12. THE END OF THE CULT

Archeological excavations show that violent destruction during the reign of Maximinus Thrax (A.D. 235-238) caused the end of all known Dolichenus temples in the provinces on the Rhine and the Danube.\textsuperscript{231} The Thracian emperor is known to have filled his coffers by depredations upon the riches accumulated in sanctuaries,\textsuperscript{232} and Dolichenus temples were particularly rich as can be seen from the fact that a common soldier dedicated a silver votive tablet to Iuppiter Dolichenus in Heddernheim/Upper Germany (Fig. 13)\textsuperscript{233} carrying the following inscription:

\textit{I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) Dolicheno, Antonius Proclus 7(centuria) Germani v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito).}

Since no emperor could afford to offend the army, Maximinus' action proves that the cult was not spread very widely and very evenly among the soldiers but belonged to a narrow, rich, and perhaps generally disliked group, i.e. the Orientals. Perhaps the measures taken included the physical annihilation of some of the cult’s adherents, too, for none of the known sanctuaries was rebuilt after the catastrophe and the buried treasures were not recovered. Conceivably this was part of an ‘Illyrian reaction’ against the fallen Syrian dynasty and its supporters and beneficiaries.\textsuperscript{234}

\textsuperscript{231} Tóth (1973).
\textsuperscript{232} Herodian VII, 3, 5, - 4, 1.
\textsuperscript{233} CIL XIII, 734\textit{a} = M 31\textit{a} = Schwertheim (1974) 81. See above p. 40. Dr. U. Gehrig of the Antikenabteilung Berlin advises me the weight of the tablet (plus minor traces of putty) is 8 grams.
\textsuperscript{234} See now the excellent account on Maximinus Thrax by Loriot (1975) esp. p. 672; for the parallel persecution of Christians because they were considered supporters of the Severan house, see Lippold (1975). Of course it is inconceivable that large numbers of Oriental soldiers were killed,—for the Osrhoeni see e.g. Loriot \textit{l.c.}; perhaps those in non-Oriental units were transferred, or took on a low profile. For Orientals in Pannonian legions see Speidel (1976).
The destruction of the sanctuaries on Rhine and Danube certainly was a heavy blow against the religion of Iuppiter Dolichenus but it was not the end of the cult in these provinces or anywhere else as can be seen from a list of later military monuments to the god.

Altar from Ampelum/Dacia of A.D. 238-244:

51 I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) D(olicheno) pro salute imp(eri) 
    perpetui M(arci) Antoni Gordiani Aug(usti) Aur(elius) 
    Gai(us) b(ene)f(icarius) co(n)s(ularis) v(otum) p(osuit) m(erito).

An altar from Rigomagus/Lower Germany of A.D. 250 has been discussed above (27) and likewise two altars from the Dolichenum of Dura-Europos/Syria of A.D. 251, set up by legionary detach­ments sent to strengthen the garrison against an impending Persian attack (9 and 10).

To these one should add our numbers 26, 49 and four altars from the Dolichenum of Lambaesis/Numidia, on which the name of legio III Augusta was erased in A.D. 238 but restored in A.D. 253 by which date, therefore, the Dolichenum was still in use.

Three other military Dolichenus monuments were claimed to be of a yet later date. One is Ulpius Chresimus' Sol Invictus plaque which has been shown above to belong to the second century A.D. The second, supposedly very late monument is an altar from Ratiaria/Upper Moesia with the following text:

52 I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) D(olicheno), pro salute Titi Iuli 
    Optati, circitoris p(rae)p(ositi), L(ucius) Licinius Terminalis 
    v(otum) s(olvit) [l(ibens) m(erito)].

The rank of circitor was taken to belong to the later Roman army but it is actually known as early as A.D. 223-235. Moreover, the god invoked may be Iuppiter D(epulsor) rather than

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235 AE 1971, 381.
237 M 44.
238 E.g. Zotović (1966) 47.
239 Fink (1971) 47, I, 7.