

Stilicho — The Soldier of Rome Claudian's *De Consulatu Stilichonis**

Reading the panegyric *De Consulatu Stilichonis* (A.D. 400) for the *magister militum praesentalis* Flavius Stilicho, one cannot help observing that this Claudian's hero was an extraordinarily talented soldier, and in fact, irreplaceable, for the Roman empire.¹

Stilicho emphasized his military prowess already in the early stage of his impressive position as the virtual ruler of the West because this was, according to Stilicho himself, the most important reason why Theodosius confided in him.² It is, in my opinion, worth remarking that Stilicho's propagandist Claudian recalled as late as the year 400 Theodosius' confidence in Stilicho's military ability: The emperor had deliberately chosen Stilicho as husband for Serena, his niece and adoptive daughter.³

„The soldierly abilities of Stilicho” was probably quite unconstrained propaganda five years earlier in 395, at the beginning of his *parentela* over Theodosius' son Honorius, who was at that time only nine years of age. However, even already at that time the problem lay in the plausibility of the propaganda and certainly it became year by year more annoying to Stilicho, the general who was short of great victories. Actually, he seems to have been no more than a mediocre general, who won his first decisive victory only in 406 at Faesulae, eleven years after Theodosius' death and some eight years after the campaign against Gildo, the mutinous *magister utriusque militiae per Africam*. Nevertheless, in *De Consulatu Stilichonis* the war against Gildo is praised as a great triumph for Stilicho. Neither this triumph, nor any others, ever existed before the year 406.⁴

* In the „Uralkodótükör” conference this paper was read under the title 'Claudian's *De Consulatu Stilichonis* And A New Era In The History Of Roman Rulership'.

¹ For Stilicho's *virtus*, see, for instance, Stil. i, 94—115 *quis enim Visos in plaustra feroces reppulit* (etc.); ibid., 116—137 *adsiduus castris aderat, rarissimus urbi* (etc.); ibid., 170—217 *denique felices aquilas quocumque moveres* (etc.); ibid., 246—268 *post domitas Arctos alio prorupit ab axe* (etc.); ibid., 368—385 *victoria nulla clarior aut hominum votis optatior unquam contigit* (etc. = Gildo's defeat); Stil. iii, 81—84 *iam non praetumidi supplex Orientis ademptam legatis poscit Libyam famulosve precatur (dictu turpe) suos: sed robore freata Gabino te duce Romana tandem se vindicat ira*.

² See more comprehensively A. CAMERON, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford 1970, 55—56.

³ Stil. i, 74 *iudicium virtutis erat*; ibid., 89 *felix arbitrii princeps*; ibid., 116ff.; Stil. ii, 62 *hoc clipeo munitus Honorius*.

⁴ J.M. O'FLYNN, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire*, Edmonton 1983, 25ff.; about the war against Gildo, see Stil. i, 4 *cecinit fuso Gildone triumphos*; cf. ibid., 271ff., Stil. ii, 256—262 and Stil. iii (praef.) 21—24, 81—84 (see above n. 1); CAMERON (1970) 150—151; O'FLYNN, 36—37, J.H.W.G. LIEBESCHUETZ, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford 1991, 98.

On the other hand we know, for instance, of the hostile Eunapius tradition about Stilicho in Zosimus. As regards Stilicho's expedition to Greece to face Alaric in 397, Zosimus narrates that „Stilicho would very easily have destroyed the Visigoths due to their shortage of provisions if he had not given himself up to wantonness, comedians, and loose women, permitting his troops to loot whatever the barbarians had left, and allowing the enemy a wide-open passage to escape from the Peloponnese with all their booty and to cross to Epirus and plunder the cities there. When Stilicho saw that this was what they had done, he sailed off to Italy, having achieved nothing.” (Zos. 5.7.2—3).⁵

When eulogizing Stilicho, Claudian may be compared to modern advertising experts or politicians: The more an evidently untrue message is repeated — in this case Stilicho's reputation for military prowess — the more people take it for truth. The real is replaced by the imaginary, the sheer volume of images and words obscures the facts themselves.

In addition, *De Consulatu Stilichonis* presents Stilicho as an omnipotent man both in war and peace, creating an impression of hyperbole in the rhetoric questions at Book i, 16—17:

narrem iustitiam? resplendet gloria Martis.
armati referam vires? plus egit inermis.

My purpose is not to concentrate on contradictory traditions about Stilicho in ancient historians. The phenomenon of conflicting traditions is not unfamiliar in Greek and Roman historiography, Stilicho being only one example among others. Instead, I shall consider more closely Claudian's poetic adorning of Stilicho, making some remarks on the following topics:

(i) How could this imaginary, poetic hero meet the current requirements of the authentic Stilicho in his struggle for power against the advisers of Arcadius in the Eastern empire? Until Stilicho's death (408) this struggle was a kind of a „cold war”, as some scholars have described it.⁶

(ii) The emphasis on Stilicho's military glory by Claudian has led me to consider Stilicho's propagandistic tactic and its possible limits. In this regard, I shall comment on Claudian's (and, naturally, Stilicho's) method of solving political problems by means of war. Accordingly, by means of Claudian's panegyric I want to illustrate that his Stilicho was a militarist in the disguise of an upright soldier of Rome.

⁵ The translation is O'FLYNN's, p. 210.

⁶ For instance A.H.M. JONES, *The Decline of the Ancient World*, Singapore 1989 [1966] 126; A. CAMERON, J. LONG & S. LEE, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius*, Univ. of California Press 1993, 166, 309—310 (cf. *ibid.*, 246—247).

Stilicho's control of the supreme power, as Honorius' guardian, was the prelude to a new era in the history of Roman domination, and particularly so in the West.⁷ After Theodosius the Great the effective power in the West fell to military advisers who, however, did not make themselves *Augusti* — with the transient exception of Constantius III, Stilicho's successor and the co-emperor of Honorius in 421. In the West, after the year 395 the civilian (now formal and nominal) and military (effective) summits of power were usually never occupied by one and the same person. The time of the soldier-emperors, to say nothing of the *principes*, finally gave way to this new practice, which survived until 476 when the officer Odovacar was proclaimed „King of Italy”.⁸

On the other hand, the Eastern empire broadly continued the traditional Roman system. The prestige of the imperial office remained high there, at least formally, although in practice — especially in the times of feeble rulers like Arcadius and Theodosius II — control by civilian ministers (or by the members of the consistory) prevailed.⁹

Stilicho „The Soldier” — the symbol of consensus

As regards the legitimacy of Stilicho's future policy, Claudian's appeal to popular consent in the context of Theodosius' choice was the cornerstone of the panegyric. Directing one's attention to common consent on Stilicho's military skill, the poet at the same time emphasized that it was the emperor's deliberate decision to afford regency to Stilicho. Everyone put his trust in the emperor's choice; it was unanimously accepted (Stil. i, 89—90):

Felix arbitrii princeps, qui congrua mundo
iudicat et primus censet, quod cernimus omnes.

⁷ Some studies on Stilicho: S. MAZZARINO, *Stilicone. La crisi imperiale dopo Teodosio*, Roma 1942; E. NISCHER-FALKENHOF, *Stilicho*, Wien 1947; E. DEMOUGEOT, *De l'unité à la division de l'empire romain, 395—410*, Paris 1951; J. STRAUB, *Parvens Principum, La Nouvelle Clío* 4, 1952, 94—115 (= pp. 220—239 in *Regeneratio Imperii*, Darmstadt 1972); L. VÁRADY, *Stilicho proditor arcani Imperii, Acta Antiqua Hung.* 16, 1968, 413—432; A. CAMERON, *Theodosius the Great and the Regency of Stilicho, Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 73, 1968, 247—280; A. DEMANDT, s.v. „Magister Militum”, *RE Suppl.* XII, 1970, 715f. See also: CAMERON (1970), *passim*; O'FLYNN, 1—62.

⁸ A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire, 284—602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*. 3 vols, Oxford 1964, I 326—328, O'FLYNN, 22—23, 136ff. (Odovacar); for Constantius III, see *ibid.*, 63—68; JONES (1989) 78—79; S. MAZZARINO, *L'Impero romano 2*, Bari 1990 [1973] 799; P.J. HEATHER, *Goths and Romans 332—489*, Oxford 1991, 220—223.

⁹ The consistory had replaced the *council* in the reign of Constantine: J. CROOK, *Consilium Principis*, Cambridge 1955, 102—103. For its functions from the fourth century on, see JONES (1964) I 333—337, *id.* (1989) 128—131, LIEBESCHUETZ, 93—94 (cf. *ibid.*, 136—137). See below n. 21.

Within the limits of the imperial succession this kind of an expression could be enough to explain consent, or in other words, voluntary agreement of the Romans on their relationship with Stilicho.¹⁰

In the western part of the empire the regency of Stilicho was a rational way for Theodosius to ensure the succession to the throne of the young Honorius.¹¹ However, for Claudian's and Stilicho's purposes the position of *parens principum* was even more than rational. Claudian recalled in the poem that Stilicho was not an average regent and also that Theodosius when seeking a trustworthy candidate was open-minded, quite „democratic” as we might say in modern language.¹²

The Roman soldier against the East

Stilicho's declaration that Theodosius had appointed him *parens* of both Honorius and Arcadius was false and the main stimulus for the schism between West and East, during which the most active role was Stilicho's. The fictitious claim is the continued theme of Claudian's poems, including *De Consulatu Stilichonis*.¹³

Claudian's emphasis on Stilicho's military skill was certainly a result of Theodosius' alleged criterion for the choice of the regent. Accordingly, Stilicho was, in the poet's opinion, the only right commander of what Joseph Vogt would call „*orbis Romanus*”¹⁴: The general was *ductor tot gentibus unus* (Stil. i, 160—161) thanks to whom *exultat uterque Theodosius* (Stil. ii, 421). He was the *pacator* and the restorer of the deeds done in the heroic past and guaranteeing Rome's existence, *Romana salus*. He also restored „the old legislation of Romulus” by which the army was controlled by *patres*, this last-mentioned referring also to the consul Stilicho himself.¹⁵

¹⁰ For the subject of consent, see D. BEETHAM, *The Legitimation of Power*, London 1991, 91 (his emphasis): „... what is important about consent is not the condition of voluntary agreement, but the specific actions that publicly express it.” In *De consulatu Stilichonis* those „specific actions” could be Claudian's intention to combine Theodosius' confidence in Stilicho (*virtus*, marriage, *parentela*) with his sincere worry about the future of Rome. In this way Claudian creates an atmosphere of consensus, see esp. Stil. i, 69—79, cf. *ibid.* 89—90, 140—141.

¹¹ Cf. CAMERON (1968) 270, 274.

¹² Stil. i, 69—79, 89—90.

¹³ Stil. i, 78—79 *et gener Augustis olim socer ipse futurus accedis*, 141 *iam tibi commissis conscenderat aethera terris*, 160—161 *ductor Stilicho tot gentibus unus, quot vel progrediens vels conspicit occiduus sol*; cf. Stil. ii, 50—53, 58—60, 62—87, 421—422.

¹⁴ J. VOGT, *Orbis Romanus*. Ein Beitrag zum Sprachgebrauch zur Vorstellungswelt des Römischen Imperialisismus, in J. VOGT, *Orbis. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Geschichte des Altertums*. Freiburg 1960 [1929].

¹⁵ *DUCTOR*: Stil. i, 160, cf. Stil. ii, 392 *et populus quem ductor ames*; *PACATOR*: Stil. i, 148ff., 162—169, 200ff., esp. 215—216 *omne, quod Oceanum fontesque interiacet Histri, unius incurso tremuit; restitutor*: in the heroic sense, *ibid.*, 385 *restituit Stilicho cunctos tibi, Roma, triumphos*, cf. Stil. ii, 184—207, esp. 203—204; *ROMANA SALUS*: Stil. i, 368ff., the „victory” over Gildo as an actual example; *ROMULEAE LEGES*: *ibid.*, 328—332, cf. Stil. ii, 315—316, 402; for Stilicho's own position, see *ibid.*, 297: *nostros qui consulis omnia patres*; cf. for instance, Sidonius, *Carm.* 7, 495—512 at which the Gothic king Theudoricus swears his allegiance to Rome.

This was not enough. Conforming to the genre of Roman panegyric in general, the contrast, the evilness of the enemies, had to be presented.¹⁶ Claudian followed with pleasure these literary conventions: He claimed that Stilicho's policy was in great contrast to the influence of Arcadius' advisers in the East. The keywords of *De Consulatu Stilichonis* denoting the policy of the East are *crimen, insidiae, doli, coniuratus, edicta corruptura, dissensus aulae, privatae causae*. Arcadius' ministers are incriminated in the poem. They are insidious, corrupting, factious, having an eye only for their private interests. The Gildo affair was a quite recent evidence of their motives, Claudian protests.¹⁷ In other words, Arcadius' ministers were blamed by Claudian for being dissidents of the Empire whereas Stilicho himself was, by contrast, the embodiment of the Roman consensus and the physical and spiritual saviour of the unity of the empire.¹⁸

Claudian's actual attack was against both Aurelian and, particularly, Eutropius. Claudian, following faithfully Stilicho's Eastern policy, could not recognize their consulships: Eutropius, *praepositus sacri cubiculi* of Arcadius, was consul in 399, Aurelian, *praefectus praetorio Orientis*, probably in 400.¹⁹ Claudian alternates smoothly between criticism and deliberate, rhetorical nonchalance in regard to these consuls who, according to him, disgraced the Roman ideal of that honourable office.²⁰

In general, Claudian refers to serious deficiencies in Arcadius' administration. As one example of these, he points out that a eunuch and ex-slave Eutropius had been made minister, and, unfortunately, even consul.

¹⁶ For the theme in panegyrics, D. LASSANDRO, *La demonizzazione del nemico politico nei Panegyrici Latini, Religione e politica nel mondo antico, Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica* 7, Milano 1981, 237—249 (esp. p. 238: „da una parte la sacralità dell'imperator, dall'altra la mostruosità del suo avversario"); see also: B.H. WARMINGTON, *Aspects of Constantinian Propaganda in the Panegyrici Latini, Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 104, 1974, 371—384; E. VEREECKE, *Le corpus des panégyriques latins de l'époque tardive. Problèmes d'imitation, L'Antiquité Classique* 44, 1975, 141—160.

¹⁷ The East as *hostis malus* during Gildo's revolt: *Stil. i, 7—8 Libyae post proelia crimen concidit Eoum*; *ibid.*, 269—282, cf. *ibid.* 295—298; *ibid.* 306 *evitare dolos*; *Stil. ii, 78—87*, esp. 81 *discordia*, 86 *mediis dissensus aulae*; *Stil. iii, 81—83*; *ibid.*, 125 *per quem [Constantinople?] fracta diu translataque paene potestas*; Cameron (1970) 120—123.

¹⁸ *Stil. i, 142—143 ancipites rerum ruituro culmine lapsus aequali cervice subis*; *Stil. ii, 168—172 te docus prisca loquentem, te matura senex audit, te fortia miles adpersis salibus, quibus haud Amphiona quisquam praeferat Aonios meditantem carmine muros nec velit Orpheo migrantes pectine silvas*; cf. *Stil. i, 232ff.* and *Stil. ii, 58—60*.

¹⁹ Cf. also Claudian's invective *In Eutropium* which came out in that very year of Eutropius' consulate, see Cameron (1970) 124ff. For Aurelian's consulate, see the discussion in Liebeschuetz, 259—261 and Cameron et al. (1993) 161—168. Following the last-mentioned, I think that the information about Aurelian's designation was probably sent in late 399 to Western court, but Stilicho refused to recognize Aurelian as his fellow consul for the following year.

²⁰ Claudian between criticism and rhetoric nonchalance: *Stil. ii, 79—81* (probably against Aurelian, see Cameron et al. (1993) 166) *fratrem levior nec cura tuetur Arcadium; nec, si quid iners atque impia turba praetendens proprio nomen regale furori audeat, adscribis iuveni*; *ibid.*, 294ff. against Eutropius; *ibid.*, 298 *de monstris taceas*; *ibid.*, 301—311, esp. 309—310 *cur ego, quem numquam didici sensive creatum, gratuler exemptum? delicti paenitet illos: nos nec credidimus*.

In his hostility to the Eastern policy Claudian combines the actually prevailing Eastern system and its policy with the traditional Roman ideology of government.

As for the actuality, the East was for Claudian mysterious, unreliable, unsafe, troublesome. The most important posts of the Constantinople government were manned by civilian officials: the pretorian prefect of the East was the most powerful under the emperor, and under a weak one, such as Arcadius, he dominated the other civilian ministers of the *consistorium*. The consistory itself had an important share in the emperor's decisions only if the emperor was strong enough.²¹ If the emperor was weak-minded, service in the palace could be a route to the supreme power, as it had sometimes been in the old Roman empire during the dynastic age. So it was for Eutropius. In his position of *praepositus sacri cubiculi* he is known to have been empowered to choose an archbishop of Constantinople, and Claudian in his invective *In Eutropium*. (i, 234—286) claims that Eutropius even had an army at his command.²²

Why were only civilians in charge in the East? The structure of the administrative system, referred to briefly above, provides only a partial answer to this question. Additionally, non-military means were appreciated more than military ones when the Eastern empire dealt with unruly confederates, and that the regular field army was not, in fact, particularly effective in the East.²³ However, the powerful position of the civilians was not self-evident. There was a political rivalry between civilians and soldiers, also between easterners and westerners, at least until the murder of the prefect Rufinus. In this struggle, the army was an unpredictable factor. For instance, after the murder of the Rufinus in 395, the intervention in politics by the army proved to be a real danger, since the murder was accomplished by Gainas, the commander of the *foederati* in 395.²⁴

And let us not forget Stilicho! He probably bore a grudge against the East. The East, in fact, had already under Theodosius' rule disappointed Stilicho's hopes. At that time Stilicho had had no opportunities to advance his career in the East, because in the military reform after 388 the five generals were ranked equal there.²⁵ Thus it seems that Theodosius had not planned to make any general — including Stilicho — regent on behalf of

²¹ LIEBESCHUETZ, 94 (see his reference to D.A. GRAVES' *Consistorium Domini: Imperial Councils of State in the Late Roman Empire*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor 1982 [1973]); for the prefecture of the East, see Cod. Theod. 11.30.16; H.L. LEVY, *The Invective in Rufinum of Claudius Claudianus*, New York 1935, 12—14; JONES (1964) I 333—337, 448—462; CAMERON et al. (1993) 5.

²² For Eutropius power, see LIEBESCHUETZ, 93, 96ff., 166; W. HEIL, *Das konstantinische Patriziat, Baseler Studien zur Rechtswissenschaft* 78, Basel 1966; for his military measures, cf. *In Eutrop.* ii (praef.) 55—56; LIEBESCHUETZ, 99—100; CAMERON et al. (1993) 7, 336.

²³ LIEBESCHUETZ, 94—95; cf. JONES (1989) 132—133; on the immunity of the East from barbarian invasions, see *id.*, (1964) I 342.

²⁴ LIEBESCHUETZ, 3, 89—92, 99—105; cf. CAMERON et al. (1993) 7—8. On Theodosius' westernizing policy and its effects, J. MATTHEWS, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364—425*, Oxford 1975, 109—114; LIEBESCHUETZ, 136—137; For Gainas (particularly on his revolt in 399), see JONES (1964) I 177—179, 202; LIEBESCHUETZ, 92, 96—131 passim; CAMERON et al. (1993) 7—8, 117—119, 201—211.

²⁵ O'FLYNN, 17—18.

Arcadius. Correspondingly (and for example), in the East Theodosius seems to have trusted the civilian official Rufinus more than any of the generals, making him consul in 392 and permitting him to keep a personal bodyguard and granting him the power to issue laws in 394 when Theodosius himself left for the west against Eugenius. Stilicho, on the contrary, had not received any consulship during Theodosius' lifetime.²⁶

Additionally, the policy itself of Arcadius' ministers was effectively to resist Stilicho's claims. It was a silent, diplomatic and successful policy of treaties with barbarians. It had the result of isolating Stilicho, which was frustrating for him. He used, by contrast, the army but was not able to undermine Arcadius' ministers through his military campaigns.

First, Stilicho's involvement in Eastern politics in summer 395 failed. He advanced to the Balkans with a combined imperial army, purposing, according to his propaganda, to control the Goths. However, he had to withdraw from the Balkans because a great part of the troops dissented. Probably this can be explained by a treaty between Alaric and Rufinus. Claudian himself claims that they were in league together. Unfortunately, Claudian (In Ruf. ii, 130ff.) is the only source for these events of 395 and he does not give the reason why the battle between Stilicho and the Goths did not take place.²⁷

Secondly, in summer 397 Stilicho was again „crusading” against the East, launching a seaborne invasion of Greece. Now in his propaganda the enemies were Alaric and his Goths, but the real one was Eutropius. However, Eutropius in his negotiations with Alaric succeeded in persuading Arcadius to declare Stilicho *hostis publicus*. Stilicho had to withdraw again.²⁸

Traditional propaganda

Consequently, Stilicho's real hope had been, and was in the year 400, in the West, and there particularly, and perhaps alone, his wife Serena. Through her — not through military ability — Stilicho had steadily furthered Theodosius' confidence in him.²⁹ Stilicho's falling in love with Serena had to be given a special significance for the empire: „Stilicho the Soldier” was Claudian's choice in making propaganda. Claudian presents Stilicho's abilities in the form of those of an emperor (Stil. ii, 1—2; my emphases):

Hactenus armatae laudes: nunc qualibus orbem
moribus et quanto frenet metuendus amore

²⁶ For Rufinus' consulship, see PLRE I, 778; O'Flynn, 14—15, 27; Liebeschuetz, 90.

²⁷ And *De consulatu Stilichonis* is very vague about Stilicho's expeditions, see e.g.: Stil. i, 21—22, 122—137, 172—176, 181—187; Stil. ii, 95—96, Stil. iii, 13; cf. O'FLYNN, 35; For the expedition of 395, see D. HOFFMANN, *Das Spättrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum*, 2 vols. Düsseldorf 1969, I 31; cf. CAMERON (1970) 63ff., 159ff.; MATTHEWS, 270—271; O'FLYNN, 28—31; HEATHER, 201—202.

²⁸ HEATHER (1991) 202—204; cf. id., The Anti-Scythian Tirade of Synesius' *De Regno*, *Phoenix* 41, 1988, 167—168; DEMOUGEOT, 170ff.; MATTHEWS, 271—272; CAMERON (1970) 168ff.; O'FLYNN, 33—36.

²⁹ Possibly Serena herself suggested Theodosius to choose Stilicho as her husband, see E. DEMOUGEOT, 132; O'FLYNN, 16.

First, this „emperor” had the traditional virtues of *Clementia*, *Fides*, *Iustitia*, *Patientia*, *Temperies*, *Prudentia*, *Constantia*,³⁰ which helped him in his battle against the Eastern vices, *Avaritia*, *Ambitio* and *Luxuries*. Secondly, he was comparable to the brilliant consuls of the heroic past. And thirdly, the function of the *recusatio* ideology was to indicate Stilicho’s unambitious nature.³¹ Equipped with the characteristics of a ruler, Stilicho was the man for liberty, like the first consul Brutus. Stilicho, likewise, was Rome’s avenger (*ultor*). His enemies, on the contrary, suffer the fate of Pentheus who was torn in pieces by *maenads*.³²

On the other hand, describing the dark side of the world, the Eastern empire, and there particularly Eutropius, Claudian displayed the traditional Roman aversion to the influence of palace servants and favourites on the decisions of some emperors. In its prejudices, the Roman world was still consistent, if no longer in its political system. Now Eutropius had enemies also in the East. The law which annulled Eutropius’ acts, after his fall, included the words „this vile monster defiled the divine gift of the consulship by his contagion.” Probably these words, providing a hint of his background as eunuch and slave, were formulated in law text on Aurelian’s, his successor’s, orders. The words were possibly Aurelian’s senatorial propaganda. He was the former prefect of Constantinople.³³

In Roman senatorial historiography, indeed, the hatred towards the palace servants was considerable. Cassius Dio, for instance, criticized a favourite’s, particularly a libertine’s influence, more carefully than the influence of a person with a better background, although their crimes were quite identical. This categorization becomes evident from Dio’s attitudes toward Tigridius Perennis and M. Aurelius Cleander during Commodus’ reign. Cleander’s, a libertine’s, lust for power (actually, his use of imperial power) is regarded as a more serious crime than Perennis’ whose background was that of a pretorian. As a matter of fact, Dio almost whitewashes Perennis.³⁴ Claudian’s hatred, expressed in traditional words, against the Eastern virtual ruler Eutropius makes sense when we keep in mind this tradition in Roman literature.

³⁰ *Clementia*: Stil. ii, 6ff.; *Fides*: *ibid.*, 30ff., 52–53 esp. in Theodosius, 62 in Honorius, 78ff. in Arcadius; other virtues, *ibid.*, 100–109. For the virtues in panegyrics, see e.g. A. LIPPOLD, *Herrscherideal und Traditionsverbundenheit im Panegyricus des Pacatus*, *Historia* 17, 1968, 228–250 (Theodosius), R. SEAGER, *Some Imperial Virtues in the Latin Prose Panegyrics. The Demands of Propaganda and the Dynamics of Literary Composition. Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar*. ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Paper and Monographs 11, 1984, 129–165, M-C. L’HUILIER, *La figure de l’empereur et les vertus impériales. Crise et modèle d’identité dans les panégyriques latins*, in: *Les grandes figures religieuses. Fonctionnement paratique et symbolique dans l’antiquité*, Paris 1986.

³¹ *Avaritia*, *Ambitio*, *Luxuries*: Stil. ii, 111ff.; Stilicho as future consul of Rome: *ibid.*, 377ff., for this kind of idealization of the present, cf. C.E.V. NIXON, *The Use of the Past by the Gallic Panegyrists*, in: Graeme Clarke (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, Rushcutters Bay 1990; *recusatio*: Stil. ii, 218ff.

³² Brutus and Stilicho, see Stil. ii, 322–327, cf. *ibid.*, 391; Pentheus: *ibid.*, 208–213 [Eutropius?], esp. 213: *bacchanti laniant Pentheo corpora riu*; for the theme to be killed by own soldiers, cf. the fate of a certain Sunno (a Frank) at Stil. i, 243: *iacuit mucrone suorum*.

³³ Cod. Theod. 9.40.17; LIEBESCHUETZ, 104–105 (with the referred translation).

³⁴ Cf. Dio, 72(73),9,1 and 72(73),10,1 = Perennis to 72(73),12–13 = Cleander (Loeb); for the contemporary invective against Eutropius by Synesius, see CAMERON et al. (1993) 135, n. 105.

A militarist in the disguise of an upright soldier

The Stilicho panegyric is a conventional example of this literary genre with its concepts of the empire, the imperial Herrscherideal and of Roman imperialism, even of militarism.³⁵ I do not mean that the love of war is the main sign of militarism in the poem. But even that can be seen as one and in this respect Claudian's Stilicho was an example of a Roman militarist: Stilicho's heroic way of solving political and regional problems in the poem reflected the Roman habit of valuing military methods above civilian ones.³⁶ It is worth noticing that Claudian even admits (Stil. iii, 81—84) that nothing could be brought about by ambassadors, as in the Gildo affair — the native Latin vigour was more effective! In other words, the effort to bring about a peaceful solution had led to a Roman shame, but, Claudian assures, it was nothing to be ashamed of because the military prowess compensates for it.

As for militarism, there is even more convincing evidence than Claudian's love of war. Namely, with military adornment Claudian whitewashed Stilicho's *cupido regnandi*. In spite of the uncertainty of Stilicho's innermost aims, when considering his morals on the basis of *De Consulatu Stilichonis* as compared with the political facts, the heroic and military emphasis can be seen to have clearly served the needs of his dictatorship, first because his claim to be the only legal „ruler“ of the whole empire is still (in 400 A.D.) discernible in the poem (cf. consensus), and secondly in the sense that Claudian's critique of the enemies — the Eastern persistent advisers of Arcadius — is so manifest.³⁷

Limits of propaganda?

In real life, the problem of Stilicho's rule, claims and propaganda concerned more its physical and temporal limits than moral ones, because he controlled the propaganda and everything in the West.³⁸

In 400 A.D., Stilicho considered himself to be a Roman soldier who protected the west against danger. Some years ago he had claimed his victory over Gildo. However, at the same time he had to be aware of the long—standing nature of the policy and ideology of Arcadius' ministers. Because of political rivalry there was a rapid succession of ministers in the East — Rufinus, then Eutropius, now Aurelian. In spite of this, the policy of the East remained the same.³⁹ In the West, Claudian tried to assure his audience that the policy of

³⁵ For the theme, see U. ASCHE, *Roms Weltherrschaftsidee und Aussenpolitik in der Spätantike im Spiegel der Panegyrici Latini*, Diss., Reihe Alte Geschichte 16, Bonn 1983.

³⁶ Cf. R. MACMULLEN, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge Mass. 1963, 174; see A. VAGT's definitions of militarism in modern societies in *A History of Militarism. Civilian and Military*, London 1959 [1937] 17. See also: L. STORONI MAZZOLANI, *The Idea of the City in Roman Thought. From Walled City to Spiritual Commonwealth* (English transl. by S. O'DONNELL) London 1970, passim.

³⁷ But cf. CAMERON (1968) 280 for Stilicho's motives: ...„there is no need to believe that he was motivated solely by personal ambition.“

³⁸ O'FLYNN, 22; cf. CAMERON (1968), 279.

³⁹ LIEBESCHUETZ, 132ff.; cf. CAMERON et al. (1993) 250.

the East was unbalanced. He was probably believed — or the subordinates of Stilicho were forced to believe him.

Although Stilicho could not affect the politics in the East, the Eastern part of „his Rome” was still a throughout theme in *De consulatu Stilichonis*. Could it be so that, in the year 400, Stilicho with unrealistic expectations believed that his rule would continue in either part of the empire; he had still some time in the West to create good positions to move to the East, if necessary?⁴⁰ *De Consulatu Stilichonis* was, in fact, timeless in regard to Stilicho’s *parentela* over both sons of Theodosius.⁴¹

At least some people thought that Stilicho had had only selfish motives. In 408 his rule was regarded as over-powerful by the opposition. He was accused of a secret treaty with Alaric and of a plan to make his own son Eucherius Honorius’ successor. For these reasons, he was beheaded on the orders of Honorius. Ironically enough, as a reaction after his death there was in the West an interlude of civilian rule, civilian rule which Stilicho and his propagandist Claudian so much „hated” in general. But, to be truthful, this rule was short-lived.

⁴⁰ Although the poem considering Stilicho’s relationship with the East is, in fact, retrospective, cf. P.G. CHRISTIANSEN, Claudian and the East, *Historia* 19, 1970, 118—119. But for the time, Honorius was only sixteen.

⁴¹ Cf. CAMERON (1970) 152: „It is striking too that in 400, with Honorius now 16 and Arcadius 23, Stilicho had still not retreated a jot from his claim to the regency of both.”