-Mediterranean and Red Sea trade continues to raise scholarly debates.¹⁰ This is surely (at least partly) due to the influence of one school of thought, which holds that there was no awareness, let alone policy, for generating wealth for the Roman treasury by foreign trade, that there were no commercial or commercially inspired wars in Roman history, and that the Roman imperial governments never undertook measures to promote trade with the East.¹¹ According to this view, the Roman emperors neither conceived of their realm as an economic unit nor did they develop anything that could be described as an imperial economic policy. Trade through the Red Sea and to India, particularly during the first three centuries CE, is therefore usually understood to have been free of political implications (at least as far as the Roman Empire is concerned). Yet even if there are good reasons to question whether Roman governments had any deeper understanding of economic fundamentals, they were undeniably aware of the importance of taxes and customs duties as major sources of income for the imperial treasury. We therefore hardly need to question whether or not Roman imperial governments indeed interfered with the extremely lucrative long-distance maritime commerce, for this is clearly borne out by the 25 per cent import tax and the heavily guarded routes between the Nile and the Red Sea ports.¹²

On a practical level, an ancient merchant wishing to engage in trade activities beyond the confines of his native state not only needed

¹⁰ See e.g. Sidebotham 1986: esp. 113ff. Young 2001, Bowman 2010, McLaughlin 2010, all with further bibliography.

¹¹ Thus esp. Finley 1973: 23, 158, Casson 1989: 35ff. For an extensive discussion, earlier bibliography and a different point of view see now Gabrielsen 2011.

¹² Lack of economic understanding: see, for instance, Speidel 2009a. Awareness of the importance of customs duties: Cic., Man. 7,17. Tac., Ann. 1,11,4. Suet., Aug. 101,4. Cf. Speidel 2009: 55ff. 25 per cent import tax: see esp. Jördens 2009: 355ff. for the sources and a full discussion.

the relevant sets of knowledge (economic, geographical, behavioural, logistic, etc.), but he (or his agent) also depended on an environment, which was favourable to his commercial intentions.¹³ That foremost included safe access to the foreign markets he intended to visit, as well as the necessary property and market rights. He equally needed indiscriminating access to foreign legal systems or to be received into local traditions of hospitality. For if long-distance merchants wanted to successfully and safely carry out transactions abroad, and if they wanted to have some guarantee that their private contracts would be honoured by local and other foreign partners, they depended on physical safety and legal security alike. A Roman merchant might therefore put all his faith into a foreign network of trusted friends or acquaintances, and the peacefulness, hospitality and goodwill of the rulers and inhabitants of foreign worlds. He might also invest into guards and other security measures. But gold and silver and other great riches stored in the cargo bay of freight ships or loaded on the backs of camels were always likely to attract pirates and brigands of all walks of life. A merchant's private arrangements alone therefore left a substantial risk for his safe return, and the help of powerful rulers who undertook to establish a safe environment within their realm were welcome complements to lower the merchant's risk of being dispossessed or harmed.

The physical safety and legal security of those on business abroad were of course well-known categories in the Ancient World—as was their crucial impact on risk and transaction costs. These categories are therefore not absent from our sources, as we shall see in a moment. It will suffice for now to recall Strabo's idealizing description of life at the Nabataean capital Petra with respect to Nabataean courts of justice. For, in a well-known passage, the Augustan geographer reports that the Nabataeans had

excellent laws for the administration of public affairs. Athenodorus, a philosopher and my friend, who had been at Petra, used to relate with surprise, that he found many Romans and also many other foreigners residing there. He observed the foreigners frequently engaged in litigation, both with

¹³ On the technicalities of the Indo-Mediterranean trade during the imperial period see most recently Ruffing 2013.

one another and with the natives, but the natives never had any dispute amongst themselves, and lived together in perfect harmony.¹⁴

In a world such as ours today, we would surely expect international treaties and trade agreements to cover such issues as access to foreign markets and legal systems. However, there seems to be a firm consensus among the historians of the Roman Empire that imperial Rome never concluded international trade accords. Moses Finley held that Rome only ever signed such agreements (with its Italian allies and with Carthage) in the very early phases of its history. After Rome became the predominant power in Italy and the Western Mediterranean it allegedly ceased to do so, for as the victorious conqueror it could now set the rules unilaterally and simply impose its will by the use of force.¹⁵ Recent works on Roman economy therefore have nothing to add to the subject of Roman international trade agreements as instruments of economic promotion during the imperial period. Yet, relevant information would be very welcome and no doubt have an import on issues related to the 'New Institutional Economics', which has become the most fashionable approach to Roman economic history in recent years.¹⁶ To be sure, Rome's military engagement in the Red Sea basin is generally held to have been a catastrophic failure or to have been nearly non-existent. It is therefore usually absent from investigations into the Indo-Mediterranean trade. It is, of course, not difficult from a modern perspective to find good reasons why the imperial Roman State should have considered promoting the Indo-Mediterranean trade. Yet, how could it have done so beyond the reach of its armies and fleets, if it indeed refused to conclude international trade agreements? Recent publications of new or revised documentary evidence, epigraphic mainly, but some also papyrological and numismatic, encourage a re-examination of the role that the Roman State played in this respect.

¹⁴ Strabo 16,4,21.

¹⁵ Finley 1973: 161.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Manning/Morris 2005: 34. 232. Scheidel 2012: 49. 198. 'New Institutional Economics': see esp. North/Thomas 1973, North 1990.

FARASAN: A NEW DIMENSION

Only a few years ago two fragmentary Latin inscriptions were discovered on the main island of the Farasan archipelago in the southern Red Sea, just off the coast of Saudi Arabia. These two texts from well over 1,000 km beyond the southern confines of Roman Egypt provide a new dimension to how we should think about Rome's involvement in the Red Sea basin, for they attest a Roman military and administrative presence on the main island of Farasan in the first half of the second century CE.¹⁷ Only the lower right hand corner of what appears to be the earlier inscription survives. This fragment (often overlooked in recent accounts) dates, perhaps, from the twenties of the second century CE. It is set in a *tabula ansata* and attests building activities by a detachment of Roman legionary soldiers from the province of Arabia:¹⁸

- - -]
[- - -]VI FERR
[- - -]PR PR

The letters PR PR in the last line of this Latin building inscription are doubtless the remains *pr(o) pr(aetore)* of the titlature of a Roman senatorial governor. As is well known, the only Roman province on the Red Sea governed by a *legatus Augusti pro praetore provinciae* was *provincia Arabia*. Furthermore, the Latin language and the formulaic structure of such building inscriptions leave no doubt that the letters -]VI FERR in the line above referred to *legio VI Ferrata*.¹⁹ The reference to this legion provides a chronological frame for the date of this inscription, for *legio VI Ferrata* belonged to the garrison of the province of Arabia only for a short period of time after 114 and before 132/5(?).²⁰ The detachment might therefore have come to Farasan in

¹⁷ For a more detailed version in German language of the following chapter see Speidel 2009: 635-49.

¹⁸ Villeneuve 2007: 23ff. AE 2005, 1640 = AE 2007, 1659 (Farasan). Overlooked: e.g. Mc Laughlin 2010: 79ff, Power 2012: 63, Bowersock 2013: 54f.

¹⁹ For examples see e.g. Saxer 1967: 63ff. Horster 2001: 50f. with n. 139, 168ff., 443ff.; Cotton/Eck 1999: 211ff.

²⁰ Cf. Speidel 2009: 639f. with bibliography.

connection with (or in the wake of) the Roman takeover of the Nabataean kingdom. If true, this may imply that the islands had been under the control of the Nabataeans before the Romans turned their kingdom into a province.²¹ Not much can be said about the nature of the building, which the Roman soldiers constructed on the island, apart from that it presumably served military purposes and that it was evidently made of stone (which implies that it was erected with the intention to remain in use for the foreseeable future).

A second Latin building inscription from 144 CE, again set in a *tabula ansata*, attests the presence on Farasan of a mixed detachment of legionary and auxiliary soldiers from Egypt, *vexill(atio) leg(ionis) II Tr(aiana) Fortis et auxil(iares) eius*, and their construction, in stone, of a fortress (*castra*) on the island:²²

*Imp(eratore) Caes(are) Tito Ael(io) Hadr(iano)
Antonino Aug(usto) Pio, pont(ifice)
max(imo), trib(unicia) pot(estate) VII, c(o)s(ule) III,
p(atre) p(atriciae), vexill(atio) leg(ionis) II Tr(aiana) Fortis
et auxil(iares) eius castr[a] sub —]
Avito praef(ecto) Ferresani portus (?)
et Pont(i) Hercul(is) fec(erunt) et d[ed(icaverunt)].*

This inscription reveals a new phase in the Roman occupation of Farasan, and also attests the existence of a Roman prefecture of ‘the harbour of Farasan and of the Herculian Sea’: *praef(ectus) Ferresani portus(?) et Pont(i) Herculis*. The prefect’s sphere of responsibility thus covered not only the Farasan islands but also an area called the Herculian Sea, which, as the editors convincingly maintained, must surely have been a term for the southernmost part of the Red Sea and the straits of Bab el Mandeb. The nature of the Farasan prefecture and its purpose are not fully spelled out, although they bring to mind

²¹ For Nabataean finds on Farasan and in southern Arabia see the bibliography in Speidel 2009: 647f. and Speidel forthcoming. Cf. Also Pliny’s *Insulae Malichu* in this very region: *NH* 6,34,175. *Ptol.* 6,7,44. Villeneuve/Phillips/Facey 2004: 160f.

²² Villeneuve/Phillips/Facey 2004. AE 2004, 1643 = AE 2005, 1639 = AE 2007, 1659 (Farasan). Speidel 2009: 635ff.

other equestrian positions such as the *praefectus insularum Balarum*, the *praefectus orae maritimae Hispaniae citerioris*, the *praefectus orae Ponticae maritimae* or, in Egypt, the *praefectus montis Berenikidis*. Yet whatever the true nature and purpose of the Farasan prefecture may have been, it should surely comply with the general characteristics of other Roman prefectures in the provinces. Thus, *praefecti* of a region were members of the equestrian order. They were generally under the orders of a provincial governor and replaced by a successor after their term of duty.²³ Roman *praefecti* were thus representatives of a type of government, which scholars of the Roman World universally define as direct rule. In other words, there can be no doubt that the Farasan islands and the Herculian Sea were considered, by the Romans, to have belonged to the Imperium Romanum. Moreover, the setting up of a military garrison on Farasan in connection with or in the wake of the Roman takeover of the Nabataean kingdom, the construction on (at least) two separate occasions of (a) building(s) and of a fort in stone, as well as the establishment of a prefecture are strong indications of Rome's intention to uphold a permanent military and administrative presence in the southern Red Sea. In this, the Romans were successful for at least around three decades, as borne out by the Farasan inscriptions.

But what were the political and military contexts of this Roman stronghold? Roman prefects (in contrast e.g. to *praepositi vexillationis*) generally dealt both with civilian and military affairs. Therefore, this was probably also true for the prefect of Farasan. His military responsibilities at the harbour of Farasan and in the southern part of the Red Sea are of course reflected by the garrison of Roman soldiers. These soldiers may have been involved with enforcing Roman custom's control and safeguarding a customs station on Farasan, as some scholars have suggested.²⁴ If true, the establishment of this prefecture might have aimed at preventing contraband trade into the

²³ See e.g. Zwicky 1944: 11ff; Jones 1960: 115ff. Brunt 1983: 55ff; Spiedel 2009: 637ff. with bibliography. Evidently, the *praefectus Aegypti* does not belong to this category.

²⁴ Villeneuve/Philips/Facey 2004: 173ff.; Jördens 2009: 366 n. 45; McLaughlin 2010: 81; Sidebotham 2011: 188.

Empire.²⁵ Yet, one wonders whether this measure would have been successful, and how it might have affected the procedures and institutions of the existing taxation system, which apparently continued to function as it had done before.²⁶ According to another suggestion, the prefecture was established to fight pirates or to protect merchant ships sailing through the Red Sea.²⁷ That may bear some truth, but it should hardly provoke images of the hunt for Caribbean pirates such as Captain Blackbeard and others.²⁸ Nor should we think of modern military operations, such as the one that has been labelled 'Atalanta' and is currently being conducted by the European Union around the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa to protect merchant ships from Somali pirates. Roman campaigns against pirates (and those who were declared to be pirates) usually aimed to destroy pirate settlements and strong-holds ashore, and to eliminate or deport the entire pirate population.²⁹ At any rate, the establishment and upkeep of a permanent Roman prefecture and military garrison on Farasan could hardly have been carried out without further bases or the help or consent of supporters in the southern Red Sea.

Yet, whatever other purposes the Roman prefecture and the mixed garrison of legionary and auxiliary soldiers on Farasan may have had,

²⁵ For the importance Rome attributed to the prevention of contraband cf. e.g. Mitchell 2005: 195ff.

²⁶ As indicated e.g. by the famous Musiris papyrus P.Vindob. G 40822 = SB XVIII 13167. For the functioning of the existing system cf. e.g. Jördens 2009: 355ff.; Cottier 2010.

²⁷ E.g. Villeneuve/Philips/Facey 2004: 159. 169ff.; McLaughlin 2010: 80f.; Marek 2013: 314. Cargo ships sailing to India had archers aboard to fight off pirates: Plin., *NH* 6,26,101. Philostr., *v. Apoll.* 3,35. Unfortunately, we are not told where en route these archers were most needed. In the Red Sea, piracy threatened mainly along the central stretches of the Arabian coast: PME 20. Cf. Philostr., *v. Apoll.* 3,35. OGIS 199 = SB 8545b = RIÉ 277.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. Dio 55,28,1, explaining that Augustus established an equestrian prefecture on Sardinia to fight local piracy (cf. Strabo 5,2,7). Compare also the military tasks of the prefect of Berenike fighting brigand in Egypt's eastern desert: e.g. O.Krok. 14. 41. 60. 87. 88.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. De Souza 2002: 114. 210, etc.

the geographical location on an island in the middle of the Red Sea well over 1,000 km south of Roman Egypt's southern borders was a clear demonstration of Rome's military power and its willingness to use force should it decide to intervene in the region. One such instance from the reign of Antoninus Pius may indeed be on record. For in his famous 'Roman Oration', Aelius Aristides, praising Roman rule, said that wars had become a phenomenon of the past and that in his days military engagements were few, short and occurred only on the most distant fringes of the Roman world. As one of only three examples of recent international military conflicts, the orator points to the people of the Red Sea who in his opinion were incapable of enjoying the blessings of Roman rule.³⁰ One might also speculate that the Farasan detachment would have had orders to prevent (or intervene in) such military conflicts as the one mentioned by Aristides or others that resembled the one initiated by King Kaleb in the early sixth century. At any rate, unless there was an additional Roman naval unit in Farasan, the legionary (and auxiliary?) soldiers must have had ships of their own, as they would otherwise hardly have been capable of enforcing Rome's will beyond the coastline of this small island.³¹ Eutropius offers confirmation. For this fourth-century historian relates that Emperor Trajan established a new war fleet in the Red Sea, so that he could lay waste to the borders of India.³² Jordanes, repeating Eutropius' statement, adds that a statue of Trajan was set up *in mari Rubro*,³³ and several sources relate that Trajan restored or enlarged the canal that linked the Nile (and thus the Mediterranean) with the Red Sea.³⁴ It is, again, tempting to understand these passages in the context of the provincialization of the Nabataean kingdom in 106 CE. Yet if there is any truth in these statements, it seems evident that the term

³⁰ Arist., *or. Rom.* 70.

³¹ For the ships of legions see e.g. Sarnowski/Trynkowski 1986: 536; Varon 2000: 711ff.

³² Eutrop., *Brev.* 8,3,2.

³³ Jord., *Rom.* 268. Discussed in Speidel forthcoming.

³⁴ See esp. Oertel 1964; Adams 2007: 34f.; Jördens 2009: 417ff.; Sheehan 2010: esp. 35ff.; Aubert 2004 has recently argued that the canal was never in use before the Arab conquest, but see Jördens 2007: 470 with n. 3.

'India' was hardly used here to describe the subcontinent but it surely rather meant the countries around the southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa, as many late Roman texts also called this region 'India'.³⁵

ROMAN EXPANSION, TRADE, AND
SECURITY IN THE RED SEA REGION

At any rate, the seat of the prefecture on an island in the middle of the Red Sea and its sphere of activity in the southernmost part of the Red Sea strongly suggest that it was Rome's intention to establish control and safety in the region, and thereby to protect the sea-bound trade. This goes well with other Roman investments and activities in the Red Sea basin to protect the flow of trade. These measures are surely best borne out by the heavily guarded routes between Coptos on the Nile and the Red Sea harbours of Myos Hormos and Berenike.³⁶ Along these roads, Roman soldiers were posted in a dense row of forts and watchtowers in order to safeguard the caravans, which transported a great many precious goods between Coptos and the Red Sea. A widely neglected find of fragmentary Latin inscriptions of the early fourth century CE from the military fort at Abu Sha'ar on the Egyptian Red Sea coast, includes one fragment which appears to clearly spell out that this fort served purposes which benefitted merchants. For this fragment, apparently part of a building inscription mentioning an *ala (?) nova Maximi[ana]*, contains the letters—*um mercator[um]*—. ³⁷ The date of these fragments also brings to mind the diplomatic and

³⁵ Mayerson 1993; Salles 1994.

³⁶ See for instance the Latin building inscriptions CIL III 6627 (cf. III 14147) = ILS 2483 or AE 2001, 2051 = AE 2005, 1630. See also the relevant passages and contributions in Young 2001: esp. 69f. (cf. also 128ff. 157ff.). Cuvigny 2003; 2005; Jördens 2009: 424ff.; Sidebotham 2011: 76ff., 125ff. See also O.Krok. 6. 47. 87 for reports of Roman soldiers fighting brigands in Egypt's eastern desert.

³⁷ Bagnall/Sheridan 1994: 162f. fig. 5: *ala (?) nova Maximi[ana] - - - / - - - ad us(?)um mercator[um]* —. (I owe my knowledge of the Abu Sha'ar inscriptions to the kindness of Steve Sidebotham). See *ibid.*: 163 on the assumed purpose of the fort: 'The area it was to protect is in a border zone of desert,

military efforts, which Diocletian undertook to pacify the Blemmyes and the Nubians on Egypt's southern borders.³⁸ Furthermore, graffiti and inscriptions also attest Roman military presence on the so-called 'Incense Road' at the Oasis of Al-'Ula or in the Wadi Sirhan (both in modern Saudi Arabia) in the second century CE.³⁹ To be sure, Roman military protection would not have entirely eliminated a merchant's own investment into security measures, as he, not the Roman state, was responsible for the safe arrival of the goods.⁴⁰

Still, Rome invested into the security of the Red Sea trade since the early first century CE. This has recently become much clearer, as a re-edition of two ostraca from the so-called Nikanor archive has produced evidence for the presence, in the Red Sea, of Roman warships during the first half of the first century CE.⁴¹ The very recent edition of a new papyrus from Quseir al-Qadim supplies further confirmation. For this text concerns a Roman soldier (στρατ[ι]ώτης) from the Red Sea harbour of Myos Hormos who was, in 93 CE, attached to a *tesseraria* ship (presumably a dispatch boat) called *Hippocampus* (seahorse).⁴²

and a major purpose is the protection of merchants'. This was the conclusion Steven Sidebotham already drew in 1986 from the location of the fort: Sidebotham 1986: 51: 'it is doubtful that the military would place a fort and station a garrison in such a distant location in the Tetrarchic period unless it was intended to protect continued commercial activities'. Compare CIL III 3653 = ILS 775 = RIU 3, 771 = AE 1999, 1264 (Brigetio, 371 CE) for another inscription expressing a similar notion.

³⁸ Paneg. Lat. 8(5),5,2: ... *trophaea Niliaca sub quibus Aethiops et Indus interemuit*. Cf. AE 1981, 777 = SEG 31, 1116: a Roman soldier's epitaph from Ada Köy (Turkey) who fought in 'India' under Diocletian. Cf. Drew-Bear 1981: esp. 97f. and Zon., 12,31B-C.

³⁹ Cf. Sipilä 2004: 320; Hackl/Jenni/Schneider 2003: 55f. See now also Villeneuve 2015, 37-45 for new Roman military inscriptions from Hegra.

⁴⁰ P.Vindob. G 40822 = SB XVIII 13167, recto col. ii l. 3-4. Plin., *NH* 6,26,101. Philostr., *v. Apoll.* 3,35.

⁴¹ Messeri 2005 on O. Petr. 296 (mentioning Λούκιος Κλώδιος τριηράρχος [=τριηραρχος]). 1st half 1st century CE) and O. Petr. 279 (mentioning Σατορνύλος, τεσσαράρις λυβέρνου [=λιβύρνου]. 16. September 52 CE).

⁴² van Rengen 2011: P. 004 (mentioning Λουκίος Λογγίνος στρατ[ι]ώτης 'Ιπποκάμπου τεσσαραρίας. 25. March 93 CE).

Myos Hormos was, of course, the harbour at which Aelius Gallus in 25 BCE left behind the large Roman war fleet, which he had constructed for his expedition to southern Arabia.⁴³ The Farasan inscriptions now also provide proof of Roman naval presence in the Red Sea during the second century CE. But Rome was not alone in trying to establish safety for the maritime trade routes through the Red Sea (cf. below p. 101f.). For, the soldiers of the Nabataean kingdom, Rome's dependant ally on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea, are reported to have hunted down pirates (or those declared to be pirates) in their settlements and strongholds ashore.⁴⁴ It is surely relevant in this context that the Nabataean king was a dependant ally of the Roman Empire, for his military enterprises are most likely to have required Roman consent.

Aelius Gallus' Arabian campaign in 26/25 BCE was immediately followed by another Roman expedition: Publius Petronius, Gallus' successor to the governorship of Egypt, led his army into the 'Ethiopian' (Nubian) kingdom of Meroë on two separate occasions in 25/24 and in 22/21 BCE.⁴⁵ Officially, Rome declared these campaigns to be counter-attacks following 'Ethiopian' hostilities. But Strabo, for one, believed the Roman expeditions to southern Arabia and 'Ethiopia' to have belonged to one and the same strategic concept.⁴⁶ He reports that Augustus ordered his armies to south Arabia and 'Ethiopia' because these were the neighbouring countries of the Trogo-dyte (African) Red Sea coast, 'which is contiguous to Egypt'.⁴⁷ Augustus, it therefore seems, intended to secure Roman control not only of south Arabia and Ethiopia, but also of the African Red Sea coast. Roman interest in this coast and its main trading centre at Adulis seems also to have been expressed in the now lost works of King Juba II of Mauretania. For Juba composed his scholarly writings on this

⁴³ Strabo 16,4,24.

⁴⁴ PME 20.

⁴⁵ Strabo 17,1,54. RgdA 26,5. Plin., *NH* 6,35,181. Dio 54,5,4f. Cf. Jameson 1968.

⁴⁶ Strabo 16,4,22. For a commentary see Speidel 2009: 645. The selection of *gentes* from the Sebasteion at Carian Aphrodisias also possibly included Ethiopians (Smith 1988, 55. 57f. and Plate VIII, 9).

⁴⁷ Strabo 16,4,22.

region 'for C. Caesar concerning his expedition against Arabia'. They were thus evidently to instruct and to prepare Augustus' grandson for his military campaigns in the East. Pliny the Elder drew primarily on Juba's account and the information collected by the Roman expeditionary forces for his description of the Arabian Peninsula in his encyclopaedic 'Natural History' from around the mid-seventies of the first century CE.⁴⁸ In this work, he referred to the settlement at Adulis (*oppidum Adulitarum*) as 'the most important trading centre of the Trogodytes and the Ethiopians' (*maximum hic emporium Trogodytarum, etiam Aethiopum*).⁴⁹ As Juba himself drew on earlier Hellenistic sources, Adulis is even likely to already have been an important emporium in the first century BCE.⁵⁰ In the mid-first century CE, the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* describes Zoskales, the ruler of a kingdom on the African Red Sea coast between somewhere north of (but excluding, it seems) Ptolemais Theron and the Bab el Mandeb in the South as a man who 'is fussy about his possessions and always enlarging them, but in other respects an excellent person and well acquainted with Greek letters'.⁵¹ It is perhaps not to be ruled out that this characterization was not simply the author's private impression, but that it was inspired by Roman official assessments and therefore intended also to refer to Zoskales' political and military behaviour as a king who was (if true) in the habit of continuously extending his realm. If so, the author of the *Periplus* (and, presumably, Roman public opinion), remarkably, still seems to have thought of him in favourable and friendly terms.

According to Strabo, Publius Petronius' first campaign to 'Ethiopia' forced the Nubians to plead for friendship (φιλία) with Rome, and

⁴⁸ Plin., *NH* 6,31,141. Cf. Roller 2003: 227ff. Bowersock 2013: 27. The passage from Pliny also includes a reference to Dionysius of Charax who was sent by Augustus to gather all necessary information in the East for C. Caesar's campaign and included some of this information in his later publications.

⁴⁹ Plin., *NH* 6,34,172ff. But see also Plin., *NH* 6,34,140 for Pliny giving preference to information by Nabataean ambassadors and Roman merchants (*legati Arabum nostrique negotiatores*) over the account of King Juba.

⁵⁰ Cf. Phillipson 2012: 71ff.

⁵¹ PME 5 (cf. 2-3), transl. Bowersock 2013: 148 n. 11. Cf. also Casson 1989: 109f.

in 20 BCE, after a second defeat, Nubian ambassadors managed to negotiate a treaty on favourable terms.⁵² A papyrus fragment from perhaps the second half of the first century CE, which is kept at Milano, preserves the report of Roman military operations against ‘Ethiopians’ and ‘Trogodytes’.⁵³ Unfortunately, it is not clear which event the report refers to. Finally, Nero is reported to have contemplated an expedition to Ethiopia. Again, neither the motives nor the circumstances are transmitted in our sources.⁵⁴ According to Seneca, however, Roman soldiers on an exploration mission penetrated into the Ethiopian highlands and benefitted from the help of the ‘Ethiopian’ king who gave them support and recommended them to neighbouring kings (*a rege Aethiopiae instructi auxilio commendatique proximis regibus*). This episode appears to refer to a Roman attempt to extend political influence to Red Sea countries beyond the kingdom of Meroë.⁵⁵ At any rate, it is a welcome illustration of how in these years political relations were seen, at Rome, to function south of the *finis imperii* at Syene or Berenike.⁵⁶ In fact, Josephus in his *bellum Judaicum*, no doubt quoting official Roman positions, had king Agrippa II declare that ‘the Romans have entirely subdued the Ethiopians, as far as the Red Sea’, and ‘Roman Egypt... is extended as far as the Ethiopians and Arabia the Happy, and borders upon India’.⁵⁷

⁵² Strabo 17,1,54.

⁵³ FHN III, no. 224.

⁵⁴ Sen., *Q. Nat.* 6,8,3. Plin., *NH* 6,35,181 and 184-6. 12,8,19. Dio 63,8,1. Cf. Hine 2011: 119ff.

⁵⁵ Sen., *Q. Nat.* 6,8,3. On political relations between Nubia and Axum see now Hatke 2013.

⁵⁶ For Roman diplomatic missions between Meroë and Rome continuing well into the third century CE see e.g. SB V 7944 = FNH II 168. CIL III 83 with Łajtar/van der Vliet 2006 and Hatke 2013, 58. For (annual?) Byzantine embassies to the Ethiopian court in the fourth century CE see e.g. CTh. 12,12,2 (356 CE) and CSEL 39,116 (Petr. Diac., *Liber de locis sanctis*, CCSL, vol. 175, p. 101. Cf. Wilkinson 1999: 206; Caner 2010: 213). But see Malalas 18,56. *Fines imperii*: Plin., *NH* 12,8,19. Tac., *Ann.* 2,61 (*claustra imperii*). Cf. PME 1.

⁵⁷ Jos., *BJ* 2,16,4. Cf. also Arist., or. rom. 82 for a very similar statement. India: not the subcontinent, but the ‘Horn of Africa’. Cf. on the confusion in general, see Mayerson 1993.

In short, the documents and events listed above clearly attest a substantial military and diplomatic investment of the Roman state both into the control of the countries around the Red Sea basin and into the safety of the long distance trade through the Red Sea from the early Empire onward. In 106, the Roman takeover of the Nabataean kingdom under Emperor Trajan brought a new dimension to Rome's involvement in the Red Sea, for now Rome took over the government, administration, jurisdiction and defence of the former Nabataean territories.⁵⁸ Thus, Tacitus, who was writing his *Annales* precisely in these years, claimed in that work that the limits of the Roman Empire (*claustra Romani imperii*) were now beginning to extend to the Red Sea (*nunc rubrum ad mare patescit*).⁵⁹ Tacitus's emphasis on the Red Sea seems puzzling. For Pompey had already declared to have extended Roman rule to the Red Sea around 150 years earlier in inscriptions that were still on public display at prominent locations in Rome.⁶⁰ Moreover (as is well known) Rome also had direct access to the Red Sea since 30 BCE, mainly via the harbours of Arsinoë/Cleopatra/Clysma, Myos Hormos and Berenike. It therefore seems more likely that the prominence of the Red Sea in Trajanic imperial statements was founded in a Roman claim to have taken control of the entire Red Sea basin. Rome's take-over of the Nabataean kingdom and its strongholds along the Arabian Red Sea coast are therefore likely to have been the historical context for the construction work that was carried out on the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea during the reign of Trajan, as well as for the war fleet this emperor is said to have established in the Red Sea, and for the prefecture that was set up on Farasan.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Cf. Speidel 2009: 633ff.

⁵⁹ Tac., *Ann.* 2,61. Cf. Speidel 2009, 648f. For the date of the *Annales* see Birley 2000. See also the milestones of the 'via nova Traiana' a *finibus Syriae usque ad mare Rubrum*: CIL III 14149, etc. For Azania, roughly the Somali coast south of the Cap Guardafui, allegedly also being under Roman control see the commentary by J. Hill to section 15 of the ancient Chinese text 'Wei Lüe' at http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/notes11_30.html#15_1 (22 September 2013).

⁶⁰ Pompey's inscriptions: Diod. 40,4. Plin., *NH* 7, 26,97.

⁶¹ Red Sea canal: see above n. 34. Fleet: see notes 41 and 42 above. Farasan: see above text to notes 17ff.

As is well known, these developments began with the Roman conquest of Egypt, putting an end to the open conflicts between the Nabataeans and the Ptolemies. This improved security on the Red Sea trading routes dramatically, for Strabo claims that maritime trade with the Trogydites, Ethiopia and India increased sixfold under Augustus as a result of Roman rule.⁶² There is also some evidence to suggest that Cleopatra had forged a network of allies around the Red Sea (or so the victor's propaganda held). Rome's conquest of Egypt would therefore have had immediate political implications for many of these former allies of the last queen of Egypt. Thus, Plutarch, Cassius Dio and Orosius describe Egypt's neighbours, Ethiopia and the Red Sea countries, as trusted allies of the Queen of Egypt.⁶³ Moreover, the list of languages, which Cleopatra is said to have spoken, and which included those of the Ethiopians, Trogydites and Arabs, has recently been interpreted as reflecting the elements of her system of alliances.⁶⁴ It is remarkable, therefore, that Vergil and Florus even imply that Sabaeans, Arabs and other Red Sea countries contributed to or supported the forces of Antonius at Actium.⁶⁵ After Antonius' defeat, Cleopatra called the neighbouring tribes and kings to her aid, and began to move what remained of her forces to the Red Sea where she hoped to establish a new base. However, she was stopped by the Nabataean king Malichus I, who had an axe to grind with the queen.⁶⁶ Finally, after Cleopatra realized that her fate was sealed, she sent her son Caesarion with much of the royal treasure via Ethiopia to India (i.e. to a country bordering on the southern Red Sea or the 'Horn of Africa').⁶⁷ We should, therefore, perhaps not rule out that in 30 BCE the Roman conquerors of Egypt believed (or so claimed) that many of the countries around the Red Sea belonged to a hostile alliance,

⁶² Strabo 2,5,12. 17,1,13. 'Nabataean pirates': cf. Hölbl 56 and most recently Sidebotham 2011, 35. 177.

⁶³ Plut., *Ant.* 81,2. Dio 51,6,2-3 and 51,15,5. Oros. 6,19,14.

⁶⁴ Languages: Plut., *Ant.* 27,3. Cf. Strootmann 2010, 151, giving much importance to the fact that Latin is missing from the list.

⁶⁵ Verg., *Aen.* 8,705-6: *omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi, omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaei*. Florus 2,21,7.

⁶⁶ Plut., *Ant.* 69,2f. Dio 51,6,2f. 51,7,1f. Axe to grind: cf. Bowersock 1983: 40ff.

⁶⁷ Plut., *Ant.* 81,2. Dio 51,15,5.

and that this belief had an important impact on Roman decisions to invade kingdoms in southern Arabia and Nubia. For hostile nations around the Red Sea were not only a potential threat to Romans and Roman possessions but they were also a potential menace to the seaborne trade, and therefore to the Roman treasury's income.

INDO-MEDITERRANEAN TRADE AND THE ROMAN TREASURY

The correlation between safety and the flow of trade was, of course, well known in the Ancient World, and it was also clearly spelled out with respect to the long-distance trade with India and South Arabia in the surviving written sources.⁶⁸ Augustus, for instance, was remembered at Alexandria for having freed the seas from pirates. Theodor Mommsen was surely right to take this remark by Philo to refer to the Red Sea rather than to the Mediterranean.⁶⁹ Furthermore, a local (Axumite) king boasted in a famous text inscribed onto a marble throne at Adulis, that he subjected the tribes of the Arabitai and Kinaidokolpilai along the Arabian coast between Leuke Kome and the kingdom of Saba in order to bring peace to the maritime and overland trade routes.⁷⁰ It is the second inscription Cosmas Indicopleustēs transcribed for King Kaleb in the autumn of 518. The text unfortunately bears no date or reference to securely identifiable events, but is usually dated to the third century CE. Other dates, however, cannot be ruled out.⁷¹ The Adulis inscription thus appears

⁶⁸ On ancient states establishing safety for the benefit of the flow of trade cf. in general Gabrielsen 2011.

⁶⁹ Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* 146. Mommsen 1904, 615.

⁷⁰ Cosmas 2,60-63. OGIS 199 = RIÉ 277 (*Monumentum Adulitanum regis Aethiopum*). Cf. above n. 4. For this understanding of the passage concerning the Arabites and Kinaidokolpites see Cuvigny/Robin 708. See also RIÉ 269, perhaps from the same ruler (thus e.g. Bowersock 2013: 58f.) and from king Ezana in the fourth century CE RIÉ 188.

⁷¹ Cf. most recently, Bowersock 2013: 44ff.; Hatke 2013: 38ff.; Breyer 2012: 117 (with some confusing mistakes). Phillipson 2012: 75 prefers a date in the second century CE. For a date towards the later second century CE see also Robin 1989, 155 and Cuvigny/Robin 1996: 710f. Fauvelle 2009 argued for a date in the late first century BCE. However, Fauvelle's arguments were recently rejected by Hatke 2013: 38ff. n. 142.

to report African military efforts to suppress Arabian piracy precisely along the same stretch of the Arabian Red Sea coast where Nabataean forces fought pirates in the first century CE.⁷² As this campaign covered the coastal regions between Leuke Kome and the kingdom of Saba, and as it made local Arabian kings tributary to the African king, it seems reasonable to assume that the attack involved the consent (or even support) of the powers bordering on the operational zone. Curiously, however, the inscription fails to name the Romans in connection with this or any of the king's other military expeditions in the region. At any rate, the proclaimed objectives (or rather justifications) of this campaign (security for the overland and maritime trade routes) were no doubt in the interest of all Red Sea powers that benefitted from an undisturbed long distance trade, and therefore surely among their shared values. At a much later date, the Syriac Chronicle of Zuqnin reports how a hostile king of the Himyarites seized and killed Roman merchants passing through his realm in the early sixth century until the flow of trade between Constantinople and south Arabia almost entirely broke down.⁷³

These few examples suffice to show that the Roman government was well aware of the very basic correlation between safety and the volume of trade, and that it knew it could increase the latter by manipulating the former. It was indeed common Roman belief that Roman governments had done so repeatedly in the past, particularly by fighting piracy.⁷⁴ Moreover, Rome had very good reason to do so and to invest into the safety of the Indo-Mediterranean trade routes, for it imposed a heavy 25 per cent tax on goods imported from the East.⁷⁵ Strabo, for one, even believed that collecting import taxes (at

⁷² PME 20. Cf. Cuvigny/Robin 1996: 713f.

⁷³ Chronicle of Zuqnin 54 (*ad annum* 846 = 534/35 CE). Cf. Witakowski 1996: 51. For Roman awareness of foreign taxes on the prices of imported goods see Strabo 16,1,27 and Plin., NH 12,32,63-65.

⁷⁴ One might only mention Rome's official reasons for its fighting the First Illyrian War or those for Pompey's command, based on the *lex Gabinia*, to fight piracy in the East (cf. De Souza 2002: 149-79 for a recent view). But see also the *lex de provinciis praetoriis* of 100 BCE on the Roman occupation of Cilicia (Crawford et al. 1996, no. 12. Cf. e.g. Geelhaar 2002 for a recent assessment) or, using very general terms, Cic., *Manil.* 11 (cf. *Pol.* 2,8).

⁷⁵ See most recently Jördens 2009, 355ff.

least in certain cases) could generate more money than exploiting conquered territory.⁷⁶ It is indeed not unlikely that Rome even collected the 25 per cent import tax throughout the first century CE on goods that entered the dependent kingdom of the Nabataeans at the fort (φοῦριον) of Leuke Kome, for according to the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, a customs officer (παραλήπτης) and a centurion (ἐκατοντάρχης) with a detachment of soldiers had been sent there.⁷⁷ Support for such an interpretation can be found in epigraphic evidence for Roman soldiers collecting the *capitulum lenoceni* tax in Chersonesus Taurica or in reports of other dependent kings of the first and second centuries CE sending tribute to Rome.⁷⁸ If true, this raises questions with regard to the ambassadors and ‘gifts’ King Charibaël of the Sabaeans and Himyarites is said to have continuously sent to the Romans in the mid-first century CE. Interestingly, the elder Pliny also mentions the arrival at Rome of embassies bringing gifts of frankincense

⁷⁶ Strabo 2,5,8 and 4,5,3.

⁷⁷ PME 19: παραλήπτης . . . και ἐκατοντάρχης μετὰ στρατεύματος . . . ἀποστέλλεται. On the controversial location of Leuke Kome (Aynuna vs. al-Wajh or Qarna) see most recently Jördens 2009: 356f. n. 6; Nappo 2010. Young 1997 (for economic reasons) and Jördens 2009: 364ff. (mainly because of ἀποστέλλεται conveying the point of view of a reader from within the Roman Empire) argued that the centurion, the soldiers and the tax collector at Leuke Kome were Romans. In addition to their arguments one could perhaps point out that the ancient readers of the *PME* (generally identified as Greek-speaking merchants from the Eastern Roman Empire) were surely more likely to have understood ἐκατοντάρχης without any further specification to refer to Roman officials rather than to Nabataeans. Furthermore, one might have expected the *Periplus* to use the term κεντύριον (directly transcribed from Latin) instead of ἐκατοντάρχης if this text was indeed referring to a technical term of the Nabataean army, as proposed by Bowersock 1983: 71 and others, for the Nabataeans transcribed the rank κητρύν’.

⁷⁸ Chersonesus Taurica: CIL III 13750 = IGRR I 860 = IOSPE2 I 404. Other kings: Lucian, *Alex.* 57. Plin., *Ep.* 10,63f. and 67. Jos., *BJ* 1,29,3. *AJ* 17,54f. On the subject see esp. Haensch 2009: 220ff. Cf. also Suet., *Aug.* 48 and Dio 57,17,4f. for the *epitropos* Augustus sent to king Archelaus of Cappadocia. On the *regna* in Augustus’ *breviarium totius imperii* see Speidel 2009: 55, 70f. and 568 n. 33.

from Arabia Felix during his lifetime, and he apparently had no difficulty in believing Herodotus that the Arabians formerly paid tribute, in frankincense, to the kings of Persia.⁷⁹ Perhaps, therefore, it should not be ruled out that Charibaël's 'gifts' were payments of tribute.⁸⁰

The transmitted figures describing Rome's income from taxation in Egypt seem to suggest that by the later first century CE a third or perhaps even almost half of the profits from Egypt were generated by taxing Red Sea merchants. Thus, during the Ptolemaic period and until the reign of Augustus, Egypt is reported to have generated revenues of around 300 to 350 million sesterces per annum.⁸¹ Next, Josephus implies revenues of roughly 600 million sesterces during the later decades of the first century CE.⁸² If true, Rome's tax income from Egypt had nearly doubled within less than a century. Scholars have therefore questioned Josephus' statement.⁸³ However, to some extent his sums are confirmed by the figures preserved on the so-called 'Muziris papyrus' from the mid-second century.⁸⁴ For this text reveals the case of a single ship, the *Hermapollon*, which, upon returning from India, was expected to pay the equivalent of over 1.7 million sesterces of import taxes.⁸⁵ If we take Strabo's 120 ships' per annum as a possibly realistic number of vessels sailing to South Arabia and India during the Flavian period, we reach an order of magnitude of around 200 million sesterces of yearly revenues generated by the Red

⁷⁹ Plin., *NH* 12,31,57: *qui mea aetate legati ex Arabia venerant*. It is possible, though not certain, that these ambassadors came from the Hadramawt. Tribute: Plin., *NH* 12,40,80 referring to Hdt. 3,97,5.

⁸⁰ PME 23.

⁸¹ Cicero, *Frg.* XVI 13 Schoell. Strabo 17,1,13. Hier., *ad Dan.* 11,5. The very low figure of 144 million sesterces (last century BCE) transmitted by Diodorus (17,52) can probably be discounted. Cf. Duncan-Jones 1994: 254; McLaughlin 2010: 163ff. However, Duncan-Jones 1994: 52f. gives an estimate of only *c.* 260 million sesterces.

⁸² Jos., *BJ* 2,16,4. Jos., *AJ* 19,8,2.

⁸³ Duncan-Jones 1994, 254.

⁸⁴ P.Vindob G 40822 = SB XVIII 13167. Cf. Harrauer/Sijpesteijn 1985. Thür 1987; Casson 1990; Rathbone 2000; De Romanis 2006; Morelli 2011; De Romanis 2012. De Romanis in this volume.

⁸⁵ De Romanis 2006: 58.

Sea and Indo-Mediterranean trade.⁸⁶ Josephus' figure could therefore at least in part be explained as the result of the extraordinary increase in the trading activity on the Red Sea since the reign of Augustus. Josephus' claim that the revenues from Egypt were twelve times those of Roman Palestine is one way to put the importance of Egypt and the Red Sea trade as a source of income into perspective. Another way might be to point out that 200 million sesterces collected annually as import tax in Egypt would have been enough to pay nearly two-thirds of the soldiers serving in the Roman army.

It is of course well known that figures quantifying Roman fiscal revenues are notoriously scarce and often unreliable. Evidently, such figures cannot be used as reliable guides to detailed fiscal realities in Roman Egypt. They do, however, appear to give an impression of the relations and perhaps the orders of magnitude and thereby help to recognize possible reasons for decisions taken by Roman governments. Strabo for one was fascinated with the enormous increase in Egypt's tax revenues generated by the flourishing of the long-distance trade through the Red Sea, and he described this development as a consequence of Roman rule.⁸⁷ There can be little doubt, therefore, that Rome's investments into the safety along the trade-route through Egypt's eastern desert and through the Red Sea were intended to generate and protect high revenues from import taxes.

SOUTH ARABIA

As we have seen, both political and economic reasons are likely to have made the kingdoms of southern Arabia a target of Roman military aggression. It is interesting, therefore, to find Strabo explaining Augustus' strategy to gain control of the Red Sea basin, by sending an army and a fleet to the southern parts of the Red Sea with the intention to either turn the Sabaeans into Roman allies or to subdue them.⁸⁸ Strabo also claims greed to have motivated Augustus, and he seems to suggest that the Romans also intended to forcefully open

⁸⁶ Strabo 2,5,12.

⁸⁷ Strabo 17,1,13.

⁸⁸ Strabo 16,4,22. Cf. Speidel 2009: 645.

Sabaeen markets.⁸⁹ It is not necessary here to get into the details of the Arabian campaign of 26/25 BCE, which Aelius Gallus, the governor of Egypt, led against the kingdom of Saba.⁹⁰ Following the verdicts of Strabo and Dio it is generally held that this expedition was a disastrous failure. Yet this interpretation of the evidence raises questions, for Augustus was not in the habit of giving up after an initial setback, and he proudly pointed out his responsibility for the Arabian campaign in his *Res Gestae*.⁹¹ Moreover, some of the surviving information strongly suggests that Aelius Gallus' expedition indeed achieved its primary political goal, which was to place the southern Arabian kings under Roman control.⁹² Thus both Strabo and Cassius Dio relate several Roman victories in Arabia Felix during the course of the campaign. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei* reports the conquest, under Augustus (as it seems), of the harbour of Aden.⁹³ Epigraphic evidence from southern Arabia reveals the emergence of a new local political order in the aftermath of the Roman attack, and the rise of the Himyarites with their royal residence at Zafar precisely in the years following the Roman attack.⁹⁴ Moreover, the *Periplus* relates that the mid-first century ruler of the Himyarites and the Sabaeans, Charibaël (Χαριβαήλ/Karib'il c. 40-70 CE), referred to himself as a 'friend of the Emperors' (φίλος τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων) and a 'lawful king' (ἔνθεσμος βασιλεύς) because he continuously sent 'embassies and gifts'

⁸⁹ Strabo 16,4,22. Cf. Hor., *carm.* I 29. Plin., *NH.* 6,32.

⁹⁰ For chronology see Jameson 1968; Braund 1983, 239f.; Jördens 2009: 403 n. 18. For the expedition itself Strabo 16,4, 22-4 and 17, 1,53. Dio 53, 29, 3-9. Plin., *NH* 6, 32, 157-62. RgdA 26,5. Jos., *BJ.* 15,9,3 (317). Gal., *Peri Antidoton* 2,17 (14,203 Kühn), and see esp. Marek 1993 with further literature. I intend to return to the subject in more detail elsewhere.

⁹¹ RgdA 26.

⁹² For a full discussion of the evidence see Speidel (forthcoming).

⁹³ PME 26. Seland 2005 expressed doubts but see the convincing arguments set forth by Marek 1993, 140ff. Interestingly, Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3,4, calls Aden τὸ Ῥωμαϊκὸν ἐμπόριον and contrasts it with a 'Persikon emporion' near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Ptol. 6,7,9, however, simply has, Ἀραβίας ἐμπόριον.

⁹⁴ Cf. e.g. Robin 1998. 264; Retsö 2003; 539f.; Nebes 2009: 53; Potts 2010: 37f.

to the Romans.⁹⁵ If this choice of words indeed reflects official Roman terminology, as seems likely, it implies that the kings of Saba and Himyar were now considered to be Rome's dependant allies. Documentary evidence supplies further information.

Thus, a series of coins from around the last decades of the first century BCE to the mid-first century CE show the Athenian owl on the reverse side and the bust of a Julio-Claudian emperor, presumably Augustus, within a laurel wreath on the obverse.⁹⁶ Until about ten years ago, these coins were ascribed to the Himyarites, but Stuart Munro-Hay has convincingly identified them as Sabaeans.⁹⁷ The only plausible reason for Sabaeans to copy the portrait of Augustus (or any other Roman emperor) onto their coins (particularly after the Romans had just attacked and invaded their country) is that they intended to send a signal of loyalty and subordination to Rome in the same way as several other allied kings did during this period.⁹⁸ Surely this message was not in consequence of a Sabaeans victory but rather of their submission.⁹⁹

A recently published Nabataean-Sabaeans bilingual inscription also seems to reflect a new political situation in southern Arabia during the reign of Augustus.¹⁰⁰ For this inscription records its dedication to the main Nabataean god Dhu Shara in the temple of the Sabaeans national god 'Almaqah at Sirwah in modern Yemen. This extraordinary

⁹⁵ PME 23. For embassies from Southern Arabia to Rome see also Plin., *NH.* 12,31,56.

⁹⁶ BMC Arabia 32-48. Potts 1994 (confidently identifying the portrait as that of Augustus on pp. 214f.). Huth 2010: xx-xxi and 100f. ('Roman style bust', 'resembling the bust of Augustus').

⁹⁷ Munro-Hay 2003: 47f.

⁹⁸ Cf. e.g. the coins of Tigranes III (?) and Artavasdes IV (?) of Armenia (RPC I 3841. 3843. Mousheghian / Depeyrot 1999: 187f. with table VIII, 169f. IK 65, 472), Rhoemetalkes I of Thracia (RPC I 1708ff.). Ajax, high-priest and toparch of eastern Cilicia Tracheia (RPC I 3724. 3726. 3727). Philip, tetrarch of Gaulanitis, etc. (RPC I 4938ff.).

⁹⁹ Cf. Potts 1994: esp. 217f. Speidel forthcoming. (Potts, however, dates the coins to the reign of the Charibaël of the *Periplus*, based on deliberations of when Roman coins entered India).

¹⁰⁰ For what follows see Nebes 2009.

monument is dated, in both languages, to the 3rd year of the reign of the Nabataean king Aretas IV, which corresponds to the year 7/6 BCE. The text makes no mention of a Sabaeen ruler, but it presupposes the local presence of readers of the Nabataean language. Nabataeans, it therefore seems, moved very freely within Sabaeen territory at this date. That was very different some 17 years earlier, when a contingent of 1,000 Nabataean soldiers fought in Aelius Gallus' expeditionary force. The inscription can also be understood to reflect the flourishing of the Nabataean trade network during the reign of Aretas IV both within the Roman Empire and, as archaeology suggests, in South Arabia.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Norbert Nebes, the editor of this inscription, pointed out that the find spot of the text was not located on one of the traditional South Arabian long-distance trade routes but rather on a route that connected the Sabaeen capital Marib with the royal city Zafar of the Himyarites. The inscription's find spot therefore seems to imply that the new political order, which developed in the period following the Roman invasion, was already well established in 7/6 BCE.

Surprisingly perhaps, another indication for a close political alliance between the united kingdom of Saba and Himyar seems to be expressed by the well-known fragment of a Roman soldier's bilingual (Latin and Greek) gravestone, which was found in Baraqish (Ἰθροῦλα) in modern Yemen where the Romans had established a military base during the expedition of Aelius Gallus in 25 BCE. Unfortunately, the inscription cannot be dated more precisely than roughly to the first century CE (due to the missing of *Dis Manibus*). Nevertheless, there is currently virtual consensus among scholars that this soldier died during the Roman invasion of 25 BCE.¹⁰² But this interpretation is very unlikely to be true, for nowhere else are Roman soldiers known

¹⁰¹ Cf. e.g. Bowersock 1983: 54-69; Potts 1991; Speidel 2009: 647 with further Literature.

¹⁰² AE 1980: 890 = AE 1995: 1608 = Bull. ép. 1978: 535 = SEG 27: 1005 = SEG 31: 1480 = IK 65: 436: See Bowersock 1983: 148-53; Marek 1994; Speidel forthcoming: [*P(ublius)*] *Cornel[ius —] eques + [— hic situs est (?)]* / *Πούβλις Κορν[ήλιος — ἐνθάδε κεῖται (?)]*. For Baraqish as the site of ancient Ἰθροῦλα (Strabo 16,4,24) / Ἰθροῦλα (Dio 53,29,8) see Bowersock 1983: 151f.

to have set up their gravestones on foreign territory during military campaigns. Thus, not a single gravestone is known from the many battlefields where Roman soldiers fought the Parthians, Sassanians or Germanic tribes. The only known context, in which Roman soldiers' set up funerary monuments beyond the Empire's provincial territory was a (true or intended) long-term garrison in an allied and dependent kingdom.¹⁰³ Of course, a single fragmentary gravestone can not be understood to suggest that greater parts of south Arabia were permanently occupied by large Roman garrisons throughout the first century CE. But it is remarkable in this context that Publius Petronius, after the Nubian campaign of 25/24 BCE, established a garrison of four hundred Roman soldiers in Nubia and supplied them with provisions for two years.¹⁰⁴ It is perhaps not to be excluded that a similar arrangement led to the establishment of a Roman garrison at Baraqish in the course (or as a result) of the Arabian campaign. Yet even so, the Baraqish inscription can only help to infer the intended length of the garrison's stay in south Arabia, but not the period of time it actually stayed. Be that as it may, the Baraqish inscription is another strong indication that after Gallus' campaign, the kings of Saba and Himyar were indeed among Rome's allies, just as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* relates for the mid-first century CE.¹⁰⁵

The inscription on a later second century altar from Capua in Italy can also be understood to proclaim a very similar message. This altar was set up by a legionary soldier for the god Jupiter Olbius Sabaeus.¹⁰⁶ Another late-second century dedication to Jupiter Sabaeus was set up

¹⁰³ See from Chersonesos Taurica: AE 1967: 431; AE 2000: 1276; CIL III 782 = ILS 2352; CIL III 13751a; CIL III 13751b; ILS 9160. 9203; Balaklava: AE 1995: 1351 with Savelja/Sarnowski 2000: 191-6, pl. 17:3. Artaxata: AE 1968: 511 (cf. AE 1968, 510). Kainepolis: Bull. ép. 1956, 345. SEG XV 839; IK 65, 19. Cf. Speidel 2009: 617 and Speidel forthcoming with bibliography.

¹⁰⁴ Strabo 17,1,54. Dio 54,5.

¹⁰⁵ PME 23.

¹⁰⁶ EE VIII (1899) S. 216 Nr. 877 (*Titulum nuper inlatum museo Campano*) = ILS 4085 = Chioffi 2005, no. 95: *Pro salute / August(i) / Iovi Olbio / Sabeo / [—] Longus / [—] leg(ionis) / [-*. The name of the emperor Commodus on the right side of this altar provides a *terminus ad quem* of 192 CE.

in Rome by a soldier of the praetorian fleet of Misenum and his sons.¹⁰⁷ Jupiter Sabaeus may have been the Latin name given to the Sabaeen national god 'Almaqah, for Strabo likened this god to Zeus.¹⁰⁸ It is surely significant that there is not a single example of a dedication by Roman soldiers to gods of hostile nations. We can therefore safely conclude that the Sabaeans were a nation considered, at that time, to be friendly to Rome. Moreover, we might speculate whether the reason for which these Roman soldiers fulfilled a vow to Jupiter Sabaeus was that they had been on duty in the southern Red Sea region. If so, they may even have reached the Farasan prefecture. A very recently published fragmentary base of an imperial statue with a Greek inscription discovered at Zafar, the capital city of Himyar, is by itself no clear proof of an alliance with Rome.¹⁰⁹ However, this monument and its Greek text imply the regular presence at Zafar of a Greek speaking community. Thus, not unlike the Greek text on the marble throne at Adulis,¹¹⁰ this inscription appears to reflect the thriving trade through the Red Sea and with south Arabia during the second or third century, which no doubt benefitted from the investments of Rome and its *amici* into the safety of the region. Very recently, the publication of graffiti from a cave named Hoq (a local sanctuary) on the island of Soqatra has made more evidence known of the thriving Indo-Mediterranean trade during the Roman imperial period. The majority of these texts from Soqatra are written in Indian Brahmi scripts, but they also include Ethiopic, South Arabian, Palmyrene Aramaic, and Bactrian scripts and languages, and, in one case, also a Greek proskynema text by a ναύκληρος from Roman

¹⁰⁷ AE 1953,26 = CCID 433: *G(aius) Iulius Dionysius miles [classis]/pr (aetoriae) Misenatium natione Surus pater[no deo] / Comogeno et Iulius Romanus et Iul[ius]/Aquila fili et sacerdos Sabeo votum [solverunt]*. For a full discussion of both inscriptions see Speidel forthcoming.

¹⁰⁸ Strabo 16,1,11. The context to implies that the Arabs of southern Arabia were meant.

¹⁰⁹ Yule 2007: 81 with fig. 50; Marek 2013. I owe my knowledge of this inscription to the kindness of Christian Marek (Zürich).

¹¹⁰ Cf. above n. 4. Philippson 2012: 54 on the use of Greek in the Axumite kingdom.

Egypt named Septimius Paniskos.¹¹¹ Paniskos, perhaps not unlike the above mentioned soldiers of the Roman army, invoked the support of local gods in these foreign southerly regions.

FRIENDSHIP WITH INDIAN KINGS

Yet, if thriving trade and an international network of alliances under Roman domination for the establishment of a safe environment is indeed the context for the Farasan prefecture, as seems likely, we must ask in what way the world beyond the Bab el Mandeb politically related to the Roman Empire. The many reports of Indian embassies to Rome might point to a partial answer.¹¹² Augustus proudly records in his 'Achievements' that 'embassies of kings from India were often sent to me, such as previously have never been seen in the presence of any Roman leader'.¹¹³

The arrivals of the earliest embassies from India appear to coincide with the reported enormous increase in Indo-Mediterranean trading

¹¹¹ Bukharin 2012. Cf. PME 30. Bukharin's onomastic remarks and his dating of the graffito of Septimius Paniskos to 'about 230 CE' (494ff., esp. 498) are untenable. The name could date to nearly any point in time during the first three centuries CE.

¹¹² Cf. e.g. Ziethen 1994: 150ff.; Cooley 2009: 249ff.; McLaughlin 2010: 111ff. Later references include Dio 68,15,1 (106 CE). Beaucamp/Briquel-Chattonnet/Robin 1999-2000: 70 (c. 218/19 CE?). HA *Aurel.* 33,4 (270 CE). Euseb., *v. Const.* 4,50 (336/7 CE). Amm. 22,7,10 (361 CE). Malalas 477 (530 CE).

¹¹³ RgdA 31. See also Suet., *Aug.* 21,3. In particular: Oros. 6,21,19f. Dio 54,9,8ff. Strabo 15,1,4. Plin., *NH* 8,25,65. As only two Indian embassies are independently known to have met Augustus, Cooley 2009: 249f. concludes that the Roman ruler unduly exaggerated diplomatic contacts with India in order to propagate the idea that his influence won friends for Rome even in the remotest parts of the Ancient World. Yet even though there can be no doubt that Augustus made the most of the arrival of Indian embassies, that by itself is not a compelling reason to question his statement all together, and to believe that the other surviving sources reveal the entirety or even the majority of diplomatic contacts between India and Rome in the Augustan period.

activity under Augustus.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, our sources fail to explicitly clarify whether or to what extent the Indian embassies were commercially motivated. The immediate textual context of Augustus' statement within the *Res Gestae* implies that the Indian ambassadors came to ask for 'friendship' (*amicitia*) with Augustus and Rome, and this is indeed what Suetonius explicitly states.¹¹⁵ In fact, whenever ancient reports of embassies from India provide any context or purpose at all, the envoys are always presented as seeking 'friendship' (*amicitia*, φιλία) with Rome. It is also surely significant that *amicitia* was also the outcome of the Roman military expeditions against Nubia and Saba. Unfortunately, only very few details are on record in the case of India. Yet a short report survives of how Nicolaos of Damascus personally witnessed the arrival at Syrian Antioch of an Indian embassy in 20 BCE.¹¹⁶ He also saw a letter (ἐπιστολή) which these envoys brought with them and which their king had written in Greek, seeking the friendship of Augustus and offering him free passage through their country as well as assistance in any undertaking that was just. Interestingly, these elements can be understood as having been inspired by similar clauses, which are known as standard features of formal Roman treaties.¹¹⁷ We will return to this point in a moment.

A series of coins issued by the first Kushan ruler, Kujula Kadphises

¹¹⁴ Strabo 2,5,12. 17,1,13.

¹¹⁵ Suet., Aug. 21: *ad amicitiam suam populique Romani ultro per legatos petendam*. RgdA 31 continues by evoking envoys of the Bastarnae, Scythians, Sarmatians, Albanians, and Hiberians, and immediately begins with *nostram amicitiam appetiverunt* ..., implying that this statement, which linked the two sentences was also true for the Indian envoys. For a recent assessment of the notion of *amicitia* with respect to Roman empire-building see Burton 2001. For the importance of political *amicitia* for the Indo-Mediterranean trade in the imperial period see Speidel forthcoming b.

¹¹⁶ Strabo 15,1,73. Cf. Strabo 15,1,4. Dio 54,9,8.

¹¹⁷ On the subject in general see e.g. Ferrary 1990 and idem, Bull. ép. 2006: 143. For a discussion of standard elements in Roman *foedera* see most recently Avram 1999: 34-9; Mitchell 2005: 185-94, esp. 191ff. for the clauses not to provide safe passage for the enemies of the treaty partners and to assist each other in the case of war. Cf. also Schuler 2007: esp. 58 and 67; Freitag 2007.

(c. 30-80 CE), also appears to reflect the existence of an *amicitia*-agreement between Rome and this Indian king. These coins show the bust of a Julio-Claudian emperor on their obverse. The bust is usually thought to represent Augustus, but it might also have been intended to show one of his successors. The reverse is perhaps even more interesting, for it shows the Kushan ruler in Indo-Scythian dress sitting on what remarkably looks like a *sella curulis*.¹¹⁸ As seats of this type are not known to have belonged to the contemporary domestic culture of northern India, it is generally held that this image refers to a real Roman *sella curulis*. If so, it might have been given to one of the Indian missions seeking *amicitia* with Rome. For giving presents to such successful embassies is a well-documented Roman practice, and there are a number of known cases where the Roman grant of *amicitia* was underpinned by presenting a *sella curulis* (and other gifts) to the new *amicus*.¹¹⁹ Incidentally, what appear to be the actual remains of such a *sella curulis* have been unearthed during excavations at Taxila near Islamabad where the above-mentioned coins are believed to have been struck.¹²⁰

But what could Indian rulers have hoped to gain from *amicitia* with Rome? Why were they keen to be the friends of Rome when, at the same time, the kingdom of Saba in Southern Arabia and the Nubian kingdom of Meroë apparently needed military persuasion before accepting Rome's friendship? Surely the Indian envoys hoped for more than a polite exchange of pleasantries, but neither the fame of Augustus' virtues and modesty, as Suetonius claims,¹²¹ nor the Indians' reported offer of military aid (allegedly without asking for anything in return) are likely to have been the sole or prime reasons for which Indian kings sent their ambassadors to Rome. Unfortunately, the term *amicitia* by itself is no guide to the specific type or terms of

¹¹⁸ Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 544; Jairazbhoy 1963: 120; MacDowall 1968: 144 n. 4; Mahler 2008: 301ff.

¹¹⁹ Braund 1984: 34f. For Kushan wealth deriving from trade with the Roman Empire see Thorley 1979, 189.

¹²⁰ Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 544 no. 54 and vol. 3, 170 no. 54 .

¹²¹ Suet., Aug. 21.

a treaty (formal or informal),¹²² and the Roman narrative sources need not be comprehensive in this respect, as they are almost exclusively concerned with the political and military aspects of treaties. We can, however, be certain, that *amicitia*, in order to exist or to be recognized as a state of international ‘friendship’, entailed certain expectations on both sides, even if imperial Rome thought of itself as (and behaved like) the dominant power.

Some of the better known treaties establishing or confirming *amicitia* with Rome contain elements, which might help to understand such expectations and how they encouraged both Romans and Indians to conclude agreements of friendship. For already the earliest treaties with Carthage (508/7 and 348? BCE), which are generally held to be wholly economic in contents, and which according to Moses Finley were among the very few international trade agreements that Rome ever concluded begin, according to Polybios, with the words: ‘There shall be friendship between the Romans and their allies, and the Carthaginians (...) on the following conditions: ...’.¹²³ The evocation of *amicitia* in the opening passage of these Roman trade agreements strongly suggests that *amicitia* could indeed be seen to have entailed important economic implications from Rome’s earliest history onwards. One such implication can for instance be found in the *lex de provinciis praetoriis* of 100 BCE.¹²⁴ For this text, which deals with the provincial organization of Cilicia and Macedonia, the suppression of piracy and the administration of newly-conquered territories, relates how Roman magistrates could write letters to peoples and communities in the East to ensure that the Romans, their allies, and friends could trade and travel safely. The text further ascertains that Roman magistrates could also address letters to eastern kings who had friendship and alliance with Rome, instructing them not to support or tolerate piracy but to help the Romans provide safety according to justice and the laws.

¹²² For discussions of the correlation between *amicitia* and formal treaties see e.g. Heuss 1933: esp. 55ff.; Timpe 1972: 288; Schuler 2007: 64f.; Coskun 2008; Kehne 2010: 42f.; Zack 2011, 2012, 2013.

¹²³ Polyb., 3,22,4 and 3,24, 3-13. Serrati 2006: 113, 120. Cf. Finley 1973: 161.

¹²⁴ IK 41, no. 31. Crawford et al. 1996, no. 12. Cf. Ferrary 1977.

A recently published bronze tablet inscribed with the text of a treaty between Rome and the commune of the Lycians from 46 BCE provides further insight.¹²⁵ This treaty declared (among other things) that there should be friendship and alliance between the Roman people and the commune of the Lycians, and that neither party should help the enemies of the other in any way or to allow hostile armies to pass through allied territory, but to support the other party in the case of an attack. While this was a standard clause that could be invoked in the context of suppressing piracy, the new treaty also includes a hitherto unknown clause that specified the relationship between Rome and her free allies with regard to criminal and civil cases. By confirming and spelling out the Lycians' right to be tried according to their own laws in their native country for capital offences, this clause not only endorsed a privilege to their communality but it also contributed to the legal security of travellers and merchants (or at least it can be understood to have done so) for if a dispute arose, those involved could now consult a highly official text that was on public display. Thanks to another recently published inscription, we now even know large parts of a previous formal treaty between Rome and the Lycians.¹²⁶ This earlier text is less detailed than the later treaty and it contains only the usual standard clauses, but it also includes *amicitia*, which therefore already existed between Rome and the Lycian commune in 46 BCE when the later treaty was drawn up. The treaty of 46 BCE was therefore surely intended to replace the earlier one. The additional details would have primarily aimed at making potentially controversial issues plain. They helped to prevent conflicts that could develop out of diverging notions of justice or interpretations of legal concepts and thereby improved the institutional framework also with respect to the trade relations between the allies.

Flourishing around the mid-second century CE, the Roman jurist Sextus Pomponius also reflected on the correlation between political

¹²⁵ AE 2005, 1487 = SEG LV 1452 = Bull. ép. 2006: 146; Mitchell 2005. Cf. also Schuler 2007.

¹²⁶ AE 2007, 1504 = SEG 56, 1664. Schuler 2007.

amicitia and international legal security. Thus, a fragment of his writings, which survives in the Digests reads:¹²⁷

... if there is neither friendship (*amicitia*) nor *hospitium*, nor a formal treaty made for the purpose of friendship (*foedus amicitiae causa*) between a particular people and us, they are not exactly our enemies, but anything, which belongs to us and passes under their control becomes their property, and a free man of ours who is captured by them becomes their slave. The same applies if anything of theirs passes under our control.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to explore the entire range of legal and historical implications of this passage.¹²⁸ It is enough to retain that in the mid-second century an eminent Roman jurist correlated the physical and legal security of Roman merchants in a foreign country with the existence of *amicitia* (or *hospitium* or *foedus amicitiae causa*) between Rome and that country. Roman governments concluding and amending a variety of treaties and agreements within a framework that carried the label *amicitia* can therefore be understood to have been an important and common Roman response to the needs of international trade (though Rome no doubt always kept its own benefit foremost in mind).

Of course, this is not to suggest that there could not be or was no trade without treaties or a state of *amicitia*. But the sources referred to above suggest that the existence of *amicitia* reassured merchants and long-distance traders. They further suggest that Roman governments were therefore interested in establishing *amicitia* (among other things) in order to shape favourable conditions for peaceful and profitable trade.¹²⁹ Within the Red Sea basin, establishing *amicitia* and creating

¹²⁷ Dig. 49,15,5,2 (Pomponius, *libro 37 ad Quintum Mucium*):... *nam si cum gente aliqua neque amicitiam neque hospitium neque foedus amicitiae causa factum habemus, hi hostes quidem non sunt, quod autem ex nostro ad eos pervenit, illorum fit, et liber homo noster ab eis captus servus fit et eorum: idemque est, si ab illis ad nos aliquid perveniat...*

¹²⁸ See Zack 2011 with the full relevant bibliography. In Zack's view, *amicitia*-treaties, in Roman legal terms, were irrelevant to the safety of Roman and other ancient merchants: Zack 2011: 106ff., esp. 108.

¹²⁹ Compare Casson's remarks on *hormoi apodeidegmenoi* and *emporion enthesmon* in the PME: Casson 1989: 271ff. and see Hdn. 4,10.

a peaceful environment included the use of military force, and entailed Roman dominance. On the whole, however, the number of Roman military interventions in southern Red Sea countries after the reign of Augustus appears to have remained insignificant. Substantial campaigns, at any rate, are not on record and both Pliny the Elder and Cassius Dio assure that no Roman army was ever again led into Arabia Felix after the Gallus campaign.¹³⁰ Roman attempts to exercise permanent control beyond the Bab el Mandeb, however, could hardly be founded on military force, even though Trajan, while standing at the shores of the Persian Gulf is said to have dreamt of conquering India just like Alexander the Great had once done.¹³¹ It is perhaps even doubtful whether or not we should believe this anecdote, because Lucian of Samosata, for one, thought that historians who included such ridiculous remarks into their works were simply mad.¹³²

Evidently, the Indian Ocean was an area where the Romans had to achieve their political goals by diplomacy and negotiation rather than by their superiority on the battlefields. Yet in either case, it seems, *amicitia* was the name of their strategic goal. One wonders, of course, whether for instance the temple of Augustus on the Peutinger map or the assurance of an Indian embassy to Constantine that they paid homage to the Roman emperor in his representations both by paintings and statues, were in any way connected to such *amicitia* agreements.¹³³ Roman merchants involved in the trade with Muziris would presumably have rejoiced at the sight of the symbol of a *templum Augusti* on any comparable display or description of southern India, for *amicitia* with Rome should have obliged the local Indian rulers (at least) to protect Roman merchants from pirates (which both the Peutinger map and the elder Pliny recorded in the region of Muziris).¹³⁴ The *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, perhaps, refers to such a case, for it records a situation of post-war turmoil at the Indian harbour of Kalliena, a

¹³⁰ Plin., *NH* 6,32,160. Dio, 53,29,8.

¹³¹ Dio 68,29,1. Cf. Jord., *Rom.* 268. Eutrop., *Brev.* 8,3,2.

¹³² Luc. Sam., *Quomodo hist. conscr. sit* 32.

¹³³ Euseb., *v. Const.* 4,50. For a full discussion of the temple of Augustus on the Peutinger map and other comparable evidence see Speidel forthcoming a.

¹³⁴ Plin., *NH* 6,26,104: *non expetendum propter vicinos piratas.*

former ἐμπόριον ἔνθεσμον (lawful trading-station), and it informs its readers that Greek ships which by chance approached the harbour were escorted ‘under guard’ to the port of Barygaza.¹³⁵ At any rate (and not surprisingly), the *Periplus* very frequently identifies places where a merchant can feel safe, and where he should be on his guard.¹³⁶

Amicitia between Rome and the rulers of countries with major trading-stations and ports (whatever the exact details of the agreement may have been) is therefore likely to have been an influential factor in the development of the dynamics of Indo-Mediterranean trade. One might object that the extant sources imply that Rome’s interest in political friendship with rulers of far away peoples was actually rather small, as our sources are consistent in portraying the Indians and other foreign peoples as those who always took the initiative in establishing diplomatic contacts. Indian rulers may indeed have believed that *amicitia* with Rome would help to increase the volume of trade in their ports, but that does not exclude the possibility that Rome played a more active role in the conclusion of *amicitia* agreements than our sources suggest. For in traditional imperial rhetoric, political considerations generally took pride of place over economic deliberations. Moreover, around the mid-second century, Appian claimed that he witnessed how the Roman emperor refused to accept strategic alliances with profitless tribes of barbarians, which implies that Rome was not interested in expansion at any price.¹³⁷ If true, imperial Rome made choices in such matters and adhered to certain rational principles. In any event, whatever the truth behind the reports of Indian requests for political friendship with Rome may have been, Roman rulers never hesitated to interpret, accept and promulgate any such requests as signs of submission. Moreover, in

¹³⁵ PME 52. Cf. Casson 1989: 215; McLaughlin 2010: 47. For a different view: Gupta 2007: 48f.

¹³⁶ Cf. e.g. 4, 7, 8, 9, 19, 20, 23, 34, etc. Also, the PME’s terms *hormos apodedeigmenos* (1, 32), *emporion enthesmos* (52) and *emporion nomismos* (4, 21, 35)—whatever their precise technical meaning (cf. Casson 1989: 271ff.)—no doubt all had implications with respect to safety aspects, and therefore reassured merchants.

¹³⁷ App., *Praef.* 7. For a case of Roman initiative cf. Hdn. 4,10.

Roman eyes, accepting Roman domination was, of course, the ideal basis for friendship.

The surviving sources thus suggest that Roman imperial governments understood the importance, for the imperial treasury, of foreign trade with the Red Sea basin, East Africa and India. Security along the relevant trade routes, in particular, was therefore an element Rome attempted to control and increase. In order to achieve this goal in the Red Sea basin, Rome relied both on its military power and on a network of allies it called 'friends' (*amici*). Although Roman military power seems to have reached to the Bab el Mandeb, Rome apparently did not simply abandon the attempt to exert its influence at the southern end of the Red Sea but also concluded agreements of political friendship with Indian rulers. Although the details of these agreements remain unknown, the concept of *amicitia* (political friendship) apparently played an important role, much as it already had in Roman economic foreign relations in the earliest treaties between Rome and Carthage. In particular, *amicitia* appears to have been valued as an ideal condition for peaceful and safe trading, and a reassurance in the international fight against piracy. By enforcing, accepting, or instigating *amicitia* on both sides of the Bab el Mandeb, Roman imperial governments can therefore be understood to have attempted to promote the maritime long-distance trade through the Red Sea. The traditional requirements of Roman political rhetoric, however, connected such efforts not so much with economic motives than with concepts of empire-building or with the defence of an ideal world, which, from an official Roman point of view, the *Imperium Romanum* truly was.

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