OXFORD

WITNESSES TO A WORLD CRISIS

Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century

JAMES HOWARD-JOHNSTON

WITNESSES TO A WORLD CRISIS

This page intentionally left blank

Witnesses to a World Crisis

Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century

JAMES HOWARD-JOHNSTON

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© James Howard-Johnston 2010

The moral rights of the author have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

ISBN 978–0–19–920859–3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

For my wife and daughter

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

Over forty years ago, two fine historians, the late Dimitri Obolensky, whose lectures were virtuoso, noteless performances and carried his audiences effortlessly over vast tracts of eastern Europe in the early middle ages, and Peter Brown, the guru of late antique historians in the anglophone world, put their heads together and devised a new subject for the Oxford History School. The traditionally Anglocentric history taught in an apparently outmoded way, in one-to-one tutorials, virtually never ventured beyond the confines of Europe, the Americas, and the British Empire. A stern line was upheld by the reigning Regius Professor, Hugh Trevor-Roper. No undergraduate should ever enter a field of history if he or she could not read the language of the primary sources. So there was no room for China or Japan or South-East Asia or Islam in the syllabus. Friendship, however, proved a formidable adversary of scholarly rigour. Dimitri Obolensky only had to speak, and the great wall securing Oxford History was breached in two places by Byzantine Studies. From 1966 young historians were allowed to study primary sources in translation if they were written in Greek (and other Middle Eastern languages). For the first time in a thousand years the name Constantine Porphyrogenitus could be heard on undergraduate lips. Forays could also be made into eastern Europe, to watch Slavs appear over the horizons of the Mediterranean world, and into the Middle East before and after the genesis of Islam.

Ten years or so after its inception, I was drawn into teaching *Byzantium and its Northern and Eastern Neighbours, 527–ca.700*, which has mutated since into *The Near East in the Age of Justinian and Muhammad, 527–ca.700*. For there was a crying need for an additional tutor after Peter Brown left Oxford, first for London, then for the United States. It has been extraordinarily rewarding to teach the subject to successive generations of undergraduate historians, with varied historical pasts and varied interests. No two weekly essays have ever been alike. It is quite impossible for discussion to follow the same course with different pupils. Tutorials are a godsend to the history tutor. With a reading list and some guidance, pupils are put out to pasture, and return a week later with essays in which they make what they will of their reading and thinking. The tutor can sit back and listen as particles of information and explanation are emitted and strike the sensors in his mind. Memories are triggered. Thoughts are stirred. By the end of the essay, the tutor is ready to engage with the pupil, if only by playing the part of devil's

advocate. There can be no question of resorting to tired arguments or in-house jargon, let alone of pulling rank. Reason, imagination, close attention to evidence, lucid exposition are vital on both sides. The ageing tutor is revivified in each tutorial. The pupil, if lucky, is illuminated and entertained. Scholarship and understanding advance.

Witnesses to a World Crisis is, in large measure, a product of tutorial discussions over many years. It is to the two hundred or so undergraduates to whom I have given tutorials on seventh-century history that I am most indebted. Let this written, greatly elaborated version of tutorial patter stand as one among many pieces of evidence which testify to the efficacy of the tutorial system for teacher as well as taught.

Many other debts have been incurred. Corpus Christi College, to which I moved from my *alma mater* next door thirty-eight years ago, is second to none as an invigorating academic milieu, where conversation (inspired by the example of the late Trevor Aston) has never eschewed great issues of the day or the central academic concerns of individual Fellows. I have learned much from fellow Byzantinists (at Oxford and elsewhere), from the classicists, medieval historians, and Orientalists who congregate in impressive numbers in Oxford, and from my own and others' graduate students. Invidious though it may be to single out individuals, I must thank Cyril Mango (the finest contemporary analyst of Byzantine historical texts), Mark Whittow (to me the Great Whittow whose historical range is unmatched and who is always full of good sense), Mary Whitby (who best appreciates the poetry of George of Pisidia), Tim Greenwood (with whom I am engaged in a long-running disputation about the Armenian sources), and Andrew Marsham (one of the Islamicists generated by the Near East Further Subject, who volunteered to read large parts of the book in draft). Each of them has greatly widened and deepened my knowledge. However, my greatest single debt, after that to my undergraduate pupils, is to the organizers of seven workshops on the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. Those gatherings made it possible for a non-Islamicist to encounter the finest contemporary scholars of Islam, from Europe, America, and the Middle East. It is the cumulative understanding gained from attending every single session of each of those workshops which has equipped me, at least partially, for a venture into early Islamic history.

For I must confess to the reader, at the outset, that I lack the most important piece of equipment, command of Arabic. This is a book written by a non-Islamicist who can claim no more than a superficial knowledge of the Arabic script and of a limited number of key Arabic terms. Things are worse still. For I cannot claim to be any sort of Orientalist. I have to rely on translations (I grovel and plead for mercy at the feet of the ghost of Hugh Trevor-Roper) from *four* languages—Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Middle

Persian—as well as Arabic. I am a late Roman historian-cum-Byzantinist who has been lured far from his home territory in Asia Minor and the Balkans by the importance of events which occurred elsewhere in the seventh century. For it is the late Roman and Byzantine sources (discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) which cast the clearest light on the end of antiquity and the rise of Islam. All that I have been able to do is to add Armenian to the Greek and Latin acquired at school. For the Armenian sources (analysed in Chapters 3 and 4) are second only to the Greek in the quantity and quality of information which they provide about the Middle East in the seventh century. A case can therefore be made for investigation of the origins of Islam by a non-Islamicist, on the grounds that the largest body of reliable, dated evidence comes from Greek and Armenian sources. It is also plain that knowledge of the historical context is vital if Islam's emergence as a world religion and the Arabs' conquest of the Roman and Persian empires is to be understood.

Equally important is knowledge of the geographical arena, where the last war between the great powers of late antiquity (603–28) was fought and where Islam emerged subsequently as a new, even greater power. With financial assistance from the History Faculty and Corpus, I have been able to travel widely within Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Israel. Again the reader will note the gaps—no visits to the Arabian peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, or Iraq. Iraq was next on the programme for the group of Oxford academics who visited Iran in 1998, 2000, and 2002. But our hopes of ranging freely over the lowlands from Basra to Mosul and of visiting the upland basins of Kurdistan were dashed all too soon. Instead I have had to rely on reading (excavation reports, archaeological surveys, and the Geographical Handbook Series produced by the Naval Intelligence Division of the Admiralty during the First and Second World Wars) and vicarious travel (tracking, *inter alia*, the movements of Doughty and Thesiger in Arabia).[1]

Witnesses to a World Crisis came into being as a preliminary investigation into the historical sources for the last Roman–Persian war (603–28). There would undoubtedly have been a learned readership ready to take part in the late antique equivalent of intelligence analysis, but, for all the drama of that conflict, which saw an extraordinary reversal of fortunes at the very end, few outsiders would have been enticed by the subject. It also seemed foolish, after going to great lengths to establish the value of the full range of sources covering the first thirty years of the seventh century, not to extend the enquiry to the rest of the century (and a little beyond), given the undoubted importance of the rise of Islam and the great uncertainty recently generated about

[1] C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 2 vols. (3rd edn., London, 1923); W. Thesiger, *Arabian Sands* (London, 1959).

the value of early Islamic historical sources. For almost all of the texts analysed and evaluated, so as to establish a secure evidential base for the reconstruction of a world war in western Eurasia at the end of antiquity, extend their coverage into later decades of the century. Such new texts as come on stream in the course of the century can be appraised through a simple procedure of comparing what they say with what has already been established from texts of proven value. No body of primary source material is so much in need of this sort of vetting as the voluminous traditions picked up and arranged by later, mainly ninth- and tenth-century, Islamic authors.

That vetting of historians and histories, non-Muslim and Muslim, is the principal task undertaken in this book. It is far from being a new project. The pioneers were Patricia Crone and Michael Cook who, in their highly provocative book *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977), took as their starting point three passages in three non-Muslim texts dating from the seventh century. A great deal of invaluable hard work was then carried out by Robert G. Hoyland (a graduate pupil of Patricia Crone's) in his *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997). He carried out an exhaustive, scholarly survey of non-Muslim sources of every conceivable type written in a wide range of languages. I am simply narrowing Hoyland's field of enquiry to texts (chiefly historical and hagiographical) which can yield a reasonable quantity of demonstrably reliable material. Once the number of texts is limited, they can be subjected to yet more thorough-going analysis and appraisal.

Inevitably, like any piece of basic scholarship in the humanities, close attention must be paid to every detail in the specimen texts. We have to understand what they are made of, how they have been put together, if we are to use them with any confidence. So be warned, Reader, that there will be *longueurs* in the chapters which lie ahead. Each is somewhat akin to a pathologist's report. The analysis of individual specimens has to be thorough and rigorous. There must be no careless handling of material, no hasty coverage of aspects of a text, no neglect of apparently trivial details. The evidence also has to be made available, for scrutiny by readers who may wish to check things for themselves. But there is no need to read the reports in full to follow the progress of the investigation. For the benefit of those more interested in the outcome than the process of investigation, I have included summaries of the results of the examinations carried out on different categories of source, at the end of the core chapters of the book (Chapters 2–9). Those summaries provide the vital links between the Introduction, which outlines the procedure to be followed, and Chapters 11–12, in which the Islamic sources are appraised and, I hope, partially rehabilitated. Chapters 1

and 10 stand somewhat to the side, one dealing with a great poet of the early seventh century who deserves to be far better known than he is, the other with four late sources produced in Islamic milieux, the last a masterpiece of medieval Persian literature. There follows an overview of contemporary and near-contemporary historical writing about the end of antiquity and the rise of Islam (Chapter 13), before a final foray into substantive history. The last three chapters (14–16) present a provisional reconstruction of the history of the Middle East in the seventh (and early eighth) century, based on trustworthy non-Muslim sources and the corroborated skeletal narrative of events which can be extracted from the mass of early Islamic historical traditions. Some provisional explanations for Islam's initial success are presented in the conclusion.

That, in summary, is what lies ahead for you, Reader. Whether you take the highway or are prepared for the winding byways of scholarly exposition, where you may have to force your way through brambles and briars and waist-high ferns, I hope that you enjoy the journey.

J.H.-J.

May 2009
Corpus Christi College, Oxford

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Abbreviations xvii
List of Maps xviii
Maps xix

Introduction 1

1. George of Pisidia 16
   1. Life and early poems 17
   2. War poetry and religious poetry 20
   3. Official history of the Persian war and other late works 25
   4. Literary achievement 27
   5. Relations with the emperor 31

2. Two Universal Chronicles 36
   1. *Chronicon Paschale*: general characteristics 37
   2. *Chronicon Paschale*: universal history 41
   3. *Chronicon Paschale*: documentary history of the recent past 44
   4. *Chronicon Paschale*: scope and authorship 54
   5. *Chronicle to the Year 724*: content and sources 59
   6. *Chronicle to the Year 724*: early seventh-century material 63
   7. Conclusion 67

3. Seventh-Century Eastern Sources I: The *History of Khosrov* 70
   1. The *History of Khosrov* and its authorship 71
   2. Scope and character 74
   3. Sources 80
   4. Editing 87
   5. Trustworthiness 94
   6. Conclusion 99

4. Seventh-Century Eastern Sources II: The *History to the Year 682* and the *Khuzistan Chronicle* 103
   1. History of Atropatene (Azerbaijan) from the beginning of time 105
   2. A historical text disinterred: the *History to the Year 682* 108

3. Information about Turks and Arabs 113
4. Editing 120
5. *History to 682*: reliability and historical contribution 124
6. *Khuzistan Chronicle* 128
7. Conclusion 135

5. Supplementary Roman Sources of the Seventh Century I 138
1. Works written in Constantinople 140
2. Evidence from Asia Minor 149
3. Evidence from the Balkans, Italy, and north Africa 151
4. Two show-trials in Constantinople in the 650s 157

6. Supplementary Roman Sources of the Seventh Century II 163
1. Propaganda and lives of saints from Palestine 163
2. Sophronius, poet and patriarch 171
3. The *Maronite Chronicle* 175
4. Evidence about Egypt in the early seventh century 179
5. A detailed narrative of the Arab conquest of Egypt 181
6. Conclusion 189

7. Later Historians: The West Syrian Tradition 192
1. The lost *History* of Theophilus of Edessa and its derivatives 194
2. Theophilus' account of the last Roman–Persian War 199
3. Theophilus' account of the rise of Islam 206
4. Theophilus on international relations and domestic crises (641–661) 216
5. Theophilus' evidence on Arab grand strategy before and after the second civil war 223
6. Editorial treatment of Theophilus' work in later histories 229
7. Conclusion 233

8. Later Historians: Nicephorus 237
1. Life and historical writing 238
2. Nicephorus' account of the period 603–641: sources 244
3. Nicephorus' account of the period 603–641: historical value 250
4. Later seventh- and early eighth-century history: Nicephorus' source 256
5. Nicephorus' account of Roman–Arab relations: historical value 260
6. Conclusion 265

9. Later Historians: Theophanes 268
   1. Life and work 269
   2. Last Roman–Persian war: sources 274
   3. Last Roman–Persian war: editorial errors 279
   4. A historical text disinterred: the official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns 284
   5. Arab conquests: sources and editing 295
   6. Battle for the Mediterranean 669–718: sources and editing 299
   7. A historical text identified: the political memoirs of the Patrician Trajan 306
   8. Conclusion 307

10. Later Historians at Work in Egypt, Iraq, and Iran 313
   1. *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* 315
   2. *Chronicle of Seert* 324
   3. *Annals* of Eutychius 331
   4. *Khwadaynamag* ('Book of Lords') 341

11. Early Islamic Historical Writing 354
   1. The Qur'an 355
   2. Early Islamic historical traditions 358
   3. Al-Tabari's account of the last Roman–Persian war 366
   4. Muslim accounts of the conquests (*futuh*) 370
   5. Disruptions in the historical narrative: the capture of Jerusalem and the first civil war (*fitna*) 379
   6. History of events from the end of the first civil war (661) to the siege of Constantinople (717–718) 387
   7. Conclusion 392

12. The Life of the Prophet 395
   1. Islamic traditions about sixth-century Arabia 396
   2. Rise of Mecca 398
   3. Historical value of the biography of the Prophet (*sira*) 402
   4. The settlement of Hudaybiya 408
   5. Triumph and triumphalism 414

13. Historians of the Middle East in the Seventh Century 419
   1. Modest aims and respect for evidence 420
   2. General characteristics of non-Islamic historical writing 423

3. General characteristics of early Islamic historical writing 425
4. Coverage of extant historical sources 428
5. Substantive history 435

14. The Middle East in the Seventh Century: The Great Powers, Arabia, and the Prophet 436
1. The last Roman-Persian war, 603–630 436
2. The Prophet and his followers 445
3. Confrontation and conciliation 455

15. The Middle East in the Seventh Century: Arab Conquests 461
1. Conquest of the Middle East 464
2. Reasons for Muslim success 470
3. Battle for the Mediterranean: phase I 474
4. First civil war, 656–661 481

16. The Middle East in the Seventh Century: A New World Order 488
1. Battle for the Mediterranean: phase II 489
2. Second civil war, 682–692 495
3. The early Muslim state 501
4. Siege of Constantinople, 717–718 507
5. Byzantium and Islam 510

Conclusion 517

Bibliography 531
Index 551

List of Abbreviations

AAE	*Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*
An. Boll.	*Analecta Bollandiana*
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
Byz.	*Byzantion*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EI (2nd edn.)	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* New Edition
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EQ	*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*
JA	*Journal asiatique*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MGH	Monumenta Germanicae Historiae
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PLRE	*Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*
PmbZ	*Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
RSBN	*Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*
TM	*Travaux et mémoires*
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
VV	*Vizantiskij Vremmenik*

List of Maps

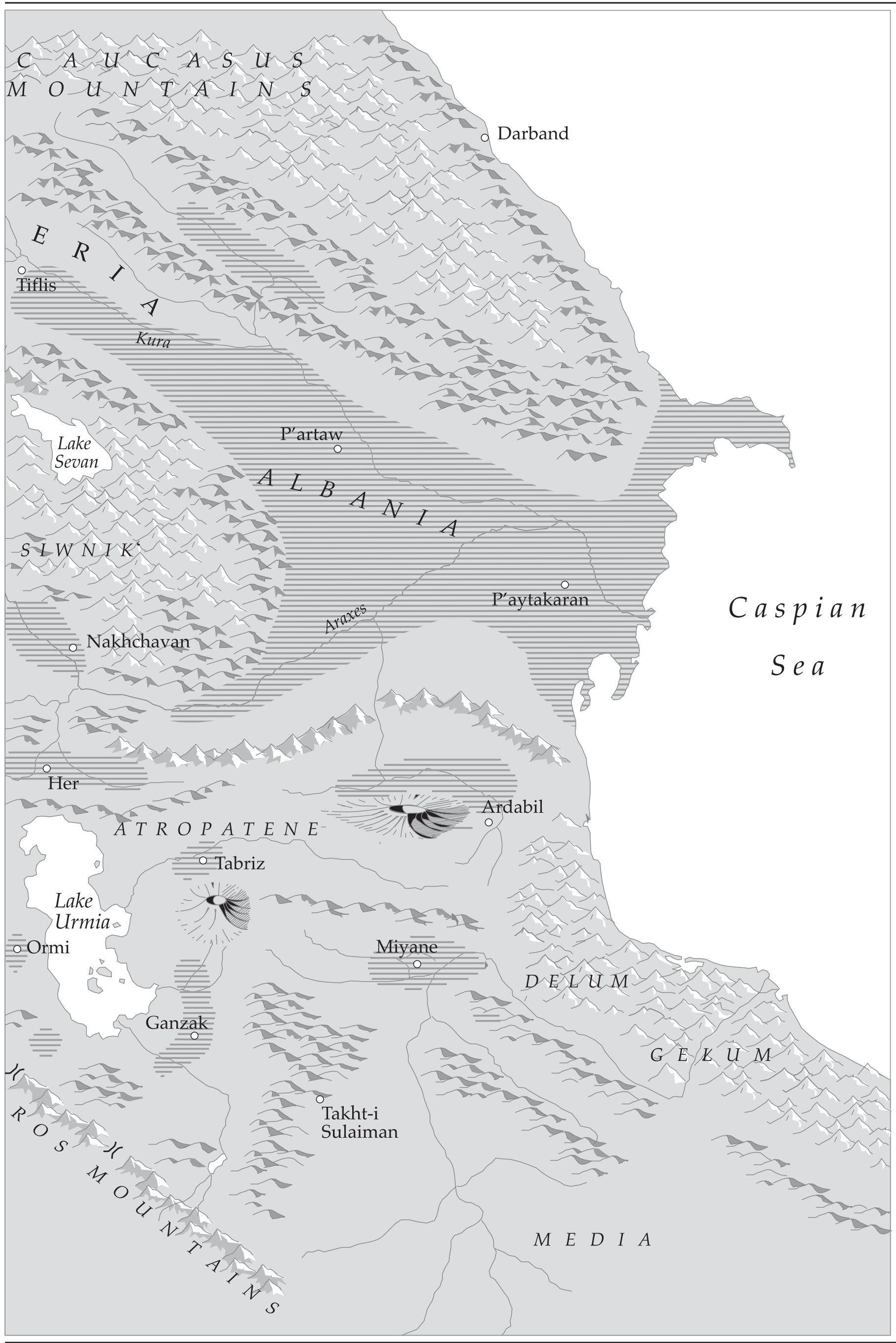
I. Western Eurasia on the eve of the Arab conquests xx
II. Armenia and neighbouring lands xxii
III. The Middle East in the seventh century xxiv
IV. Roman Palestine and Syria xxvi
V. Egypt xxvii
VI. Palestine and Syria under the Umayyads xxviii
VII. Asia Minor xxx
VIII. Theme commands in Asia Minor around 720 xxxii
IX. Limits of Muslim rule in 750 xxxiv

Maps

I. Western Eurasia on the eve of the Arab conquests

0
500
1000 miles
0
400
800
1200
1600 km
TURKISH KHAGANATE
ABASGIANS
ALANS
Caspian Gates
Phasis
Trapezus
ARMENIA
CHORESMIA
Oxus
Samarqand
Kashgar
SOGDIA
HYRCANIA
Merv
Balkh
Caesarea
Edessa
Nisibis
Antioch
SYRIA
MEDIA
KHURASAN
Nishapur
Rayy
Damascus
Circesium
SASANIAN EMPIRE
Ctesiphon
Tyre
GHASSAN
SAKASTAN
Gaza
LAKHM
PERSIA
Istakhr
Aila
KIRMAN
Tabuk
HIJAZ
YAMAMA
Medina
OMAN
Red Sea
Mecca
Ta'if
EMPTY QUARTER
SARAT
HIMYAR
Marib
YEMEN
Arabian Sea

II. Armenia and neighbouring lands



C A U C A S U S
M O U N T A I N S
Darband
E R I A
Tiflis
Kura
Lake Sevan
P'artaw
A L B A N I A
S I W N I K'
P'aytakaran
Caspian Sea
Araxes
Nakhchavan
Her
Ardabil
A T R O P A T E N E
Tabriz
Lake Urmia
Ormi
Miyane
D E L U M
Ganzak
G E L U M
Takht-i Sulaiman
R O S M O U N T A I N S
M E D I A

III. The Middle East in the seventh century

AYRARAT
Dvin
ALBANIA
Araxes
Nakhchavan
Lake Van
Caspian Sea
Lake Urmia
ATROPATENE
DELUM
Great Zab
Ganzak
GELUM
HYRCANIA (GURGAN)
Nineveh
Takht-i Sulaiman
TABARISTAN
Amul
ELBURZ MTS.
QUMIS
Lesser Zab
ZAGROS MTS.
MEDIA
SHAHRAZUR
Rayy
Jalula
Hamadan
Diyala
Nihawand
Dastagerd
Ctesiphon
Veh Ardashir
Nahrawan Canal
ZAGROS MTS
Babylon
Kufa
VEHKAWAT
Kashkar
Tigris
Hira
Susa
Isfahan
Qadisiyya
Shustar
MESENE
KHUZISTAN
PERSIA
Euphrates
Basra
Pasargadae
Bishapur
Istakhr
Persepolis
Persian Gates
Persian Gulf

IV. Roman Palestine and Syria

V. Egypt

VI. Palestine and Syria under the Umayyads

VII. Asia Minor

Pass
Volcano
High, inaccessible mountains, alpine in character
Continuous mountain ranges, effective barrier to military movement
Mountains/hills
Large alluvial plain
Natural highland redoubt
Fortress
Outer limit of central plateau
Phasis
Sinope
Amisus
Amaseia
Lycus
Trebizond
Acampsis
Araxes
Sebasteia
Camacha
Theodosiopolis
DOCIA
Halys
Euphrates
Caesarea
Arsanias
Lake Van
Arabissus
Melitene
Amida
Germaniceia
CILICIA
Tarsus
Mopsouestia
Edessa
Mardin
Tigris
Antioch
Beroea (Aleppo)
Nineveh
Euphrates

VIII. Theme commands in Asia Minor around 720

This page intentionally left blank

IX. Limits of Muslim rule in 750

0
500
1000 miles
0
400
800
1200
1600 km
KHAZAR
KHAGANATE
EMPIRE
ARMENIA
Ardabil
Caesarea
Amida
AZERBAIJAN
Edessa
JAZIRA
Mosul
Antioch
IRAQ
SYRIA
Damascus
Kufa
Jerusalem
Aqaba
CALIPHATE
Ctesiphon
Rayy
Hamadan
Isfahan
Ahwaz
Basra
PERSIA
Istakhr
Kerman
KIRMAN
MAKRAN
SIND
SISTAN
Herat
KHURASAN
Nishapur
Merv
KHWARAZM
Oxus
Bukhara
TRANSOXANIA
Samarqand
FARGHANA
Balkh
Kabul
Taxila
Dumat al-Jandal
HIJAZ
Medina
Mecca
OMAN
IA
Najran
San'a
Adulis
Sennar
WA
Axum
AXUM
YEMEN
Arabian
Sea

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Dramatic change came upon the world in the seventh century. In the Far East, the Han Chinese under a new dynasty, the T'ang, broke free from Turkish tutelage and began pushing into the steppes in the heart of the Eurasian continent. Young Germanic kingdoms consolidated their hold on territories previously torn from Roman control at the western, European end of the continent. Already they seethed with vitality as different cultural traditions, Roman, Christian, and Germanic, mixed and merged. Tensions between kin and ethnic groups flared into open internecine conflict. Leaders, secular and ecclesiastical, competed for power and prestige. A Roman system of government, institutionally advanced and run from a single organizing centre, was slowly giving way to one in which power had to be built up painstakingly from the localities. A new economic system was developing around the North Sea under the aegis of the greatest of contemporary Germanic dynasties, the Merovingian kings of Francia. It would continue to grow century after century, with a single phase of hesitation in the ninth century, until, at the end of the middle ages, Europe was ready to reach out over the rest of the globe.

Away to the east, on the steppes which extend from the inner Asian frontiers of China to the great central Asian watershed and then arch over the Aral, Caspian, and Black Seas, the Turks vanished as suddenly as they had appeared in the 550s. At their apogee, they had been able to play off the leading powers of China and the Middle East against each other. Now, in 629, their empire imploded under T'ang pressure. Something similar happened on the eastern approaches to Germanic Europe, where the Avars, who had established a multi-ethnic empire centred on the Hungarian plain in the late sixth century, haemorrhaged authority after failing to take Constantinople in 626. Fifty years passed before three reasonably stable nomad powers took shape in the northern world within reach of the Middle East. They were fifty years of flux, of scarcely visible conflict involving Slavs, Avars, Bulgars, peoples of the Caucasus, Khazars, and many others. The Khazars won the battle for hegemony in the west-central steppes. Their defeated rivals, the Bulgars, retreated either north to the middle Volga where they remained under loose Khazar control or west to the north-east Balkans where they

came into contact with a rump Avar state, now confined to the Carpathian basin.[1] But it was the Middle East at the south-western extremity of Eurasia which was utterly transformed, politically, religiously, and culturally, in the course of the century.

Around 600 two great empires, long established, evidently destined to endure for many generations to come, dominated western Eurasia. The Romans had, of course, lost their outer European provinces. But they continued to command the western as well as the eastern Mediterranean. They were able to draw on the resources of north Africa and much of Italy as well as the Balkans and the nearer Middle East. The Persian empire, reconstituted by the Sasanian dynasty in the third century, was an equally well-organized state, which directed the affairs of the further Middle East. The *shahanshah* could mobilize resources for war on a par with those of the Romans. Roman and Persian territories abutted, both in the lowlands of northern Mesopotamia and, across the Taurus, in the uplands of Transcaucasia, which formed a natural causeway linking the Anatolian and Iranian plateaux. The frontier was artificial. It cut across culturally homogeneous regions—Caucasian Iberia (Georgia) and Armenia in the north, and what had once been Assyria to the south, where Syriac was the dominant language. Outside these regions of direct confrontation, the two empires competed for influence—over the peoples of the north Caucasus and over the Beduin of Arabia. Equally, if not more, important was their commercial rivalry, for control of the lucrative traffic coming from China (overland) and from India and South-East Asia (across the Indian Ocean). They were evenly matched and, by 600, embittered opponents after four hard-fought wars in the sixth century.[2]

Such in brief was the geopolitical configuration of the Middle East at the beginning of the seventh century. By the second quarter of the eighth century, there was no vestige of the Sasanian empire to be seen. A Christian Roman state was still visible, but it had been stripped of its empire and was engaged in a grim struggle to survive in the face of attack by a new imperial power, which controlled three of the four natural power-centres of the Middle East—Egypt, Mesopotamia, and highland Iran. This residual Roman state, customarily

[1] T. J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford, 1989), 131–45; R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300–1000* (London, 1991); P. B. Golden, H. Ben-Shammai, and A. Róna-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives: Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium* (Leiden, 2007).

[2] J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison', in Averil Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, iii: *States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton, 1995), 157–226, repr. in J. Howard-Johnston, *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2006), i.

called Byzantium, was clinging on to the fourth of those power-centres, Asia Minor. It also retained a scatter of other possessions, of which the more important were the islands of the Aegean and the southern extremities of the Balkans (Slavs having colonized much of the interior and Bulgars having gained control of the north-east). The new imperial power had originated in the marginal lands beyond the southern zone of direct confrontation between the great powers. The Beduin of Arabia had swept out and overrun the fertile lands which enveloped the desert. They had been able to fight and defeat the field armies of the established powers in open battle. They had pushed steadily and remorselessly forward over the highlands of Iran, finally forcing the *shahanshah* Yazdgerd III to flee for his life into the steppes. They had built fleets and attacked Constantinople on three separate occasions. They were tightening their grip on the lands they had conquered.

The binary world order of western Eurasia in late antiquity was utterly destroyed and replaced by a new unitary, Arab power in the seventh century. The established religions of western Eurasia—Zoroastrian dualism, Jewish and Christian monotheisms—were challenged by a new monotheist faith.[3] Arabs in the Hijaz had been chosen to receive God's third revelation, which completed and superseded the two antecedent revelations. Their task was to bring the true faith to the whole of mankind. It was an urgent task as time was running short. As God's agents they must broadcast the message received by the Prophet over the furthest reaches of the world. This would involve action as well as speech. Armed struggle was sanctioned from an early stage in the existence of the *umma*, the Muslim community, soon after its extrusion from Mecca in 622. The faithful were authorized to fight for the propagation of Islam, first in Arabia, then over vast tracts of the surrounding world. Theirs was an inclusive faith, open to all but especially to monotheists, Jews and Christians, who had been enlightened by the two earlier revelations. Rather than marking itself off by a careful definition of its tenets, Islam, in its first phase, was open-armed, ready to welcome those who would obviously flock in once they heard God's words. Victory would bring their Prophet's message to the ambient, non-Arab world, and mass conversions would follow, aided, if necessary, by pressure from God's earthly agents.

In the event paganism and the old monotheist faiths did give ground throughout the Middle East, as well as north Africa and Spain. Islam became the dominant faith in the territory of the defunct Sasanian empire, in the rich eastern provinces of the later Roman empire (Syria, Palestine, and Egypt), and (later, after the arrival of the Seljuks) in the Asia Minor heartland of its

[3] G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).

medieval successor state. But conversion was a slow and gradual process and the authorities were forced to resort to coercion. It was only with the patent failure of what at times amounted to persecution that they realized that faith could not be injected forcibly into their subjects. Thereafter the words of God were left to propagate themselves by themselves, and the flow of converts grew, reaching a peak, it has been suggested, in the ninth and tenth centuries.[4] Such missionary work as took place was undertaken by individuals, relying on persuasion rather than coercion.

Such is the forcefulness and clarity of its message that Islam has been able to infiltrate and pervade the remotest parts of Eurasia and beyond. Christianity in its various confessional manifestations has retreated in many places, as has polytheism in its south Asian heartland. The most striking successes of all were achieved in the Indonesian archipelago and the fastnesses of the Caucasus mountains.[5] The phase of withdrawal and weakness which followed in the era of European colonization has clearly ended. Islam's appeal has not diminished and the faithful are to be found all over the globe. As for the future, the radicals who dream of winning over the Great Satan are, of course, extraordinarily optimistic and employ the wrong means, but they are not insane. For it is possible to conceive of the *hejab* spreading through the fervent religious south of the United States. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a faith which is not complicated by Trinitarian doctrines and which can encompass so much of the worshipper's life might gradually win over more and more of the Christian fundamentalists who have had such an impact on American politics in the recent past.

The history of the Middle East in the seventh century is an extraordinary tale, with ramifications reaching down to the present. It is the equivalent on the human plane of a cosmic event, even perhaps of the Big Bang. It was initiated by ideas engendered in a single mind and their articulation in words. At one moment there was nothing. A few years later there was the material for a whole soul-shaping text. At one moment, a handful of disciples listened to the Prophet. A mere fifty years later, his successor as leader of the Muslim community was acknowledged to be ruler of the world. The *umma* which formed around Muhammad in Mecca in the second decade of the seventh century acquired immense energy by the time of his death in 632. In a first explosive phase of twenty years (632–52), it expanded over Arabia and the Middle East. Then, after a period of relative quiescence, it entered a second explosive phase (692–751). In the west, north Africa and Spain were overrun.

[4] R. W. Bulliett, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

[5] X. de Planhol, *Les Fondements géographiques de l'histoire de l'Islam* (Paris, 1968).

In the north, Transcaucasia was subjected to effective rule and the war was taken across the mountains to the Khazars' steppe heartland. In the east, Muslim forces reached the heart of Asia where they met and defeated the forces of T'ang China. Thenceforth Islam bestrode the world.[6]

The tale of world conquest by the Arabs of the Hijaz, chosen as God's agents on earth, previously a marginal people of little significance to the great powers of western Eurasia as they squared up for the last and greatest of the wars which they fought, is a tale second to none. It is a tale, though, which can, as yet, only be told in outline. Explanations can be advanced but only of a general sort. Circumstances—a temporary weakening of the outer world after a final, unrestrained bout of Roman–Persian warfare lasting from 603 to 628—and social and ideological change in the interior of Arabia, brought about by the preaching of Muhammad, are the principal contenders.[7] But events need to be scrutinized more closely and placed as precisely as possible in time and space, if specific causal connections are to be detected. Detailed information of many sorts, about characters and ideas, about plans and actions of individuals and groups, about strategy and tactics, about propaganda and diplomacy, about institutional development and reform, must be picked up, analysed, and arranged, if sense is to be made of the swirl of barely visible phenomena. Then and only then can a full, chronologically ordered narrative be constructed with individual episodes placed in their proper contexts. Then and only then can patterns be discerned, motivations suggested, causes identified, and the whole sweep of that brief time at least partially understood. Then and only then can history proper be written.

The first, most basic task is to rummage through the various sources of information which have been preserved and to identify those which may be trusted or types of material in a source of doubtful worth which may nonetheless be usable. This is no easy task since there is a surprisingly high number of extant texts which supply information about the seventh century. A complete survey of those referring to the rise of Islam but composed by non-Muslims has been published recently. Over a hundred and twenty individual works, belonging to many different genres, are inventoried and evaluated.[8] To these should be added a number of Islamic historical sources, some massive in scale, produced under the Abbasids in the early medieval heyday of the caliphate. In aggregate the volume of Islamic material transmitted by the

[6] H. Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live in* (London, 2007).

[7] F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 3–82.

[8] R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

relatively small group of texts subsequently regarded as authoritative far outstrips that emanating from non-Muslim sources.[9]

There are then numerous witnesses to the world crisis of the seventh century. The great majority, however, are of doubtful value, too far removed from the crucial arenas and critical times to have been able to gather more than fragmentary information and to offer more than sententious comments. Such items of news as they picked up often reached them via several intermediaries and all too often were mangled in transmission. Thus it was all too easy for non-Muslim observers at a distance to be misled by preconceptions of their own into typecasting the Arabs as conquering barbarians or viewing Islam as an extremist, messianic Jewish sect. They might also become unduly receptive to discreditable anecdotes and deliberately distorted accounts of Muslim rites and beliefs. As for the early Islamic traditions picked up and arranged in massive compendia by Abbasid scholars, there has been much debate about their value among Islamicists in recent decades. They have emphasized that scholars living in a later age with different concerns were liable to conceive of the past in terms of the present and to call on the past to help in the political, legal, and religious wrangles of their own times. Taking account, in addition, of the mutability of orally transmitted material, a broad consensus has emerged which approaches Muslim accounts of the seventh century with great scepticism and, while acknowledging that much authentic material may lurk amidst the embellished, deformed, and spurious, despairs of being able to identify it.[10]

So it is key witnesses for whom the historian must look in his capacity as examining magistrate, witnesses who can provide more than scraps of evidence and whose testimony is credible. The search must be narrowed at first to contemporaries and near-contemporaries, and among contemporaries to those who either had direct experience of events or were in contact with those who did. For the prized witness is the person who can provide a connected narrative, based either on the evidence of his own senses (autopsy) or on access to authoritative written accounts emanating directly or indirectly from one or more participants. It is testimony of this sort which provides a standard against which to gauge the worth of all other types of evidence.

Two particularly promising witnesses are singled out for examination in the first two chapters. Both lived through the last Roman–Persian war (603–28). Both witnessed the joint Persian and Avar siege of Constantinople in 626. Both had access to official documents about the war. George of Pisidia was a senior churchman in the patriarchate who was known personally to the

[9] C. F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003).
[10] R. S. Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (London, 1991), 69–91.

reigning emperor (Heraclius, 610–41). He was also a fine poet who was ready to extol the emperor's achievements in verse and who was commissioned to write an official history of the war soon after it ended. The anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale* was a junior colleague of George's, who compiled a universal history of mankind and brought it to a close with a selection of excerpts from official government circulars issued in his lifetime together with three documents reproduced whole, each placed in the appropriate year-entry. Between them they gathered and recorded a considerable body of detailed and authoritative information about key episodes in Roman domestic history and in the war against Persia in the first thirty years of the seventh century. A firm chronological armature is provided by the *Chronicon Paschale.* Some of the dates are full and precise, including day of the week and date in the month, and can be shown to be accurate by the correlation of these last two elements. This material not only makes it possible to start reconstructing the history of that last war between the great powers of late antiquity but also provides a large set of data against which to test the worth of material offered by other seventh-century sources.

The investigation then broadens out to take in other witnesses who provide information about the rise of Islam as well as the last Roman–Persian war. They lived in different regions of the Middle East. The first to be examined (in the final section of Chapter 2) is a Syrian monk, anonymous like his contemporary, the author of the *Chronicon Paschale.* He kept a brief record of current events down to 636, with dates which can be corroborated. His work is embedded in a skeletal universal history compiled in the early eighth century. Next come three authors, at work in Armenia, Caucasian Albania, and lower Mesopotamia, who provide extensive information about the Muslim conquests and who are examined in Chapters 3 and 4.

A churchman with access to the archives of the catholicosate in Dvin, probably a bishop, wrote a wide-ranging history of his own times, taking the story back to the outbreak of the penultimate Roman–Persian war in 572–3 and coming down to the eve of the first Muslim civil war (656–61). He added a postscript bringing it up to date in 661. He presented Khusro II Parvez, Persian *shahanshah* from 590 to his execution at the end of February 628, as the central, malign figure, and placed Armenian history in the larger context of the Middle East. His work, entitled *History of Khosrov*, can be shown to be generally reliable, since its contents and dating tally with those of the *Chronicon Paschale* and George of Pisidia's *Official History*, where they deal with the same episodes. The stock of reliable material against which to test other sources is thus considerably enlarged and extended to the middle of the century. This process can then be repeated with a work dubbed *History to 682*, which can be disinterred from a late tenth-century universal history

written in Caucasian Albania (in Armenian), and with an appendix on the Muslim conquest of south-eastern Mesopotamia, which was added in the 660s to the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, a gossipy work covering the history of Mesopotamia from the 570s to the 650s. Both may be more narrowly focused than the *History of Khosrov*, but there is enough overlap of coverage to show that they are generally trustworthy sources.

The remaining contemporary witnesses, all living on Roman or formerly Roman territory, have rather less to offer, their evidence being confined largely to specific localities or to short periods of time. Corroboration is inevitably harder to obtain when there is little overlap with sources of proven worth, and more reliance has to be placed on subjective judgement about the quality of individual witnesses. In aggregate, however, a considerable amount of usable supplementary material can be extracted from their works, which are examined in Chapters 5 and 6. These include lives of saints, four of which stand out by virtue of their fullness and the vantage points occupied by their subjects (a patriarch of Alexandria, an abbot with Constantinopolitan court connections, a latter-day Persian martyr who attracted wide attention, and a highly venerated recluse in a monastery outside Jericho), a collection of miracle stories, some being mini-histories in their own right, which are set in Thessalonica, a proselytizing tract aimed at a Jewish readership with occasional references to current events, sermons about two Avar attacks on Constantinople, a collection of contemporary documents circulated by dissident Christians from the 660s, and poems written by Sophronius, who, at the end of his life, became patriarch of Jerusalem.

Four historians are also discussed in addition to those examined in the first four chapters. Two, both at work in Constantinople in the early seventh century, are included not so much for the information they provide—their coverage is limited to Constantinople and does not reach beyond the reign of Phocas (602–10)—but as examples of distinct genres of historical writing in late antiquity, (i) high-style, basically secular history (Theophylact Simocatta) and (ii) plain, pithy, annalistic chronicling (John of Antioch). The other two usefully complement the testimony of metropolitan and Armenian witnesses. John of Nikiu, a high-ranking Egyptian churchman in the second half of the seventh century, brought his universal history to a close with a detailed account of the military operations which forced the Roman authorities to cede Egypt to the Muslim forces commanded by ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs in autumn 642. This fills in a large blank in the narrative of Islam's expansion. A near-contemporary Syrian, whose own universal history is only partially preserved, adds an invaluable account of the formal ceremonies marking the rise of Muʿawiya to supreme power in the caliphate in the years 658–60.

There are five distinct stages to the investigation, three of which have been touched on so far: first identification of two prime witnesses; second a careful examination of four other important witnesses—two relatively forthcoming Armenian informants, whose testimony can be corroborated, a laconic Syrian (likewise of demonstrable reliability), and the author of a concise, dispassionate appendix tacked on to a rather tabloid version of Mesopotamian history; third, a survey of a variegated set of supplementary witnesses whose evidence is less susceptible to testing but who stand up well under examination. At each stage an effort has to be made to gain an understanding of the character, interests, and working methods of the writer and, by placing him in his original milieu, to define his perspective on events and to identify any likely bias. It is equally important to extend the analysis well outside those sections or passages in a text which have a direct bearing on seventh-century history. For they can only be understood properly if viewed in context. Account must be taken of the structure, aims, and sources of a text as a whole before use can be made of material extracted from it.

Of the remaining two stages, the more important is the fifth and last—the examination and evaluation of Islamic sources. Obviously they cannot be pushed entirely to the side. The immense quantity of material which has lodged in medieval Arab texts of several sorts[11]—principally universal histories, local histories, and biographical dictionaries—must be subjected to critical scrutiny. It is impossible to embark on the laborious enterprise of constructing a historical narrative of the rise of Islam without determining first whether or not the voluminous testimony of Muslim sources should or should not be trusted. That is the task undertaken in Chapters 11 and 12. Before doing so, however, the relatively scanty material assembled from contemporary non-Muslim sources about the last decades of the seventh century needs to be filled out by ranging ahead into the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.

In the fourth stage of the investigation (Chapters 7–10), attention is turned to histories which cover the seventh century but which were written by historians of later generations. The first of these was a learned Syrian who rose high in Abbasid service in the 770s and 780s. Theophilus of Edessa (Ch. 7), whose history has to be reconstructed from derivative texts, is one of three later authors whose work covers the whole of the seventh century and carries on to the time of writing. Like the other two, he was misled in places by pieces of deliberate disinformation which, together with entertaining but fanciful stories, had gained wide currency by the time of writing, but

[11] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 55–79, 134–42.

his history is for the most part sound, since, for several episodes, it can be checked against other texts shown to be reliable. Together with two later Byzantine historians, Nicephorus writing in the 770s (Ch. 8), who was later to become patriarch of Constantinople, and Theophanes (Ch. 9), a well-educated and well-connected abbot who amassed an extensive library and compiled his work over two or three years to 814, Theophilus casts light on otherwise dark episodes in the first half of the seventh century—notably the conquest of Syria—and provides a plentiful supply of material for piecing together a narrative of events in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, when the war between Islam and Byzantium was approaching a climax.

A similar service—this time provision of supplementary information about otherwise ill-reported events in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Iran—is performed by four histories which are subjected to relatively cursory examination in Chapter 10. The first was written in the second decade of the eighth century by George, a monk at the important Egyptian monastery of St Macarius. It comprises the lives of sixteen Coptic (Monophysite) patriarchs of Alexandria, from Peter Mongus (477–90) to Simon (691–700). Originally written in Coptic, it was translated into Arabic and incorporated into a *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* put together at the end of the eleventh century in Alexandria by Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrij. It is an Egyptian analogue to the running history of the popes produced in Rome, the *Liber pontificalis.*[12] It contains a great deal of unique information about Egypt under early Islamic rule. Next comes the *Seert Chronicle*, an ecclesiastical history focused on the Nestorian church of Mesopotamia. The author, who is not named, seems to have been at work in the early tenth century, writing in Arabic, which had by then become the language of the church. He included background secular material and a great deal of biographical information about bishops and abbots as well as catholicoi. The third work, likewise written in Arabic, was put together by Eutychius, Melkite (Chalcedonian) patriarch of Alexandria (935–40). He had access to a wide range of sources, notably a local Fustat collection of early Islamic traditions, an Arabic translation of a late Sasanian dynastic history (the *Khwadaynamag*, 'Book of Lords'), and books in the library of St Catherine's monastery at Sinai. His universal history, compiled out of excerpted material, includes accounts of the last Roman–Persian war and the Muslim conquest of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. It is a work of uneven quality, to be handled with care. Finally, the fate of the *Khwadaynamag* is traced after the destruction of the Sasanian empire. Two versions are singled out for discussion, a translation into Arabic by Ibn

[12] For the *Liber pontificalis*, see Ch. 4 n. 46 and Ch. 13 n. 14.

al-Muqaffa, which was used extensively by Muslim authors as well as by Eutychius, and a Persian version, much elaborated and embellished by Firdawsi in his *Shahnama*, written between 980 and 1010, one of the masterpieces of medieval Persian poetry.

The substantive history of the Middle East in the seventh century can gradually be pieced together as each successive witness is brought in for examination. More and more can be seen of individual campaigns and associated diplomatic activity in the long war between Romans and Persians as the first few witnesses give their testimony. The two Armenians among them, once their reliability has been established, are able to take the story on to the middle of the century and beyond, producing vital, chronologically articulated evidence about the first, explosive phase of Muslim expansion, because they lived respectively one and two generations after the two prime Roman witnesses. The supplementary seventh-century witnesses and later writers who picked up and transmitted material about the seventh and early eighth centuries fill in a whole series of blanks in the narrative. Non-Muslim sources in aggregate can thus provide complete coverage but with one notable exception: they only have vague knowledge of the history of inner Arabia in the first third of the century; they know Muhammad's name and something of his achievement—his preaching of a new variety of monotheism and his unification of Arabia—but they have no detailed information about his career, the Hijazi background to his mission, the armed struggle to which he was forced to resort, and the complex politics of his rise to power. For this, as also for the Muslim view of later events, we must turn to Muslim sources.

The sheer volume of early Islamic traditions conserved in later historical works complicates the task of evaluation, but the same methodology may be applied as in the case of the non-Muslim sources. In Chapters 11 and 12, the three most important collections of early material are singled out for detailed consideration—(1) the *sira* (biography of the Prophet) of Ibn Ishaq dating from the 760s (preserved in a revised early ninth-century edition), (2) the *futuh al-buldan* of al-Baladhuri, a concise, geographically arranged account of the Muslim conquests, the organization of the conquered provinces, and subsequent developments, put together towards the end of the ninth century, and (3) relevant sections of the *Annals* of al-Tabari (d. 923), a universal history of mankind written on the grand scale. It is then a relatively simple matter to test the quality of the material transmitted by these texts, by comparing it with independent and validated non-Muslim accounts where there is overlap in coverage.

Muslim historians were primarily concerned to retail the extraordinary story of God's third and final revelation and the divinely sanctioned project of bringing the new faith to the attention of all mankind by extending the

boundaries of the Muslim community (*umma*) until it encompassed the whole earth. Inevitably their view of the past was introverted and to a large extent deracinated from the surrounding world. But a universal historian like al-Tabari, who set himself the task of placing the Islamic venture in the context of God's general providential scheme, had to give information about the Middle East before and during Muhammad's prophetic mission. Likewise Ibn Ishaq could not do justice to the Prophet's achievement without setting the scene, by sketching in the biblical past, describing the earlier history of his native city, and including background information about Arabia more generally. But the most substantial body of material dealing with the wider world is contained in works narrating the *futuh* (conquests) of Islam and covering the battle for the Mediterranean from the middle of the seventh century to its culmination in the early eighth century when Muslim land and sea forces made a supreme effort to capture Constantinople.

The various traditions on the history of the wider world collected and conserved in these and other medieval Muslim texts can then be gathered together in clusters relating to specific historical episodes and placed alongside reconstructions of those same episodes based on one or more of the demonstrably sound non-Muslim sources. The quality of the Muslim record, including its chronological accuracy, can then be gauged by comparing each individual cluster with the corresponding reconstruction and proceeding from episode to episode. This fifth and final stage begins with an episode of pre-Islamic Arab history in the early sixth century which caught the attention of the wider world—the siege and capture of Najran by Dhu Nuwas, Jewish king of Himyar (Yemen), in which many local Christians were killed, and the subsequent Roman-sponsored invasion and conquest of Himyar by the Christian kingdom of Axum (northern Ethiopia). While there is a certainly fluidity in the details, the main shape of events has been captured in Muslim historical texts and the episode has been located at approximately the right time. There is similarly no fundamental deformation of history in Muslim narratives, far longer and fuller than anything reported by outside observers, about the imposition of Persian direct rule on Yemen in 571, nor in the outline history of the last Roman–Persian war which forms the framework for their detailed accounts of the conflicts provoked among the Beduin tribes fronting Mesopotamia by Khusro II's decision to dismantle the traditional Persian client-management system in the first decade of the century.

It is with the start of the outward drive of Islam that Muslim traditions can be analysed and appraised in detail, because there is extensive overlap with what is reported in non-Muslim sources. There is no denying the malleability of oral tradition. Islamicists have been quite right to be highly suspicious of much of the anecdotal matter which fleshes out the bare history of events and

gives it colour. Individual tales (*akhbar*) are likely to have been elaborated and embellished in the course of transmission.[13] Those about exploits of Muslims of all sorts, leaders and humble followers, which loom large in the historical record, assuredly evolved as they circulated, before they caught a scholar's attention. The same is true of accounts of the Muslims' first contacts with the Persian world (laced with marvels) and later narratives about political machinations in high places or radical Muslim groups and their conflicts with the authorities.

But the basic skeleton of history, taking the form of brief notices about major events, placed under dated years of the Islamic era, stands up remarkably well under critical scrutiny. Where it diverges significantly from the externally validated narrative, it does not do so inadvertently but very deliberately, for clearly discernible religious reasons. There are only three such cases where historical truth can be shown to have been overlaid by religious truth after the death of Muhammad in 632. In all three cases, the tampering takes the form of a chronological rearrangement of historical notices, not of wholesale fabrication or suppression of information. Otherwise the chronologically ordered set of notices, which has been fleshed out with anecdotal material, sometimes at very great length, in medieval Muslim historical texts, conforms closely to what is independently recorded in non-Muslim sources. It follows therefore that early Islamic historical traditions can safely be asked not only to contribute to the reconstruction of a narrative of Muslim conquest and management of the conquered territories but also to illuminate the formative phase in the history of Islam in the lifetime of the Prophet.

Even the most sceptical of Islamicists have recognized that the *sira* contains authentic material, preserved in the detailed provisions of what is termed the Constitution of Medina.[14] To this should be added an outline of the principal headings of the agreement reached between the Prophet and the Meccan leadership at Hudaybiya in 628 which gives every sign of being based on a real treaty. Taking confidence from the impressive track record of Muslim historians about certain episodes of pre-Islamic as well as Islamic history, the modern historian may then venture gingerly into the life story of the Prophet and the growing impact of his preaching on Mecca, the Hijaz, and Arabia at large. Of course, there is much anecdotal material in the *sira*, which may well have been embellished in the telling, but the main episodes in the Prophet's life have very probably been recorded faithfully and in the correct sequence.

[13] S. Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic form of Historical Writing', in Averil Cameron and L. I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, i: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 277–315.

[14] Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 92–8.

The verse anthologies which punctuate the prose of the text are also apparently attached to the correct episodes, and can yield important evidence on the ethos of the times as well as some additional detail about events. Out of this core of well-ordered, briefly described episodes, a basic narrative may be constructed about the origin and early development of a world religion. This takes the Prophet from the reclusive phase which followed the first revelations, through his successful proselytizing in Mecca and the emigration (*hijra*) to Medina, to the armed struggle against his native city which ended with his triumphal return in 630.

There is only one aspect of the Prophet's life which has been deliberately masked in the *sira*. It is another case of superimposition of religious on historical truth. The historical truth was not entirely obliterated, because the text of the Qur'an, consisting as it did of the words of God, could not be tampered with, even by Muhammad. For it was Muhammad who was undoubtedly responsible for improving the historical record and retrospectively justifying an entirely unexpected action on his part. To keep the reader in suspense, I shall say nothing more at this early stage about this deformation of history authorized by the Prophet himself, nor about the three other religious truths which have damaged the narrative of the conquests and first civil war (656–61). It is not possible to present a soundly based history of the rise of Islam and to embark on the difficult enterprise of trying to understand and explain so extraordinary a historical phenomenon, until all four have been identified and discounted.

This is the final stage of the historiographical investigation which is the main subject of this book. In the course of the various enquiries conducted into specific texts, all the data which can be extracted from them and brought together to form a substantive historical narrative is identified and described. What can be recovered from the darkness of time is recovered, but it is presented in discrete fragments as it is yielded up by individual sources. There is therefore a case for rearranging the fragments into the correct chronological order and taking note of the patterns which may be revealed. That is the task undertaken in the final section, after some concluding reflections (Ch. 13) on the principal trends discernible in historical writings about the seventh century. Chapters 14–16 were originally intended to provide dry summaries of the results of the preceding historiographical investigation, but they have grown in the writing.

The reader should be warned that no more than a preliminary foray is made into a dramatic and complex period of history. The narrative which is presented incorporates a fair amount of conjecture (it is hard to tell when chronological correlation is or is not an indication of causal connection). It also presupposes a level of statecraft applied to international relations which

may well surprise historians of the early Islamic centuries. However, the evidence lurking in the detailed and dated narrative of events (in the form of explicit statements and implicit connections) suggests that Muslims as well as Romans and Persians were capable of formulating policies and devising strategies appropriate to circumstance, that like the established great powers, they could harness resources, both human and material, to the execution of policy, and that, on occasion, they made use of deception on a grand scale to very good effect.

Propositions such as these, along with an associated hypothesis that the early caliphate should be viewed as a developed polity, well able to manage its multitude of subject peoples as well as to sustain a war effort generation after generation, will undoubtedly prove contentious. What is not in doubt, though, is that western Eurasia was utterly transformed in the seventh century by the new power of Islam and that, by the middle of the eighth century, the caliphate was capable of taking on and defeating the armies of the T'ang dynasty in central Asia, with incalculable consequences for China.[15]

[15] E. de la Vaissière, *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* (Paris, 2002), 213–21, 261–2.

1

George of Pisidia

An extraordinary writer, who deserves to the numbered along with the best of his classical predecessors, a poet who was all too aware of the fragilities of life and preferred to look at God's handiwork rather than man's, is the unlikely leader of our parade of seventh-century historians. George of Pisidia cannot be typecast as a historian.[1] He was well read in Christian and pagan literature. He was a wordsmith with few peers in any age. He could soften, elongate, and manipulate images with an ingenuity almost unparalleled before or since. He was fully engaged in the intellectual controversies of his day, familiar with the niceties of theological argumentation, an advocate of Aristotelian empiricism against a prevalent rationalist, Neoplatonic consensus. He was a churchman whose interests lay well away from history.[2]

But he was a churchman who moved in high circles. He knew the Patriarch Sergius and the Emperor Heraclius, both of whom commissioned works from him. These ranged from epigrams commemorating the completion of buildings or labelling pictures to long poems on contemporary affairs. He could not, in any case, shut himself off from the dramatic confrontation which he was witnessing, between the Roman empire and Zoroastrian Persia. The Christian empire, God's designated agency for the propagation of the true

[1] L. Tartaglia (ed. and trans.), *Carmi di Giorgio di Pisidia* (Turin, 1998) reproduces previous editions of George's poetry, namely (1) J. M. Querci (ed.), *In Christi resurrectionem, De vanitate vitae*, and *Contra Severum, PG* 92, cols. 1373–84, 1581–1600, 1621–76, (2) L. Sternbach, 'Georgii Pisidae carmina inedita', *Wiener Studien*, 13 (1891), 1–62 and 14 (1892), 51–68 (*In Alypium* and epigrams), (3) A. Pertusi (ed. and trans.), *Giorgio di Pisidia, Poemi*, i: *Panegirici epici*, Studia Patristica et Byzantina, 7 (Ettal, 1959), (4) F. Gonnelli, 'Il *De vita humana* di Giorgio Pisida', *Bollettino dei classici*, ser. 3, 12 (1991), 118–38, and (5) F. Gonnelli (ed. and trans.), *Giorgio di Pisidia, Esamerone* (Pisa, 1998). Mary Whitby is preparing an English translation of the secular verse, with a full commentary. M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, Wiener Byzantinische Studien 24, I (Vienna, 2003), 65–6, 334–7 for the two collections of his verse—one (short) of literary poems, the other (large) consisting mainly of epigrams written for practical use—and the manuscripts through which they were transmitted.

[2] G. Bianchi, 'Note sulla cultura a Bisanzio all'inizio del VII secolo in rapporto all'*Esamerone* di Giorgio di Pisidia', *RSBN* 12–13 (1965–6), 137–43 and 'Sulla cultura astronomica di Giorgio di Pisidia', *Aevum*, 40 (1966), 35–52. However J. D. C. Frendo, 'The Significance of Technical Terms in the Poems of George of Pisidia', *Orpheus*, 21 (1974), 45–55 casts doubt on the range of George's reading.

faith on earth, was being dismembered piece by piece before his eyes for twenty years. He could not but look out at the heroic efforts of the emperor and the last Roman army as they fought to reverse the flow of success. Reality thrust itself into his poetry, much of which thus became involuntary history. His poem in three cantos on Heraclius' conduct of operations in 622, his narrative of the Avar–Persian siege of Constantinople in 626, and his overview of Heraclius' achievements up to spring 628 are important contemporary testimonies, prime sources for the historian. Late in his life he turned his hand to history proper, when, in response to an imperial commission, he wrote what can be termed the official history of the final victorious phase of the war, a highly innovative work of classicizing history.

1. LIFE AND EARLY POEMS

George, the date of whose birth is unknown, came from Antioch in Pisidia. He was ordained and spent most of his adult life as a deacon of the Great Church of St Sophia, serving in the patriarchal administration.[3] He had probably joined it by late 610 or early 611, when he wrote the earliest of his extant poems, *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*. This brief encomium of Heraclius welcomes his successful rebellion and is optimistic about his prospects of negotiating an end to the Persian war which had resulted from Phocas' *putsch* eight years earlier. It sounds like the poet's personal acclamation of the new ruler rather than an imperial commission (despite the fact that it is addressed to Heraclius in the second person). George seems to be angling for patronage. The absence of any direct reference to Sergius, the new patriarch, suggests that George had not as yet come to his attention.[4]

It is possible to trace the main stages of George's bureaucratic career thanks to the headings in the manuscripts which preserve one or more of his poems and a brief summary of his life and works in the *Suda*, a huge antiquarian

[3] Michael Psellus, who regarded George's iambics as superior to Euripides', names his home city (A. Colonna, 'Michaelis Pselli de Euripide et Georgio Pisida iudicium', *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini* (Rome, 1953), i. 16–21, at 20. 24–5).

[4] Ed. and trans. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 77–81. Reference to Heraclius' coup on 5 October 610 (lines 39–62); hopes for peace (lines 14–38). J. D. C. Frendo, 'The Poetic Achievement of George of Pisidia: A Literary and Historical Study', in A. Moffatt (ed.), *MAISTOR: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5 (Canberra, 1984), 159–87, at 167–71 rightly rejects Pertusi's alternative and preferred dating to 619–20 (*Giorgio di Pisidia*, 18–19). Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 13–14 agrees, on metrical grounds. Angling for imperial favour: Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, i. 38–9.

encyclopedia put together in the tenth century.[5] Taking the posts in ascending order of importance, he is variously described as *skeuophylax*, one of twelve staff responsible for the movable property of St Sophia (plate, vestments, consumables such as incense, and decorations), *referendarius*, an official responsible for communications with the emperor and imperial authorities (there were twelve of these too in the reign of Heraclius), and *chartophylax*, keeper of the archives.[6] Each of the first two titles is separately attested in a considerable number of manuscripts, the third in one manuscript and the *Suda*, the testimony of which is decisive in the case of an author as well known as George of Pisidia. It seems reasonable to suppose that originally each poem was prefaced with the name and current position of the author and that subsequently, when selections of his poetry were made, it was a matter of chance which of the individual titles made its way into the heading of individual manuscript selections and thence into the proliferation of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts of the *Hexaemeron*. The title given by the *Suda* probably represents the summit of his career in the patriarchate, but he went on to hold an independent position as head of imperial charitable foundations for orphans and the old.[7] He died after 632, the date of the latest of his extant writings, a prose laudation of a contemporary saint.[8]

The second datable poem is an extraordinary one about Heraclius' eldest son Heraclius the New Constantine, born on 3 May 612. Traditionally it has been dated to the 620s when the boy was growing up and had been left in nominal charge of the empire while Heraclius campaigned in the east. But it should probably be placed much earlier, in 613 when the young Heraclius was a baby, less than a year old. The occasion which prompted its composition was probably

[5] A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae lexicon*, i (Leipzig, 1928), 517.

[6] A maximum for the clerical establishment of St Sophia was laid down by Heraclius, in an edict issued on 1 May 612 (J. Konidaris, 'Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios', in D. Simon (ed.), *Fontes minores*, v (Frankfurt, 1982), 33–106, at 66). There is no mention of the office of *chartophylax*, as is noted by Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 13 n. 1 and Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 39, presumably because there had never been more than one holder. V. Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, v.1: *L'Église* (Paris, 1963), 67–8 summarizes what is known about the office: it is first attested in 530; the holder was the notary responsible for the patriarchal archives; George was probably a predecessor of Stephen, who held the post in 638.

[7] Outline of George's career: Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 11–16 (13 n. 1 for manuscript references to his posts); Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 39. The manuscripts themselves are catalogued and dated in Pertusi's earlier article, 'Dei poemi perduti di Giorgio di Pisidia', *Aevum*, 30 (1956), 395–427, at 400–8, and by Gonnelli, *Esamerone*, 17–35, who concludes (104–6) that there were two distinct revivals of interest in George, in the tenth and thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, each of which resulted in systematic collections of his works. For the *Suda* as a whole, see P. Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme byzantin* (Paris, 1971), 297–9.

[8] *Laudatio S. Anastasii*, ed. and trans. B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, i: *Les Textes* (Paris, 1992), 202–59.

the baby's coronation as co-emperor on 22 January 613.[9] It was completed and ready for recitation by Easter (15 April) or soon afterwards. If it was formally presented to the court, the occasion was perhaps the small co-emperor's first birthday, two and half weeks later. *In resurrectionem* is a daring display of wit, perhaps intended like *In Heraclium* to catch the attention of potential patrons, perhaps a commission of the emperor's. The triumph of Christ at Easter is evoked and the consequent lamenting of the Devil who is pictured as vomiting up the decayed corpses with which he has stuffed his dark belly. This extraordinary reference to vomit (lines 52–5) and the invocation of the child as swaddled in spiritual purple (65) should alert us to the subject's age. George emphasizes above all the innocence of the child, proof against all the Devil's wiles—in particular against the childish excitation of partisan spectators at the races, their eyes starting from their heads, their raised arms gesticulating wildly (77–92). The factional violence of Phocas' reign is thus alluded to. The child 'came forth as a Heracles indeed' (106) who will campaign with his father in the future. He has no teeth to show when he laughs (95–6) and likes playing with a ball, which George construes as a sign of intellectual interest in 'the sequence of spheres above' (100–3).

There is no reason to suppose that George fell silent after 613. Many of the extant poems written without reference to contemporary events may be datable to the years 614–21: his affectionate mocking of the appearance of a fat clerical friend, Alypius, portayed as a grotesque flecked with sweat which looked as if it had been spewed forth from Etna, a poem which begins as *psogos* (invective), laced with classical and biblical allusions, and mutates into *encomium* (of Alypius' character);[10] occasional verse, mainly about monuments (buildings and images), including what seems to be a long series of ekphrastic epigrams about a cycle of gospel paintings; and epigrammatic fragments about saints which, if they were not captions to pictures, may have be the detritus of lost devotional poems, which were left out of Byzantine editions of George's work.[11] There is some evidence too that he wrote a poem (also dropped from later editions) about Heraclius' achievements in the early part of his reign, with the emphasis on his military reforms.[12]

[9] Ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 250–9. Birth and coronation of Heraclius the New Constantine: *Chron. Pasch.*, 702. 16–18, 703. 17–704. 2.

[10] Ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 458–65.

[11] Ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 468–505. Cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, i. 180–3, 335.

[12] Pertusi, *Georgio di Pisidia*, 20–1 postulates that a *protos logos* dealing with instructions sent by Heraclius to his generals, to which George refers at *Expeditio Persica*, II. 177–82, was an earlier poem, the contents of which are recapitulated at *Heraclias*, I. 125–9 and 152–8.

2. WAR POETRY AND RELIGIOUS POETRY

Much of the occasional verse was probably sponsored by patrons. But George's first clearly attested commission came from the emperor in the second half of 622.[13] Heraclius had taken to the field, for the first time since his failed attempt to drive the Persians back from Antioch in 613. After presiding over military exercises, he had led his troops on a swift counterstrike against Persian forces operating in northern Asia Minor and had achieved some success, before hastily returning to Constantinople to deal with a crisis in the Balkans.[14] By this date George was acquainted with him, indeed cast himself in the poem as a confidant of the emperor's (III. 343–6). On his return Heraclius commissioned George to write about the campaign, supplying him with basic information in the form of a written record, probably a copy of an official account put into circulation immediately after the campaign.[15] Hence George could give precise figures for the passage of time between episodes highlighted in the poem (II. 11, 286, III. 14, 150–1). Hence too he could assume that his audience would be familiar with the campaign, and would appreciate the deftness with which he introduced an unrelated episode of near-shipwreck on an earlier sea crossing to the palace of Hieria into the swift voyage to Pylae in Bithynia as the climax of the first canto. There it served to point up the poem's principal themes, the emperor's calmness and decisiveness in a crisis, his willingness to plunge into the fray, and his role as God's vice-gerent on earth (I. 162–252).[16]

[13] Ed. and trans. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 84–136. It is hard to determine which of George's poems were commissioned since he is inclined to address all manner of personages in the second person in the course of a single poem. Mere invocation of emperor or patriarch does not therefore prove that they were the patrons for whom George was writing in the case of many of the poems. More positive evidence is required. The following criteria to distinguish commissions from personal writings are adopted here: (i) a considerable volume of praise, verging on the hyperbolic and directed at one of the addressees, should be introduced at an early stage; (ii) the poem should be formally presented to the same addressee. Both are satisfied in the case of the *Expeditio Persica*: praise of Heraclius in the second person at I. 35–99; presentation to him of the poem which is likened to a garland of fragrant roses (his achievements) gathered from among the thorns of war (III. 374–80).

[14] N. Oikonomidès, 'A Chronological Note on the First Persian Campaign of Heraclius (622)', *BMGS* 1 (1975), 1–9.

[15] An observation which I owe to Mary Whitby.

[16] The digression is clearly signalled at the start (I. 162–9), but Mary Whitby ('George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns: Variety and Development', in G. J. Reinink and B. H. Stolte (eds.), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven, 2002), 157–73, at 162–7) is the first to realize that the episode does not belong to the 622 campaign.

The *Expeditio Persica* is a loosely structured poem in three cantos which heaps praise on Heraclius—merited, the poet insists, not mere flattery—not only for his leadership and sang-froid but even more for his intelligence, clemency, and piety. It is impressionistic, homing in on a small number of episodes with panegyrical potential. There is a fair amount of rhetorical padding, the poet making his presence known throughout. He takes his listeners (and readers) with him as he imagines himself watching the frightening simulation of war in training exercises carried out before the campaign (II. 122–6, 149–52), overhearing soldiers talking about Heraclius (III. 131–6), or seeing from a distance the disorderly flight of Persian forces (III. 258–9).[17] He lays on an impressive demonstration of verbal dexterity. The poem pullulates with antitheses, puns, paradoxes, familiar rhetorical themes presented in new guises, and variegated imagery. It is held together by wordplay and recurring motifs.[18] Thus Heraclius, who is fleetingly likened to Moses campaigning against Pharaoh (I. 135–8), is contrasted with Xerxes, distant antecedent of his Persian antagonist, who tried to beat his way across a sea (II. 303–26). Rocks and stones make repeated appearances—a demon taking the form of a stone and drawing blood from Heraclius' toe (I. 239–47), Heraclius quoting David about beating the children of Persia on the rocks (II. 113–15), Xerxes trying to petrify the water and make stones stream (II. 305 and 311), indecision on the part of the Persian general likened to the irregular course of a stone rolling downhill (II. 348–56), Persian contingents petrified among mountain stones as they look down on the Roman army in the plain (III. 32–6), Persian soldiers all like obelisks of stone when challenged to fight (III. 70–2). The poem was surely written for public recitation before emperor and court, probably early in 623.

George's only direct experience of war came during the Avar siege of Constantinople in the summer of 626. It was a harrowing time which prompted him to write his next two secular poems. The first, entitled *In Bonum Patricium*, though addressed to Bonus who was deputed to run the government during Heraclius' absence on campaign between 624 and 626, is an emotional appeal to the emperor, described as the shining eye of the inhabited world and the sun of Rome, to return and save his endangered capital. It was probably a spontaneous expression of the poet's feelings,

[17] Mary Whitby is surely right to interpret the poet's self-projection into the poem as a Pindaresque device for lending vividness to his evocation of scenes and conjuring up appropriate emotions, rather than taking them as literal references to the poet's presence on campaign. See her forthcoming translation and commentary. Contra Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 13–14 and Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 39. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, i. 37 may go too far in reducing the poet's authorial presence to that of a disembodied, ghostly being without feelings.

[18] Mary Whitby, 'George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word: Words, Words, Words . . .', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), 173–86.

written in the period of anxious suspense around the beginning of June when the attack was known to be imminent but had not yet materialized.[19] The second, the *Bellum Avaricum*, gives a connected, chronologically ordered account of the siege and credits the Mother of God with saving the city. It was commissioned by the Patriarch Sergius, upon whom praise is lavished.[20] It is a tour de force of richly encrusted historical narration, with ingenious turns and clever imagery, far superior to the carefully worked prose account previously penned by Theodore Syncellus.[21]

The next of George's datable poems is the *Heraclias*, a celebration of Heraclius' achievements throughout his reign up to the time of writing.[22] Its composition can be dated after 20 May 628 when Heraclius' final dispatch from the east, about the deposition and death of Khusro II, was read out from the *ambo* of St Sophia.[23] The opening lines which tell stars, moon, sun, and aether to exult at the news (I. 1–14) rework the first few sentences of the dispatch.[24] If a reference to the garlanding of the city in honour of Heraclius may be taken literally (I. 212–14), the poem was composed for recitation at a ceremony celebrating the emperor's triumphal return (to be placed in late June or July).[25] Heraclius is lauded not so much for his own feats of generalship (likened to those of Scipio and Alexander) as for the salvation which he has brought to the universe as God's faithful agent on earth. Elegant turns compare him to great heroes who served mankind in the past, both mythical (Heracles and Perseus) and biblical (Noah and Moses).[26] His principal

[19] Ed. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 163–70. Cited phrases: lines 49 and 53–4.

[20] Ed. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 176–200. The presentation of the poem, described once again as roses gathered from among the thorns of war, is made to the Patriarch Sergius at lines 10–15, who is lauded at lines 125–64. Two epigrams (nos. 95 and 96) also belong to this period: they were probably inscribed on the Virgin's church at Blachernae and commemorated her role in defeating the Avars by land and sea in 626 (ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 496–9).

[21] Theodore Syncellus' celebratory sermon is discussed in Ch. 5. George recycles several of his images, embellishing them with characteristically novel variations, and replaces relatively conventional passages with virtuoso turns of his own. P. Speck, *Zufälliges zum Bellum Avaricum des Georgios Pisides*, Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 24 (Munich, 1980), 18–19, 24–6, and 52–3 for the relationship between the texts.

[22] Ed. and trans. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 240–61.

[23] *Chron. Pasch.*, 727. 7–14.

[24] Frendo, 'Poetic Achievement', 181–2.

[25] George's claim that only Heraclius' words could dissolve his writer's block (I. 219–41) should surely be taken as a reference to his dispatch rather than future conversations in which the emperor would describe his Persian campaigns, as suggested by Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 28–9. Consequently, there is no need to suppose, with Pertusi (16 and 29), that the poem was produced in two stages, two cantos in the first flush of victory in 628, the third after Heraclius' return.

[26] Mary Whitby, 'A New Image for a New Age: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius', in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East* (Kraków, 1994), 197–225. Cf. also Mary Whitby, 'Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and his

achievements are then touched on in a second canto—the deposition of Phocas, the calming of the circus factions, fighting on two fronts, secret preparations for campaigning in the east, the swift march east, and the most notable success of the first counteroffensive, the destruction (in 624) of the fire-temple at Darartasis (modern Takht-i Sulaiman). At this point, line 230 of the second canto, the text breaks off abruptly, leaving listener and reader in the dark about his subsequent feats on that first counteroffensive (624–6), his second, devastating attack (627–8), and the successful *putsch* it prompted against Khusro. A second set of headline-catching events was almost certainly picked out for variegated short encomia, culminating in a turn on the fall of Khusro, in a third canto, the existence of which is attested by a high-grade Vatican manuscript.[27]

Heraclius began thinking about the problem of interconfessional conflict in the Middle East while he was still on Persian territory. It made sense to try to bring about a reunion while memories of war against a dualist, nearly triumphant enemy and of the suffering endured by Christians remained vivid. After his return to Constantinople, he commissioned George to write a verse tract, dealing with the central Christological issues which divided Nestorians, Monophysites, and Chalcedonians. The resulting poem, *Contra Severum*, which runs to 726 lines, was probably completed in the course of 629, before Heraclius set off for the Middle East in early 630 to begin his new spiritual campaign.[28] It was targeted on the principal intellectual force behind Monophysitism, Severus, patriarch of Antioch 512–18. Severus' views and arguments are dissected. His charges against Chalcedonians are rebutted. He is accused of deliberate misinterpretation and falsification of patristic evidence. Images of sinuous writhing and contortion are conjured up: Severus is likened to the trainer of a belly-dancer (220–8), and to a snake which stretches out and then contracts (320–1). Key theological points are debated, although George thinks that it would be better for men to maintain a mystical silence about such matters as the origin, qualities, and relations of natures in Christ (9–23). It is virtuoso piece of forensic argumentation, elegantly expressed and embellished as usual with apposite similes. It demonstrates again the

Deputies', in Mary Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1998), 247–73.

[27] A list of George's works is appended to the text of the *Hexaemeron* in *Cod. Ottob.* 342, a scholarly manuscript of the fourteenth century, written by two hands, which also includes a text of the *Iliad* with interlinear glosses (see Gonnelli, *Esamerone*, 31–2).

[28] Ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 262–307. Lines 700–18 for the conversion of a Persian town in the course of Heraclius' campaigns. Early moves on the part of Sergius and Heraclius: G. Dagron, P. Riché, and A. Vauchez (eds.), *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, iv: *Évêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)* (Paris, 1993), 40–3.

extraordinary versatility of the poet who can tackle the most unpromising subjects with verve and eloquence.[29]

It is not possible to pinpoint the date of completion of George's longest and finest poem, the *Hexaemeron*, let alone to establish when he began to work on it. It looks like the distillation of a lifetime's thought gradually moulded into verse over many years.[30] The final version was sponsored by the Patriarch Sergius, who receives hyperbolic praise in the opening address. Remarks about Sergius at the end (1869–80) make it plain that he is fasting and thus point to a first recitation in Lent. The year must be either 629 or 630. For the victorious conclusion of the war was known at the time (the news arrived after Lent 628) and a final peace treaty had not yet been agreed (George expresses rather hawkish sentiments on what its terms should be).[31] It is a carefully worked, reflective poem. George breaks with convention. Instead of an exegesis of *Genesis*, he celebrates God's Creation in all its aspects: the engineering of the universe, the regular movement of the heavenly bodies, the seasonal cycle of the year, the intricate design of man, and nature in all its variety. George shows that God's power pervades his whole Creation, taking innumerable examples of his work from the wonders of nature, and argues that he continues still to interest himself and to intervene in human affairs as he did in Old Testament days. He brings out the majesty and the complexity of God's handiwork, no less awed by it than was a contemporary of his in the distant Hijaz.[32]

The last of the datable poems, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, is short, written in a staccato style, and packed with biblical and mythological allusions. It celebrates Heraclius' restoration of the True Cross to its proper place in

[29] L. S. B. MacCoull, 'George of Pisidia, *Against Severus*: In Praise of Heraclius', in R. Dahood (ed.), *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends and Opportunities for Research* (Turnhout, 1998), 69–79. It is clear that the poem was an imperial commission since George presents it as conveying the emperor's views, its arguments being likened to merchant ships of speech filled with the emperor's words (lines 69–89). Heraclius is duly praised in the opening and closing perorations (lines 1–8 and 691–718). It is highly unlikely that so polemical a work would have been commissioned after the start of talks in 630 (contra MacCoull who believes that George introduces the word *ektheseis* in line 677 as a deliberate reference to Heraclius' doctrinal edict, the *Ekthesis* of 638).

[30] Ed. and trans. Gonnelli, *Esamerone*.

[31] All stops are pulled out in the opening, excessively laudatory invocation of Sergius (lines 1–59) to whom the poem is presented at lines 22–3. The arguments of D. M. Olster, 'The Date of George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron*', *DOP* 45 (1991), 159–72 in favour of a late date of composition (in 638) are rebutted by Mary Whitby, 'The Devil in Disguise: The End of George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron* Reconsidered', *JHS* 115 (1995), 115–29. After presenting Heraclius as rescuer of the world, persecutor and saviour of Persia, George prays that he may rule the whole world and that the earth may imitate heaven and come under the authority of a single sun (lines 1799–806).

[32] Cf. Bianchi, 'Note sulla cultura', and Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 25–9.

Jerusalem on 21 March 630. According to its title, it was improvised after the proclamation of an imperial dispatch about the triumphal ceremony to a large crowd in Constantinople ten days later. This is borne out by the poem itself which reads like the immediate response of the poet to the news of the event, short, insubstantial, and excited.[33]

3. OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE PERSIAN WAR AND OTHER LATE WORKS

George seems to have been at his most productive in the last years of his life, in the late 620s and early 630s. If, as seems likely, it is a work of his maturity, *De vanitate vitae*, a moving rumination on the vanity of worldly ambition, should be added to the four poems datable to these years.[34] So too should *De vita humana*, a virtuoso piece of hexameter verse composition in the manner of Nonnus, which touches on themes developed in *Hexaemeron* as well as *De vanitate vitae* and displays an extraordinary command of archaic vocabulary.[35] Another important and time-consuming project was a history of the two Roman counteroffensives of 624–6 and 627–8, which Heraclius commissioned from him at the end of the war. As in 622, a set of official documents, dispatches sent back from the field, was handed over, to provide basic information. This time, though, George adopted a novel approach, quite different from his earlier discursive treatment of the short 622 campaign. He chose to reuse material from the dispatches, pointing up critical moments with poetry. He composed at least eighteen poems, fragments of which have lodged themselves in the text of the *Chronographia* of Theophanes (composed nearly two centuries later) and the pages of the tenth-century *Souda*. These verse passages embellished the historical narrative in the way traditionally done by speeches and artful digressions (antiquarian, geographical and other). They also served three historiographical purposes: by drawing readers' attention to critical engagements, they helped to articulate and shape the military narrative; by highlighting Heraclius' feats of valour and morale-boosting speeches, they emphasized his personal contribution to ultimate success, without debasing history and subordinating truth to panegyric; and, by providing opportunities for commentary and interpretation of events, they

33 Ed. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 225–30. Cf. Whitby, 'Variety and Development', 161–2.
34 Ed. and trans. Tartaglia, *Carmi*, 428–45. It appears to be dedicated to the Patriarch Sergius who is invoked twice (lines 34–40 and 230–8).
35 Ed. and trans. Gonnelli, 'Il *De vita humana*'.

brought out the underlying rationale of the war, a battle on behalf of Christendom against an evil empire.[36]

The last of George's works cannot stand comparison with his two very different accounts of Heraclius' achievements, let alone with his great reflective poems on life and the cosmos. It is written entirely in prose, the poet's hand only revealing itself in rhythmical clausulae and inventive imagery. It is a reworking of a plain but gripping account of the life and death of St Anastasius, a Persian soldier who converted to Christianity and succeeded in emulating the early Christian martyrs. George reproduces the content of his source (save for the prologue which he replaces with one of his own), but rewrites it in a more elevated style, with much elaboration. The Life of the saint is transformed into a sonorous encomium, written for public recitation and surely commissioned by the Patriarch Sergius who is envisaged as being in the audience. Clearly it postdates the original Life (commissioned in 631). Heraclius is conspicuous for his absence, presumably in the Middle East where he strove (not unsuccessfully) to reunite Christendom between 630 and 632. Had he been in Constantinople at the time of the recitation, George surely would have referred to him. It follows then that the encomium was probably written in 632.[37]

George died soon afterwards. Nothing in any of his works indicates that he was aware of the sudden appearance of a new threat to the established order on earth. He, if anyone, would have been alert to the significance of the first major victory won by Muslims over Roman forces very early in 634, which opened up Palestine to widespread devastation. Concerned as he was to place human conflicts in a larger cosmic context, he could not but have been shocked by this evidence of God's anger, this setting of nomads from the southern hot desert against the civilized, settled world, immediately after Heraclius had rescued it from Khusro II. It is conceivable that the shock silenced him, especially when that first victory was followed, before the year was out, by a second which led to the submission of the whole of Palestine and opened the way for further military thrusts into Syria and Roman Mesopotamia.[38] It is more likely, though, that he would have issued a call for Heraclius to take up the challenge, to prove once more that he could surpass his predecessors as an effective agent of the divine will, and to act as the

[36] See Ch. 9 below.

[37] Ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 202–59. Authorship, date, and character: A. Pertusi, 'L'encomio di S. Anastasio martire persiano', *AB* 76 (1958), 5–63, at 7–25; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 191–7; and Whitby, 'Persuasive Word', 177–81.

[38] The most important pieces of evidence for the first Muslim successes are identified in Chapters 2 and 3. For a short summary, see R. W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, TTH 31 (Liverpool, 1999), ii: Historical Commentary, note 53 (Arab Conquests I).

champion of Christendom in the new struggle, which, he might well have supposed, marked the opening of the final phase in human history. It was surely death which silenced this great poet.

There can be no doubt of George's stature as a poet of rare talent, with relatively few peers in classical antiquity. Given the widely differing subjects he tackled, variations in the length of his poems (from nearly 2,000 to less than 100 lines),[39] in the style of exposition (from measured progress to pithy comments or excited exclamations in swift succession), and in his approach (from the purely thematic to the narrative), he is hard to classify as a poet. What links all his verse output is the imagery conjured up (mainly from the everyday natural world), brilliant wordplay, pithy epigrammatic expressions, paradoxes of all sorts, wit, and solemnity in the face of the working out of God's will. He cannot possibly be typecast as a political poet, at the beck and call of political masters, the patriarch and the emperor, let alone as their self-serving and subservient client. This would be to attach too much importance to one of the several genres in which he wrote, to skate over the distinction between commissioned and personal works, and to malign him (as will be shown below). Certainly his range extended far beyond and above politics, to embrace the whole universe, morality, the theological core of Christianity, the meaning of particular religious images, as well as lighter topics.[40]

4. LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT

It is plain, from the preceding survey of George's output, that the profane component is relatively well represented in Byzantine collections of his verse. It seems likely that, with the notable exception of the *Hexaemeron*, the other principal component, the religious, suffered greater losses, affecting principally private, devotional poems, of which only one example, *De vanitate vitae*, has survived. For it is hard to conceive of so consummate a craftsman, whose religious feelings ran so deep, refraining from writing on matters of faith throughout his life and especially in the fraught fifteen years between the composition of *In Heraclium* in 611 and the anxious summer of 626.[41]

[39] *Hexaemeron* is the longest with 1,864 lines (not counting George's authorial note). Apart from the epigrams, there are two poems with fewer than 100 lines—*In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem* and *De vita humana*.

[40] Cf. Whitby, 'Devil in Disguise', 116 and 'Defender of the Cross', 247–8.

[41] The attention of later generations of Byzantine readers seems rightly to have been caught by the longest and greatest of his poems, the *Hexaemeron* (represented by some 50 manuscripts as well as an Armenian and Slavonic translation (Gonnelli, *Esamerone*, 17–39; Lauxtermann,

This probable bias in favour of the survival of the secular verse in which George involved himself in the affairs of his own time cannot be deplored by historians, who would have been hard put to extract useful material from a different selection of his verse chosen solely on the basis of its literary quality. Not that the extant corpus is devoid of literary merit. Far from it. George demonstrates that he was a man of extraordinarily wide literary culture and high intelligence. Allusions to pagan myths and to epic and tragic characters are contraposed against others to Old Testament heroes in his religious as well as his secular poetry. He shows familiarity with pagan philosophers as well as Christian thinkers. His vocabulary is vast and variegated, a mosaic of classical, post-classical, biblical, patristic, and late Roman words (among them, unusually, a number of current technical terms). There are verbal reminiscences of classical as well as biblical passages, and subtle, pointed references to classical as well as biblical anecdotes. He was a bold innovator, as regards language (there are many new coinings of his), metre (the iambic trimetres, which are used for the first time in the body of a panegyrical poem, combine subtly and successfully quantities with accentuation), and the synthesis of the sacred and profane which he achieves (the interpenetration of classical and biblical themes imparts a universal quality to the political as well as the religious verse and enables it to operate on both a temporal and an eternal plane). Finally he was versatile, ready to perform to order or at moments of high emotion as well as to explore deeper issues over the longer term by himself.[42] He was also, of course, more than capable of writing good high-style prose, one attested example of which has been preserved, his laudation of St Anastasius, the most spectacular Christian martyr of the last great war.

The historian who seeks to quarry material from George's poems must remember first that he was a poet whose principal purpose was to move and elevate his listeners and readers rather than to convey information, and second that he was a devout Christian, who remained conscious of eternity and of God's unceasing involvement in the affairs of his creatures. It would be

Byzantine Poetry, ii. 57)) at the cost of neglecting the remainder of his religious output. It should be stressed that close scrutiny of the poems individually provides irrefutable evidence against Pertusi's over-schematic periodization of George's literary career into two unequal phases, a long first one in which he only wrote secular verse followed by a short one from 630 or soon thereafter to his death when he turned to theological and moral themes (*Giorgio di Pisidia*, 15–16). It is also hard to square the notion implicit in this, that George was so bound up with the affairs of his time that he only switched to religious themes for lack of worthy secular subjects, with what we know of him from the *Hexaemeron* and *De vanitate vitae*, where he gazes with rapt attention at the works of God and scorns the strivings of man's worldly ambition.

[42] Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 32–48; Frendo, 'Poetic Achievement'; Whitby, 'Variety and Development'. See also Frendo, 'Technical Terms', for his escape from the linguistic straitjacket of traditional poetic diction.

the height of philistinism to ignore the delicate architecture of his poetry and the many subtle nuances of meaning in the search for hard, graspable facts. It would be wrong-headed to view the poet only within the confines of his own time, when, in reality, however absorbed he was in contemporary events, he was always able to escape on to a timeless plane.

He was a very fine poet, who can be seen to best advantage in his two great religious poems, the *Hexaemeron* and *De vanitate vitae*. For the subjects were more inspiring than ephemeral secular themes and he was less constrained by time. In them he demonstrated to best effect his love for sonorous language and elaborate similes. The images are vivid and apposite. He revivified tired ones, extending them and interweaving abstract points so that simile was transformed into metaphor, and introduced many fresh ones of his own, some of which are developed into long and ingenious conceits. Some of the best are to be found in *De vanitate vitae* as the poet reflects on the workings of fortune and the vanity of worldly ambition and pride. A small sample will illustrate his technique:

> (i) Earth, mud, swirling dust—
> earth rejoins earth
> and is swaddled in an earthen swathe;
> and earth again goes forth as dust,
> which the strong whirlwind
> raises up on high and draws down.
> So too for our oft-turning lives—
> squalls of malign winds
> raise them up on high to counterfeit glory
> (lines 41–9)

> (ii) For present brightness passes
> and all unstable insubstantial glory
> stretches out and contracts again,
> just as a malign snake with his coils
> seems to lie outstretched only to tighten them the more
> (lines 216–20)

> (iii) Thus creeps on the whole course of life
> and every swelling of pride bursts and shrinks,
> like a throbbing, distended bubble;
> it might seem to rise up high,
> but if meanwhile some small unnoticed thing,
> a chip, a crumb, a drop, encounter it,
> its lightness would be turned into its opposite
> and it would shrivel from the violent blow
> (lines 222–9)

In the *Hexaemeron*, he conveys movingly his sense of man's weakness and vulnerability and his awe at the magnificence of God's Creation. Read, for example, the following lines (362–71):

> Who can look upon this vast heaven
> and the ever-moving power which it has,
> upon great clusters of stars
> as they move, now north, now south,
> in forays or migrations,
> and upon the abyss of air poured out,
> cooled now, heated again,
> enduring forced attacks,
> who can do so without understanding its unchanging essence
> and realizing that ever-changing Creation is his servant?

But insofar as they were products of their time, George's secular poems are of inestimable value to the historian. At a very basic level, they provide a modest amount of information about events which cannot be obtained from other extant sources. The *Expeditio Persica* is the sole decent source for the manoeuvres and actions of 622, providing the bulk of the material which is recycled in the corresponding entry of the *Chronographia* of Theophanes. The second canto of the *Heraclias* provides invaluable information about the line of Heraclius' march towards Persia in 624 and hence about the strategy of the initial phase of that first counteroffensive. The third canto, if only it had survived, would probably have plugged a gaping hole in our knowledge about the opening phases of the second counteroffensive in summer 627. The *Bellum Avaricum* is a useful supplement to other accounts of the siege of Constantinople, because it gives the overview of an eyewitness who was peculiarly well placed to observe the flow of events. Finally, the fragmentary remains of the hybrid prose and verse history, an imperial commission which may well have surprised its sponsor, transmit a mass of particulars about Heraclius' Persian campaigns on which the latter-day historian can feast.

But the principal contribution of George's poetry, the religious as well as the secular, is to improve our understanding of the period. Poetry written in times of crisis, by an acute observer and interpreter of current events, brings with it wafts of the contemporary atmosphere. George conveys best the sense of what it was like to be involved in a war which increasingly took on a religious colouring. He both reflected and helped to shape the public image of an emperor who had dared to take direct command over the army in the field and thus to shoulder direct responsibility for the outcome of operations. He both expressed the views of the patriarchate for which he worked and aired his own ideas. He therefore enables us to tiptoe momentarily inside those dramatic times, to which otherwise

entry is barred except insofar as the Qur'an and the *sira* (Life and Deeds) of Muhammad open a door into the contemporary Hijaz or Christian saints' lives present genuine portraits of individuals in real local settings.

5. RELATIONS WITH THE EMPEROR

Before we take leave of George, an important issue must be confronted. We have seen that he was both independent-minded and ready to take commissions from the emperor and the patriarch. The question therefore arises as to how far he allowed himself to become the mouthpiece of his sponsors in the poems which they commissioned and, more generally, as to how far he conformed, out of conviction or deference, to the prevailing views of society. It is of particular importance to establish the closeness of his connection with the world of the court, hence the degree to which his poems reflect the official views of the emperor and his immediate entourage.

The most authoritative of the small band of scholars who have taken a serious interest in the works of George holds that he became a friend of the emperor during 622 and remained on close, possibly even intimate terms with him thereafter.[43] In which case, we would expect his poetry, whether or not it was commissioned by the emperor, to embody much of his thinking and to harmonize with the themes of current and planned official propaganda. Material enabling us to determine the public stance of the imperial authorities independently of the poetry of George is far from plentiful, but there is enough for us to discern (i) the main thrust of propaganda at the height of the war, (ii) the relatively generous attitude shown towards Persia after its defeat in the winter of 627/8 which contributed to the successful outcome of peace negotiations, and (iii) the image of Heraclius at the end of the war.[44] When these officially propagated views are compared with the main themes of George's poetry, significant divergences can be detected. While he stresses, in the *Expeditio Persica* and the *Heraclias*, that the war was a conflict between two faiths and that the Roman forces were God's agents in the earthly struggle, in neither of those poems does he make the recovery of the True Cross as central to the struggle as it was in official propaganda. It only assumes importance when its physical

[43] Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 14. Cf. also A. Pernice, *L'imperatore Eraclio* (Florence, 1905), p. x and A. N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, i: *602–634* (Amsterdam, 1968), 93 and 358.

[44] J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns', in Dąbrowa (ed.), *Roman and Byzantine Army*, 57–87, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, iv, at 36–9; J. W. Drijvers, 'Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 175–90.

presence was central to an event covered by George, namely the triumphal ceremony of its return to Jerusalem on 21 March 630 which is celebrated in *In restitutionem S. Crucis*.[45] When victory was won, he adopted a harder line, if the opening of his peroration at the end of the *Hexaemeron* is to be taken at face value, abandoning the traditional notion that the civilized world was satisfactorily governed by two rival, equipollent empires.[46] Finally, in his two poems celebrating Heraclius' achievements in the last stages of the war, he only alludes fleetingly to the officially propagated image of Heraclius as a new David who has slain the Persian Goliath,[47] preferring instead a whole series of alternative comparisons with Daniel, Heracles, Noah, Perseus, Odysseus, Elijah, Jason, and Constantine.[48]

There were, of course, good literary reasons for George to strive for novelty, if he was to stir or startle his listeners, and thus to seek out the recondite rather than the familiar (who but George would have compared the young rebel leader and future emperor to Phineas?),[49] but he shows rather more independence than we would expect in a friend or confidant of the emperor. Besides the examples already cited, there is the ferocity of his attack on the prime intellectual force behind Monophysitism. It is conceivable that Heraclius hoped to soften resistance by an intense bombardment of an enemy's position, when he commissioned *Contra Severum*, but the poem is so at variance with his own conciliatory approach that one suspects that George went well beyond his brief. This suggests that George was no imperial stooge, that the tone and dominant themes of his political poetry were of his choosing, and that he preferred at times to adopt an original line of his own. His poetry therefore is unreliable as a guide to the inner workings of Heraclius' mind, to the collective mood of his entourage, and to the public presentation of policy in his reign.

Furthermore there is a long puzzling gap between George's first imperial commission in 622 and the two post-war commissions which he received, for a history of the 624–6 and 627–8 campaigns and a tract against Monophysitism. All his subsequent political poems were slight by comparison with the *Expeditio Persica*, none more so than the *Heraclias* which provides no more

[45] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 293–319.

[46] *Hexaemeron*, 1799–806.

[47] The allusion (*In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 71–4) is to David dancing as he brings the Ark into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6: 14–17). David is not named, but the True Cross is called the new Ark and Heraclius dances with angels. Cf. Drijvers, 'Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*', 184–5.

[48] *Heraclias*, I. 15–21 (Daniel), 65–79 (Heracles), 84–92 (Noah), II. 5–23 (Perseus and Heracles), 71–97 (Odysseus and Perseus), 133–5 (Elijah); *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 21–4 (Jason), 47–63 (Constantine). The loss of the third canto of the *Heraclias* obviously diminishes the force of this argument insofar as it depends on George's silence.

[49] *In Heracleum redeuntem*, 56–8.

than an impressionistic and rhetorical summary of the emperor's heroic feats of arms which, unlike the minor engagements of 622, did change the course of history. All but one (the *Bellum Avaricum*) were unsponsored compositions. It is highly unlikely that later Byzantine collections of his work would have excluded full-blown poems, on the scale of the *Expeditio Persica*, about later campaigns, which we would have expected from the pen of the poet who had won the emperor's favour in 622. There are no cross-references to such hypothetical poems in those which are extant (as there are to the lost poem on the opening phase of Heraclius' reign postulated by Pertusi); they are not mentioned in any manuscript *scholium* (as is the third canto of the *Heraclias*); nor, finally, have they left traces in the works of later writers. This accumulation of negative evidence should be treated as conclusive on this occasion, since there was no lack of interest on the part of following generations in the achievements of Heraclius which provided inspiration to Byzantines both in the dark years of defensive warfare from the mid seventh to the mid ninth century and in the following period of their military and political revival in the Middle East. They would surely have been the last of George's poems to have escaped the attention of readers in Byzantium and that of scribes supplying them with manuscript copies.

There can only be one explanation. The poet must have lost the emperor's favour after writing the *Expeditio Persica*. Something in the poem or some extraneous event must have caused an estrangement between emperor and his strong-willed poet. The mere fact that the emperor was away on campaign would not have precluded him from commissioning work from George, and, in any case, he returned to the capital and was in a position to give guidance to the poet (had he wished to do so) for several months in late 626 and early 627.

Why then did George fall out of favour late in 622 or in the course of 623? What did he write in the *Expeditio Persica* which might have antagonized the emperor? No sooner is the question asked than certain lines in the poem start out before the eyes of the reader. They are to be found in the conclusion where George calls down God's blessing on the emperor. God, whose word is supreme, who secures the abyss, upholds the earth and bounds the vault of heaven, to whom all things visible and beyond comprehension are subordinated, is entreated to fulfil the hopes placed in him, to guide his earthly general in all things, *to make him a faithful guardian of his holy commands everywhere*, to make him prevail over his enemies, to allow his exertions to cleanse him of past sins, and *to let him win a double victory over his enemies, by gaining victories over passions and barbarians . . .*[50] This was an unwise line to

[50] *Expeditio Persica*, III. 385–410.

take in 623, at the very time that the emperor was being drawn inexorably into a union with his niece Martina and was on the verge of committing the cardinal sin of incest.[51]

It is highly unlikely that George knew what he was doing. For surely he did not take the emperor at his word when he urged him to refrain from flattery.[52] Surely he was not so imprudent as to attack him in public on so sensitive a matter. In any case, there is no reason to suppose that he would have been privy to the emperor's private affairs until they became public with the shocking announcement of the incestuous marriage, which probably took place in the winter of 623–4. No, the internal battle against one's passions was a private preoccupation of George's, a theme to which he recurs in other poems.[53] It was appallingly bad luck that he allowed it to make an appearance in this imperially commissioned poem. No worse faux pas was made in the long history of the Byzantine court. Inadvertent it may have been, but it was a terrible blunder. It must have caused great embarrassment and anger to the emperor. It led immediately, we may safely infer, to the poet's disgrace.

Many years were to pass before George was restored to favour. He probably gradually inched his way back, by glorifying the emperor's exploits in the four political poems which he wrote of his own accord in the following years and by making it clear that the emperor deserved forgiveness for his great sin because of his endeavours on behalf of his people.[54] Representations on his behalf were probably also made by the Patriarch Sergius, his chief patron, who does not seem to have abandoned him.[55] Ultimately, Heraclius relented, but six long years had passed. For all the detachment from worldly affairs which he assumed in the *De vanitate vitae*, George probably felt the blow keenly. Indeed the vivid images come so thick and fast in that great poem, and the disdain shown towards ambition for wealth, position, and power is so forcefully and movingly expressed, that one may legitimately suspect that much of the pain experienced at the time of his disgrace and recollected afterwards has been distilled in the poem. And that is where we should leave George of Pisidia, ruefully reflecting on fleeting worldly glory:

[51] Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, c. 11, with commentary (179–80).

[52] *Expeditio Persica*, I. 35–8.

[53] *In Alypium*, 111–13; *De vanitate vitae*, 34–40, 57–74, 242–61; *Hexaemeron*, 759–814, and authorial note, 25–33; epigrams, nos. 54, 96.

[54] *In Bonum Patricium*, 160–1; *Heraclias*, I. 140–7; *Hexaemeron*, 1807–8.

[55] George not only kept his job in the patriarchate but was commissioned by Sergius to write the *Bellum Avaricum* in 626.

Who can look from the recesses of his heart
at the shame-filled theatre of life
without quenching with laments his laughter at the play?
For already they often laugh at us,
those counterfeiters of counterfeit laughter,
presenting thrones, painting dignities,
fashioning offices, so that intoxication
may fashion the misfortune which occasions laughter.
One of them, putting on robes of state,
is exalted, conjures up good fortune
and wordlessly acts out the dignity.
He who is nothing pretends to be everything.
He who knows nothing wants to seem knowledgeable,
with a double foolishness in a single soul—
fake sophist, dim-witted Atticist.
He plays and thinks himself great,
until life's play is ended.

Such is nature in a world of flux,
sister of the stage, kinswoman of dreams.
All wave-tossed vanity passes
like sleep, like a fleeting dream.
And often, when he is laid out and enfeebled,
at the onset of sleeping thoughts,
it sets a man soaring with its insubstantial vision.
It steals his reason and takes away his nature
like an evil brigand of the mind.
It gathers wealth for him which is not there
and conjures up dream honours,
showing him images of unrealised joy . . .
But soon its favours are gone.
In an instant, a speechless[56] bird,
herald of the day, removes its substance.

(*De vanitate vitae*, 89–117, 125–7)

[56] Sternbach's reading *ἄφωνος* (speechless) is to be preferred to Tartaglia's correction *εὔφωνος* (melodious).

2

Two Universal Chronicles

Reluctantly we must tear ourselves away from George of Pisidia who stared out from troubled times and marvelled at the architecture of the universe and the complexities of the human organism. We must turn our attention instead to two chronicles, which range back to the very beginning of history (the creation of Adam) and, as they move forward to the time of writing, present a series of succinct and precise notices about the late Roman empire, culminating in a flurry of information about the early seventh century.

We know nothing of the authors, save what we can glean from their works. Their names are not recorded. One was at work on the *Chronicon Paschale*, a universal history written in Greek, while the last Roman–Persian war was still being fought. The other compiled a similar but much shorter work (known as the *Chronicle to the Year 724*) in Syriac a century later, and included extensive extracts from a pithy but remarkably precise chronicle which was written in the late 630s.

Both texts are almost entirely devoid of literary merit. They are compilations, mere gatherings of information known to the authors, which is set down in a simple style. A fair amount of thinking has gone into their composition. Both are concerned above all with God's providential scheme and take pains to date whatever can be precisely dated and to compute as accurately as possible the time which elapsed between key events in the history of mankind. In sharp contrast to the works of George, they are densely packed with hard information, all the more valuable because it has not been digested and altered in the process of writing. If the history of this distant, turbulent period is to be reconstructed, it is to these sources, contemporary or near-contemporary with the events covered, without literary pretensions, that we must turn first in the search for the reliable evidence which will provide a solid basis for historiographical and historical investigations.

1. *CHRONICON PASCHALE*: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The earlier and more important of these chronicles is the *Chronicon Paschale*.[1] It begins with the story of Adam and ends in the author's own time. The act of Creation itself, the fashioning of the whole complex physical universe and all living creatures within it, a theme which so absorbed George of Pisidia, is passed over in silence, save for one reference (26–7) to the creation of the sun and the moon on the third day. This marked the start of the cosmic clock, time being measurable thereafter by their regular movements through the heavens. The reference occurs in a long, carefully argued chronological prologue, concerning the correct method for calculating the date of Easter. A necessary precondition was the establishment of an exact date for the beginning of time, which is placed on Wednesday 21 March, the spring equinox.[2] The author's prime concern remains chronological and chronometrical throughout the text. From the birth of Abraham events are recorded under individual year-entries, Olympiads supplementing Abraham's age once the games begin (193. 8–20). Other dating systems are introduced subsequently, notably Roman consulships (308. 18–309. 2), regnal years of emperors, and indictions or financial years (355. 8–18).[3] The past is levered into this annalistic framework, rather awkwardly in places. Bare lists of dates may alternate with year-entries stuffed with exegetical matter. Every now and again careful computations are introduced, in which year totals are calculated for the time separating key events in the providential story and significant correlations are picked out.

The chronicle is divided into two distinct parts. The first (32. 1–430. 5) covers ancient history and culminates in the story of God's direct intervention in human affairs between the Incarnation and the Ascension which is treated at length and is framed by long computations (368. 3–375. 20, 414. 10–418. 21) and a final disquisition on the date of Easter (423. 1–430. 5). More space is devoted to the deep past than to the Roman period covered in the second part, and more intellectual effort has been invested in it. It drew mainly on

[1] *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (Bonn, 1832). The last, late Roman, section is translated by Michael and Mary Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD*, TTH 7 (Liverpool, 1989). Cf. also the general comments (rather disparaging) of W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), 340–8.

[2] J. Beaucamp, R.-C. Bondoux, J. Lefort, M.-F. Rouan, and I. Sorlin, 'Temps et histoire I: le prologue de la *Chronique Pascale*', *TM* 7 (1979), 223–301.

[3] There are also intermittent references to years after the Ascension, the era of Antioch, and the era of Diocletian which was in common use in Egypt (Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xxiv).

Scripture and the writings of the fathers of the church (31. 12–17), with additional material quarried from other genres of late Roman writing, notably older world chronicles (those of Julius Africanus, Eusebius, and John Malalas) and the *Topographia Christiana* of Cosmas Indicopleustes.[4] In the sharpest possible contrast to the latest of the preceding world chronicles, that of Malalas (completed soon after 533), which presents a predominantly pagan view of the past, with an admixture of biblical material, the pagan content of the *Chronicon Paschale* has been kept to a minimum, most of it in the form of short notices, taken mainly from Malalas himself and a Roman consular list, which are scattered across its biblically based narrative.[5]

The chronicler's principal motive for introducing pagan material seems to have been to provide additional non-biblical documentation for his carefully constructed Old Testament chronology, and to build up a full set of chronological indicators before he reaches the Incarnation. For it is the gospel story which is at the centre of his chronicle, and the prime purpose of all his chronological researches is to provide precise and accurate dates (within the week, the month and the flow of years) for the key events in Christ's life. The narrative of each major gospel episode is accompanied by a long computation in which the chronicler uses the empirically verifiable regularity of the nineteen-year lunar cycle (to fix the position of Passover within the year) and the twenty-eight-year solar cycle (to determine the day of the week corresponding to the date in the month) to calculate, from the available textual evidence, all elements of the date.[6]

[4] General: H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978), i. 328–30. Use of Julius Africanus and Eusebius: H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie*, ii (Leipzig, 1885), 152–4. Cosmas (ed. and trans. W. Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès, Topographie chrétienne*, i–iii (Paris, 1968–73), Sources chrétiennes, nos. 141, 159, 197) supplied a series of articles on the chief characters of the Old and New Testaments, including several important ones (on Christ, the Evangelists, and part of the article on St Peter) which probably occupied most of the missing 21st and 22nd gatherings of the only extant manuscript (see G. Mercati, 'A Study of the *Paschal Chronicle*', *JTS* 7 (1905–6), 397–412, at 403–8, who suggests direct use of Cosmas with unnecessary hesitancy).

[5] Use of Malalas: E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. Scott, *Studies in John Malalas*, Byzantina Australiensia 6 (Sydney, 1990), 252–3 (Jeffreys). Use of a consular list: Gelzer, *Julius Africanus*, 156–8. The only substantial pagan notices come from Malalas: rationalized mythology and ancient history (64. 9–88. 14) and the foundation and early history of Rome (204. 2–213. 4).

[6] Long computations fix the exact dates of the Annunciation (368. 3–375. 20), the birth of John the Baptist (379. 12–380. 2), the birth of Christ (380. 22–381. 8), the baptism of Christ (391. 21–395. 6), the first celebration of the Passover by Christ and his disciples (395. 14–399. 9), and the Passion and Crucifixion (414. 10–418. 21). J. Beaucamp, R. C. Bondoux, J. Lefort, M.-F. Rouan-Auzépy, I. Sorlin, 'La *Chronique Pascale*: le temps approprié', in Colloques internationaux du CNRS 604, *Le Temps chrétien de la fin de l'antiquité au moyen âge IIIe–XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1984), 451–68 observe a certain amount of massaging of the data in the third, fourth, and sixth of these computations, so as to bring about the desired results (455–9).

The second part deals with recent history (430. 6–737).[7] It opens with an outline history of the Roman empire to the end of Diocletian's reign and the development of the church in the heroic age of the early missions and resistance to persecution. The principal sources used for this section are Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Malalas' chronicle, and the consular list mentioned above.[8] With the accession of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity, a new phase of history opens in which the two previously independent strands of classical and religious history can be woven together. In the main body of the second part, the chronicle takes the story down to the early years of Justinian's reign. A paradoxical and striking feature of this section is that the church, once it has been integrated into the secular state and has surmounted the last onslaught mounted by Julian, recedes into the background, the chronicler showing little interest in the great doctrinal controversies which were to dominate it for the remainder of antiquity.[9] Constantinople takes centre stage after its designation as the new capital, both in its own right as the metropolis and as the setting for the history of the court.[10] The coverage of foreign affairs is intermittent and apparently arbitrary. This section halts in 533 when Justinian has just surmounted the greatest domestic political crisis of his reign (the Nika riot in the capital which rapidly escalated out of control in January 532). Thereafter there is a sudden deterioration in the chronicle. Recovery takes place when the author approaches his own time. These last two sections are scrutinized separately below.

Most of the material making up the late Roman history in the chronicle was culled from two high-grade sources. The annalistic framework and a large set of brief notices were taken from a relatively spare, apparently official record of major events in the life of Constantinople in the fourth and fifth centuries.

[7] Cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, introduction.

[8] Gelzer, *Julius Africanus*, 158–66.

[9] Notices about major church councils are brief and noncommittal. From this Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xxvi infer a lack of enthusiasm for Chalcedonian orthodoxy on the part of the author, citing in addition his inclusion of a report of anti-Chalcedonian chanting after the earthquake of 533 (629. 10–20) and the quotation in full of Justinian's two edicts of 533 (630. 9–633. 14) and 551 (635. 18–684. 15) modifying the Chalcedonian position (see also nn. 268, 373, 383). There is, however, an alternative explanation for the inclusion of the edicts—they helped to fill a gaping hole in his coverage of the main part of Justinian's reign.

[10] Constantinople was the principal stage on which emperors performed before their subjects. Key rites of passage in the imperial family took place there. The inhabitants watched spectacles laid on in the hippodrome and ceremonial processions through the streets and squares. New buildings made imperial power manifest. These imperial acts, together with their obverse, the damage caused by natural disaster or human disturbance, constitute the central subject of the *Chronicon Paschale*, which, as is argued below, is mirroring the official view of the city's public life.

These city annals were also used by Marcellinus Comes for both the 518 and 534 editions of his Latin chronicle, which reached back to 379. They presented, it appears, a carefully dated annual register of consuls, which was fleshed out with generally short notices about the imperial family (births, marriages, accessions, arrivals, opening ceremonies, deaths), other ceremonial events (the arrival of relics and ambassadors), receipt of important items of news from elsewhere, and the development of the city (as well as the natural disasters and popular disturbances which interrupted its growth).[11] The world chronicle of Malalas continued to be quarried, chiefly for long, anecdotal passages focused on emperor and court. From 469, when the version of the city annals available to the chronicler seems to have given out, he relied almost exclusively on Malalas, who had made extensive use of documents in the last part of his chronicle. Inconveniently, though, given the Constantinopolitan orientation of the *Chronicon Paschale,* Malalas looked at events largely from the perspective of Antiochene officialdom and there was much local matter to excise.[12]

There was no fundamental change in the structure or standing of the empire in the 530s. It withstood with remarkable resilience the shock of bubonic plague in 542. Nor was there a radical shift in the chronicler's interests, to judge by the record of his own time in the final section. But his coverage becomes skimpy from 533, most year-entries being left blank until the end of Maurice's reign in 602. Thereafter the narrative reverts to its customary scale, focusing, as before, primarily on the capital. The explanation is not hard to find. The only useful sixth-century source available to him was the original edition of Malalas' chronicle, which halted in 533. So he had to make do with such limited material as had come his way, until he could rely on his own experience and documentation about contemporary events. Apart from a bare record of imperial accessions and deaths, this material consisted largely of two theological decrees issued in 533 and 551, which are reproduced in full and fill fifty-two out of the sixty-three pages dealing with the thirty-two years of glorious success and dramatic reversals of fortune in Justinian's reign

[11] B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford, 2001), 173–86; cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. xvi–xxii.

[12] J. Thurn (ed.), *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, CFHB 35 (Berlin, 2000), trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Byzantina Australiensia 4 (Melbourne, 1986). Croke in *Studies in John Malalas*, 6–11, for the milieu in which Malalas worked and the documentary basis of much of his information. The excisions were systematic—to the extent that Malalas' long and gripping account of the earthquake which flattened much of Antioch in 526 (XVII. 16) was dropped, leaving a blank year-entry (616. 13). The chronicler was forced to leave several other year-entries similarly blank between 470 and 507. Only one notice (IX. 20) slipped past this guard, much earlier—about the endowment of a local festival by a rich Antiochene who died in Rome in the reign of Augustus (364. 5–10).

after 533 and the thirty-seven no less eventful years of his three immediate successors.

The fuller, contemporary history presented in the last forty-four pages of the printed text starts with a notice on the elaborate celebration of the marriage of Maurice's eldest son Theodosius in 602 and continues to the end of the chronicle. There is some uncertainty about the exact point at which it halted, since the last folio is missing from the only extant Byzantine manuscript.[13] It has been plausibly suggested that the last recorded event was the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius on 21 March 630. For the ceremony took place in the twentieth year of his reign (beginning on 22 January 630) and the third indiction (ending on 31 August 630), where the chronicle halted according to its title. It would have provided the author with a suitably cheerful note on which to end, enabling him to join George of Pisidia and the whole of Christendom in celebrating Heraclius' final and conclusive victory over Zoroastrian Persia.[14] The chronicle, which has a simple agglutinative structure, was, one may presume, finished soon after the event recorded in its last notice. This would place its completion in 630, a date for which general corroboration can be found in the absence of any hint of a new threat to the established order from the Arabs (pointing to a date before the mid 630s when that threat materialized) and the clear implication that the Patriarch Sergius, who died in December 638, was still alive at the time of writing.

2. *CHRONICON PASCHALE*: UNIVERSAL HISTORY

Since the last, contemporary section is the richest of all the available sources on the history of the east Roman empire during the first great crisis of the seventh century, the thirty years war with Persia, it must be analysed in detail

[13] This is by no means the only lacuna in the manuscript, *Cod. Vat. gr.* 1941 of the tenth century. Mercati, '*Paschal Chronicle*', 403, 408–12 shows that it was copied from a defective archetype which had lacunae in Anastasius' reign (between 507 and 517) and at the start of the Nika riot as well as others in part 1, and that it has itself suffered serious damage, losing the whole of the 21st and 22nd gatherings and the folios at the beginning and end of the last (37th) gathering. Cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xiv and nn. 320, A (p. 112), 472, 491. Three copies were made in the sixteenth century but have no independent value.

[14] Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. xi–xiii view Easter, 8 April 630, which fell in the period defined in the title for the chronicle's end (between 22 January and 1 September 630), as an appropriate terminus for a work which was concerned with the correct calculation of the date of Easter, and suggest that the restoration of the True Cross on 21 March provided it with a fitting historical climax.

and with great care. But before doing so, it is important to remember that it is but an appendage to a vast historical work, and that the author invested much more time and effort in the composition of the main body of the text which dealt with the ancient history of mankind, the gospel story, and the heyday of the Christianized Roman empire in the fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries than he did in assembling the rather miscellaneous material which makes up the history of his own time. If we are to understand his working methods and to isolate his personal historical interests (which must be taken into account if his evidence on the seventh century is to be evaluated properly), we must start by examining the general features of the main body of his text.

The first impression made by the long account of ancient history in the *Chronicon Paschale* (part 1) is of a vast and variegated array of learning. This impression of scholarship, given principally by citations of classical and patristic authors, is, however, a misleading one, since the chronicler was basically an excerptor and confined himself to quarrying material, including the citations, from a relatively small number of sources.[15] It is hard to prove this, because so many of the earlier examples of the genre in which he was operating, that of universal history, have been lost. But a careful comparison of his versions of Cosmas Indicopleustes' articles or of Malalas' notices with the original texts which are still extant shows that for the most part he was faithful to his sources, content to transcribe them wholesale.[16] Since the genre of universal history had taken shape long before his day and much effort had gone into constructing a coherent history encompassing religious and secular history out of the Bible and classical sources, it seems likely that the chronicler was equally content to recycle what had already been established by his predecessors and was presented in their lost works, confining his own contributions to the refinement of the grand chronology of human history as it had been developed and the introduction of chunks of material from Cosmas Indicopleustes.

However, the workings of an independent intelligence are detectable in the chronological prologue to the chronicle. Although neither the general scheme

[15] Gelzer, *Julianus Africanus*, 141; Hunger, *Literatur der Byzantiner*, i. 329.

[16] E. Jeffreys in *Studies in Malalas*, 253 for the chronicler's generally faithful transcription of passages from Malalas (the divergences are attributable mainly to defective transmission of Malalas' text to the sole complete manuscript). Mercati, '*Paschal Chronicle*', 406–7 catalogues the borrowings from Cosmas. A careful comparison with the original passages reveals only a small number of minor differences, attributable to scribal error. Two examples: Cosmas' reflections on Adam (V. 67–8) are reproduced at *Chron. Pasch.*, 33. 1–34. 2, with six minor variants which do not affect the sense and one more significant one (καταπαλαίσας for Cosmas' καταπατήσας at 34. 2); a longer passage on the significance of Moses (V. 111–13) has been transcribed at 142. 3–143. 17 with only three minor variants and the omission of one line (at 143. 15).

proposed nor the method of calculation using lunar and solar cycles in combination is original to the author, he imposes his own pattern on the argument and skilfully steers his way to the desired conclusions by his choice and arrangement of the material which he quotes from his sources.[17] The text of the chronicle not only bears witness to similar *bricolage* on his part, whereby he gives his own shape to the chronicle by his selection of materials for inclusion, but also reveals that he was ready to intervene more actively in his pursuit of chronological exactitude and in the traditional Christian enterprise of connecting the Old to the New Testament, by highlighting significant correspondences between key events in the life of Christ and the successive acts of God in the week of Creation where they occurred on the same day of the week.[18]

In general, though, his editorial activity was limited to the selection and arrangement of material from his sources. This becomes more evident in the second part, up to the most recent tranche of contemporary history. He did not seek to introduce his own opinions into his text, even on matters as important as doctrinal issues. He did not set out to rewrite what he found in his sources, nor to combine material from different sources in individual notices (save to add dates), nor even to condense a source when its account expanded to an unmanageable level. No, he was simply an excerptor, who normally copied out selected passages from his sources verbatim.[19] His principal concern was not with the substance of history, which he took on trust from his sources, but remained with chronology. He continued to intervene as an editor, so as to make his own chronology as complete and as accurate as possible. He presented history year by year, each year-entry being carefully and precisely dated according to his four principal dating systems.[20] He also strove to pin down individual events to precise dates within the year, giving the date in the month and the day of the week and even the hour of day or night, whenever the information was available.[21] Occasional computations

[17] Beaucamp et al., '*Chronique Pascale*', 462–3 and 'Temps et histoire', 258–75.

[18] Beaucamp et al., 'Temps et histoire', 285–91 and '*Chronique Pascale*', 457–9. These backward references from the gospel story are complemented by extracts from Cosmas Indicopleustes which show how Old Testament patriarchs (notably Adam, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses) foreshadowed the gospel story.

[19] Very occasionally he can be found rewriting or inserting a passage of his own composition, which may result in some garbling (Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xx).

[20] Gelzer, *Julius Africanus*, 142–51; Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. ix–x, xxii–xxiv.

[21] All precise chronological indications of this sort in the late Roman section down to the year 469 were probably copied from the Constantinopolitan annals (Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. xviii (n. 32), xxi, and xxiv). The dating formulae become more elaborate, first with the regular inclusion of the Greek month as well as the Roman date

served to demonstrate that his cosmic calculator worked and to provide cross-checks between later history and the gospel story.

The *Chronicon Paschale* is therefore a true chronicle, in which chronology overrides history. Narrative flow and causal connections between events are sacrificed to the pursuit of chronological precision. History is broken down into isolated notices which are placed end to end in carefully dated year-entries. The year-entries and their elaborate dating formulae appear regardless of whether there are any substantive notices to be included. At a number of points the narrative is interrupted to make way for chronological computations, some short, some long and complex, whereby bearings are taken for important events, either from the beginning of time (in part 1) or from key episodes in the gospel story (in part 2).

The very limitations of the anonymous author raise him in the estimation of latter-day historians who use his work as a source for the history of the later Roman empire. For the more accurately he can be shown to transcribe his sources and the more avid his interest in gathering precise chronological information about specific events from his sources, the more transparent a glass does his chronicle become, through which we can look at the evidence of his sources. Since one of the two main sources used in part 2 has been shown to be authoritative and reliable (the official chronicle of Constantinople), the *Chronicon Paschale* should be as highly prized a source as the best classicizing history produced in the period. If similarly high-grade sources can be identified as supplying the material for the last contemporary section and the large number of precise dates which are given there, then it will be demonstrably the richest and best source for the history of the last great war of antiquity.

3. *CHRONICON PASCHALE*: DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE RECENT PAST

There can be no doubt that a large proportion of the material dealing with the author's own time was extracted from documents. Indeed it can be argued and will be argued below that he strove to maintain the admirable self-restraint which he had shown up to this point in the second part of his chronicle and restricted his own original contributions to a necessary

(from 26 June 363 (551. 10–19), the death of Julian and proclamation of Jovian) and second with the occasional addition of the day of the week (from 404 (568. 17–569. 6), when four such dates are given). The chronicle is evidently simply reflecting two changes of practice on the part of the compilers of the official record.

minimum, acting instead for the most part merely as a conduit for documentary material which might take the form of whole documents, excerpts from them, or, in a few cases, summaries. The non-documentary residue, drawn from his own memory, is distinguished by occasional vagueness in its content.

A cursory perusal of the text reveals the presence of three long documents. The first and the third are explicitly introduced as such and are then reproduced whole. The second, which is missing the whole of its opening section and much of its conclusion, declares itself, on inspection, to be a document quite unambiguously, although it is simply thrust into the chronicle with a short and uninformative introduction which says nothing about its origin and status. Between them, they occupy a large proportion of the contemporary section of the text.

The first of these documents (707–9) is a diplomatic letter, written in 615 by unspecified Romans (clearly leaders of the Senate) who take care to distance themselves from the emperor. They address Khusro II and sue for peace on behalf of the Roman state. The circumstances are detailed in a brief introduction (706. 11–22). A Persian expeditionary force has advanced across Asia Minor and taken up a position at Chalcedon, on the Asian shore of the Bosporus. Heraclius himself has sailed across and conducted negotiations from a ship with the Persian general Shahen. After receiving presents from Heraclius, Shahen has agreed to the dispatch of a Roman embassy. The three ambassadors, representing church and state, take the letter with them.

The letter is an extraordinary document, one to be treasured and handled with the utmost care by the historian. Every artifice of diplomatic language is used in the attempt simultaneously to avoid giving offence to the triumphant *shahanshah* (and thus to keep open channels of communication) and to prevent any further weakening of the Roman negotiating position. Flattering phrases abound. Contentious issues are circumvented by sticking to generalities and by the careful use of vague and ambiguous phrases.

The subject of the second document (716. 17–724. 20) is the joint Avar–Persian attack on Constantinople in summer 626.[22] It is introduced with a relatively flowery preamble which looks like the composition of the author (716. 9–16). This ends with an apology for the incompleteness of the attached account, which is probably intended to signal that the chronicler is reproducing an extract from a fuller but unmanageably long document. The missing beginning dealt, as one would expect, with the preliminaries to the siege: this is clearly implied by allusions in the quoted part to events which

[22] J. D. Howard-Johnston, 'The Siege of Constantinople in 626', in C. Mango and G. Dagron (eds.), *Constantinople and its Hinterland* (Aldershot, 1995), 131–42 (reprinted in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, vii).

have already taken place, the arrival of Shahrvaraz's force at Chalcedon on the Asian shore of the Bosporus many days before the appearance of the Avars on the European side (716. 17–20), and the dispatch of a high-ranking Roman ambassador to negotiate with the khagan of the Avars as he marched towards Constantinople (718. 4–8).

The chronicler begins his extract appropriately enough on the day (Sunday 29 June) when the Avar advance force, some 30,000 strong, reached the Long Wall guarding the land approach to the city. There follows one of the best accounts of a siege to survive in ancient literature, only marred by the loss of a folio covering two and a half days of the siege as it was approaching its climax (at 724. 9). It is a masterpiece of historical narrative, in which different strands of military, naval. and diplomatic history, involving three interacting parties, are woven expertly together. Attention is focused on the Avars who posed much the greater immediate threat, but not to the exclusion of the Persians, whose communications and cooperation with the Avars the Romans were determined to stop. All significant Avar operations are recorded along with the responses of the Roman authorities. The progressive development of the siege by land and by sea, involving men, machines, and ships, is described in a remarkably lucid way. The impressive amount of detail which is supplied about manoeuvres, persons, places, times, and equipment, far from cluttering up the narrative, serves to point up key factors which affected the outcome. This account of military (and naval) operations is punctuated with reports of diplomatic exchanges. These round out the narrative by highlighting the main points at issue at different stages, and bring it to life with direct quotations.

The only evidence of editorial intervention comes near the end, soon after the lacuna. Instead of providing full coverage of the end of the final grand assault by land and sea, of the subsequent dismantling of the siege-machines, and of the withdrawal of the Avar forces, the chronicler cuts short his account immediately after the annihilation of the Slav fleet in the Golden Horn and the slaughter of most of the crews, substituting a brief summary for the closing section of the document (724. 20–725. 5). To this summary, he appends four items: the first (725. 6–8) is introduced in such a way as to indicate that it comes from another source and reports the explanation offered by some people for the abrupt departure of the Avars (the Slavs had deserted); the remaining three (725.9–726.10) look like snippets taken from the omitted conclusion of the document and between them wrap up the story, giving the khagan's reason for his departure, some details about the damage done by the rearguard which was masking his retreat, and the bluff with which the Romans sought to hasten him on his way.

The foregoing discussion of the chronicle's account of the Avar siege of Constantinople should dispel any lingering doubts about the character and

quality of the source from which it was taken. The author of that source was evidently in command of a mass of detailed information, and was in a position to evaluate it, as a result of which he was able to isolate and trace important developments through the welter of confused and potentially confusing events. Some of the information given was highly confidential (for example, the details of what was said at negotiating sessions with the Avars)[23] and could only have been obtained by someone belonging to the inner circle of Roman policy-makers at the time or very soon afterwards. These features all point to an official origin for the chronicle's source, one which is to be sought high up in the apparatus of government at the time.

The author's identity can be established once we take into account two further features of his narrative: first he never loses sight of the fact that this great drama was played out in the sight of God, and repeatedly acknowledges the Constantinopolitans' debt to God and the Virgin Mother (719. 20, 722. 15–16, 724. 18–19, 725. 9–11, 726. 2–3); second, while Bonus, one of the two men charged with the government during Heraclius' absence on campaign, appears as a central figure in the story (718. 10, 720. 8–10, 726. 5), there is a deafening silence about the Patriarch Sergius, who was the other regent appointed by the emperor. The first feature is compatible with an ecclesiastical origin, although it does not require one. Only one conclusion, however, can be drawn from the second: the only reasonable explanation for Sergius' absence from the text is *that he wrote it and refrained, with becoming and traditional modesty, from thrusting himself into the story which he was telling*. There can, of course, be no question of any *damnatio memoriae* connected with the patriarch who was viewed as a hero of the war second only to the emperor himself, nor of the anonymous chronicler's deliberately eliminating him in the very flush of victory when his fame was at its height.

It should not be imagined that Sergius produced his account of the siege unaided. Not only would this be hard to reconcile with the rounded, balanced history of a complex episode which his account gives, it would also be hard to envisage a man with his heavy responsibilities, which reached far beyond the domain of ecclesiastical affairs, summoning up the intellectual energy and reserving the time to assemble, sift, and digest a multitude of reports as well as to write up a final lucid narrative. It is far more likely that the text was a collective work of the administration of which Sergius was joint acting head, that many hands were involved in drafting it, that it was written as an authoritative official history while bureaucratic and military memories were

[23] This included two Roman bluffs, reported at 722. 3–4 and 726. 7–9.

still fresh, and that Sergius was only responsible for the production of the final draft. Such is the view which I shall be taking of it henceforth.

As for the circumstances of its composition, it is not difficult to point to one contemporary who would have had a particularly strong interest in reading such a work and who was in a position to demand it—namely the Emperor Heraclius himself. For he needed to be properly briefed about the siege, before he resumed direct control over the administration of the capital and the conduct of diplomacy in the north. If this suggestion is right, Sergius' document should be classified as a dispatch. There is nothing at all surprising about the production of a dispatch covering so critical a period in Roman history. In the course of these historiographical investigations several others will be identified, all of them sent back by the emperor in the field to the capital to inform his people of the progress of the war. Sergius' document is merely a unique extant example in this period of a dispatch going in the contrary direction, from the centre out to the emperor.[24]

The third document (727. 15–734) is one of the most important of the dispatches sent by the emperor from the east. It is prefaced with a brief introduction, written in the clipped, clear language of officialdom, which refers to its content and reports that it was read out from the *ambo* (pulpit) in St Sophia on Sunday 15 May 628 (727. 7–14). This was probably a note appended to the copy used by the chronicler, which he has simply copied out verbatim along with the dispatch itself. The latter-day historian once again blesses the chronicler for preserving the whole of this document, which provides a wealth of detail about the mechanics of diplomacy, as well as giving direct access to the mood of the high command at the first news of the downfall of their great Persian adversary.

That mood was one of exultation, which was made more seemly by being expressed first in the words of Psalm 100: 1–4: 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter . . . into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name.' In the grandiloquent passage which follows, first announcing, then describing, the overthrow and execution of Khusro II, the emperor does not claim the credit for himself but portrays the fall of the *shahanshah* as God's punishment for his arrogance and blasphemy (727. 19–728).

[24] The documentary character of the chronicle's account of the siege was recognized both by F. Barišić, 'Le Siège de Constantinople par les Avares et les Slaves en 626', *Byz.* 24 (1954), 371–95, at 375, and by C. Mango, *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History* (Washington, DC, 1990), 181.

The tone changes at the end of this preamble and the emperor starts a full, connected account of how the news reached him after prolonged and heavy snowfalls had interrupted communications over the Zagros mountains for over a month and how he succeeded in making contact with an ambassador sent by the new king, Kavad Shiroe, and thus opened peace negotiations. The movements of small parties to and from the Roman winter quarters outside the city of Ganzak are logged. The offices and titles of the leading figures involved on both sides are recorded. Note is even taken of the number of saddled horses on leads (20 (731. 6)) assigned to the reception party sent south to meet the Persian embassy and escort it to the Roman camp, as also of the number of pack-animals (60 (733. 1)) requested from the governor of Ganzak in his refuge fortress in the mountains for their return journey south. A considerable amount of incidental detail is also given about the Romans' perilous march north in the depths of winter, about the large number of corpses which they left in their wake (roughly 3,000 (730. 21–731.1)), and about the number of houses in Ganzak (also roughly 3,000 (732. 8–9)). In the course of the dispatch seven other documents are referred to and summarized, among them the formal peace proposal sent by the new *shahanshah* and the emperor's reply, copies of which were appended to the dispatch.[25] It ends with a datemark (8 April 628), a note that the army was striking camp and setting off on the march home, and a request for prayers for their safe return (734. 13–17).

In their very different ways, each of these documents is of inestimable value. The first allows us to sense the prevailing mood at one of the nadirs of the war, the second and third, which are intended to convey information rather than merely prepare the way for substantive discussions, supply in quantity the sort of solid, well-organized material which is meat to historians. They are also useful aids in our historiographical investigations. For as examples of the contemporary bureaucratic style, preserving the form and content of original documents in full (except for the opening and closing formulae), they can be used to seek out and isolate other documentary

[25] (1) The emperor's previous dispatch covering the period 17 October 627–15 March 628 (729. 15–730. 2), (2) a memorandum from Chosdaï, a Persian official with the rank of *rasnan* sent to make contact with Heraclius (730. 13–731. 3), (3) a dispatch from the reception party sent out to fetch Chosdaï (731. 10–18), (4) a memorandum to the governor of Ganzak (733. 1–3), (5) his reply to the emperor (733. 9–14), (6) the formal negotiating document sent by Kavad Shiroe and delivered by Phaïak, another Persian official with the rank of *rasnan* (733. 16–21), and (7) the emperor's reply (734. 1–2, not summarized). The appended copies of the last two (735–7) are preserved in a very mutilated form, since the last extant folio of the Vatican manuscript, containing the end of the *shahanshah*'s letter and the whole of the Roman reply, is badly damaged.

material which may be lurking in the pages of the *Chronicon Paschale* and other contemporary and later sources. A good indicator of the presence of an extract from a document or a document-based passage in a text is the rasp of densely packed facts, which is well attested in the two dispatches. As soon as the eye lights on a cluster of precise dates, named individuals with positions or titles, economical and clear accounts of actions with appropriate references to places, other parties involved, and equipment used, etc., it can be taken as prima facie likely that a detailed, written source, almost certainly of official character, is making a contribution to the text under scrutiny.

A large body of additional documentary material can be detected in the contemporary section of the *Chronicon Paschale* using this criterion. There are four passages presenting succinct but lucid accounts of complex episodes which can thus be identified as summaries of lost official accounts. They deal with Phocas' coup,[26] the detection of a major conspiracy against him and the punishment of the ringleaders,[27] Heraclius' coup,[28] and the Avar surprise attack of 623.[29] The postulated documents from which the hard data given in the text seems to have been selected, all dealing with events of the highest political importance, were probably written by the authorities for circulation, as part of a conscious effort to manage the news and thereby to reinforce or protect the current regime's position. Hence the discreet silences in the chronicle's summary account of Heraclius' coup about the vital part played by the partisans of the Greens (the authorities had every incentive to gloss over factional divisions at a time of deepening crisis) as also about the origin of the fire which destroyed the whole quarter of Caesarius (probably started by Heraclius' supporters as a diversion at a critical moment).[30]

[26] *Chron. Pasch.*, 693. 9–694. 12, a notice stripped down to a bare record of events in which the usurper Phocas is simply designated a soldier.

[27] *Chron. Pasch.*, 696. 6–697. 3, listing the conspirators, giving gory details about their deaths, and reporting the executions of Maurice's widow, daughters, daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law's father.

[28] *Chron. Pasch.*, 699. 19–701. 18, with plenty of gruesome details about the fates of named individuals. Cryptic references to the previous misdeeds of two of them (Bonosus at 700. 4–6 and Theophanes at 700. 6) and to two notorious but unnamed junior officials (701. 8–10) are probably all that is left of fuller denunciations of Phocas' regime present in the original document.

[29] *Chron. Pasch.*, 712. 12–713. 14. Again the chronicler has made very selective use of a fuller account. He concentrates (i) on the period immediately before the Avars' surprise attack (for which a precise time as well as date is given), when a crowd followed the emperor's entourage out of the city after it had been announced (ἐφημίσθη) that he was to sign a treaty with the khagan of the Avars and that the event would be celebrated with races at Heraclia, outside the Long Wall, and (ii) on damage done to the extramural churches.

[30] Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, n. 423.

There are many more short passages, again distinguishable by the precision of the information conveyed, which report the actions of the imperial government and court events: patriarchal deaths and appointments, including notes of previous positions held by the appointees (697. 5–9, 11–14, and 699. 9–15); the replacement of a key military commander and the death of a senior minister (703. 9–12 and 726. 16–727. 2); a rogation ceremony after an earthquake (702. 7–10); two births (the hour is recorded for the first of them), a marriage, and a death in the imperial family (702. 10–13, 702. 16–18, 693. 3–5, 702. 19–703. 2); public coronations of two babies, with a note of the names of the officials in attendance (703. 3–8, 703. 17–704. 2); and the movements of the imperial family before and after Easter 624 (713. 19–714. 8). All these events were probably marked by public ceremonies. The notices look like extracts from brief, official accounts, released for the information of those who did not attend the ceremonies and for the record.

There is nothing inherently improbable about this suggestion, which can best account for the presence of this material in the chronicle. To keep their subjects regularly informed about political events at the apex of the state was an obvious course of action for any autocratic regime which had an interest in sustaining its prestige by every available means. Bulletins reporting public political acts and rites of passage in the imperial family were a useful adjunct to the carefully orchestrated propaganda, much of it taking the form of grand public ceremonies, which buttressed the position of the dynasty. They were probably issued for circulation among the official classes, both in the city and in the provinces, like the *mandata* or announcements, which are known to have been circulated to government offices on the eve of ceremonies. It is a practice which appears to have had a long history in the east Roman empire. For the annals of Constantinople, which several chroniclers, including the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, have been shown to have used, seemingly consisted of nothing more or less than a complete set of such bulletins. If further proof is required, it is readily to hand in the *De cerimoniis* compiled in the tenth century: this reproduces in whole or in part rather fuller accounts of four ceremonies which took place in the last years of Heraclius' reign. These accounts have the hallmarks of official documents and were probably ultimately derived from an official record of ceremonies kept at the court.[31]

[31] Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, ed. J. J. Reiske, CSHB (Bonn, 1829–30), i, 6. 6–11 (*mandata*—i. 1), 627. 12–628. 20 (an account of a ceremony which is apparently complete—ii. 27), 628. 21–631. 4 (three extracts, one of which includes, at 630. 21–631. 2, what looks like a *scholium* answering a query—ii. 28–30). M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 199–200 concentrates on the role of written communications in planning rather than commemorating ceremonies.

The published bulletins, which were a valuable source of information for the chronicler, appear to have incorporated the essence of similar full accounts, official in character, of the ceremonies in question.[32]

The official bulletins included in the chronicle are all precisely dated. Normally both the day of the week and the date in the month are specified. A peculiar feature, common to all but three of them and to the four longer notices summarizing information about major political events affecting court and capital (discussed above), is the careful recording of both the Roman and the Greek (Syro-Macedonian) names for the month.[33] Although care was taken to include precise dates in the three long documents included in the chronicle, the Greek names of months are not given. This suggests that the inclusion of both names was a distinguishing mark of *published* official information, which was dispensed with in documents originally produced for the government's own purposes rather than for public dissemination.[34] If this was so, such double dating can be used as a safe indicator of the presence of additional material taken from bulletins in the text. This material extended beyond the immediate sphere of activity of government and court, to cover church affairs (the arrival of two relics associated with the Crucifixion in 614, and a liturgical innovation in 624 (705. 3–14, 714. 9–20)), the appearance of a comet in 626 (715. 6–8), and political agitation which took place in St Sophia also in 626 (715. 9–716. 8).

The chronicler appears to have contented himself with the plentiful dating information, supplied by the official sources, which he was using. He has transcribed it accurately, except in three cases where he has made minor but easily detectable slips.[35] He was also careful to include the annual formulae for

[32] The chronicler's unflagging interest in chronology is shown in the attention which he paid to the rubrics (*symbolaia*) at the head of official documents: he notes a failure to include a reference to the coronation of Theodosius as Maurice's co-emperor in 590 (691. 15–16), an instruction to include a reference to Maurice's second consulship on documents issued after 6 July 602 (693. 5–9), and later that year the introduction of dating by Phocas' first regnal year from 25 November (694. 13–15). The dating formulae were used as headings for successive year-entries in the chronicle.

[33] The Greek month is missing from the notices about Theodosius' marriage celebrations which lasted from 9 to 15 February 602, the birth of Epiphania on 7 July 611, and the death of Eudocia on 13 August 612 (693. 3–5, 702. 10–13, 702. 19–703. 2). In each case the chronicler probably left it out accidentally.

[34] The convention was presumably introduced originally for the benefit of readers in the Middle East who were accustomed to the Hellenistic dates, probably at a time when the court itself was residing in the east. It appears to date from 363 when Greek months begin appearing regularly alongside Roman ones in the *Chronicon Paschale* (see n. 21 above).

[35] (1) Monday 6 (instead of 5) October 610 (700. 14) for Phocas' execution and Heraclius' coronation, (2) Saturday 28 (instead of 26) October 614 (705. 7–9) for the arrival of the Holy Lance, (3) the 4th (instead of the 3rd) indiction for the introduction of a new chant into the liturgy in the first week of Lent 615 (705. 19). Cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*,

dating documents, adding notes on the four major changes which occurred in the period. This careful attention to chronological minutiae, apart from providing confirmation for the hypothesis that the chronicler looked primarily to documents rather than his own memory for his contemporary information, reveals that his interest in chronology for its own sake does not diminish towards the end of the chronicle.

Only a small proportion of the contemporary section has not been classified as having a documentary origin. Three items, which are not double dated but are full of hard information and deal with topics falling within the remit of bulletins (action against Maurice's widow and two of his magnates in 603, a faction riot also in 603, and a liturgical innovation of 615 (695. 2–5, 695. 5–696. 2, 705. 18–706. 8)), were probably taken from documents. This leaves two types of material in the non-documentary residue which can probably be attributed to the chronicler himself. First, there are two computations in which he seems to be assuring himself or demonstrating to his readers that his cosmic calculator works (697. 18–698. 19, 710. 5–711. 4). In both cases he takes a fixed event in the past (the death of Constantine the Great at Pentecost, 22 May 337, and the Incarnation) and a fixed date in the current year-entry (Tuesday 1 April 609 and Monday 1 March 616) and shows how he can get from the first to the second by reference to his lunar and solar cycles and can work out the correct day of the week.[36] Second, there are a small number of notices which lack the chronological precision of the identifiable documentary material. Three concern construction projects in and just outside Constantinople. The chronicler, who had an avid interest in the subject, to judge by the number of building notices in his earlier late Roman section, probably noted them at the time.[37] Two deal with the austerity programme introduced as the Persian war continued and the Roman position worsened,

nn. 424, 438, 439. A small mistake by the chronicler accounts better for the second error than the complicated explanation suggested by H. A. Klein, 'Niketas und das wahre Kreuz. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Überlieferung des Chronicon Paschale ad annum 614', *BZ* 94 (2001), 580–7 (he has several notices displaced by the copyist of the tenth-century Vatican manuscript, as he worked from a defective manuscript with loose leaves at the end).

[36] Cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, nn. 414, 445–7.

[37] Completion in 609 of the composite column and cistern built by Phocas, only dated by the year-entry in which it is placed (698. 20–699. 2); (2) addition of a cross to the composite column, again merely dated by being entered under 612, although this time the name of the current prefect of the city is given (703. 13–15); (3) construction of a protective wall around the extramural church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, placed under 627 (726. 14–15; cf. Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, c. 13. 40–1 and Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, n. 481).

which doubtless impinged on the lives of the chronicler and his circle.[38] Finally, there are three notices which range outside the capital, two of which touch on important episodes in the war. For these and these alone he appears to have relied on his and others' memories.[39]

The author of the *Chronicon Paschale* adopts an attitude of the utmost humility when he comes to the history of his own time, making himself the creature of such documentary sources as came into his hands. The only exceptions are a handful of personal notices which he appears to have included either because they picked up a previously important theme (as in the building notices) or because the events covered made a deep impression on him. There is no reason, however, to suppose that he went so far as to include material from all the documents accessible to him about his own lifetime. He seems rather to have made use only of those which provided information on the central theme of the preceding section on late Roman history. His account continues to be dominated by the local history of the metropolis, and he profits to the full from the plentiful information supplied in published bulletins. Constantinople is the arena in which not only local factional but empire-wide and international conflicts are played out. Careful attention is also paid to court events, the actions of the Crown, and, to a lesser extent, episodes involving the patriarchate and St Sophia, all of which also take place in the city.[40]

4. *CHRONICON PASCHALE*: SCOPE AND AUTHORSHIP

The chief weakness of the chronicler in this section lies in his exiguous coverage of foreign affairs, when they did not impinge directly on the capital.

[38] Payment of state salaries at half their old rate, entered under 615 (706. 9–11); introduction of charges for the bread ration in 618, followed rapidly by its complete suspension in August (711. 11–15).

[39] (1) A composite notice, entered under 609, about the start of Heraclius' rebellion (which, in reality, began in the previous year), the murder of the patriarch of Alexandria, the replacing of the patriarch of Jerusalem, and the fall of Edessa to the Persians (699. 3–7); (2) a short item on the arrival of news 'towards the end of September' 610 about the murder of the patriarch of Antioch (699. 16–18); (3) a notice written in an uncharacteristically flowery style about the Persian sack of Jerusalem, dated 'about the month of June' 614 after a siege lasting 'a few days' (704. 13–705. 2).

[40] The halt in court notices after 613 does not mark a change of attitude on the part of the chronicler, but probably the temporary abandonment of lavish ceremonial for the duration of the war, now that the new dynasty had entrenched itself in the popular mind through an initial flurry of ceremonies.

He is silent about political and military developments in the north, about Heraclius' important diplomatic initiatives towards Huns, Unogundurs, and Turks, even about the Avar-directed siege of Thessalonica. It is only when the Avars launch direct attacks on the capital in 623 and 626 that northern peoples feature in the text. The Persian war is equally neglected. In marked contrast to ps. Sebeos (see Ch. 3), the chronicler makes no attempt to outline the main stages in the steady advance of Persian forces over Roman territory in the first two phases of the war (603–21). Not a word does he write about the capture of Dara in 604 (although earlier he notes its foundation by Anastasius), the gradual conquest of Roman Armenia 604–10 (succinctly but fully described by ps. Sebeos), the crossing of the Euphrates in 610 (picked out by the *Chronicle to the Year 724*), the occupation of Caesarea of Cappadocia 611–12, the decisive victory over Heraclius himself near Antioch in 613, or the invasion of Egypt in 619. Even more surprising is his unbroken silence about the counteroffensive campaigns of Heraclius in the third phase (622–8), apart from his initial departure for the east in 624 and his final dispatch (April 628). He deliberately chose to focus the concluding section of his chronicle almost exclusively on the metropolitan area. Exterior events, however important they may have been, are excluded, unless, like the murder of a patriarch or the fall of a great religious centre, they were of particular importance to a churchman.

Paradoxically his horizons were broader in the preceding section of the chronicle. Naturally the spotlight falls on the capital. A central theme is the development of what may be termed a late antique Strategic Defence Initiative, the assembly of an array of supernatural defenders for Constantinople, whose protection was secured by transferring their relics to the city. The chronicler reveals himself as a man of his day with a very real interest in the efficacy of these relics.[41] His selection of material on foreign affairs is also very revealing. It too betrays the perspective of someone living through the first crisis of the seventh century, his eyes drawn north as well as east by the great war being waged as he wrote. This surely is the explanation for the contrast in the late Roman section of the chronicle between the skimpy coverage of western affairs[42] and the relatively full account of the northern nomads who

[41] Relics with their date of arrival (or discovery): Timothy in 356 (542. 7–11), Luke and Andrew in 357 (542. 14–18), head of John the Baptist in 391 (564. 13–19), Samuel in 406 (569. 12–18 and 570. 26–571. 2), Joseph son of Jacob and Zacharias father of John the Baptist in 415 (572. 15–573. 2), Forty Martyrs of Sebastea in 451 (590. 16–20).

[42] What he does include appears at first sight to have been chosen arbitrarily, but a connection with contemporary events may explain the presence of two notices taken from the Constantinopolitan annals (583. 5–7 and 592. 2–7; cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, nn. 244 and 273) about the Vandals (north Africa being the home province of Heraclius), and

made the greatest impact on the Roman world in late antiquity, the Huns.[43] It also accounts for the large quantity of material from Malalas which he includes on Persian history, beginning with notices about Zoroaster and the Persian inspiration for chariot-racing at Rome (instituted at a festival of the Sun, in honour of the four elements venerated in Zoroastrianism and reputed to assure victory for the Persians), continuing with scattered notices on the Achaemenids (not to mention a great mass of additional material from the Old Testament) and their Parthian and Sasanian successors which broadens out, from the late third century, into a remarkably full, though not complete, account of Roman–Persian relations.[44] A clear editorial policy on the chronicler's part can be discerned in his handling of his late Roman sources, among which the massive, wide-ranging, variegated chronicle of Malalas bulks

the only notice about Theoderic (604. 15–605. 13, taken from Malalas, XV. 10; cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, n. 309), concerning his intervention in a case involving a grand Roman lady and the succession of his grandson Athalaric (the name of an illegitimate son of Heraclius, a powerful figure at court until his disgrace in the 630s (ps. Sebeos, 133. 1–16 with *Hist. Com.*, n. 50, Nicephorus, cc. 13. 4–6 and 24. 8–18).

[43] The chronicler's interest in the Huns is revealed not only in his transcription of Malalas' summary of the last phase of Attila's career, including his imperious request that palaces be prepared for him in Rome and Constantinople (587. 7–588. 5, from Malalas, XIV. 10), and his account of diplomatic manoeuvring involving the Huns of the Caucasus in the 520s (615. 5–616. 6, from Malalas, XVII. 10), but also in the inclusion of two additional notices taken from the Constantinopolitan annals about the devastation of Illyricum in 442 and the death of Attila's son Dengizich in 468 (583. 14–15 and 598. 3–8, cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, nn. 246 and 294).

[44] Material was taken from the Old Testament and the Constantinopolitan annals as well as Malalas. The Malalas material includes two items on the remote Persian past about Zoroaster (67. 14–22, from I. 11) and racing in honour of the four elements, each represented by a colour (205. 21–206. 3 and 208. 11–19, from VII. 4 and 5). Malalas has been quarried extensively on Persian–Roman relations from the late third to the early sixth century: 510. 5–15 (Persian campaigns of Carus, Carinus, and Numerian), a garbled version of XII. 34–6; 550. 20–551. 21 (death of Julian), from XIII. 23–4; 552. 19–555. 3 (extrication of Roman army by Jovian), from XIII. 27; 608. 19–609. 7 (fortification of Dara), from XVI. 10; 613. 3–615. 4 (baptism of Tzath, ruler of the Laz), from XVII. 9; 618. 1–13 (Roman defeat in Lazica in 528), from XVIII. 4 (NB Belisarius is substituted for Gilderic, one of three named Roman generals).Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xxvi stress the strong contemporary resonance of two notices, (1) about the Persian siege of Nisibis in 350 (536. 18–539. 3—not from Malalas) and (2) about Senator Arinthaeus' negotiations with the Persians in 363 (553. 14–554. 1, from Malalas' account of Jovian's brief reign (XIII. 27)), and identify (n. 343) a rare case where the chronicler adds a postscript of his own at the end of a notice about the Samaritan rebellion of 529 (619. 18–620. 2). The only notable omissions are (1) all but the last part of Malalas' account (XIII. 19–23) of Julian's Persian campaign (550. 20–551. 21) and (2) Malalas' extensive coverage of diplomacy and military actions in Justinian's first Persian war from 527 to 532 (bk. XVIII) except for material on operations in Lazica at the start of the war (618. 1–13). In both these cases, the chronicler probably decided that he could not include them whole because that would unbalance his account, and was unwilling or unable to reduce them to a manageable size by abridging them (a practice which was, as we have seen, alien to him).

largest. He selects material relevant to his main themes (of which, of course, the great persecutions and dynastic history are two others), and his choice of themes can be seen to have been governed to a large extent by the events and concerns of his own time.

We can but guess at his motives for narrowing his gaze when he did finally come to his own time. He cannot surely have failed to gain access to some more documents dealing with foreign affairs, for example dispatches from Heraclius pre-dating his final victory. It seems highly unlikely that he had an axe to grind, as has been suggested recently, and deliberately sought to play down Heraclius' part in the war, whether doing so of his own accord or acting as the mouthpiece of a higher authority, namely the patriarch. He was, as we have seen, a man who was careful to keep his views, except those on chronology, out of his history. All the available evidence also suggests that emperor and patriarch worked harmoniously together during the war and in the following period of peace. One is forced back to the simplest of all explanations—the practicalities of producing a universal chronicle, reaching from the beginning of time to the present, and completing it within a reasonable time. His principal concern was surely to keep the final section from growing unmanageably large and unbalancing the whole work. The three long documents which he did incorporate would leave a reader in no doubt about the gravity of the contemporary crisis and the identities of the empire's principal adversaries. The telling of the full story was left to others, whose primary interest was in narrative rather than chronology. He may also have thought it appropriate to narrow his geographical coverage in tandem with the compression of the Roman state, as it fell back on its organizing centre.

Because of his self-restraint, not much can be learned about the chronicler from his work. We can infer that he was well read in his chosen fields of chronography and chronometry, and that he knew his Bible thoroughly. From the skill with which he argues in favour of the main contentions of his chronological prologue and the ingenuity with which he makes his calculations of key gospel dates come out right, we can infer that he possessed a considerable intelligence. The predominance of biblical material in part 1 suggests, though it cannot prove, that he belonged to the clergy. Similarly the Constantinopolitan bias of part 2 points to residence in the capital.

But of his views about contemporary issues, whether political or doctrinal, or his attitudes to the contemporary leaders of church and state we can learn nothing, so reticent is he. His career too can only be guessed at, on the basis of two items of information extracted from the chronicle, one negative, one positive. The absence of a dedication and the non-committal way in which the Patriarch Sergius is mentioned when he makes his several entries strongly suggest that it was a private venture of the chronicler and that he had not

received any support from Sergius, the chief literary patron of the day.[45] On the other hand, judging by the contemporary documents to which he had access, he probably occupied an administrative position in the patriarchal secretariat (if he was, as suggested, a churchman), and had access to its archives. Besides published imperial bulletins, the archives surely contained copies of the three long documents which he reproduced, since the patriarch and his staff were privy to all three of them. This is obviously true of the report about the 626 siege, since Sergius drafted it, and Heraclius' final dispatch, since it was read out in St Sophia, and is likely to be true of the Senate's letter of 615, which was probably vetted by Sergius since the *syncellus*, a senior patriarchal official, was one of the ambassadors deputed to convey it to the Persian king.[46]

Nothing is known about the author's status in the patriarchate, if indeed he worked there. Since it was not a huge organization, he was probably known by sight and name to the patriarch and to senior officials like George of Pisidia. If he was himself a senior figure rather than a lowly clerk who was a stickler for accuracy, he may have been frequently in their company. They may also have known that he had a strong interest in chronology and was engaged on a private writing project. It would then be another mark of modesty on his part that he did not seek their patronage, but simply continued amassing and copying out material for a compilation which he probably intended eventually to deposit in the archives.

Whatever his status and whatever the nature of his job, the chronicler has put subsequent generations immensely in his debt, by preserving so rich and extensive a dossier of documents and by refraining from tampering with them. The quality of the information which he provides about the early seventh century cannot be matched by any other extant source. It is, above all, the concern for chronological exactitude evident throughout the *Chronicon Paschale* which is to be prized. The chronicler's penchant for official documents is to be explained, at least in part, by the detailed dating information which they supplied. He took great care in its transcription. He seems to have reproduced it faithfully in all but three cases, where the slips are minor and easily detectable. The chronological labelling on the

[45] As suggested by Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, p. xxvii; contra Gelzer, *Julius Africanus*, 138, who places him in Sergius' circle. Thus the chronicler was evidently unaware of the history of the reign of Maurice which Theophylact Simocatta, a protégé of Sergius, was writing at the same time, in the later 620s, since, despite his evident anxiety to include some substantive notices for the mid and late sixth century, he made no use whatsoever of it.

[46] A similar conclusion can be drawn from his inclusion of complete transcripts of the Theopaschite and Three Chapters edicts of 533 and 551 respectively, since copies of these too must have been kept in the patriarchal archives.

original bulletins, letters, reports, dispatches, etc. was, it may be presumed, accurate as well as precise. If confirmation is needed, it can be obtained by checking individual constituent elements of dates transcribed in the chronicle (days of the week, dates in the month, and years) against each other. In all cases, save the three mentioned above, they are internally consistent. The chronicler could, however, go astray if there were no documentary source to hand for an item which he felt impelled to include. There are three examples in the penultimate section covering the years 533–602: the rededication of St Sophia is dated a year too late (December 563 instead of 562); Justinian's death is also recorded one year too late (in 566 instead of 565), with a consequential shortening of Justin II's reign (11 years, 8 months instead of 12 years, 11 months); and, most striking of all, 'the great death', by which the plague of 542 must be meant, is misdated to 529.[47] Fortunately, the only detectable fault in the final, contemporary section is a deliberate vagueness in the few notices which the chronicler composed himself.

5. *CHRONICLE TO THE YEAR 724*: CONTENT AND SOURCES

Without the *Chronicon Paschale* latter-day historians would be left floundering. With it they can start to reconstruct history out of a flux of conflicting sources, confident that the foundations are sound. The next step is to turn to the text which bears the closest resemblance to it, the *Chronicle to the Year 724*, which is preserved in a single manuscript (BL Add. 14643). This too covers the whole history of the world from the creation of Adam to the author's own day. The author was likewise anonymous and shared the same devouring interest in chronological computations. He too liked to include full dating indications where they were supplied by his sources. He too was well read and combined material from several different sources. Like his Constantinopolitan predecessor, he was content normally to transcribe rather than rewrite his sources, but he was more selective in what he extracted from them and readier to shorten excerpts by excising passages. His text was slighter, not much more than one-tenth the length of the *Chronicon Paschale*. He was also less interested in the issue of Easter (but notes (111) a controversy in 570 about the start of Lent) and organized his material differently. There is less narrative and more listing. There is no annalistic framework. While time remains the chief

[47] Cf. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, nn. 342, 387, and 389.

organizing principle, notices are sometimes grouped thematically. Each of the three periods into which he divides mankind's past is covered in two juxtaposed sections, one presenting history pared down to essentials, the other either providing more chronological information or amplifying the preceding minimalist account with supplementary notices. The general impression is more that of a commonplace book, of jottings made by a reader on matters of particular interest, than of a well-planned work of systematic compilation.[48]

The main part of the *Chronicle to 724* surveys the past in three successive sweeps, first from Adam to the birth of Abraham, second from Abraham to the twentieth regnal year of the Emperor Constantine (325) when the Council of Nicaea was held, and third from the twenty-first year of Constantine to the 630s. Most of the first section has been lost, save for a final few paragraphs (63–4) listing the peoples of the world together with some geographical information. It is made plain, though, by a later computation (100), that it recycled the story of *Genesis*, homing in on the Flood and the proliferation of tongues after man's attempt to build the Tower of Babel. The principal source was the early third-century *Diamerismos* of Hippolytus which traced the descent of known peoples from Noah's sons, appending lists of their colonial offshoots, of regions with unknown inhabitants, of mountains, and of rivers.[49] The second section opens with a systematic chronological tabulation of Old Testament patriarchs, giving the length of their lives, their ages at the birth of their sons, and dating their deaths by reference to Noah's life and the Flood. The same information is then provided from Noah's point of view (born 86 years after Adam's death, 9 years before the death of Seth . . .). and followed by a second list of patriarchs down to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (64–8).

The next two sections take the story down to the unification of mankind under Roman rule and the twentieth year of Constantine respectively.

[48] *Chronicon miscellaneum ad annum Domini 724 pertinens*, trans. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 4, Chronica Minor II (Louvain, 1955), 63–119. Selective English translation in A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, TTH 15 (Liverpool, 1993), 13–23, 49–50 (cited, in this chapter, as P with page reference). Originally the text was some 80 pages long. The extant manuscript, which runs to 57 pages in the Latin translation, has lost ten folios (nine at the beginning and one after the first extant folio)—see E. W. Brooks's introduction to Chabot's translation, 61–2.

[49] The *Diamerismos* was the most widely read part of a universal history written by Hippolytus which came down to AD 234 (ed. A. Bauer and R. Helm, *Hippolytus Werke*, iv: *Die Chronik*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Berlin, 1955)). Material has been excised in the *Chron.724*'s transcription, and there are several scribal errors, but in general it is closer to the original than the version (admittedly fuller) included in the *Chronicon Paschale* (46–62).

The latter date was presumably picked out because Eusebius halted his *Chronicle* at that point. A first attempt to correlate different strands of history, Jewish, Greek, and Middle Eastern, as well as to place prophets within regnal years of kings of Israel, is made in the third section (68–78), which consists mainly of lists of gentile rulers and Old Testament patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. It includes a chronological digression (73–6), lifted from Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which argues that Moses was a contemporary of Cecrops, first king of Athens, and therefore lived before Homer, Hesiod, and all notable Greeks. It ends with a note (78) correcting Eusebius' dating of the Incarnation to year 309 of the Alexandrian era. The following fourth section contains (1) an epitome of Eusebius' integrated chronicle of events, beginning with Ninus and his wife Semiramis on the gentile side and God's covenant with Abraham on the Jewish and ending with Augustus and Herod (78–85), (2) a summary of the New Testament story (85–8), (3) a history of the Roman empire and the nascent church which peters out into bare lists of emperors, bishops, and martyrs towards the end (88–100), and (4) a final summary computation (100–1).

The history of the Christianized Roman empire, from the twenty-first regnal year of Constantine, is covered in the two following sections and is drawn from at least two sources, as is made evident from the opening conjoined accounts of the reigns of Constantine and his son Constantius, the first skeletal, the second more discursive (101–3). The relatively full account of subsequent Roman history from Julian to Theodosius I (103–8), in which considerable attention is paid to foreign affairs, was probably taken from the second source, while the bare notices of the lengths of later emperors' reigns, down to Heraclius (108), probably came from the first. A rich selection of supplementary material is presented in the sixth section, most, if not all of it, probably taken from a single source. Graphic accounts of earthquakes which hit Antioch in 458 and a year or so later (108–11)[50] are followed by small clusters of brief notices about sixth-century warfare and natural calamities (111, P14–15),[51] a note about the centurion at the Crucifixion

[50] Malalas' independent account of the first earthquake (XIV. 36), highly abridged in the extant manuscript, is recycled by Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II. 12 (ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia* (London, 1898), trans. Michael Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, TTH 33 (Liverpool, 2000)). The various chronological indications are contradictory, but the most plausible date is Sunday 14 September 458 (see Whitby, *Evagrius*, n. 131). *Chron. 724* dates the second earthquake to 19 June in year 771 of the Alexandrian era (460) and in year 507 of the Antiochene era (459).

[51] An apparently intrusive notice about a dispute in Syria over the beginning of Lent (but not about the date of Easter) serves as introduction to a victory won by al-Mundhir, leader of the Ghassan, over his Persian-sponsored rival (111, P15).

(111, P15), a summary of the life of Severus, Monophysite patriarch of Antioch (111, P15), dated obits of leading sixth-century churchmen and of famous holy men of the fourth and fifth centuries (111–12, P15–16),[52] and a set of detailed, carefully dated notices dealing mainly with Roman–Persian warfare in the late sixth and early seventh century (112–14, P16–19). To this are appended some supplementary notes on Roman history from the first to the early sixth century (section 7 114–16, P19–21), a short collection of material on the history of the church before and after its establishment (section 8, 116–19, in the form of lists of notable heresiarchs, third- and fourth-century ecumenical councils, and their leading participants), and finally a list of caliphs (section 9, 119, P49–50—translated from Arabic).[53]

A concern with chronological precision is evident to the last. The length of the reign of the last caliph listed, Yazid II, is given in years, months, and days. It follows that the chronicle was completed after, probably very soon after, his death in 724. The manuscript, which dates from the same period, appears to have been the chronicler's own copy, written probably in his own hand.[54]

Not only was his project similar to the *Chronicon Paschale* but, as has been seen, the 724 chronicler drew on a similar array of sources—Scripture, earlier universal historical syntheses (notably those of Hippolytus and Eusebius), and at least two sources on late antique history, one laconic, the other discursive. In his case, though, the material reached him not in Greek but in Syriac. The translation of Hippolytus which he used was evidently faithful to the Greek text, to judge from a comparison of his extracts with the original. Of the two known translations of Eusebius, both made in the seventh century, by Simeon of Beth Garmai (a Nestorian) and Jacob of Edessa (a noted Monophysite churchman and writer, who died in 708), it was surely Jacob's version which he used.[55] It is highly unlikely that he would have sought out a work by an adherent of an antipathetic sect, when there was an alternative to hand written by the greatest Syrian intellectual of the recent past and there was no confessional bar to its use. This can be demonstrated, for the correction to Eusebius' date for the birth of Christ, placing it in year 309

[52] Three extraneous notices have been inserted (112, P16) about the movement of refugees across the Euphrates in 630/1, the appointment of a new patriarch (of Antioch) in the following year, and the loss of Nisibis to the Persians (dated 361/2).

[53] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 395–6.

[54] Introduction (by E. W. Brooks) to Chabot's translation, 61–2; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 396.

[55] W. Witakowski, *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: A Study in the History of Historiography*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala, 1987), 77–8. Jacob's version may have been rather more than a plain translation, if it is to be equated with his extant fragmentary *Chronicle*, which incorporates a reworked version of Eusebius' *Chronicle* and continues it down to 692 (Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 80).

rather than 312 of the Alexandrian era, was made by Jacob of Edessa. Hence the book in the archives of Edessa which the chronicler cites as his authority (78) was surely Jacob's *Chronicle*, a Syriac version and continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*.[56]

6. *CHRONICLE TO THE YEAR 724*: EARLY SEVENTH-CENTURY MATERIAL

By far the most valuable material transmitted by the compiler of the *Chronicle to 724* is the final set of notices in section 6 (112–14, P16–19). Carefully dated and arranged in chronological order, they deal mainly with Roman–Persian warfare from the sack of Antioch by Khusro I in 540 to a summit meeting in 629 between the Emperor Heraclius and the Persian military strongman, Shahrvaraz, which brought the war initiated by Khusro II to a close. Note is taken of some other matters—the execution of the Emperor Maurice and his sons, Monophysite church affairs, a severe winter when the Euphrates froze over, a Slav naval raid in the Aegean, an eclipse, and (on the eve of the summit meeting) a serious earthquake. The last two notices take the story on into the 630s and record the first dramatic successes of Arab armies outside Arabia. Considerable trouble is taken over chronology. Where possible, a double system of dating is used, the Alexandrian era being supplemented by indictions from 590/1 to 608/9 and in the last two notices about the Arab conquests.[57] When indiction dates give out, an effort is made to specify the month. The penultimate notice in the series (114, P18–19) contains the fullest dating indication of all (as well as being gravid with information): 'a battle was fought between the Romans and twelve thousand Arabs of Muhammad in Palestine to the east of Gaza, in the year 945 (633/4), in the seventh indiction (633/4), on Friday the 4th of Shebat (February), at the ninth hour . . .' That defeat, which resulted in a huge death-toll (40,000 peasants, Christian, Jewish, and Samaritan) and opened up Palestine to Arab devastation, was evidently singled out as the most important recent event in the source used by the *Chronicle to 724*.

That source was presumably written soon after the last events recorded (114, P19), the Arab invasion of Mesopotamia and the slaughter of monks

[56] F. Nau, 'Lettre de Jacques d'Édesse à Jean le Stylite', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, 5 (1900), 581–96; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 80.

[57] Indiction dating probably lapsed in reality in the Middle East when Roman fiscal administration was first disrupted, as the war intensified, and then taken over by the Persians.

in two of the hill monasteries behind Mardin, which are dated to 635/6. A reference to the death of Simeon, doorkeeper of the monastery of Qedar and brother of Thomas the priest, brings us into the circle of the writer. It is hard to explain the inclusion of so insignificant a piece of information, save as some sort of indirect indication of authorship on the part of Thomas the priest or of someone close to him. It is equally hard to explain the halt in the coverage of the Arab conquests in the *Chronicle to 724*, unless its principal source for material on international relations at the end of antiquity gave out after 636.[58] However, it is virtually impossible to determine the starting point of what we may term the *Chronicle to 636*, since the later chronicler may only have excerpted material from its final part. All we can do is to use the criterion of chronological precision (far from foolproof, since some of the sources used by Thomas the priest or his protégé may have been less forthcoming than others) and to make the working assumption that the 724 chronicler is likely to have extracted more rather than less information from it. For he evidently thought highly of it, since he twice made use of the same notice about the 629 summit meeting, tacking it on to a note about the length of Heraclius' reign at the end of section 5 (108, P13) as well as introducing it in its proper place (114, P18).[59]

If chronological precision is taken as a diagnostic, all the material in section 6 may be attributed to the *Chronicle to 636* since great care is taken over the dating of both fifth-century Antioch earthquakes as also of the controversy over Lent in 570 and the lives and deaths of sixth- and early seventh-century eastern churchmen (indictions are usually given in the case of the churchmen). It is hard to say, though, whether the more discursive material in section 5 came from it, since the few precise dates are confined to the early 360s. There is the same difficulty with the supplementary material on earlier and later Roman history in section 7, since there is only one case, the fall of Amida to the Persians, for which a precise and accurate date is given (10 January 503). It seems safer for the moment to view section 6 as a compendium of material taken from the *Chronicle to 636*, which the 724 chronicler probably came across at a late stage in his reading and note-taking, and to ascribe the more discursive material in section 5 (together with the supplementary notes in section 7) to a separate source which he had encountered earlier. On this hypothesis the 724 chronicler had four distinct sources of information on late antiquity—a spare enumeration of events, a more discursive source which may well have reached back into earlier Roman

[58] Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 5–6; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 119.

[59] The rounded figure of 30 years for Heraclius' reign (108, P13) surely came from the same source as the previous regnal figures, one quite distinct from the *Chronicle to 636*.

history, the *Chronicle to 636*, and an ecclesiastical source (exploited in section 8). To these may be added an Arabic list of caliphs, which he used to plug the gap between the conclusion of the *Chronicle to 636* and his own day.[60]

Thomas the priest (or his anonymous protégé) has transmitted invaluable nuggets of information. Save for the two lengthy and well-written accounts of fifth-century Antioch earthquakes (surely lifted bodily from an anterior work?), he shows no interest in fine writing. Hard information was what he sought, and he did not waste words in conveying it. Contemporary concerns influenced his selection of earlier material—hence surely the inclusion of brief notes about major events involving the Arab clients of the great powers, from 519 (the first major raid by al-Mundhir of the Lakhm) and notices about ecclesiastical affairs. His coverage is impressively wide, reaching back into the fifth century and forward to the first stage of the Arab conquests. The principal weakness in the *Chronicon Paschale*'s account of the last Roman–Persian war, its highly selective coverage, is remedied. The main stages in the Persian advance over Roman territory, within the field of vision of a contemporary observer living in the vicinity of Mardin, are carefully noted and dated: the advance towards the Euphrates; the crossing of the Euphrates; the capture of strategically important cities in Syria (Emesa and Damascus); the sack of Jerusalem; the fall of Alexandria, which opened Egypt to occupation; the conquest of Rhodes, a vital forward naval base. Finally a unique piece of information is supplied which casts light on a key phase in the negotiations which brought the war to an end: the agreement reached between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz, commander-in-chief of Persian armies in the west, when they met in July 629 at Arabissus in the Anti-Taurus.

In most cases, it is not so much the information conveyed (which has been reduced to a necessary minimum) as the dating which is of greatest historical value. It is therefore important to test the chronological accuracy of the *Chronicle to 636*. Two methods can be used. As well as being scrutinized for internal coherence, dates can be checked against those given by sources of demonstrable worth. The results of the first test are not conclusive, mainly because there are only two events, the first Antioch earthquake and the Arab victory near Gaza, for which days of the week as well as dates in the month of a specified year are given. Otherwise all that can be done is to correlate

[60] Contra Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 5–12 and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 118–20 who ascribe the whole chronicle, except for the final list of caliphs, to Thomas the priest or his protégé. A fuller exposition of his ingenious reading of the text is given by A. Palmer, 'Une chronique syriaque contemporaine de la conquête arabe: essai d'interprétation théologique et politique', in P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VIIe–VIIIe siècles* (Damascus, 1992), 31–46.

indiction years, where they are noted, with years numbered according to the Alexandrian era. In no case, though, can any inconsistency be found. Where dates can be compared with those given by the *Chronicon Paschale* and reliable sources (notably the histories of Procopius and Theophylact Simocatta, for the sixth century, and ps. Sebeos, for the seventh), the record of Thomas (or his protégé) is impressive. A minor error concerns the date of the execution of the Emperor Maurice and his sons (113, P17), which is correctly placed in 602/3 but in the wrong month (August (so in 603) rather than November (602)) and on the wrong day (the 23rd, the date of Phocas' proclamation as emperor, rather than the 27th, the date of the executions).[61] A more serious one is his misplacing of the start of Heraclius' counteroffensive in 623, mid-way between the defensive operations of 622 and the invasion of Atropatene in 624 (113, P18). He seems to have conflated those two campaigns, the first commanded by Heraclius in person since 613, and to have plumped for the intermediate year (623). While the round figure (30 years) he gives for Heraclius' reign (108, P13) is correct (it came to 30 years, 4 months, and 6 days (Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, c. 27. 13–15)), he lengthens Khusro II's from 38 to 40 years (113, P18), but without displacing his death from the correct year. There is also one evident scribal error (112, P16) which has corrupted the date of the capture of Antioch by Khusro I (year 871 of the Alexandrian era (559/60) rather than the correct 851 (539/40) given in an earlier notice (111, P14)).

Dates which can be corroborated include the fall of Dara in 572/3 (112, P16), the restoration of Khusro II to the Sasanian throne in 590/1 (112, P17), the second fall of Dara in 603/4 (113, P17), the fall of Jerusalem in 613/14 (113, P17), the death of Khusro II in February 628 (113, P18). The *Chronicle to 636* thus has an impressive record of chronological accuracy, with only one significant exception. It is therefore not foolhardy to put one's faith in the uncorroborated dates which are given for the breaching of the Roman inner line of defence on the Euphrates (7 August 610), for the fall of Emesa (610/11) and Damascus (612/13), for the capture of Alexandria (June 619) and its evacuation together with all the cities of Syria ten years later (June 629),[62] for the summit meeting between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz (July 629),[63] and lastly for Arab attacks on Palestine (February 634) and Mesopotamia (635/6).[64]

[61] Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988), 26.
[62] *Chron. 724*, 113, P17–18.
[63] *Chron. 724*, 108 and 114, P 13 and 18.
[64] *Chron. 724*, 114, P18–19.

7. CONCLUSION

The two universal chronicles analysed in this chapter supply a large body of reliable and detailed evidence about the last Roman–Persian war and two snippets, unique and invaluable, about the opening phase of Muslim expansion. All the documentary material reproduced in the *Chronicon Paschale* is of the highest quality. We must take care, though, in handling documents, especially those intended for publication, such as court circulars and some dispatches from the field. The dissemination of information was a political act of government and government often wished to manage news—whether to enhance the emperor's standing, to gloss over failure, to exaggerate success, to boost faltering morale at home, or to deceive the enemy. We must be wary above all of exaggeration and deliberate disinformation. That said, there is no reason to suspect that there was either distortion or fabrication in any of the three long documents reproduced in the *Chronicon Paschale*. The Senate's letter to Khusro II was, of course, very carefully phrased, so as simultaneously to avoid causing offence and to defend the Roman negotiating position, insofar as it was defensible. Sergius' report on the siege of Constantinople was confidential, written for the emperor in the field. Only Heraclius' final victory dispatch was intended for publication, and in that case there was no need to improve on reality. As well as providing much hard information (as do the notices on domestic politics and court ceremonies), these documents allow us to sense the collective mood at three very different times—the nadir in 615, the turning point in 626 and the final triumph in 628.

It is impossible to say whether any of the sources used by the *Chronicle to 636* were documents, on the basis of the extracts embedded in the *Chronicle to 724*.[65] Thomas the priest (or his protégé) seems to have condensed what he read or heard or witnessed into pithy notices. His great service is to complement the dates supplied by the *Chronicon Paschale* with a fair number of his own, which are equally trustworthy. Between them these two universal chronicles provide a sound armature of dates for the most recent tranche of history which they cover. They also complement each other in their coverage. The *Chronicon Paschale* gives an authoritative account of key episodes in the life of court and capital, homing in on the two political revolutions of the period and the three direct attacks on the metropolitan area by Persians and Avars in the years 615, 623, and 626. The 636 chronicler looks out at the wider

[65] Henceforth citations of *Chron. 724* will be to Palmer's English translation, unless otherwise indicated.

world from a provincial vantage point in the north-western segment of the Fertile Crescent. His record of the recent past is dominated by warfare in the lands to the south of the Taurus, to such an extent that he neglects the affairs of his own Monophysite confession, merely noting the reconciliation of factions achieved in 617/18 and 618/19 (113, P17). Out of the two texts a skeleton history can be pieced together, which covers key episodes of the last war between the established great powers and the first striking successes outside Arabia of a new type of religious-political entity, the Muslim *umma* (community). The following table gathers together the principal events covered and the dates given:

603/4: fall of Dara
609: fall of Edessa
7 August 610: Persians cross the Euphrates
610/11: fall of Emesa
612/13: fall of Damascus
613/14: fall of Jerusalem (news reaches Constantinople in June 614)
615: Persian advance to Chalcedon
615: Senate sues for peace
June 619: fall of Alexandria
623: surprise Avar attack across the Long Wall
June 626: Shahrvaraz reaches Chalcedon
29 June 626: Avar vanguard crosses Long Wall
29 July–7 August 626: Avar siege of Constantinople
24 February 628: overthrow of Khusro II
25 February 628: coronation of Kavad Shiroe
28 February 628: execution of Khusro II
June 629: Persian evacuation of Alexandria
July 629: summit meeting between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz
4 February 634: Arab victory inland from Gaza
635/6: Arab invasion of Persian Mesopotamia

There is only one gaping hole in the combined geographical coverage of the two chronicles—their virtually unbroken silence about events in Transcaucasia, save for winter 627–8, when Heraclius withdrew to Atropatene (Iranian Azerbaijan).

The substance of the documents transcribed in the *Chronicon Paschale* and the precise and accurate dates given by both chronicles also equip the modern investigator with the means for sifting through the mass of diverse primary material concerning the last great war of antiquity supplied by other sources and for evaluating those sources one by one. Wherever there is overlap between material in either (or both) of the chronicles and that in other extant

sources, it is possible to determine the worth of the latter by a simple comparison. Dates, whether stated or implied (by the position of a notice in a text), can be checked readily against those given in the two chronicles, and a view formed as to the chronological reliability of individual sources. As will be shown in the following chapters, the procedure of testing other sources against the *Chronicon Paschale* and *Chronicle to 636* solves a multitude of historiographical problems.

A second step into deeper historiographical analysis is rendered feasible by the inclusion of a transcript of Heraclius' final dispatch in the *Chronicon Paschale*. Not only does it supply detailed information about the final operations of his second counteroffensive and the *putsch* which disposed of Khusro II, but it also gives the historian a full, unabridged, undoctored example of an imperial dispatch from the field. It thus equips him with the necessary diagnostic instruments (format, terminology, style, high specific gravity of content, etc.) for detecting dispatch-based material which may lurk in other texts. Just as the presence of iambic lines or phrases is a tell-tale sign that Theophanes has made use of George of Pisidia's poetry, so narratives about military operations incorporated in later sources may be ascribed with a fair degree of confidence to lost dispatches, if they are both rich in data and lucidly expressed. As will be seen in the next two chapters which examine two important Armenian historical texts and in a later dissection of the seventh-century section of the *Chronographia* of Theophanes (Ch. 9), a fair amount of additional documentary material, derived principally from dispatches, will be identified and laid out ready for historical use.

It is time now to turn to the Armenian History traditionally attributed to Sebeos, which centres upon the actions of Khusro II and their longer-term consequences, and to Movses Daskhurants'i's *History of Albania*, which includes a corpus of detailed seventh-century information. Between them they can fill in the missing Transcaucasian dimension of the last Roman–Persian war and cast more light on the rise of Islam.

3

Seventh-Century Eastern Sources I

The History of Khosrov

The extant poetry of George of Pisidia and the last contemporary section of the *Chronicon Paschale* take us close to the dramatic events of the great Roman–Persian war. They provide first-hand evidence both of what happened and of emotional reactions to what happened. George had some direct contact with the highest circles in Constantinople and was in a position to gauge the mood and observe the ideological drives of those who made policy. His anonymous contemporary and colleague was privileged in another way. He had ready access to such state papers as were copied to the patriarchate and made his own carefully judged selection of them. Neither, however, takes us into the yet more dramatic events which were to follow, although both probably witnessed some of the early Arab victories. So far our only glimpse of the extraordinary force brought to bear by the Muslim *umma* on the established great powers has come from the *Chronicle to 636*, and its coverage is limited to two episodes at the start of what might well have been taken as the beginning of the apocalypse.

All other non-Muslim sources of information about the world crisis of the seventh century were put together at a greater or lesser distance from the events. The potential for confusion, distortion, error, invention increased proportionately with distance, both of time and space. Attention should therefore be concentrated first on those sources which were put together within a generation or two of the Roman–Persian war or the first phase of Arab conquests, either in the eastern provinces or in Christian circles beyond the Roman frontier (Chs. 3–6), and second on medieval chronicles, which may post-date events by a century or more but which had access to good earlier sources of information (Chs. 7–10).

One of three chronicles, all surviving in fragmentary form, which were put together in the empire's eastern provinces in the seventh century, the Syriac *Chronicle to 636*, has already been appraised, since the text in which it is embedded is a universal chronicle like the *Chronicon Paschale* and it is illuminating to examine the two together (as has been done in Ch. 2). Two others, the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu and the *Maronite Chronicle*, are narrowly focused on specific

regions over short periods, Egypt at the time of the Heraclian revolt against Phocas (608–10) and the Arab campaign of conquest (641–2), and the metropolitan heartland of the caliphate in Syria at the tail-end of the first Arab civil war and over the following few years (658–64). They will be considered later along with a number of other, seventh-century Roman and post-Roman sources, a few metropolitan, most provincial and local in their coverage.

First, though, attention should be turned to three texts which were written in former Sasanian territory soon after the rise of Islam. They survive relatively unmutilated and present rich, detailed accounts of the recent past. They are particularly valuable, because each makes use, to a greater or lesser extent, of official Sasanian sources of information and picks up news circulating inside what had been the Sasanian empire. Each also has its own local perspective, looking out at the world from a different vantage point, either in Armenia (at or near the regional capital, Dvin), or Khuzistan (on the left bank of the lower Tigris), or Caucasian Albania (backing on to the Caspian), as well as taking a close interest in their home regions. The *History of Khosrov* which has been erroneously attributed to Sebeos (Armenian) and the *Khuzistan Chronicle* (Syriac) were written within a generation of the end of the war, on the eve of the first Muslim civil war. The *Chronicle to 682*, a work of considerable literary quality composed on the eve of the second Muslim civil war, is embedded in a later, medieval chronicle composed in Armenian by Movses Daskhurantsʿi in Caucasian Albania.

1. THE *HISTORY OF KHOSROV* AND ITS AUTHORSHIP

The *History of Khosrov* is the most useful of these three sources. It is not so much the range of information conveyed which impresses the reader, extensive though it be, as its detail and its chronological precision. In this last regard, it can only be matched by the *Chronicle to 636*, which, however, provides all too meagre a set of laconic notices.

It is a substantial text which runs to 113 pages in the modern critical edition.[1] The manuscript tradition is thin and late. But the text was known in the early middle ages when it was quarried extensively by two noted tenth-century historians, John Catholicos and Thomas Artsruni. The first witness to

[1] *Patmutʿiwn Sebeosi*, ed. G. V. Abgaryan (Erevan, 1979), trans. R. W. Thomson in R. W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, TTH 31 (Liverpool, 1999), i. Citations refer to pages of the critical edition, which are printed in bold type in the translation.

the text, a manuscript dated to 1568, has now disappeared. More important, though, is the second witness, a manuscript copied from an ancient codex (in uncial script) in 1672 at the monastery of St John the Baptist in Bitlis (near the west end of Lake Van). Its version of the text is of high quality but not quite as full as that used by Thomas Artsruni.[2] This manuscript, now in the Matenadaran in Erevan, is a famous one, since it contains the full canon of early Armenian historical texts, dealing with the conversion of the country to Christianity, its early history, and two great rebellions against Sasanian rule in the fifth century. Our text picks up the story from the middle of the fifth century and carries it on for two centuries, ending with the first and most dramatic phase of Arab expansion. All other extant manuscript versions of the text were copied from it.

Neither the title of the text nor the name of the author is recorded in the manuscript. But an early note of its contents was made (around 1675) by Vardan Balishetsʻi who had commissioned it. After identifying the five preceding texts, four by author's name, one by title, he ended his list with an enigmatic name, Khosrov. Since the only historian of this name is very obscure, mentioned in two medieval lists of historical writers, and since the main subject of the text is the *shahanshah* Khusro II ('the story of the destructive and ruinous Khosrov, cursed by God'), Vardan should be taken to be referring to the title rather than the author, his *Khosrov* being shorthand for the *History of Khosrov*. An earlier identification with a lost *History of Heraclius* by a certain Sebeos (proposed by Shahkhatʻunean in 1833 and accepted by the first editor Mihrdatean in 1851) may be rejected: apart from the obvious discrepancy between that title and the text (Heraclius' role being that of supporting actor for part of the story told), a passage quoted by Ukhtanes, a late tenth-century church historian, as well as extracts included in collections of liturgical readings, are not to be found in our text. For ease of

[2] Thomas Artsruni based his long chapter on the fall of the Sasanian dynasty (II. 3) entirely on the *History of Khosrov*, beginning with the circumstances in which Khosrov gained his throne and carrying the story on to the triumphal return of the True Cross to Jerusalem in 630. Most of the material he extracted is reproduced verbatim, so that textual comparisons are possible. Details missing in the extant manuscripts are supplied for seven episodes (Thomas Artsruni, *Patmutʻiwn Tann Artsruneatsʻ* (*History of the House of Artsrunik*ʻ), ed. K. Patkanean (St Petersburg, 1887), 85–98, trans. R. W. Thomson (Detroit, 1985), 152–64, with Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, ii, nn. 31, 37, 39, 42, 43, 45, 47). Thomas skips over the opening phase of the war (603–10) in a single sentence, and fails to pick up a laudatory passage about a member of the Artsruni family who was crucified by the Persians outside Caesarea of Cappadocia. The death of Yazdgerd is reported in the following chapter (II. 4), after a long account of Muhammad's life and the Arab conquest of Palestine of which only a small part is taken from the *History of Khosrov* (text 98–104, trans. 164–70).

reference—the false attribution being deeply embedded in scholarship—the author will be designated ps. Sebeos henceforth.[3]

We are left without any external indication as to ps. Sebeos' identity. However, a swift perusal of the text supplies several clues. He was, without question, a churchman. Biblical quotations, allusions, and phrases flow easily from his pen. He had access to what look like confidential documents (reproduced whole) which were probably kept in the archives of the catholicosate at Dvin. One of them is a carefully argued defence of the doctrinal position of the Armenian church, the inclusion of which is hard to explain unless he regarded it as of the utmost importance.[4] It interrupts his narrative at a dramatic moment, when the forces of Islam are beginning to affect Armenia directly and the scene is set for the complete conquest of the Sasanian empire and a head-on naval and military confrontation with what remained of the east Roman empire. This long document gives us the vital clue. For one bit-part player in the text explicitly cites it. He was an unnamed bishop who slipped out of his seat and disappeared into the body of the congregation rather than take communion with the Chalcedonian Emperor Constans II during a grand service of reconciliation held at Dvin late in 653 653–4 and attended by the whole Armenian church hierarchy. His absence did not escape notice and he was summoned to explain why he had not followed the example of the catholicos and communicated with the emperor. There follows a well-described scene in which the bishop prevaricates under cross-examination by the emperor, acknowledging the authority of both catholicos and emperor but at the same time excusing himself as someone unworthy, ignorant, overcome with awe at the presence of the emperor. Eventually he obeys the emperor's command and communicates there and then with the catholicos. In the course of the interview, he implicitly justifies his behaviour by referring to a document drawn up four years earlier by a council, which set out and explained the Armenian church's Monophysite stance. That is the document reproduced by our author, which, he notes, the catholicos had failed to send, as instructed, to the emperor. Our author is assuredly that bishop. Who else would have remembered what was said on that occasion? Who else but that eyewitness could have written so vivid an account?[5]

[3] Thomson in Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, i, pp. xxxi–xxxviii. The interpretation given here of the name Khosrov is mine, as is the designation of the author as ps. Sebeos.

[4] Ps. Sebeos, 148. 21–161. 34. Cf. R. W. Thomson, 'The Defence of Armenian Orthodoxy in Sebeos', in I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (eds.), *AETOS: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart, 1998), 329–41.

[5] Ps. Sebeos, 167. 23–168. 32. Cf. Thomson in Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, i, pp. xxxviii–xxxix, xlix–lii, liv–lvii: he is hesitant about the proposed identification.

It is impossible to tell when that anonymous bishop, our ps. Sebeos, conceived of writing a history of his own time and set about assembling source materials and piecing together some sort of connected account. It is plain, though, that the project was far advanced by the early 650s. While he reaches back well beyond Khusro's accession in 590, he has much more to say as he approaches the point, in late spring or early summer 655, where his account breaks off. He gives the impression of recording, neatly and concisely, news as it reaches him from different quarters. The narrative is not always easy to follow, given shifting points of view, some duplication in the reporting, and some disturbance to chronology. He was aware that a certain disorderliness had crept in, and duly apologizes for it in his conclusion (176. 22–6). That conclusion can be dated, with reasonable certainty, very soon after the last reported event. A great crisis was looming in the new but tenuous empire created by the Arabs. It put the bishop in mind of Old Testament apocalyptic prophecies, and he closed his narrative with one of his rare passages of editorial comment, voicing hope as well as apprehension (176. 26–177. 9). He was inclined, as he had already indicated in a previous passage (141. 23–142. 15), to identify the Arabs with the fourth of the great empires symbolized by the Prophet Daniel's four beasts, one which was fearsome, astonishing, and very powerful, with teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which ate and tore its prey to pieces, trampling the remnants under foot. He predicted that the day of their destruction was at hand, a day which might (this he left unstated) be ushering in the final act in the history of the world. Six years or so later, he added a few notes to bring his history up to date (175. 8–176. 21). The last and longest drily records the main episodes in the civil war which pitted several Arab armies of conquest against each other and resulted in the definitive victory of Mu'awiya and the old Meccan elite over the Prophet's nephew 'Ali. After that he falls silent.[6]

2. SCOPE AND CHARACTER

Khusro II Parvez is the central figure in ps. Sebeos' history. In what looks like a preface (72. 1–20), he gives it two titles, Chronological Book (an Armenian

T. W. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos', *Le Muséon*, 115 (2002), 323–97, at 392–4 is more confident.

[6] *Hist. Com.*, nn. 68–83. It should be noted that Abgaryan uprooted ps. Sebeos' conclusion from its position in the manuscript (preceding the later *scholia*) and placed it at the end of the text.

calque on the Greek *chronographia*) and Royal History, and defines its subject matter as 'Tale of the Aryans, raid over the whole world by the Sasanian brigand Apruez Khosrov, who consumed with fire the whole inner [land], disturbing the sea and the dry land, to bring destruction on the whole earth'. He makes it plain that Khusro's war against the Romans is his prime concern. He allows his emotions to show in the following few sentences as he describes its damaging effects in highly rhetorical language ('the wrath evoked from on high and the anger flaming below; the torrents of fire and blood, and the raids of brigands; the death-bringing attacks, the cry of demons and the roar of dragons . . .'). His voice then takes on a stronger apocalyptic tone as he turns to its yet more serious consequences, the Arab campaigns of conquest ('like the whirlwind they arose and burst out to destroy everything within, to raze mountains and hills, to rend the plains, to crush in pieces the stones and rocks beneath the heels of their horses and trampling hooves').

Ps. Sebeos' preface separates the start of his own history from an introduction, in which he surveys the key events of the recent past, beginning with the first serious Armenian revolt against Sasanian rule in 450–1 and ending with the death of Khusro I in the course of the penultimate Roman–Persian war which was triggered by a general uprising of Armenians in 572.[7] The history proper begins in 589 with the rebellion of the leading Persian general of the time, Bahram Chobin (later to mutate into a great epic hero in post-Islamic Iranian historical tradition), against Hormizd IV. He then gives a detailed and well-ordered account of the complex series of events which followed—the young Khusro's flight west to Roman territory, the offer of military and political aid made by the Emperor Maurice (disregarding senatorial opposition), and the successful campaign which restored Khusro to his ancestral throne in 591. This is followed by a detailed but episodic narrative covering the next eleven years. Armenia now comes to the centre of the stage. It was a dangerous time. Relations between the two imperial powers, who had repartitioned Armenia between them, were good. They set about exploiting Armenia as a recruiting ground, and acted in concert to repress dissidence. A large caste of Armenian nobles is featured, some gaining distinction in the service of Romans and Persians (the most notable being Musheł Mamikonean and Smbat Bagratuni), others from resisting foreign power.[8]

All of this is a preamble to the account of the great war which broke out in 603. The Roman political background is sketched. Then the military narrative begins, attention being focused on operations which took place north, rather

[7] Ps. Sebeos, 64. 20–70. 9. A list of Persian governors of Armenia (572–602) has been tacked on to this introductory matter (70. 10–71. 22).

[8] Ps. Sebeos, 72. 21–105. 33, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 8–24.

than south, of the Taurus. The narrative of the first phase is unique to ps. Sebeos. The treatment may vary, concise summaries of whole campaigns or a set of campaigns being juxtaposed with detailed accounts of individual engagements, but it is well ordered and the story can be followed without difficulty. This changes with the accession of Heraclius. Isolated episodes from the second phase of the war are reported in coherent fashion—the year-long Persian occupation of Caesarea in Cappadocia, a counteroffensive by Heraclius in northern Syria, the unfolding of the Jerusalem crisis in 614, negotiations at Chalcedon between Heraclius and the Persian general Shahen in 615. The same is true for some of the operations carried out by Heraclius in the third phase: his swift march to Atropatene in 624, summer and winter engagements in 625, his bold thrust into Mesopotamia in autumn 627. But much is omitted and what is reported is jumbled up, so that it is not possible to follow the general progression of events. Disruption of this sort ceases with the end of the fighting. This second section of the *History of Khosrov* concludes with a relatively full and vivid account of the deposition of Khusro and an overview of the subsequent phase of political turbulence, during which a durable peace was negotiated and Heraclius staged a triumphal entry into Jerusalem with the True Cross.[9]

The third section deals with the Arab conquests and their effects. Ps. Sebeos' account is the longest and most substantial of any contemporary non-Muslim source. At no point does he doubt that Muhammad was advocating worship of the one true God or that Arabs owed their astonishing success to God's favour. He covers, sometimes cursorily, sometimes in considerable detail, almost all aspects of the rise of Islam, beginning with the transformation of Muhammad from merchant to preacher, 'learned and informed in the history of Moses', who taught the Arabs to recognize the God of Abraham, combined the fractious tribes of Arabia 'in unity of religion', and set them on the path of conquest. He then describes several of their operations by land and sea in a chronologically ordered set of lucid notices. Segment by segment, the developed sedentary world to north, east, and west yields to Arab power. Whereas only the results are noted in the cases of Syria, Egypt, and Khuzistan, campaigns elsewhere are covered in brief but informative notices. The whole of Palestine submits, awestruck, after two Arab victories. Sasanian forces put up a better fight in defence of Mesopotamia. A counterattack in force broke the initial siege of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir and drove the Arabs out of the irrigated alluvium and into the desert before the Persians suffered a serious defeat in a full-scale engagement near Hira. At this

[9] Ps. Sebeos, 106. 1–134. 6, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 25–51.

the Arab advance resumes: the Sasanian capital is besieged again; an attempt to evacuate the government, treasury, and population goes badly wrong; there follow attacks by sea across the Gulf against the full length of the Persian littoral, clearly intended to soften up highland Iran and, perhaps, to distract attention from a planned invasion by land which is double dated to 641/2 (tenth regnal year of Yazdgerd III (beginning 16 June 641), first of Constans II (from 5 November 641)), so probably in spring 642.[10] Appended to this consolidated account of the initial phase of Arab expansion is a comparatively detailed narrative of the first Arab raid, in overwhelming force, on Armenia, which includes useful dating indications for the fall of the regional capital, Dvin (Friday 6 October, in the caliphate of ʻUmar I, in the year when the Catholicos Ezr died—so 640).

Ps. Sebeos now introduces notices about the defusing of a potentially serious intercommunal crisis in Jerusalem and about political conflicts in Constantinople after Heraclius' death, before continuing the story of Arab conquest with an account of the invasion of the military heartland of the Sasanian empire. Attention is focused on the battle between a large expeditionary force and the armies of Media and Persia proper which unite to bar access to the Iranian plateau; for a while they stand firm, until a single piece of disinformation causes their morale to plummet and they scatter; this opens the way for raiding forays to cause mayhem in the interior of Iran. Armenia, which has been largely relegated to the passive role of war zone since 603 (although notable feats by Armenian commanders are singled out for attention, and high-level politics, both secular and ecclesiastical, at the end of the Roman–Persian war are reported), now receives proper attention, detailed accounts being given of a second Arab attack (again a precise date, Sunday 10 August 643, is given for a rare defensive success) and of the politicking of leading nobles both at home and in Constantinople. Roman-appointed governors and military commanders are named. Note is taken of the actions of the Catholicos Nerses, who favoured reaching an accommodation with Chalcedonians. As ps. Sebeos approaches the time of writing, his narrative bulges with reports from all quarters, covering a purge in Constantinople, the flight and death of Yazdgerd III after his army was caught and defeated as it retreated to the eastern periphery of Iran, and the abortive intervention of the Emperor Constans II and a large Roman army in Armenia (late 653, 654). He ends with brief accounts of a failed attack in massive force on the Romans in 654 and three reverses suffered in Transcaucasia, Media, and the Caucasus

[10] Ps. Sebeos, 141. 10–19, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 59.

in 654–5, which triggered civil war on a grand scale within the caliphate (656–61).[11]

As can be seen from this summary of the contents, the most remarkable feature of the *History of Khosrov* is its geographical scope. The familiar configuration of the world around Armenia changed out of all recognition in the course of the seventy years covered by ps. Sebeos. The history which he put together could not be narrowly focused on Armenia if it were to make sense. He had to reach out in several directions and to a great distance, so as to place Armenian history in context, to pick up the powerful external forces playing upon it. Like his predecessors, the anonymous author of the *Epic Histories* and Łazar Parpets'i, he paid close attention to Sasanian Persia, the imperial power which held most of Armenia (and Transcaucasia) within its political and cultural embrace in late antiquity. Developments in Persia, whether changes of regime at the centre, or warfare on the periphery against Romans and steppe nomads, or major rebellions in the highlands, were all too likely to affect Armenia. So they were reported, as were events of equal importance in the east Roman empire, which exercised unprecedented influence over Armenian affairs in the late sixth and first half of the seventh centuries.[12] The repartitioning of Transcaucasia in 591, which was the price paid by Khusro for Roman political and military assistance, greatly enlarged the Roman sector. The Monophysite church faced a serious challenge from a Roman-sponsored Chalcedonian rival, and secular society was tapped all too effectively for troops to serve in a distant and inhospitable theatre of war. Ps. Sebeos had to look west to Constantinople and beyond from the opening of his history, when Khusro's fate lay in the hands of the Romans, to its later stages, when Roman influence, filling the temporary void left by the retreat of Persian power, briefly washed over the whole of Transcaucasia.[13]

The impact of the great powers increased immeasurably between 603 and 628 when world war swept over the plains and mountain slopes of Armenia. Decisive battles were fought and won there, by the Persians in the first phase, by the Romans in the third. Those were dramatic events,

[11] Ps. Sebeos, 134. 7–174. 36, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 52–80.

[12] J. Howard-Johnston, 'Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources and Working-Methods of Sebeos and Movses Daskhurantsi', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 41–62, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, v. N. G. Garsoïan (trans.), *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), with comments at 51–5. R. W. Thomson (trans.), *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i* (Atlanta, 1991).

[13] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 292–307. N. Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'orient*, CSCO 574, Subsidia 100 (Louvain, 1999), 263–82.

which ps. Sebeos had to cover since they shaped the history of his homeland for a generation. The yet more sensational events which followed demanded attention primarily in their own right. No historically alert contemporary could ignore the rise of Islam, which shattered the old world order in less than twenty years and was able before long to bring its power to bear directly upon Transcaucasia.[14] Ps. Sebeos was, in my view, first and foremost a historian, whose account of the recent past was shaped by brute reality rather than by any preconceived idea or fixed interpretation of his own.[15] To do justice to the history of his own time, which was evidently approaching a crisis as he wrote in the 650s, he had to extend his field of vision to encompass the Arab world to the south and to track the Muslim Arabs as they pushed out from the desert and conquered three out of the four power-centres of the Middle East.

The perspective remained Armenian throughout. But ps. Sebeos did not delve into the intricacies of internecine conflict for power and influence in the localities, did not trace the ups and downs of rival noble families, let alone commit himself to the cause of one particular family or group of families. His concern was with the fate of Armenia as a whole. His is a remarkably unpartisan history. As has already been noted, there are many protagonists from different noble families, but they are singled out because of their involvement in high politics, in dealings with the great powers of the outside world. They might profit from such connections, advancing to high office or high command at home or abroad. They might lead resistance or strive to maintain some freedom of manoeuvre for Armenia and Armenians at threatening times. He reports their behaviour with remarkable detachment, just as he does that of catholicoi. The mask of impassivity only slips twice, apropos of actions of which the memory was fresh and rankled in his mind. If there is a message for secular Armenia embedded in his history (and there may not be), ps. Sebeos was urging the nobility, high and low, whatever their past relations with each other, to act in concert in threatening times.[16]

[14] Donner, *Conquests*; H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 1986), 1–75.

[15] Contra Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 375–81, who regards the eschatological apprehension voiced by ps. Sebeos as the driving force of his historical enterprise and explains its geographical scope by his concern to amass evidence, from the recent histories of the great powers (equated with Daniel's four beasts), in support of his apocalyptic contention.

[16] References in *Hist. Com.*, 332–6. Five families provide the leading protagonists—Mamikoneans, Bagratunis, Vahewunis, Khorkorunis, and Rshtunis. If, as is argued by Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 389–92, the text was commissioned by a Mamikonean, this catholic interest would be all the more remarkable. The two tart comments are discussed below.

3. SOURCES

So much for the character and contents of the *History of Khosrov*. But what is its value as a record of the last great war of antiquity? The circumstances surrounding its outbreak, the hard fighting south as well as north of the Taurus which resulted in the Persian conquest of most of the Roman Middle East, the near-miraculous Roman revival in the 620s, and the difficult negotiations which eventually restored peace—all these complex phenomena were receding into the past, many of them out of reach of living memory when ps. Sebeos was writing. In any case, unaided memory was and is a poor foundation for a work of history, liable as it is to pick and choose what it retains, to reshape the phenomena which it registers, and to misplace them relative to each other. So how did ps. Sebeos set about piecing together a connected narrative? What written sources did he find? How successfully did he combine them? Did the strong feelings which he voiced in a small number of editorial passages influence the substance of his history and perhaps its overall shape? We must try, by a careful dissection of the text, to reconstruct the process of its composition, from the assembly of raw materials to their combination and editing into a coherent whole. We must understand the *History of Khosrov* from the inside, if we are to appraise it properly. A final stage will be to test the worth of its chronology and its substance against that of sources of proven reliability. If the results are good, and if what cannot be tested forms a coherent whole and is compatible with what is known independently, then the latter-day historian may confidently rely on it for a wealth of useful information about the war and the first phase of Islamic history.

The first task is to probe the text for different types of constituent material (differentiated in the first instance by subject matter, manner of presentation, and viewpoint) and then to see whether blocks of homogeneous material can be attributed to identifiable sources. This is a long and laborious business. The results are inevitably conjectural, since much rests on subjective judgement. Thus, even when a source can be isolated with reasonable confidence, the extent of its coverage and hence of its contribution to the text may remain debatable. However, such problems do not arise in the case of a first category of sources: documents. Three are incorporated whole into the text. The longest has already been mentioned, a letter addressed to the Emperor Constans II setting out and justifying the Armenian church's Monophysite stance which was drafted at a council held at Dvin in 649. There can be little doubt of its authenticity. Its documentary character is borne out both by its form, in particular the deferential opening and closing formulae, by its content

(dealing with Christological issues rather than the differences in ritual which were to dominate debate later), and by what is said of its fate (lodged in the archives of the catholicosate rather than being sent).[17] Form and content provide similar corroboration for two other letters kept in those archives, a carefully phrased apologia for the Persian regime in Jerusalem and appeal for funding sent to the Catholicos Komitas by Modestus, acting head of the patriarchate, and Komitas' polite but firm refusal. These two letters, singularly untouched by Roman propaganda about the sack of Jerusalem, were surely written as they purport to have been, under the watchful eyes of the Persian authorities and within two or three years of the capture of the city in May 614.[18] Only a tantalizing fragment is preserved of a fourth document, a letter congratulating Heraclius on the occasion of a visit to Jerusalem (clearly for the triumphal restoration of the True Cross in March 630). It was written in the name of the Armenians in general.[19]

There may well be other documentary material lurking in the text. But identification of document-based passages is highly speculative, if the documents are not reproduced verbatim, but have been condensed or rewritten or quarried for information. It may be tempting to ascribe diplomatic proposals presented in speeches to official communiqués, but any such suggestions can only be tentative conjectures, unless there is some solid corroboration. Abbreviation, however, may allow something of the character of an original source to show through. There is one likely case of this in the *History of Khosrov.* Twelve Persian governors of Armenia between 572 and 602 are listed baldly early in the text (70–1). Each entry has the same format: it opens with the simple formula 'then came X'; the governor is named; a brief report is given of his military activities; the length of his tenure is noted. The entries form a small block of distinctive material which interrupts the main narrative. It reaches both backwards and forwards in time from the point (579) where it has been inserted. Two shorter lists with the same characteristics feature later in the text: a near duplicate list of the last five governors in the main list (105. 21–5) and a note naming the four who held office from around 615 to 627 (113. 29–34). It is hard to escape the conclusion that ps. Sebeos is summarizing some sort of official register of Persian governors and their acts, probably kept by the catholicosate and preserved in its archives. It is plain that he has pared down what was recorded there to a bare minimum—because of the exceptional case of Gołon Mihran whose counteroffensive in Transcaucasia in 574–5 merited and receives fuller coverage.

[17] Ps. Sebeos, 148. 21–161. 34. Thomson, 'Defence of Armenian Orthodoxy'.
[18] Ps. Sebeos, 116. 14–118. 6, 118. 18–121. 2, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 35–6.
[19] Ps. Sebeos, 118. 7–17.

The question now arises as to whether longer notices about the battle for Armenia in the first phase of Khusro's war derived from this putative source. There are some indications that this was so. A gap in the list of governors, extending from 602 to around 615, is filled by the six army commanders named in the course of successive campaign narratives. Each narrative begins with a note about the new general's arrival, two indeed using the same simple formula as in the main list ('then came X'). The subject matter is exclusively military, as it is in the main list. What has changed, it may be argued, is not the source supplying the information but ps. Sebeos' editorial practice. Recognizing the importance of the early campaigns of the war in which the Persians first broke Roman military power in the field and then pushed step by step westward over Armenia, he chose to make much fuller use of the official register, which surely gave a succinct but comprehensive account of the activities of all the listed governors. There is no reason to suppose that it recorded news from other regions before or during the war. So two notices about the initial Persian gains south of the Taurus (107. 1–23, 110. 22–111. 10), which precede and punctuate the set of narratives about the Armenian theatre, should be attributed to another, unidentifiable source. The same is true of the somewhat dislocated material about the second phase of the war which comes later.[20]

The *History of Khosrov* contains two blocks of material which correspond in structure and substance to material of known provenance preserved in other sources. It has long been recognized that a lost Persian source, the *Khwadaynamag* ('Book of Lords'), supplied information on Sasanian political history to a wide range of later sources. Several versions of the same basic historical narrative were circulating in Arabic and Persian in the Islamic world, mainly in Iran, in the ninth and tenth centuries. Shorter selections of similar material are to be found in earlier Syriac sources and in Movses Daskhurantsʿi. The coverage of the *Khwadaynamag* may be reconstructed from that of its various derivatives. The chief items in its account of the end of the sixth century and the first third of the seventh were the harsh rule of Hormizd IV, Bahram's eastern campaign, the fall of Hormizd, the flight and restoration of Khusro II, the rebellion of Khusro II's uncle Bistam, the last harsh phase of Khusro's reign, the conspiracy which deposed him, and the short period of political instability which was eventually brought to a close when Yazdgerd III consolidated his position soon after 632.[21] These are all episodes covered by ps.

[20] Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 358–60.

[21] Z. Rubin, 'Al-Tabari and the Age of the Sasanians', unpublished paper delivered at a conference on The Life and Works of Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, held in St Andrews (30 August–2 September 1995); J. S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), 20–3, 37–45, 174–6.

Sebeos. A comparison of his notices with the full and easily accessible version of al-Tabari leaves no doubt that they emanate from the same ultimate source, the *Khwadaynamag*. Ps. Sebeos' version is very much his own, however. A fair amount of additional Roman and Armenian material has been incorporated. The joinery is neat. A good example is provided by his version of Khusro's flight and restoration, which includes an account of the policy debate in the Roman government and gives a prominent role to Musheł Mamikonean both before and after the decisive battle against Bahram. Transitions between the different subjects are smooth. The narrative flows unhampered. It is conceivable that this extraneous material was already attached to that extracted from the *Khwadaynamag* when it reached ps. Sebeos, that he simply retouched what may be viewed as an amplified Armenian version of Persian dynastic history. It is more likely, though, that ps. Sebeos himself was responsible for this careful and successful editorial work.[22]

A similar problem arises over a second source used by ps. Sebeos which has contributed analogous material to an extant text. In this case, the source is Roman and the additions which have been well integrated are Persian. The source in question was a detailed narrative of the last phase of the war, based in the main on Heraclius' war dispatches covering the campaigns which he led in person. As has been argued in Chapter 2, it may well have been an officially sponsored account, commissioned from George of Pisidia. Its contents and character can be reconstructed on the basis of the extensive contributions which it made to Theophanes' account of the final phase of the war. Ps. Sebeos' notices are somewhat disjointed but the subject matter and treatment are remarkably similar.[23] That he had access to a distinct source dealing with Heraclius' campaigns is also indicated by the way in which he sets out his provisional table of contents.[24] After noting the main heads of his planned

[22] *The History of al-Tabari*, v: *The Sasanids, the Byzantines, the Lakmids, and Yemen*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany, NY, 1999), 295–323, 375–411 (omitting one of the episodes listed, the rebellion of Bistam); ps. Sebeos, 72. 21–80. 11, 94. 24–95. 17, 127. 1–35, 129. 22–130. 34, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 18. Extensive discussion in Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 327–47, who concludes that ps. Sebeos' source was an amplified and reworked Armenian version of the *Khwadaynamag*. Material present in the *Khwadaynamag* can also be dropped by ps. Sebeos: thus his account of the final episode of Sasanian history—the defeat and death of Yazdgerd III in Khurasan, his flight to the Turks and death in Transoxiana (163. 29–164. 6)—has little in common with the discursive, anecdotal account given in the *Khwadaynamag* and should probably be attributed to orally transmitted information.

[23] There are striking resemblances between the two versions of one episode, Heraclius' surprise attack on Shahrvaraz's headquarters on the north shore of Lake Van in winter 625–6: Theophanes, 311. 12–312. 8; ps. Sebeos, 125. 21–126. 5, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 40.

[24] Ps. Sebeos, 65. 16–66. 6, probably composed at an early stage in his writing, since it makes no mention of matters covered in the completed version and coverage is apparently to halt in 642.

history, up to the outbreak of the war, in terms of changes of Persian ruler, and some notable early seventh-century events in the east Roman empire, he changes down a gear and describes the Roman counteroffensives episode by episode:

the invasion of Heraclius into the northern regions to the king of the T'etals;
the dispatch of an enormous multitude of peoples;
the Greek raid into Atrpatakan;
their plunder and booty and return through P'aytakaran;
the coming of the Persian army from the east to attack them;
the battle which [took place] in the land of Ałuank';
the emperor's return to the city of Nakhchawan and the battle of Archesh;
the return of the emperor back to his own territory;
yet another attack against Khosrov;
the battle at Nineveh;
the raid to the city of Ctesiphon;
the return to Atrpatakan;
the death of Khosrov;
the reign of Kawat;
the treaty between the two kings;
the abandoning of Greek territory;
the return of the divine Cross to the holy city.

He then changes up again, outlining the rise of Islam which he covers in a final section and enumerating the chief cities captured by 642. It is hard to escape the conclusion that ps. Sebeos was summarizing a specific source which he valued highly and intended to exploit to the full. In the event, he omitted some matters covered by this source (Heraclius' negotiations with the Turks and their intervention in force) and inserted, as we have seen, a summary of the *Khwadaynamag*'s account of Khusro's fall (another example of neat editorial work).

The criteria which have helped to identify specific sources so far—where something of their form is still discernible or independent evidence of their existence is to hand in other texts—cannot be used beyond this point. We are left face to face with the content of the text, hoping that changes of topic and differences in treatment may provide pointers to lost contributory sources. It might theoretically be possible to postulate a provenance for every item of information in the text, but the exercise only yields worthwhile results if it is confined to extended passages of relatively homogeneous material dealing with distinct topics in different ways which appear to form the building blocks of the text. On the basis of these inevitably subjective criteria, five more sources may be identified. Two are biographies of noted Armenian generals, each of whose deeds are reported in some detail. The physical

prowess, generalship, and piety of Smbat Bagratuni (d. 617/18) are celebrated in four substantial notices. Much is made of the honours which he received at the Sasanian court towards the end of his career. These notices, the first of which is separated from the others by extraneous material, may all be attributed with confidence to a highly laudatory Life.[25] A second Life, with a more military focus, may be postulated as the source of three passages, the first a short setting of the scene, the second and third presenting detailed accounts of the first two Arab expeditions into Armenia (640 and 643), which are dispersed in the text. In each of them, a heroic part is played by the subject of the putative Life, T'eodoros Rshtuni.[26]

A similar procedure can be used to identify three other blocks of material in the third section of the text. A long notice outlines the career and beliefs of Muhammad, and then describes two engagements with Roman defensive forces which opened the way for the conquest of Palestine. Jewish exiles from Edessa are presented as inspiring and taking part in the conquest of the holy land. There is an anti-Jewish tinge to this passage, which becomes more obvious in a later notice about a provocative incident staged by Jews in Jerusalem in 641, which was designed to turn Muslims against Christians. These two notices should probably be attributed to a well-informed but biased Palestinian source.[27] The Arab conquests are also viewed from a different regional perspective in three separate notices which report the dismembering of the Sasanian empire. Between them they present a succinct (and apparently trustworthy) summary of its military and political aspects. A single source, perhaps composed in Khuzistan (where information about one of the episodes covered seems to have been picked up), may be postulated. A note about the presence of two Armenian commanders at a decisive battle (identifiable as that fought at Qadisiyya) was probably added by ps. Sebeos.[28] It is possible that this source also supplied material about the defeat, flight, and death of Yazdgerd III in 652, but, since it was hot news at the time of writing, it is more likely to have been communicated orally.[29] The same probably holds true of another item of even more recent news about a rebellion in Media in winter 654–5. Finally there is a body of material in

[25] Ps. Sebeos, 91. 32–93. 34, 96. 15–104. 9. Howard-Johnston in Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, i, pp. lxvii–lxviii; Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 347–52.

[26] Ps. Sebeos, 134. 2–6, 138. 33–139. 6, 145. 2–147. 2, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 51, 55, 62. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 356.

[27] Ps. Sebeos, 134. 18–136. 35, 139. 23–140. 22, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 52, 53, 57. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 365–6 questions this thesis.

[28] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 4–29, 139. 9–22, 141. 10–22, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 54, 56, 59. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 363–5, who attributes the notice about Yazdgerd's ultimate fate to this source, suggests an alternative Median provenance.

[29] Ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–164. 6. Contra *Hist. Com.*, n. 67.

which attention is divided between holders of high office in Armenia and members of Armenian noble families involved in Constantinopolitan politics. This too is distributed across the text in notices placed at the appropriate chronological points (except for one, after which the narrative must retrace its steps for three years). It is tempting to associate these notices, and, on the basis of their common characteristics, to attribute them to an Armenian source, probably composed in Dvin, which was tracking the careers of high-flying Armenians at home and abroad.[30]

As has been said before, it is possible to press on yet further with such an analysis. Other lost sources may be conjured up, one focusing on another individual who features prominently early in the text (Musheł Mamikonean), another on a conspiracy in the 590s involving junior members of several noble families, a third listing successive catholicoi and some of their acts.[31] Not to mention various lost hagiographical texts which may have supplied odd snippets of information about human piety and the role of the divine in earthly affairs. But hypotheses such as these are delicate structures, resting on fragile foundations. They may well be no more than phantasms of creative minds. It is better to draw back and be content with the list of nine likely sources which have been identified, namely:

1. Four original documents: a statement of faith agreed at the Council of Dvin held in 649; a letter from Modestus, acting head of the Jerusalem church, to Kumitas, catholicos of Armenia; Kumitas' reply; a letter of congratulation addressed to Heraclius from Armenia (of which only the opening survives).
2. An official register of Persian postholders in Armenia, both civilian governors and military commanders, together with summaries of their actions.
3. An official Sasanian history, the *Khwadaynamag*.
4. The official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns which was commissioned from George of Pisidia.
5. A Life of Smbat Bagratuni.
6. A Life of T'eodoros Rshtuni.
7. An account of the origins of Islam composed in Palestine.
8. An account of the dismembering of the Sasanian empire, probably written in Khuzistan.
9. An Armenian chronicle, covering affairs in Armenia and Constantinople, probably written in Dvin.

[30] Ps. Sebeos, 132. 12–134. 6, 137. 30–138. 7, 140. 35–141. 9, 142. 16–145. 2, 162. 22–163. 19, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 50, 51, 55, 58, 60, 61, 66. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 354–6 hives off much of this material and is inclined to attribute it to a Bagratuni history.

[31] Cf. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 353–4, 356–7, 360–3.

4. EDITING

Ps. Sebeos is self-depreciating about his editorial competence. In his concluding peroration (176. 22–6) he describes his history as 'my insignificant tale' and confesses, 'I may have arranged the details . . . in accordance with the unintelligent thought of my own mind, and not in accordance with the worthy grace of knowledge.' Rather than dismaying the reader, such self-criticism should encourage confidence. Ps. Sebeos set himself a high standard. His aim, we may infer, was so to arrange what he had selected from among the materials which he had gathered that it would accord with the historical phenomena and make sense to his readers. The basic principle had to be chronological (otherwise there would be no order to his narrative, and no correspondence with reality), but with some licence to break out forwards or backwards through time rather than chop up closely related events into small disconnected notices.[32] He is not telling us that his whole history is a jumbled mess but that there are disordered patches, despite his best endeavours. An examination of the text confirms that this is the right construction to put upon his confession of inadequacy.

He was, of course, dependent on such dating indications as his sources supplied. It is hard to tell how liberally dates were scattered over postulated lost sources, since he chose to include only a necessary minimum in his own work, a grand total of twenty (five of which include synchronisms). As was only to be expected in a text written in what had long been an integral part of the Sasanian empire, Persian dates (fourteen, reckoned in numbered regnal years) predominate, but they are unevenly spread, being concentrated between 595/6 and 617/18. Apart from one early synchronism (for Heraclius' seizure of power), analogous Roman dates are confined to the reign of Constans II (eight in all, including three synchronisms). An Islamic era (dating not from the *hijra* in 622, but from 633, a year after Muhammad's death) is cited twice, in synchronisms on both occasions (the death of

[32] There are six evident cases where preference is given to thematic coherence over chronological order: the first long list of Persian governors of Armenia, inserted in 579 but extending back to 572 and forward to 602 (70. 10–71. 22); two notices about the last glorious phases in Smbat Bagratuni's career, both of which push several years into the future (from 600/1 to 607/8, then, after a notice about the final suppression of the rebellion of Bistam in 601, from 607/8 to his death in 617/18 (96. 15–104. 9)); a cast-forward from Phocas' seizure of power in 602 to the Heraclian revolution in 608–10 (106. 8–33); a notice about the deportation of the population of Theodosiopolis in 610/11 tacked on to that about the city's capitulation in 607/8 (111. 11–112. 5); a consolidated notice about the turbulent phase of Constantinopolitan politics from Heraclius' death in 641 to 645/6 and about contemporary events in Armenia, after which the narrative backtracks to 643 to cover an Arab defeat in Armenia (142. 16–145. 5).

Yazdgerd III in central Asia in 652 and Constans II's intervention in Armenia late in 653).[33] All earlier episodes in his narrative of Islamic history are undated, save for two Armenian episodes.

Not much can be learned from the distribution of dates in the text about their incidence in the sources used. Ps. Sebeos seems to have been all too ready to pull them off passages to which they were attached. However, from such dates as he left adhering to his source materials, it may be concluded that four texts were well provided with them—the postulated Lives of Smbat Bagratuni and T'eodoros Rshtuni, the register of Persian governors (if that was the source of the notices about warfare in Armenia 603–10), and the postulated Dvin source covering Roman and Armenian politics in the 640s. None of the materials taken from the other sources identified above is similarly endowed with dates, but it would be hard to explain his apparent success in fitting them together into a coherent narrative unless in most of them he had found some dates (or cross-references) to work from. Thus, for example, his whole project would surely not have been feasible if his version of the *Khwadaynamag* had been denuded of dates (as are the passages he extracted from it).

More may perhaps be read into the dearth of Roman regnal dates before the 640s. Ps. Sebeos was probably only able to date the accessions of Phocas and Heraclius because they were reported under regnal years of Khusro II in his version of the *Khwadaynamag*. There is nothing to indicate that the source which supplied his detailed information about Heraclius' Persian campaigns in the 620s did more than narrate them in sequence. The same is probably true of the scanty materials from which he pieced together some sort of an account of the years following the siege and sack of Jerusalem in 614 (which is precisely dated). At any rate, apart from the difficulty of placing two Roman episodes involving leading Armenians within his Sasanian chronological framework and a certain disorder which enters the text right at the end (caused by the press of news reaching him in late 654 and early 655), the most disordered section is that dealing with the period 615 to 626 inclusive and it is hard to imagine him making the mistakes he did if the sources to hand dated what they reported.

Deprived of the necessary dating indications, ps. Sebeos flounders when he reaches the second and third phases of the Roman–Persian war. The difficulties stemmed from his confusion of the Persian advance to Chalcedon on the Bosporus in 615 with the joint Persian–Avar siege of Constantinople in 626. His relatively full account of the negotiations which took place in 615 between Heraclius and the Persian commander Shahen is topped and tailed by short

[33] Ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–31, 165. 15–16. It may well be that he has simply misplaced Muhammad's death by one year within his Sasanian chronological framework.

notices about the arrival of the other leading Persian general of the war, Shahrvaraz, in 626 and his attempt to ferry men across to the European side of the Bosporus. Ps. Sebeos, it appears, was unable to conceive of the Persians launching two direct attacks on the metropolitan area in one war, and was not deterred from a bold editorial conjecture by anything he found in his sources.[34] This conflation of two episodes, eleven years apart, naturally had unfortunate consequences. His account of the spectacular successes achieved by the Persians after 614 is skimpy and muddled. There is one fleeting, enigmatic reference to a double invasion of Asia Minor which is hard to date.[35] A Roman counter-thrust into Armenia is badly misplaced (before rather than after the sack of Jerusalem in 614).[36] Nothing whatsoever is said about the invasion and conquest of Egypt. The narrative of Heraclius' Persian campaigns has been concertinaed and abridged, although what is reported comes mostly in the correct chronological order. The truncated defensive campaign of 622 (described at length by George of Pisidia in the *Expeditio Persica*) has been amalgamated with the opening of the first counteroffensive in 624. Heraclius celebrates Easter in Constantinople (as he did in 622) but sets off with his second wife Martina (as he did in 624). He formally vests imperial authority in his son Constantine (who had been crowned co-emperor as a baby in 613) for the duration of his absence (this occurred in 622) but meets the army in Cappadocia (its assembly place in 624).[37] As a result, Persian operations in Asia Minor in 622 and 623 are passed over in silence, as are Heraclius' Balkan distractions in those years. Finally, the first of the two winters Heraclius and his army spent in Transcaucasia has been squeezed out of the condensed narrative of the 624–6 counteroffensive, and with it several of the operations and engagements which took place in 625. Heraclius' march north to P'aytakaran in the eastern plain of Albania (datable probably to *late summer/early autumn 625*) is placed *before* the deployment of two Persian armies in *early spring 625* with the aim of trapping Heraclius in the middle Kura valley near P'artaw where he had spent the winter of 624–5. These operations together with one of the battles fought in 625 have been squeezed into a single campaigning season, which begins with Heraclius' swift thrust into Atropatene (summer 624) and ends with his withdrawal south-west to the region of Lake Van where he wintered in 625–6.[38]

[34] Ps. Sebeos, 122. 1–123. 14, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 37.
[35] Ps. Sebeos, 113. 23–8, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 32.
[36] Ps. Sebeos, 114. 1–19, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 33.
[37] Ps. Sebeos, 124. 6–27, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 38.
[38] Ps. Sebeos, 125. 1–20, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 39–40.

Ps. Sebeos' account of the second half of the Roman–Persian war has thus suffered serious damage, but the disruption appears to have a single prime cause and to have had limited, though extensive, impact on part of the second section of his text. It cannot be paralleled elsewhere. There may be occasional instances of clumsiness in fitting together material extracted from different sources (see, for example, the last two extracts from the lost biography of Smbat Bagratuni, misplaced in the first section). He may have had difficulty in putting the information pouring in at the time of writing into reasonable order towards the end of the third section. But, in general, ps. Sebeos has succeeded in combining materials taken from heterogeneous sources into a coherent, intelligible, chronologically ordered narrative. He provides a unique synoptic view of events as they occurred over a great swathe of western Eurasia in the first two-thirds of the seventh century.

How much weight should be attached to his evidence must, for the moment, remain an open question. Those parts of his history susceptible to testing (principally his account of the first phase of the seventh-century crisis, and the background against which it is set) must be carefully appraised, before credence may be given to his testimony about the rise of Islam, most of which cannot be corroborated either by the *Chronicon Paschale* (which halts in 628) or the *Chronicle to 636* (which only covers the conquest of Palestine and the first large-scale attack on Mesopotamia). It must be subjected to a rigorous testing programme. Before those tests are carried out, however, we must enquire whether the editorial boldness shown in the subsection dealing with the period 615–26 shows itself in any other way. Besides the compilatory activity of selection and arrangement of materials which has been discussed so far, there were two other important tasks which, if performed by an interventionist editor, might have resulted in distortion of historical truth. As a writer responsible for a whole text, ps. Sebeos needed to rephrase the materials he extracted from his sources so as to make it reasonably homogeneous stylistically. Did he perhaps go too far and maul reality as he rewrote? Second, he held strong views on the ultimate causes of the calamities which his generation witnessed, and he was ready to express them forcefully. Did these strongly held views of his colour or shape the work which he put together? Is it more a piece of forensic argumentation, designed to impress a particular interpretation on its readers, than a work of sober history?

Ps. Sebeos was, as has already been noted, steeped in the Bible. Biblical turns of phrase, allusions, and fragmentary quotations recur throughout the text, but with greater frequency in the third section which probably involved more writing or rewriting on his part. An important question, which is hard to answer definitively, is whether this penchant for biblical language led to serious distortion. Did the Old Testament analogies which occurred to him as

he was writing simply introduce greater depth into his history (signalling to his readers that recent and current events were shaped by divine providence and belonged to the same unfolding story of mankind) or did he reshape phenomena reported in his sources so as to conform to Old Testament paradigms? It is plain, for example, that he is thinking of Sennacherib's menacing message (which includes an offer of resettlement in a fruitful land (Isa. 36: 16–17)) and Hezekiah's response (which was to rend his clothes, cover himself with sackcloth, go into the house of the Lord, and spread the letter he had received before him (Isa. 37: 1 and 14)) when he reports what was said in an ultimatum purporting to come from Khusro II and Heraclius' response on the eve of his 624 campaign (he goes to the house of God and spreads the letter before the altar, but without putting on sackcloth). A later ultimatum from the caliph, in 654 (genuine, to judge by the tough terms offered), includes a phrase (about Christ's inability to save himself from the Jews) nearly identical to one in the 624 letter and evokes a similar response from Constans II (who puts on sackcloth, sits on ashes, and orders a fast, like the people and king of Nineveh (Jonah 3: 5–6)). There was no Old Testament parallel for the grand Arab naval attack on Constantinople which followed in 654, but ps. Sebeos makes this climactic moment of his history resonate by using biblical phrases to describe the storm which sank the Arab fleet (and including a phrase from Maccabees about the artillery carried on board).[39]

There is, it is true, an element of fiction in the 624 episode. The note purporting to come from Khusro cannot be Persian. It includes three biblical quotations (something which it would be hard to square with Sasanian authorship) and the message conveyed was calculated to cause bitter offence. But the fiction should be attributed probably not to ps. Sebeos but to Heraclius at the time. The note looks like a piece of Roman disinformation designed to provoke the outrage which it did.[40] It is also possible that Heraclius modelled his behaviour on Hezekiah's in what was a carefully stage-managed performance before the court in Constantinople. There is no positive evidence of ps. Sebeos' tampering with the substance of other historical episodes, where he introduces biblical allusions or puts speeches into his characters' mouths. There is no denying that he is ready to embellish what he finds in his sources. Direct speech enlivens his narrative, and the biblical backdrop gives it depth and solemnity. But there is no reason to suppose that he arrogated to himself more than the right to reclothe in finer language what

[39] Ps. Sebeos, 123. 15–124. 5, 169. 23–171. 24, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 38, 74, 75. Cf. Thomson in Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, pp. xlix–l and Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 369–71.

[40] Thomson in Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, p. lviii; *Hist. Com.*, n. 38.

was reported in his sources, a right which convention had long granted classicizing historians in the Roman world. This can be demonstrated incontrovertibly on one occasion. Heraclius' negotiating position in 615 is correctly represented in the speech which ps. Sebeos has him make. This can be compared with the formal document subsequently sent by the Senate to Khusro II. Heraclius' speech is an elegant piece of rhetoric. There is a clear biblical allusion (to Joshua 2: 10). But the unprecedented offer which he makes—to stand down and to allow the Persian *shahanshah* to appoint whomsoever he wishes as Roman emperor, in effect as a Sasanian client-king—is repeated in the Senate's letter, as is the argument which he advances in support of his own candidature (that his father had avenged the death of Khusro II's benefactor, Maurice).[41] It is surely reasonable to extrapolate from this case and to infer that ps. Sebeos tried faithfully to reproduce the substance of the information reaching him, rather than to postulate wholesale deformation (and at times fabrication) of what was said and done according to his sources.

The overall impression left by the *History of Khosrov* is not that of a carefully structured, polished literary work. It is not distinguished by its style (in general unadorned) or form (simple juxtaposition of material dealing with different subjects). It is remarkable rather for the amount, diversity, and high specific gravity of its content. This suggests that editorial intervention was kept to a minimum (with the notable exceptions discussed above), as does the restraint shown by ps. Sebeos in commenting on the dramatic events of the recent past. He merely sketches in some explanations of his own in four short passages. He advances three explanations—human agency (the aggressive warfare of Khusro II), divine agency (punishing Christians for deviating from correct Monophysite doctrine, the punishment taking the form of the Arab conquests), and cosmic programming (the last days being scheduled for the near future). They appear to be free-standing, alternative explanations, since each is presented on its own, but they are probably intended to form a nesting structure, sinful behaviour triggering theodicy within a predetermined providential plan. Ps. Sebeos simply drops them into his text in separate places, without relating them to each other.[42]

He is also careful to refrain from allowing any of his interpretations to seep into the materials which he is recycling from his sources. There is no blackening of Khusro II. His actions are reported dispassionately and in detail. The only hostile comment comes from Musheł Mamikonean whose relations with Khusro were strained after the victory over Bahram in 591 and who predicted

[41] Ps. Sebeos, 122. 18–123. 6, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 37; *Chron. Pasch.*, 707. 1–709. 23.
[42] Ps. Sebeos, 72. 3–20, 141. 23–142. 15, 161. 38–162. 21, 176. 22–177. 9.

that, unless he were killed, Khusro would destroy the Roman empire (83. 28–30). Even more remarkable is the respect shown towards the schismatic Chalcedonian Catholicos John, sponsored by the Emperor Maurice, and the Catholicos Ezr who was ready to reach an accommodation with the Chalcedonian church of Constantinople in 631 (91. 8–24, 129. 17–21, 131. 31–132. 11). Even Nerses, the catholicos who presided over the joint liturgy at Dvin in winter 653–4, gets a good press in general (he is described as Christ-loving and virtuous (147. 21–148. 20, 166. 33–167. 7)), ps. Sebeos' self-control only failing him when he comes to deal with the events of 653 (167. 7–22). He manages to be similarly complimentary about T'eodoros Rshtuni (pious as well as valiant (134. 2, 148. 15–16)), who, he knew, had recently submitted to Mu'awiya in what, in a second tart comment, he calls a 'pact with death and alliance with hell' (164. 15–17).

Even the eschatological fears aroused by the events of his lifetime are only allowed to show in editorial passages where he speaks directly to his readers. Apart from a general apocalyptic foreboding which colours all four of the passages, he outlines a novel interpretation of Daniel's vision of the four beasts in the second of them (141. 23–142. 15). It seems to be his considered view, since he alludes to it in a subsequent editorial aside (177. 4–9), but he does not relate it to the materials which he has assembled, does not work it out in detail in his exposition of recent history. Nor does he allow this third overarching interpretation of events to determine the scope and shape of his history, since one of Daniel's beasts, the third (equated with Gog and Magog), does not feature in his narrative.[43] Gog and Magog traditionally played a decisive part in scenarios of the last days, swooping down on the civilized world from the barbarous north. Their omission is all the more extraordinary since a northern power, taking the form of the transcontinental empire of the Turks, *did* intervene in the affairs of the sedentary empires in the 620s and ps. Sebeos was well aware of the decisive effect which they had. Their extrusion from his history evidently resulted from a deliberate editorial decision (presumably to keep his narrative compact and coherent, by focusing it on the established great powers and the greater threat soon to appear from the

[43] Ps. Sebeos, 141. 23–142. 15: the second of Daniel's beasts, the bear, is placed in the east and firmly identified with the Sasanian kingdom; the third, a four-headed and four-winged leopard, is equally firmly identified with the kingdom of the north, 'Gog and Magog and their two companions'. A later fleeting reference (162. 8) to Babylon as 'the kingdom of the regions of the north' should not be taken literally; it occurs in a biblically charged passage about the Arab conquests, 'the rupture of the veil of the old south and the blowing on us of the mortal hot wind', in which the arena of global conflict is reduced to the ancient Near East over which lowers Babylon, also called 'the mother of all nations' (161. 38–162. 8).

south).[44] That decision demonstrates that normal considerations (of space, balance, emphasis) determined the coverage of the *History of Khosrov*, not a specific line of argument or interpretation advanced by its author.[45]

Ps. Sebeos clearly belongs to the workaday category of historians. He concentrated on the primary task of tracking down trustworthy sources, selecting material for inclusion in his text, and arranging it in an order corresponding to reality and intelligible to his readers. There is no sign of radical remoulding within a chosen explanatory framework or of systematic stylistic transmutation in his text. He is first and foremost a chronicler of current and recent events, rather than historical interpreter—although, as he reveals in his rare editorial interjections, he was concerned with the ultimate forces (supernatural for him) which played upon human affairs. In working method and mentality he has a strong affinity with the anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale*. His role too was essentially the modest one of transmitting, without interference, trustworthy information about matters of great importance to his own and future generations.

5. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Such are the results of a close examination of the *History of Khosrov*. The text has been viewed from the inside, in terms of its constituent parts and the way in which they have been put together. It has been shown to be a collection of valuable historical materials gathered by a discriminating and modest editor. A modern reader might be inclined to trust it, even if there were no external controls with which to test it. Such checks can, however, be made. Ps. Sebeos' version of several episodes can be compared with versions given by sources of proven worth. Some of his dates are equally susceptible to testing.

An authoritative and entirely independent account of the circumstances surrounding Khusro II's flight to Roman territory in 590, of his appeal for aid, of the terms on which it was granted by Maurice's regime, and of the campaign which restored him to power is given by Theophylact Simocatta, who wrote a full account of the Emperor Maurice's reign in the 620s.[46] Ps. Sebeos' version, probably taken from the *Khwadaynamag* and running

[44] P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), 185–92; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns', 40–2. The intervention of the Turks, who are given the name of Persia's traditional steppe adversaries, the T'etals (Hephthalites), features in ps. Sebeos' preliminary table of contents (65. 20–2).

[45] Contra Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 375–81.

[46] Simocatta, iv. 1–v. 7 (discussed in Ch. 5).

to over twelve pages (72. 21–84. 32), is corroborated in all essentials. There are minor points of difference: ps. Sebeos is almost certainly wrong about Khusro's first assigned place of residence in northern Syria (Hierapolis rather than Khalab (Aleppo)) but probably right to refrain from implicating him in his father's death as also to suggest that there was some serious senatorial opposition to helping him. Their coverage also differs: thus Simocatta pays more attention to Roman strategic movements before the decisive battle with Bahram, while ps. Sebeos is more interested in intra-Armenian politics both before and after the battle and provides more detail about the line of the post-591 frontier. There is no question then but that Simocatta corroborates ps. Sebeos' account.[47]

Similarly positive results can be obtained from tests carried out on the disturbed portion of ps. Sebeos' account of the Roman–Persian war. Individual phases of campaigns are reported accurately, even if other phases have been excised. Thus the route of attack taken by Heraclius' expeditionary army in 624 corresponds to that which may be inferred from odd bits of information supplied by George of Pisidia and Theophanes.[48] Confirmation is also to hand for the deployment (in 625) against Heraclius of armies commanded by Shahen and Shahrvaraz (from Theophanes and Movses Daskhurants'i) and for the long march west which took Heraclius and Shahrvaraz's pursuing army to the region of Lake Van at the onset of winter (from Theophanes).[49] It may well be, as has been suggested above, that a common source, some sort of official history based on Heraclius' war dispatches, underlies the accounts of ps. Sebeos and Theophanes (as also perhaps that of Movses Daskhurants'i), but the convergence of their accounts, which is most marked when they come to Heraclius' surprise attack on Shahrvaraz's headquarters in the middle of winter, shows that both authors were faithful to their source.[50]

Further evidence that ps. Sebeos handled his sources scrupulously comes from his account of the final stages of Heraclius' second counteroffensive. Here too he is probably drawing on the full Roman source also used by Theophanes. The two accounts tally in the main, although ps. Sebeos only picks up the detailed story as Heraclius is marching south towards the Zagros, pursued by the Persian general Rahzadh. His account is much the shorter of the two but it covers all major events—the march south over the mountains, the defeat of Rahzadh at the battle of Nineveh, Heraclius' march on

[47] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 292–304.
[48] Ps. Sebeos, 124. 13–27; Geo. Pis., *Heraclias*, ii. 144–72; Theoph., 306. 19–21 and 26–7, 307. 19–308. 12.
[49] Ps. Sebeos, 125. 5–20; Theoph., 308. 27–311. 12.
[50] Ps. Sebeos, 125. 21–126. 5, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 40; Theoph., 311. 12–312. 8.

Ctesiphon, and the rich haul of booty which he gathered. Occasionally valuable extra details are given (about Heraclius' line of march in Armenia and the tactics of the battle).[51] For the political convulsion at the centre of the Sasanian empire which this campaign triggered, he seems to have turned to the *Khwadaynamag*. Again his account is short but can be corroborated both from other versions of the same source (notably that in Movses Daskhurants'i) and from Heraclius' dispatches.[52] What he has to say about the opening of peace negotiations between Kavad Shiroe, Khusro's son and successor, and Heraclius tallies with what is reported in that dispatch about the terms under discussion and the identities of the two sides' ambassadors.[53]

So much then for the corroboration provided by Roman sources. There is much less independent Armenian material of demonstrably high quality against which to check the *History of Khosrov*'s narrative of events or portrayal of Armenian society. What there is, though, is of the utmost importance. A small corpus of early medieval inscriptions, chiefly preserved on the exterior of churches built in the seventh century in central Armenia, contains encoded within the formulae of dedicatory inscriptions a fair amount of information about the social order within Armenia and the impact on it of the great powers from without. This tallies remarkably well with the picture presented by the historical text.[54] A number of the same terms of status recur—notably *aspet* (hereditary title for the head of the Bagratuni family), *ter* (lord), *tanuter* (head of family), *ishkhan Hayots'* (prince of Armenia), or curopalate (a high-ranking Roman title).[55] The last two designated the chief clients of an outside power: it was during his long tenure as *ishkhan Hayots'* (appointed by the Caliph Mu'awiya in 661) that Grigor Mamikonean dedicated, on 24 March 670, a grand church in his palace complex at Aruč on the edge of the Araxes plain to the north-west of Dvin; a curopalate (probably Dawit' Saharuni, but the name has been left blank) figures in the dating formula of the dedicatory inscription for a church built towards the end of Heraclius' reign at Mren, close to the 591–602 Roman–Persian frontier, in commemoration of the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem.[56] The epigraphic evidence makes it absolutely clear that the two systems, the

[51] Ps. Sebeos, 126. 11–127. 9; Theoph., 317. 11–323. 22, 324. 27–325. 8 (cf. *Chron. Pasch.*, 729. 15–730. 2).

[52] Ps. Sebeos, 127. 16–35; Movses D., 145. 3–148. 22 (trans. Dowsett, 89–92); Theoph., 325. 8–327. 10; *Chron. Pasch.*, 728. 12–729. 6.

[53] Ps. Sebeos, 127. 36–128. 26; *Chron. Pasch.*, 733. 14–737. 21.

[54] T. Greenwood, 'A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions', *DOP* 58 (2004), 27–91.

[55] Ibid. 62–5.

[56] Ibid., nos. A. 7 (Mren) and A. 11 (Aruč), with comments at 64, 66–7, 72–4.

indigenous (hereditary) and the external (personal preferment), coalesced in seventh-century Armenia, the importance of each relative to the other varying according to circumstance.[57]

The dating system—by regnal years of Khusro II, Heraclius, or Constans II—is the same in the inscriptions as in the *History of Khosrov*, and there is a similar concern for chronological precision when the date in question is of special significance.[58] There are also three specific pieces of information which can be backed by epigraphic evidence: (1) the construction by the Catholicos Komitas (610/11–628) of a church dedicated to St Hrip'sime is documented in two inscriptions;[59] (2) Varaztirots' Bagratuni, who served as Persian governor (*marzban*) of Armenia from his appointment by Kavad in 628 to 632–3 when he fell foul of the neighbouring governors of Atropatene (Persian) and western Armenia (Roman), is duly mentioned in post at the time of the dedication of a new church at Bagaran (8 October 629);[60] (3) the foundation by the Catholicos Nerses (640–62) of the round church of Zvartnots' is confirmed by a terse inscription saying so and a number of capitals decorated with his monogram.[61]

These selective tests, made possible by the chance survival of reliable comparative material, both literary and epigraphic, demonstrate the solidity of the content of the *History of Khosrov*. They confirm that the positive result obtained for Heraclius' speech to Shahen in 615 was not freakish, and suggest that, irrespective of the presence or absence of corroborative material, ps. Sebeos' account is probably trustworthy. This conclusion has important consequences for the reconstruction of history after the end of the Roman–Persian war, when authoritative comparative material gives out.

There is nothing in the sources examined hitherto which can be used to control ps. Sebeos' narrative of the rise of Islam, save for the final two notices in the *Chronicle to 636* which can do so only obliquely. There is plainly some causal connection between them and the two engagements described by ps. Sebeos, both fought on the eastern, desert frontage of Palestine. For it would have been imprudent to raid the Tur Abdin in Roman Mesopotamia (firmly dated to 635/6, in the *Chronicle to 636*) without first establishing firm control of Palestine and then pushing on north over Syria. It is ps. Sebeos who

[57] Ibid. 64–8.
[58] Ibid. 42–9, 53–4.
[59] Ps. Sebeos, 121. 5–25; Greenwood, 'Corpus', nos. A. 2. 1 and 2, with comments at 38–9.
[60] Ps. Sebeos, 128. 36–129. 4, 132. 12–26; Greenwood, 'Corpus', no. A. 3, with comment at 62.
[61] Ps. Sebeos, 147. 21–31, 174. 37–175. 7; Greenwood, 'Corpus', no. A. 18, with comments at 41, 54–5, 61.

partially fills this gap, with his report that the whole of Palestine submitted to the Arabs after the second of the battles which he describes. The first Arab victory which he reports, resulting from a surprise attack on a Roman force at Rabba east of the Dead Sea, probably took place at roughly the same time as the successful thrust from the south recorded in the chronicle (at the beginning of 634), and may perhaps be viewed as a diversionary action.[62] Ps. Sebeos' information can thus be fitted neatly into an existing skeletal framework of events. There is no inconsistency. But for the earlier biography of the Prophet, the overview of the victorious war against the Sasanian empire, and the following impressionistic account of the gathering crisis in the caliphate, we have to make what we can out of the *History of Khosrov*. Other texts, notably the two chronicles examined in the next chapter, can only provide corroboration in the form of circumstantial evidence. There is nothing, however, to suggest that ps. Sebeos ceased to be a careful historian, that he was not as conscientious in gathering and ordering material about contemporary and recent events as about the great war between the old imperial powers.

There are only two discernible deficiencies. Intrusive material about the flight of Jews from Edessa at the time of the reimposition of Roman authority in 629 or 630 and their vain appeal for Arab aid gives the impression that Muhammad's mission was inspired by Jews and that he succeeded, where they failed, in bringing about unity in the desert *in a mere year or two*. This Jewish notice, evidently concocted in Christian circles to provide an explanation for the otherwise inexplicable, seems to have come into ps. Sebeos' hands already attached to a sober summary of the Prophet's career, but it is to his credit that he does not allow it to colour his narrative of subsequent events.[63] It is to be regretted that he does not date any of the critical episodes in his account of the conquest of Iran, save for the final act, the defeat and death of Yazdgerd (dated to his twentieth regnal year, 651/2),[64] but there is nothing to indicate that he has deviated at any point from the true chronological order.

As for the accuracy of such dates as he gives, some checks can be carried out, and here too he scores well. He places the Armenian uprising which led to full-scale war between the great powers correctly in 571/2.[65] The coups of Phocas and Heraclius (602 and 610), independently dated in the *Chronicon Paschale*,[66] and the defeat and death of Yazdgerd III (fixed on the basis of

[62] Ps. Sebeos, 135. 25–136. 35; *Chron. 724*, 18–19.
[63] Ps. Sebeos, 134. 18–135. 17.
[64] Ibid. 163. 29–164. 6.
[65] Ps. Sebeos, 67. 27–31. Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 250–4.
[66] Ps. Sebeos, 106. 8–13, 112. 30–113. 2. Cf. *Chron. Pasch.*, 693. 9–694. 12, 699. 19–701. 18.

numismatic evidence to 651/2)[67] are placed in the correct Sasanian regnal years. The elements of the full date given for the capture of the fortress of Artsap'k' by an Arab raiding army are internally consistent (Sunday 10 August 643), suggesting that the date is accurate.[68] Leaving aside a minor disagreement over the exact date of the Persians' capture of Jerusalem (where ps. Sebeos may be right),[69] only one definite slip is discernible, in the notice which conflates Heraclius' two departures on campaign in 622 and 624: ps. Sebeos has plumped for the intervening year (June 622–June 623).[70]

6. CONCLUSION

A considerable portion of the text has been subjected to close scrutiny. Tests have been carried out on widely separated notices or sets of related notices in the text. They have demonstrated conclusively the reliability of the material presented. Positive results have also been obtained for the disturbed portion of the text dealing with events between 615 and 626. Although collateral damage caused by the conflation of the two Persian thrusts to the metropolitan area may be extensive, the checks have shown that what is reported in individual notices, selective and condensed though they be, is accurate. It seems not unreasonable to extrapolate from these results, and to infer that such competent editing of judiciously selected material from sound sources characterizes the text as a whole. It is a conclusion which accords with that reached after a careful internal examination of the text—namely that the sources identified were of high calibre, and that ps. Sebeos was a restrained editor. Where he abbreviated written sources or captured orally conveyed information in writing, his own versions naturally acquired a biblical sheen, as remembered or half-remembered words and phrases popped into his mind. But he kept deliberate intervention to a minimum: apart from occasional passages of direct comment, rewriting in finer language was restricted to certain episodes of particular importance, which might be highlighted by a passage in direct speech (for example that in which Heraclius presents his negotiating position in 615) or by the use of deliberately portentous language (for example in the description of the 654 naval attack on Constantinople).

[67] Ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–164. 6. Cf. S. Album and T. Goodwin, *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean*, i: *The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period* (Oxford, 2002), 4–7, 56–8 for the posthumous use of Yazdgerd's 20th regnal year on Arab-Sasanian drachms.

[68] Ps. Sebeos, 146. 11–16.

[69] Ps. Sebeos, 115. 28–32, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 34.

[70] Ps. Sebeos, 123. 15–124. 27, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 38.

He had strong views about the significance of the events which he recorded, but he took care to confine them to the four passages where he voiced them.

Apart from one uncharacteristically bold editorial intervention, the only serious criticism which may be made concerns the coverage of the *History of Khosrov*. It has a remarkable geographical sweep to east, west, and south of Armenia, but deliberately leaves out the north, except for occasional brief notices. Proper attention is paid to the nomads (and sedentaries) of the hot southern deserts who changed the face of the known world in the seventh century. But their northern counterparts, the Turks and their many subject and client peoples, are largely excluded, although they played a decisive part in reversing the course of the last Roman–Persian war and their imperial successors, the Khazars, were to prove the most formidable continental adversaries of Islam in the late seventh and eighth centuries.

The *History of Khosrov* may therefore be taken to be a historical source of consistently high quality. Information unique to it, of which there is a great deal, may be accepted as trustworthy, unless there are positive indications that something has gone awry. It makes a massive contribution to knowledge and understanding of the last great war of antiquity, not only by recording events otherwise passed over in silence (Armenian dissidence in the era of active Roman and Persian cooperation in the 590s, operations north of the Taurus in the first phase of the war (603–10), city politics and confessional antagonism in Jerusalem on the eve of the Persian siege in 614), but also by placing the war in a Persian as well as a Roman context. Thanks to material extracted from the *Khwadaynamag* and the Life of Smbat Bagratuni, clear light is cast on the troubled opening decade of Khusro's rule, when Bistam's rebellion first gathered wide support and then proved difficult to suppress in the mountain fastnesses of the Elburz. Khusro's decision to go to war makes more sense when placed against this background. Snippets of information (topographical, strategic, and political) add small but vital pieces of information from the Persian side. The accounts of Khusro's rise and fall, together with the political turbulence of 628–32, are less blurred, more faithful to the *Khwadaynamag*, than almost all other (later) versions.

But the great value of the *History of Khosrov* lies in its third section dealing with the rise of Islam. It presents the only wide-ranging, connected account to be found in a non-Muslim source written close to the events, in the seventh century. Had the text not survived, it would be virtually impossible to reconstruct on solid foundations the early history of Islam. As it is, certain crucial phenomena can be picked out. A series of successful attacks are attested on different regions of the surrounding world, beginning with Palestine and ending with eastern Iran, in which Arab forces seem to have been concentrated against successive designated targets. A diplomatic coup can be

seen to have isolated Yazdgerd III in eastern Iran, depriving him of the active support of the army of Media before the final Arab push into Khurasan in 652. The crisis which developed in the caliphate in 656, resulting in the murder of the Caliph ʻUthman in Medina, can be placed in a context of serious defeats on several distant fronts. The civil war which followed is presented not as anarchic fighting between a multitude of tribal and confessional groups but as taking the form of ordered combat between four great regional armies and their political-religious leaderships.

For the convenience of the reader, the results of this investigation, isolating the principal items of news reported, with or without dates, in the *History of Khosrov*, may be presented in tabular form:

594/5–601/2: rebellion of Bistam
603: Persian victory south of the Armenian Taurus, Persian reverse in Armenia
604: fall of Dara, victorious Persian campaign in Armenia
605: Persian advance to the Araxes–Euphrates watershed
608: capitulation of Theodosiopolis
609: capitulation of Edessa
611–12: Persian occupation of Caesarea (Cappadocia)
613: Persian defeat of Heraclius near Antioch
614: pogrom in Jerusalem, Persian siege and capture of the city
615/16: Turkish invasion of Iran
+ Persian advance to Chalcedon (Heraclius negotiates with Shahen)
+ Smbat Bagratuni restores Sasanian position in the north-east
+ first counteroffensive by Heraclius (advance from Caesarea (Cappadocia) through Armenia to Atropatene)
+ destruction of Adur Gushnasp fire-temple
+ operations in Transcaucasia and withdrawal to winter by Lake Van
+ invasion of Persian Mesopotamia
628: deposition and death of Khusro II
+ unification of Arabia by Muhammad
+ submission of Palestine after two Arab victories east of the Jordan
+ Arab invasion of Mesopotamia, siege of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir, successful Persian counterattack
+ Arab victory near Hira, renewed siege of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir
+ evacuation of government and treasury disrupted
+ Arab raid across the Persian Gulf
6 October 640: Arab capture of Dvin
642: Arab victory opening way on to Iranian plateau
10 August 643: minor reverse during second Arab invasion of Armenia
+ neutralization of Persian forces in Media

651/2: flight and death of Yazdgerd III
late 653: Roman army commanded by Constans II in Armenia
654: failure of grand Arab attack on Constantinople
654–5: Arab reverses in Media, Caucasus, and Iberia
+ outbreak of first Arab civil war
660–1: Constans II in Transcaucasia
+ victory of Mu'awiya in civil war

There is much more which may be teased out of the *History of Khosrov*, in particular evidence pointing to a higher level of organization on the part of the Muslims and a greater religious inclusiveness than hindsight would suggest. But the full exploitation of ps. Sebeos' material should be deferred to the last three chapters, where an attempt will be made to put together a synthesis of early Islamic history, making use of the full range of demonstrably reliable sources. For the moment, the search must continue for other useful contemporary and near-contemporary sources written on former Sasanian territory, in the hope that they may be quarried for additional information about the war which acted as a prelude to the rise of Islam and the extraordinary feats of the earliest Muslims.

4

Seventh-Century Eastern Sources II

The History to the Year 682 *and the* Khuzistan Chronicle

The *History of Khosrov* impresses the reader with the range of its coverage and the sober restraint of its editor, the unnamed bishop who was ready for a while to stand up to the Emperor Constans II and the massed Armenian episcopate. Another text, also written in Armenian but put together some three centuries later, Movses Daskhurantsʿi's *History of* (*Caucasian*) *Albania*, cannot match it in geographical scope (at least as regards the seventh century), since it is more narrowly focused on eastern Transcaucasia. But it complements the earlier text and thus extends its coverage. Such is the detail with which episodes are described that it gives yet greater insight into military operations, diplomatic manoeuvres, and governmental processes in an age of dramatic change.[1]

Movses Daskhurantsʿi fills a gaping hole in the coverage of the *History of Khosrov*. His work, a universal history with a clearly defined geographical focus, contains a full account of the diplomatic and military involvement of the Turks in the war of 603–30. Its inclusion is easily explicable, since his homeland, Albania, by virtue of its position immediately south of the easiest route across the Caucasus (between the mountains and the Caspian), felt Turkish force more keenly than either of the other two main components of Transcaucasia, Iberia and Armenia. The narrative is detailed and graphic. The action can be followed on the ground without difficulty, thanks to the topographical information given. Leading protagonists are clearly identified, including the first Roman emissary to the Turks, Persian office-holders in

[1] Movses Daskhurantsʿi (or Kałankatuatsʿi), ed. V. Arakʿelyan, *Movses Kałankatuatsʿi: Patmutʿiwn Ałuanitsʿ Ashkharhi* (Erevan, 1983), trans. C. J. F. Dowsett, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxurancʿi* (London, 1961). Dowsett's English translation is based on the older, superseded editions of K. Šahnazarean (Paris, 1860) and M. Emin (Moscow, 1860), supplemented by direct consultation of a large number of manuscripts. It omits the heading of chapter III. 17, so that the numbering of subsequent chapters lags one behind that of Arakʿelyan. References to the translation are given in brackets after citations of the modern critical edition.

Albania, individual Persian military commanders involved in operations against Romans or Turks, two high Turkish rulers who led armies south, and the Catholicos Viroy, who reluctantly took charge of affairs on his return in 628, after twenty-five years of detention in Ctesiphon. A fair amount is revealed of the social structure of Albania, as well as of aspects of the Turkish military and administrative system. Calamitous events are well described in controlled rhetorical outbursts. Emotions—anger, fear, rancour, panic, grief—are vividly conveyed.

He then goes on to describe the expansion of Islam, again from the point of view of his homeland. In this section of his history, a single heroic figure is spotlit, Juansher, a member of the ruling Mihrakan family, who first came to prominence as commander of the Albanian contingent serving with Sasanian forces defending Mesopotamia against the Muslims in the later 630s. Time (which is calibrated) passes. The Albanians withdraw from the wider war against Islam after the Muslims succeed in breaking into the Iranian plateau, and, led by Juansher, are ready to fight for local autonomy. Juansher now bestrides the stage as the dominant political figure in Albania. It is he who cuts a deal with the Romans when they extend their power temporarily over the whole of Transcaucasia, during the first Arab civil war, and then, after the ebbing of Roman power, pays two formal visits to the court of the new world ruler, the Caliph Muʿawiya. The tone is encomiastic. At every turn, Juansher is praised, and much is made of the honours and presents successively bestowed on him by Constans II and Muʿawiya. His assassination at night in a walled garden is described in a vivid passage, which is followed by a long funeral elegy in verse. The spotlight then shifts and picks out a great churchman of the time, Israyel. We are told the story of his discovery of two fragments of the True Cross, his consecration as bishop, and his subsequent mission to the north Caucasus Huns. There is then a gap in the secular coverage, before it resumes in the form of a set of spare dated notices from 697/8.

Much useful historical matter may be extracted from Movses Daskhurantsʿi. The precision of the narrative encourages confidence, and there are enough precise dates to fix key episodes in time. The account of Turkish diplomatic and military activity fits neatly into what is known from other sources, while the cluster of material about Juansher provides unique evidence about Sasanian mobilization to meet the threat of Islam and the internal tensions which weakened the defence effort after two decisive defeats in open combat. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the outsider's view of the Umayyad court at Damascus.

1. HISTORY OF ATROPATENE (AZERBAIJAN) FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME

There are marked differences between the two Armenian texts which, taken together, provide an impressively full narrative of the war north of the Taurus and Zagros. The *History of Khosrov* is relatively narrowly focused in time but ranges far afield in space. Movses Daskhurants'i's *History of Albania* is much the more ambitious work. Its field of vision extends from the beginning of time, from the origins of humanity and the dispersal of nations over the earth after the Flood, to Movses' own day in the late tenth century. Geographically it may be narrowly focused on what he calls 'the regions of the east', comprising the fertile plains of the middle and lower Kura and the edges of the highlands which frame them to north and south.[2] But Albania was so exposed to pressures and influences from without, from all four quarters, that its history had to be placed in a wider context of great power politics. Secular and ecclesiastical history are entwined. Movses introduced whatever information he could glean from available sources about domestic politics and the relations of local rulers with foreign monarchs, from the first ruler of Albania to be mentioned in a written source (Aran in the early Parthian period) to two contemporary rival princely houses.[3] As for church history, he made artful use of the more plentiful material to hand about saints and leading churchmen, about venerated relics and important councils. He argued that Christianity came to Albania at almost the same time as to Armenia (preached first by Ełishe, disciple of St James, very soon after Thaddaeus' mission to Armenia, and taking proper root with the conversion of Urnayr, a ruler whom he made a contemporary of Constantine the Great and Trdat king of Armenia), and went on to claim parity of status for the catholicosate of Albania, assertions of authority by Armenian catholicoi being interpreted as acts of voluntary deference on the part of their Albanian counterparts.[4] There is thus more partisan advocacy in the *History of Albania* than in the *History of Khosrov*.

In the absence of a preface (the heading of I. 1 hints that it may once have existed), neither the identity of the author nor the date of composition can be established with any certainty. The conventional attribution to Movses

[2] Movses D., I. 5, II. 1.

[3] Ibid. I. 4, III. 22, 23.

[4] Movses D., I. 6, 9. Cf. A. A. Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank v greko-latiniskikh i drevnearmjanskikh istochnikakh* (Erevan, 1987),183–4, 204–7, and T. W. Greenwood, 'A History of Armenia in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2000), 105–10.

Daskhurants'i rests upon the uncorroborated testimony of two later writers, Mkhitar Gosh (around 1200) and his pupil Vanakan Vardapet. The place-name Daskhuren is not known otherwise. For want of a better alternative, we may provisionally accept the medieval testimony (which was probably based on oral tradition).[5] He probably wrote it the 990s, after the death of Catholicos Movses (983–9), last in the list of catholicoi with which he concludes his text (III. 24).[6] It is noticeable that its relatively full narrative peters out, soon after 900, into a short series of discrete notices, whereas one might expect his coverage, like ps. Sebeos', to become fuller as he approaches his own lifetime. His chosen role, though, was that of compiler, not composer, of history, and his failure to write a connected history of the recent past may be explained by the lack of a conveniently packaged and reasonably unpartisan account of a complex phase in the history of Albania, when it was riven by schism in the church and endemic conflict between two rival local dynasties.[7]

In the course of a meticulous examination of the text, the Armenian scholar A. A. Hakopian (Akopjan in Cyrillic script) has identified the main contributory sources, some of them extant so that Movses' editorial performance can be appraised, others postulated to explain the pattern of his coverage and shifts both of perspective and in manner of presentation. He has also drawn a fundamental distinction between the core of book II (chapters 9–45), which deals with seventh-century events in considerable detail, and the rest of the text which is more economical in expression. He does so mainly on the basis of style. The seventh-century core is written in elegant, sometimes flowery language, the narrative being embellished with apposite similes, snatches or longer passages of direct speech, biblical quotations, and occasional classical allusions. This contrasts with the straightforward, efficient presentation of material, in unadorned language, which is characteristic of the rest of the text.[8]

Before turning to the higher-style material dealing with the seventh century, we should glance over the rest of the text. Movses admits (I. 8, III. 24) that he had difficulty tracking down sources, but he made the best of what he did find. These sources may be enumerated as follows: (1) three extant historical

[5] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 166–9; Greenwood, *Armenia*, 122–3.

[6] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 169–77, 211–16, 240–2, contra Greenwood, *Armenia*, 111–21, who prefers a date at the beginning of the tenth century. Akinjan's conjecture, taken up by Akopjan, that Movses Daskhurants'i was Movses, last of the catholicoi listed in III. 24, seems implausible in the light of the compiler's modest literary ambitions and the text's silence about the fraught ecclesiastical politics of the recent past.

[7] C. Zuckerman, 'À propos du *Livre des cérémonies*, II, 48: III l'Albanie caucasienne au Xe siècle', *TM* 13 (2000), 563–92.

[8] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 169–72, 188–9, 196–8.

texts—an Armenian translation of the Chronicle of Hippolytus, and the Histories of Movses Khorenats'i and Ełishe;[9] (2) two accounts of the Christianization of Albania, one spurious (I. 6, 7, 9, 11) which underpins a claim to parity of status with the Armenian church, the other dubbed the Tale of Vachagan by Hakopian (I. 14, 16–23) which acknowledges the known dependence on the Armenian church (the first Albanian bishop being the grandson of Gregory the Illuminator)—for Hakopian both originated in the early seventh century when the subordination of the Albanian to the Armenian church became a live issue;[10] (3) a collection of ecclesiastical documents and short texts which was probably put together in the catholicosate and which, we know, was read by the Armenian Catholicos Anania Mokats'i (946–67) during a visit to Albania in 949;[11] (4) a list of caliphs prefaced by an account of Muhammad's life and teaching (III. 1–2);[12] (5) a secular annalistic chronicle which paid particular attention to Arab military activity in Transcaucasia between 697/8 and 914/15 (III. 16–17, 20–2);[13] and (6) lists of princes and catholicoi of Albania (III. 23–4), ending respectively with Yovhannes Senekerim (ruling from shortly before 970) and Movses (983–9).

Movses Daskhurants'i was a competent compiler. His narrative was pieced together out of passages, normally abridged but sometimes transcribed, which he selected for inclusion from his written sources. This can be demonstrated in the case of the three historical texts used by him which are still extant: he was careful to preserve the structure and language of the original, restricting his editorial additions to a bare minimum.[14] He was equally scrupulous in his handling of the documents which he incorporated (many of which are independently preserved), normally contenting himself with making some excisions. But he was ready to intervene if there were, in his judgement, errors to be corrected or awkward details in need of editorial massaging, details which might otherwise bring into question either the

[9] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 201–3; Greenwood, *Armenia*, 96–8.

[10] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 178–88 detects two distinct strands in the spurious tradition: (1) a legendary story, datable to the early seventh century (I. 6), which credited Ełishe, disciple of the apostle Thaddaeus, with the first mission to Albania; (2) a second legendary story, datable to the early eighth century (I. 9 and 11), that Urnayr, who reigned in the 370s, was baptized in Armenia by Gregory the Illuminator and then brought about the conversion of Albania as early as the 330s, while Constantine was still Roman emperor (181–4). Cf. Greenwood, *Armenia*, 124–7, who defines the two traditions somewhat differently.

[11] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 203–10, 216–23.

[12] Greenwood, *Armenia*, 143.

[13] Cf. ibid. 119–20, 144, who also attributes III. 15 (a cast-back over the seventh century) to this source and characterizes it as biased in favour of one of two rival local dynasties (the Eranshahik house).

[14] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 201–3; Greenwood, *Armenia*, 96–100.

independence or the orthodoxy of the Albanian church (e.g. II. 47, 48, III. 8).[15] He was adept at marshalling and deploying his variegated material at appropriate places in his text. The basic principle of arrangement was chronological. Material from different sources was broken up and distributed in larger and smaller chunks across the text. The whole was divided up into chapters, the subject matter being signalled by headings. Finally Movses bound together his interleaved materials with short linking passages and occasional cross-references.[16]

2. A HISTORICAL TEXT DISINTERRED: THE *HISTORY TO THE YEAR 682*

As Hakopian has observed, there is a marked difference in style between the section dealing with seventh-century events (II. 9–45) and the rest of the text. The seventh-century narrative is full and well written. It consists of four clusters of material, and covers the period 624–82. The first cluster on the 620s (II. 10–16) was probably composed in the 670s, certainly not before the middle 660s, since it betrays knowledge of Constans II's departure for the west where he spent the last years of his reign (663–9).[17] The second cluster contains extensive extracts from a lost Eulogy of Juansher, prince of Albania (II. 18–28), prefaced by a garbled genealogy of his family and background information about the troubled first decade of Khusro II's reign which should be attributed to Movses himself (II. 17).[18] Juansher's return from his second audience with the caliph, loaded with honours, bringing all manner of valuable presents, was almost certainly the occasion which prompted the composition of the Eulogy. The author was an accomplished writer. He was present when Juansher came back and wrote lyrical descriptions of the parrot and elephant which he brought back.[19] A provenance can also be suggested for the third cluster of material, hagiographical in character (II. 29–31, 33),

[15] Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 203–7.

[16] Ibid. 172–3, 223–6; Greenwood, *Armenia*, 101–4.

[17] A cast-forward at the end of II. 13, referring to the removal of kingship from the Sasanian dynasty, provides a somewhat earlier *terminus post quem*—the defeat and death of Yazdgerd III in 652. The mistaken identification of the northern nomads as Khazars, who only emerged as the dominant power in the steppes north of the Caucasus in the 660s, cannot be used to confirm a date of composition in the 670s at the earliest (contra Howard-Johnston, 'Armenian Historians', 56–7), since it is made in an editorial link written much later, probably by Movses (see above).

[18] Cf. Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 196–7.

[19] Movses D., II. 28.

which describes the discovery by Israyel, a monk at the time (later a distinguished bishop), of three buried reliquaries, two containing fragments of the True Cross and one miscellaneous relics, all allegedly brought back in the fourth century from Jerusalem. For the source is cited at the beginning of chapter 29, 'a true, ornate but somewhat short account of the solitude of Israyel'. A chunk of related material explaining how the relics reached Albania and why they were concealed is to be found at I. 27–30. This background material almost certainly belongs to the cited Life of Israyel.[20] It was probably composed soon after the discovery of the relics in the 670s, and was not so much a biography of Israyel (after all it halted before his consecration as bishop (reported at II. 37)) as an account of the discovery of the Jerusalem relics, in which Israyel played the leading part. Movses presumably was responsible for separating the background material and relocating it much earlier in his chronologically ordered history, as also for introducing unrelated material on illicit noble marriages and a disputed election to the catholicosate (II. 32). Fourth and finally, there is a cluster of material dealing with a few episodes datable to 669–82 (II. 34–45), beginning with the assassination of Juansher and ending with Israyel's mission to the north Caucasus Huns.[21] The mission is the main subject of this last collection of material, Israyel's arguments and actions against the pagans being reported in great detail.[22]

The question now arises as to who fitted together these four clusters of seventh-century material. Was it the work of Movses himself whose editorial hand has already been seen at work, or did they reach him already conjoined? Our estimate of their historical value may rise, if the four clusters are viewed as components of a single work composed within two generations of the first events covered. If, on the other hand, Movses were responsible, so much further removed in time, misunderstanding and misinterpretation would be more likely, although he was, as we have seen, a competent compiler who refrained from tampering with the substance of his sources, unless he had an ecclesiastical axe to grind.

A first piece of evidence is supplied by chapter II. 9 (127. 4–128. 10 (75–6)), which introduces the first cluster of material. It seems to have been extracted from an anterior source and reproduced verbatim by Movses. It is possible that it came attached to the rich local Albanian narrative (discussed further

[20] The legendary material about Ełishe's mission and his relics presented at I. 6–7, which likewise stresses the connection with Jerusalem, should probably be classified as deep background material and attributed to the same ultimate source. Cf. Akopjan, *Albanija-Aluank*, 184, 196.

[21] The dates of Juansher's death and of Israyel's mission are established by A. A. Akopjan, 'O khronologii poslednikh sobytij v "Istorii 684 goda"', *Kavkaz i Vizantija*, 6 (1988), 24–36.

[22] There is no positive indication in the text to support Akopjan's suggestion (*Albanija-Aluank*, 198–9) that the author went on the mission.

below) which supplies the bulk of the material about the 620s.[23] It seems more likely, though, that it was composed as an introduction to the whole collection of seventh-century material, from the perspective of the last decade or so of the century. It has a strong apocalyptic tone. It identifies the troubles which have fallen upon Albania with the signs which Christ predicted would announce his Second Coming. The troubles themselves are not described, save in terms borrowed from the Gospels ('wars and rumours of wars, an abundance of famines and plagues and earthquakes, and signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and disorders of peoples like the agitation of the waves of the sea' (cf. Matt. 24: 6, 7, 29)).

A distinction appears to be drawn between the time of writing, when there are 'many still living who wish to hear if it shall be possible to accomplish something, including countless losses of the barbarous enemies surrounding us' (128. 3–5 (76)), and a past which witnessed 'very great and astonishing miracles with which the powerful and philanthropic right hand of God overcame our enemies and they were struck dead before our eyes' (128. 5–7 (76)). That past is readily identifiable as the period of Turkish intervention, brought to a close by civil war in central Asia. The present was a time of eschatological anxiety, when Albania was surrounded by menacing powers. It evidently postdated the fall of the Sasanian empire (652) and the fleeting expansion eastward of Roman power during the first Muslim civil war (656–61), since a similar apocalyptic concern is voiced in a later passage of editorial commentary on those events, which must surely be attributed to the same hand (at II. 27–192. 10–16 (124)): 'even now towering hills are flattened and levelled by dread at the countenance of the Lord, and the furious transports of the waters of the surging deep sink within themselves. Thus was the terrible glory of the Persian Empire humbled, and the deep swallowed up its haughty, cloud-capped heights. The winged voices of the deep were silenced by the fury of the winds, and the thorns of the fields, flying through the air, came and dwelt upon the waves of the wide sea.' The most appropriate context for such sombre reflections is to be found in the period covered by the fragmentary contemporary history which forms the fourth cluster of seventh-century material. For those were years when the caliphate began to break apart after the death of Mu'awiya in 680, when it might well have seemed possible that

[23] An obscure phrase in II. 16 (170. 4–5 (106)) about the rising of the Lord and our inattention may perhaps be taken as alluding to Christ's remarks about his Second Coming (Matt. 24), referred to in the preface. If so, it might be postulated that the first cluster was framed by the preface and a conclusion, of which only this trace has been left in the version preserved by Movses.

the Arabs would suffer the fate of the Turks, when the scale of the coming conflict might well have been taken to presage the end of time.

Second, there is the literary patina which distinguishes all four clusters of seventh-century material from the rest of the *History of Albania*. The writing is consistently fine. The narrative is embellished with similes, passages of direct speech, biblical quotations, and occasional classical allusions. The storytelling is vivid, showing good psychological insight. There are, it is true, marked variations between individual clusters: very little direct speech in what has been taken from the Eulogy of Juansher; virtually no similes in the account of Israyel's discovery of the Jerusalem relics[24] or in the fourth cluster; but this is offset by a strengthening of narrative grip. It looks as if an editor with literary aspirations has gone through the variegated materials extracted from a number of different sources, with their own stylistic traits, and has retouched them so as to make his text more homogeneous. This would explain the presence in the second and fourth components of images familiar from the first—bear, lion-cub, serpent, swift-writing pen. A reference early on, in the list of plunder taken by the Persians from Jerusalem in 614, to 'four-legged animals and great birds whose names have never been heard in the lands of the east' (129. 12–14 (77)—reminiscent of the exotic creatures brought back by Juansher from Damascus in 667/8–197. 13–21 (127–8)) may suggest that the same editorial hand was at work on the first and second clusters. This stylistic revision is, however, far from complete, as if the editor was forced to break off and was never able to resume the task.

Finally, there is a serious dislocation in the narrative of Turkish–Persian relations incorporated in the first cluster. It seems that a whole chunk of text (in II. 11 (133. 13–140. 14 (81–6))) has been dislodged from its proper place, and brought forward. The substance of a menacing diplomatic note sent by Khusro II (133. 18–134. 17 (82)) in reply to a Turkish ultimatum (142. 19–143. 8 (88)) has been detached from its emollient opening (143. 14–19 (88)). The Turkish response, an invasion in massive force, which culminated in the siege of Tiflis (*dated to year 38* (627/8)—134. 19–140. 14 (82–6)), is then described *before* an account is given of the diplomatic background to this Turkish–Persian war.[25] Once the loose material is put back in its proper place, this first cluster presents a lucid and connected account of international relations in Transcaucasia in the 620s. This was, almost certainly, the work

[24] Two appear in the background material hived off at I. 27–30, as does one classical allusion.

[25] Movses D., 140. 17–142. 7 (86–7) covers the Roman–Turkish negotiations which resulted in a Turkish–Roman alliance (*dated to year 36*), before describing an exploratory attack by the Turks in *year 37* (142. 8–15 (87–8)) and the above-mentioned exchange of Turkish and Persian diplomatic notes.

of a first editor. It appears that at some later stage the order of the folios was confused and a second editor (presumably Movses Daskhurants'i himself) did his best to make sense of what was before him, but only succeeded in compounding the confusion.[26]

A date in the late seventh century may be conjectured for the first editorial phase. It must post-date the original composition of two of the works used, the Eulogy of Juansher (around 669) and the Life of Israyel (in the 670s). We thus obtain roughly the same *terminus post quem*, in the 670s, as for the composition of the narrative about the Turks and the fall of Khusro II. This brings us close to the period 669–82, which is covered in the fourth cluster of seventh-century material. A *terminus ante quem* for the composition of this last cluster can be proposed with confidence, because of its abrupt halt in the first half of 682. It has the hallmarks of a contemporary historical record. It is very full and detailed. It homes in on events of real significance in Albania at the time—the most important being the assassination of Juansher some ten years earlier (graphically described) and Israyel's mission to the north Caucasus Huns. At that point its secular history of Albania breaks off, on the eve of a crisis which dwarfed the events chronicled with such care. There is not a word in Movses' text about the dramatic years 685–8 when first the Khazars and then the Byzantines exploited the second great internal crisis of the caliphate to intervene in force in Transcaucasia, nor about the Arabs' *riposte* in 692, immediately after the end of the second civil war, when they reasserted their authority and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Byzantines at Sebastopolis (Sulusaray).[27] This void in Movses' coverage can only be explained by a sudden failure on the part of the source which supplied his information up to 682. It may surely be inferred that whoever wrote up the material in the fourth cluster did so soon after the halt in its coverage. It follows from this that the author of the fragmentary contemporary history of 669–82 was at work at roughly the same time as the first three clusters of material took shape. It is but a short step to infer that the same individual was responsible for all four of them. Chronological convergence of their production is thus our fourth piece of evidence, weak perhaps, but suggestive.

However, the best evidence for the proposition that the four clusters of seventh-century material included in Movses' second book took shape at the

[26] He introduces the displaced chunk of text with an anachronistic note about a *Khazar* invasion of Albania (133. 16–18 (81–2)) and transfers a heading dealing with Khusro's conquests from its proper position immediately after the preface (128. 12 (76)) to head the displaced material in II. 11.

[27] C. Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium: The First Encounter', in P. B. Golden, H. Ben-Shammai, and A. Róna-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 8.17 (Leiden, 2007), 399–432, at 430–1.

same time and were combined to form an edited collection by a writer of talent comes from the preface in which the unknown editor speaks to his readers. This is best interpreted as an introduction to a history which stretches forward from 623/4 to 682, and which may be designated provisionally the *History to 682*. If this hypothesis holds true, it was produced in circumstances analogous to the *History of Khosrov* (at the onset of a bout of internecine warfare in the Muslim community) by an author who suspected, like ps. Sebeos, that the last days were at hand. Apart from his attitude to contemporary events and his literary skills, very little can be said about him. The keenness with which he reports Israyel's words and deeds on his mission to the north Caucasus Huns may indicate that he too was a churchman. He may have been killed in the troubled period following the Khazar attack of 685, since his silence about it is hard to explain otherwise. His work was far from finished when he left off. He had not completed the stylistic revision of the materials dealing with the fifty years or so up to 669 which he had gathered and fitted together. His contemporary history takes the form of a fragmentary record of current events.

3. INFORMATION ABOUT TURKS AND ARABS

It is vital, of course, to establish, if possible, the reliability of each component part of this postulated *History to 682* which Movses Daskhurants'i incorporated into his universal history. Before doing so, though, we should take a closer at the first two clusters, which present rich and informative narratives about international relations in Transcaucasia between 603 and 630, and about the impact of Islam on Albanians and Albania. We can leave aside, for the moment, the short preface (II. 9) which underlines the significance of the events recounted.

Throughout the account of fighting in the opening decades, the point of view, as is only to be expected, is Albanian. Something, though, had to be said about the circumstances of the Turkish intervention. So the first cluster of seventh-century material in the *History of Albania* (II. 9–16) gives a brief overview of Khusro II's successful war against the Romans, noting the different names borne by his leading general in the west, Shahrvaraz, and itemizing some of the more precious types of booty brought back (128. 13–130. 7 (76–8)). The fortune of war then begins to shift in the Romans' favour and Heraclius makes a fleeting appearance, launching his first northern attack and invading Atropatene, before withdrawing north to winter near P'artaw in Albania. The three Persian armies deployed against him in 625 are mentioned,

but the complex operations of that year and the following winter are disposed of in a few lines (130. 8–133. 11 (78–81)). Thereafter nothing is heard of the Romans until the final phase of the war, when they join with the Turks in the first siege of Tiflis and, later, advance on the metropolitan region and help bring opposition to Khusro to a head. There is no allusion to the most perilous episode of all for the Romans, the siege of Constantinople in 626.

The main storyline concerns Turks, Persians, and the peoples of Transcaucasia, chiefly the Albanians. The Romans' role is limited to that of making the first contact with the Turks. The exchange of embassies is reported separately from the military action in 624–6 and in very general terms (140. 17–142. 7 (86–7)). The Turks evidently welcome the Roman approach and promptly invade Albania in force. This invasion is the first episode in this section of the text to be treated in some detail. The focus is on diplomacy rather than warfare. Extracts (or what purport to be extracts) are quoted from the notes exchanged. Satʿ, the Turkish leader, addresses Khusro in withering terms: after announcing that he is the ally of Heraclius and demanding an end to the war and a return to the status quo before 603, he issues a grim warning in the name of 'the king of the north, the lord of all the earth, your king and the king of all kings'; Khusro at the very apogee of his power has become mere governor of Asorestan (Assyria). Khusro's reply is measured: his tone at first is respectful and reproachful, as he recalls the marriages which have grafted together the two dynastic houses, but then the haughtiness referred to in the introduction takes over (Heraclius is dismissed as a fugitive wandering among the islands of the west) and he warns Satʿ that he is ready to recall his armies from the west and let them loose on the Turks (142. 8–143. 20, 133. 16–134. 18 (87–8, 81–2)).

Diplomacy now gives way to warfare on a grand scale. The narrative centres on certain key episodes—the initial Turkish invasion which overwhelms Persian defences at Chor at the east end of the Caucasus, the meeting convened at Pʿartaw at which the Persian governor, his knees knocking from fear, is unable to speak and the resentful local notables decide to escape to the mountains while they can, the swift Turkish advance over the mountains to Tiflis, capital of Iberia, where they meet Heraclius' army and lay siege to the city (134. 19–140. 14 (82–6)). Then comes an abrupt change of scene to Mesopotamia: Heraclius is advancing: Khusro withdraws to Ctesiphon and sends out a scratch force, insisting, despite repeated pleas from its commander, that it engage the Romans—at which the general, together with his troops, raises his hands to the sun and the moon and cries out in a loud voice, 'My gods, judge between me and my pitiless king,' and goes to his death. The nobles now begin to voice their grievances—which are enumerated in a series of rhetorical questions—and a *putsch* is planned and put into effect. The

account is detailed, with a vivid portrayal of Khusro, who is at first bewildered when he is told what the disorderly noise means, then flees on foot and hides among the trees in the garden next to the palace. He is arrested there, taken away to another named building, and executed the next day (143. 21–148. 22 (88–92)).

With the release of Viroy, catholicos of Albania, by the new *shahanshah*, Kavad Shiroe, the narrative returns to Albania on the eve of a new Turkish invasion, led by the *yabghu khagan*, father of Sat', which is observed yet more closely than the two which have come before. Again it is constructed around a series of set-pieces. First comes the resumed siege of Tiflis which is taken, after two months, in a general assault: the shadow of darkness falls on the defenders; their joints are loosened, their arms weak; they retreat from the walls and take refuge in houses, conduits, and churches, 'like startled sparrows trapped in hunters' snares'; but they cannot escape and their corpses pile up 'like a deluge of hailstones' (149. 18–153. 15 (92–5)). Then the *yabghu khagan* returns home and Sat' is deputed to impose Turkish authority on Albania. Viroy is the central character in the scenes which follow: at first he is uncertain whether or not to break away from Sasanian control, and prevaricates; then he flees into the mountainous canton of Arts'akh, where he advises a meeting of notables that they should do obeisance to the Turks; this is followed by an extended and vivid description of the reception of Viroy and his delegation at the Turkish camp, clearly based on an eyewitness account (two first-person plurals have not been weeded out). The Albanians pass through the immense camp, with ramparts to right and to left, as in the crossing of the Red Sea of yore, on the way to the huge yurt where the Turkish nobles are feasting on couches, 'kneeling like a phalanx of laden camels, their bellies bloated like goatskins' (153. 16–162. 15 (95–101)). The narrative now becomes rather sketchy: Viroy gains influence with Sat'; famine and disease cause many deaths, the Turks invade Armenia the following year; an overconfident Arab cavalry force sent ahead by Shahrvaraz is surrounded 'like fire in the rushes on the shore of lake Gełam' and slaughtered to a man. Finally grim news comes from the north, of civil war and the imminent defeat and death of the *yabghu khagan*. Sat' and his men withdraw swiftly, and Albania's nightmare is over (162. 15–170. 15 (101–6)).

A few years later Juansher enters the scene. The late seventh-century historian now switches sources and begins to tap the Eulogy of Juansher for a second cluster of high-grade material. The Sasanian empire is under attack from the Muslims. The new *shahanshah* Yazdgerd III mobilizes his forces for a big push. The object is to drive the Arabs out of the Mesopotamian alluvium and back into the desert. Contingents are called up from Transcaucasia, that from Albania being placed under the command of Juansher, second son of the

ruler Varaz-Grigor. He serves in the army of Rustam, who was probably *spahbed* (commander-in-chief) of the Transcaucasian and Median quadrant of the empire, together with contingents from Siwnikʿ and Armenia. On reaching Ctesiphon (the Arab blockade, reported by ps. Sebeos, has been lifted), his appointment is confirmed by Yazdgerd, who formally designates him *sparapet* of Albania. We can then watch the war as it unfolds through his eyes. Minor engagements in which he took part loom large. He helps secure the Euphrates crossing used by the army on its march east, and distinguishes himself in the battle of Qadisiyya which is dated to 6 January and is said to have involved 30,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry on the Persian side. He is seriously wounded but recovers and is well rewarded for his gallantry. The *shahanshah* bestows the rank of general on him together with the appropriate insignia (enumerated) and a grant of land (172. 21–175. 15 (109–112)). Later, when the Arabs have renewed their attack and laid siege to Ctesiphon, he serves with 3,000 men in the relieving army, his task being to operate on the right bank of the Tigris and shield the evacuation of Yazdgerd (presumably accompanied by court, ministries, and much of the capital's population) from Ctesiphon on the left bank. Yazdgerd has been brought out safely first to Dastagerd, then to Bekłał (both palaces sacked by Heraclius during his advance on Ctesiphon at the end of 627), when Arab numbers prove too great. Juansher's men reform as a rearguard, trying but, according to ps. Sebeos, failing to secure the retreat of Yazdgerd and the treasures which had been removed from the capital (176. 1–14 (112)).

There has been much dispute about the chronology and strategy of Muslim campaigns of conquest, above all because the various dates offered by Arab sources do not inspire confidence. It would mark a significant advance if absolute rather than mere relative dates could be put on the episodes covered by ps. Sebeos and Movses Daskhurantsʿi. Only one secure date has been established so far: the first Arab attack in force on Sasanian territory took place in 635/6, according to the last notice in the *Chronicle to 636*. This initial thrust culminated in a first siege of Ctesiphon (undated in ps. Sebeos),[28] which was brought to an end by a Sasanian counterattack, led by Rustam and involving Juansher. Rustam succeeded in clearing Mesopotamia of the enemy, but was then killed, along with his senior Armenian generals, in a battle on the edge of the desert, which ended in a decisive Arab victory.

A vital piece of information is supplied by the *History to 682*, enabling us to fix the date of Juansher's first appointment as military commander of Albania relative to the regnal years of Yazdgerd. It was the fifteenth year of his

[28] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 5–7.

command when Yazdgerd was killed in the twentieth year of his reign (651/2–180. 13–16 (115)). It follows that Juansher's nomination as Albanian commander was confirmed by Yazdgerd in his sixth regnal year (637/8), and that the decisive battle of Qadisiyya was fought on 6 January 638, some two years after the initial Arab invasion of Mesopotamia and two years before the second, successful invasion (dated by Movses to Yazdgerd's eighth year (639/40)—176. 1–3 (112)). According to his biographer, Juansher continued to serve for several years more in the army of Khorokhazat, Rustam's successor,[29] fighting in a second decisive battle which is described as 'a cruel defeat at the close of their (the Persians') days' and in subsequent 'painful battles'. Then after a total of seven years' active service (so presumably in 644/5, the following eighth year), in the course of which he suffered eleven 'grievous wounds', he returned home to Atropatene (176. 15–20 (112–13)).

Whereas Roman armies in Palestine and southern Syria seem to have been outmanoeuvred without difficulty by the Arabs and resistance collapsed within two years of the first attack, the Persians fought on stubbornly. Insulated by their dualist faith from insidious doubt about the validity and divine sanction of Islam, they were able to mount a formidable counterstrike, and continued to fight on after Qadisiyya. It required another fourteen years of combat, involving numerous engagements and sieges, before Iran was conquered. However, Juansher's withdrawal probably marks the moment at which hope began to wither and military commanders realized that the Sasanian empire was doomed. Back in Albania, Juansher, who had been appointed ruler by Yazdgerd, soon distanced himself from the regional Persian commander (refusing a proffered marriage alliance) and then came out in open rebellion. Although Persian forces quickly regained control of the open plains and the capital, P'artaw, his guerrilla resistance proved remarkably effective, especially once he gained the backing of important elements in Iberia. The Persian commander, who is not named but was probably the *spahbed* Khorokhazat, had little choice but to adopt a more conciliatory policy. A considerable measure of autonomy was granted in the settlement he reached with Juansher, with the help of the latter's father-in-law, the prince of Siwnik' (176. 20–179. 19 (113–15)). The balance of power continued to shift, as was made evident by Juansher's swift military response to a later attempt to claw back power (179. 19–180. 12 (115)). A similar process of fracturing was occurring at a higher level at this time (probably the late 640s), as other *spahbeds* gained greater independence over their regions. The

[29] Identified as Rustam's brother Khorrzad (Xwarrahzad/Farrukhzad), who succeeded him as *spahbed* of Adurbadagan (Atropatene), by T. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Reflections in Armenian Sources', 13 (<www.humanities.uci.edu/sasanika/>).

Sasanian empire was dissolving into a complex of regional powers, which would not necessarily form a common front against the Muslim enemy, and within the regions power was leaking away to local rulers. It was indeed the separate peace made by Khorokhazat which opened the way for the final campaign against Yazdgerd in 652.[30]

In the post-Sasanian era, the princes of Transcaucasia had to align themselves either with the new, but possibly evanescent, power of the south or with the old imperial power in the west which had survived the first onslaught of Islam. Juansher's father, who, by virtue of seniority, seems to have resumed the leadership of Albania, played safe. While he submitted to the caliph, he advised Juansher to write and offer his services to the Roman emperor. Movses claims to reproduce his letter to the 'all-conquering lord, powerful and merciful king of the Romans, Constantine Augustus, appointed by God ruler of land and sea' in which he offers the submission of his distant people, as well as a key passage from the emperor's reply in which he accepts him and his eastern country as clients. Movses enumerates the magnificent presents and the high-ranking title ('First Patrician') with which Constans II rewarded his new eastern client. He also lists the Roman titles which Juansher was empowered to distribute among his followers, but gives pride of place to the gift of a fragment of the True Cross (180. 13–183. 13 (115–18)). The client relationship was probably formed in advance of Constans' expedition east in the autumn of 653,[31] but only took real effect during the first Arab civil war, when Constans was able to bring the whole of Transcaucasia within the Roman sphere of influence. Juansher is portrayed as an important local ruler, who received signal marks of favour on the two occasions when he went to pay court to Constans in person during his Transcaucasian progress in 660–1. At his second audience in spring 661, he was formally invested as king of 'all the eastern peoples', thus becoming a client-ruler on a par with Hamazasp Mamikonean in Armenia (183. 16–185. 14 (118–19)).[32]

Several years were to elapse after the end of first *fitna* before the Muslims reasserted their authority north of the Zagros. During this interlude, Juansher and his fellow Transcaucasian rulers continued to exercise power as Roman clients. Juansher is praised for instituting a building programme and gaining the respect of neighbouring rulers. But the Roman-backed peace in the region

[30] Ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–164. 4.

[31] Ps. Sebeos, 165. 15–16 dates Constans' arrival with a large army at Theodosiopolis to his twelfth regnal year (5 November 652–4 November 653); assured of widespread support, Constans then advanced to Dvin where he spent part of the following winter (Ps. Sebeos, 166. 9–168. 35).

[32] Constans' arrival is dated to his 19th regnal year (Movses D., 183. 16–19 (118)), which ran from 5 November 659 to 4 November 660 (cf. W. Treadgold, 'A Note on Byzantium's Year of the Four Emperors (641)', *BZ* 83 (1990), 431–3 for the date of his accession).

did not last long. In 662 (two years after the start of Constans' second visit) the Khazars who were building up their power in the Kuban and Terek steppes raided across the Caucasus. Three years later, it was the turn of the north Caucasus Huns, probably acting as Khazar surrogates. They timed their attack soon after the winter solstice (664–5), so as to catch transhumant flocks and herds from the neighbouring highlands of Ayrarat and Siwnik' on the winter pastures of the Kura and Araxes plains. They seized large numbers of sheep, horses, and oxen, together with 1,200 prisoners, but, at a summit meeting with Juansher, their king was persuaded to hand back this booty and to make peace (185. 15–192. 4 (119–24)). These two attacks not only reminded the Christian peoples of the region of the formidable striking power of nomad states but also, it appears, alerted the Muslims to the dangers lurking in the north. At any rate, that was the year when Mu'awiya invited Juansher to acknowledge his power as 'master of the world' and to do obeisance in person. His visit to the 'universal court' resulted in a formal written treaty of 'true and close friendship' between the caliph and 'the prince of the east', duly sealed and affirmed by a ritual handshake (193. 20–196. 10 (125–6)). Three years later (so in 667–8), a second summons came from the king of the south. A plan had been hatched in Constantinople to assassinate Constans II, far away in Sicily, and ambassadors had come to seek the caliph's support. Juansher's advice was needed. In the event, he is reported to have made an important contribution, and to have helped secure Mu'awiya's backing, presumably by convincing him of its viability (196. 15–197. 12 (127)). He was well rewarded—by the extension of his sphere of rule to include Siwnik', a cut of one-third in the tribute levied from Albania (instead of rule over Atropatene which he declined), and presents, including a gold-plated steel sword studded with pearls, robes of several sorts, fifty-two thoroughbred horses, an elephant, and a parrot (197. 13–199. 2 (127–8)).

This marked the apogee of Juansher's career, judged by outward manifestations of glory. Those who witnessed his return, including his biographer, marvelled at the exotic creatures which he brought back. He was lauded as a latter-day Constantine, victorious, wealthy, esteemed by neighbouring kings, and pious (199. 2–201. 15 (128–30)). All too soon, though, he was to die, after a summer spent in high mountain valleys with his court. In the autumn of this thirty-third year in power (669–70), on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September 669), he slipped out into the garden of his palace at P'artaw on his way to an evening of pleasure, only to be attacked in the dark and mortally wounded by a trusted confidant (221. 3–224. 15 (142–5)). This had all the signs of a carefully planned assassination, like that which had disposed of Constans II in a bathhouse in Syracuse two months earlier (15 July). Perhaps Juansher had baulked at the thought of sharing responsibility for killing the

senior Christian ruler appointed by God to manage earthly affairs. More probably he simply knew too much about the conspiracy against Constans. Whatever the reason, it seems likely that he had forfeited the trust of the caliph and paid for it with his life.

This precious stream of information about the early Umayyad caliphate dries up when the Eulogy of Juansher gives out. The late seventh-century historian was probably responsible for a notice about the election of Juansher's nephew Varaz-Trdat as ruler at an assembly of nobles and leading officials chaired by the catholicos of Albania and his later investiture by the caliph (230. 22–232. 2, 233. 14–19 (149–50, 151)). Apart from a notice about a Hun attack, apparently in revenge for the murder of Juansher (232. 3–233. 7 (150)), the field of vision in the last two clusters of seventh-century material in the postulated *History to 682* contracts to the Caucasus and Transcaucasia. A few episodes are picked out from the career of Israyel, now a bishop, ending with his conversion of the north Caucasus Huns in the winter of 681–2 and arrangements for his continuing supervision of the young Hunnic church (235. 17–266. 16 (152–71)). With this the coverage of events comes to an abrupt halt, to be resumed in 697–8 with a spare, annalistic account taken almost certainly from a lost chronicle (III. 16–17). It is far removed in tone and specificity from the various richly textured narratives which make up the *History to 682.*

4. EDITING

What then is the value of this unfinished historical work, with its distinct clusters of information and sketchy treatment of intervening matters? By placing its formation in the late seventh century, we have established a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the sources which it uses. This enhances their value, since it precludes gradual mutation of their contents over the three centuries before Movses set to work. On the other hand, the unknown author was more interventionist than Movses, who reproduced his raw materials, unless the orthodoxy or the status of the church in Albania was in question. The 682 Historian can be seen to have revamped some of the writing in his sources. Was he ready to take the process further and rework its substance? The only way to answer this question and to establish the reliability of the underlying sources is to subject its various component parts to close critical scrutiny, following the same procedure as in the case of the *History of Khosrov.* Something more should also be said about the sources used and

about the scope of the *History to 682*. Then the text must be tested against solid evidence extracted from independent, trustworthy texts.[33]

The principal sources have already been identified. (1) A Life of Israyel is cited (201. 20–202. 1 (130)). (2) A Eulogy of Juansher declares itself, by its tone and subject matter (Juansher's heroic deeds in war, the honours he received from foreign rulers, his fame and piety).[34] The author indicates discreetly that he was present at the climactic episode of Juansher's return from the court of 'the master of the world', the Caliph Mu'awiya, at Damascus (199. 6, 8 and 200. 2, 12 (128–9)). That was perhaps the occasion which prompted the composition of the *encomium*. Within the first cluster of materials, two other sources are readily identifiable: (3) a piece of writing by the Catholicos Viroy, lamenting the natural disasters (famine followed by disease) which fell on Albania after the Turkish invasion—a very condensed version appears at II. 15 (164. 3–166. 11 (102–3)); and (4) a full account of the military and political circumstances which led to Khusro II's downfall, and a blow-by-blow description of the successful *putsch* (145. 3–148. 22 (89–92))—this derives from the *Khwadaynamag*, of which it presents a much better focused account than the versions to be found in the *History of Khosrov* and later, medieval texts.[35]

Most of the information about the 620s, however, has been taken from a local, Albanian source (no. 5). Again we can catch a glimpse of the author, this time accompanying the Catholicos Viroy and his deputation of Albanian notables on the occasion of their formal submission to the Turks at their camp outside P'artaw in 628.[36] He also lets drop elsewhere that he came from the district of Uti, where the Roman army wintered in 624–5 (137. 9–11 (84)).[37] His account of current events is history of a very high order. It embraces military and diplomatic affairs. The reactions of individuals and groups are brought out well. The narrative is rich in detail, without losing sight of the general shape of things. It comes on stream towards the end of II. 10, when Heraclius brings his opening campaign to a close by withdrawing north to Albania and invites the

[33] The examination carried out over the next few pages is no less necessary, if the existence of the *Chronicle to 682* is doubted and Movses is regarded as the initial editor of the seventh-century materials in book II.

[34] See especially 200. 15–201. 15 (129–30).

[35] Ps. Sebeos, 127. 16–31, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 43. The principal medieval versions, with which Movses' may be compared (greatly to its advantage), are those of al-Tabari (trans. Bosworth, *The History of al-Tabari*, v. 378–81) and Firdawsi (trans. J. Mohl, *Le Livre des rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi*, vii (Paris, 1878), 277–88).

[36] Two uses of the first person plural have been left in by editorial oversight at 160. 2 and 16 (99, 100).

[37] A note which should not be attributed to the 682 Historian (contra Howard-Johnston, 'Armenian Sources', 60).

princes and notables of Christian Transcaucasia to serve him through the winter. A note added about the role of a future catholicos, Zakʻaria, in securing the safety of all the inhabitants of Pʻartaw, irrespective of their faith, signals the local provenance of the report (132. 16–21 (80)). It is likely that this source gave an outline account of subsequent Roman actions in Transcaucasia, since the occasional appearances later of Heraclius and his troops are integral parts of the narrative and Heraclius is about to be presented as the instigator of Turkish intervention. But the 682 Historian has edited out much of this necessary circumstantial material, beginning with a cursory summary of Heraclius' resumed campaign in 625, so as to concentrate on the main Turkish storyline. The occasional chronological indicators which are provided (successive regnal years of Khusro II) were probably an integral part of the original narrative, pegging it down in time.

The only sizeable free-floating block of material is that which heads the *History to 682* (127. 4–128. 10 (75–6)). It looks like an extended editorial link—and indeed the 682 Historian's hand has already been detected at work (including 'four-legged animals and great birds whose names have never been heard in the lands of the east' among the Persian spoils of war—129. 12–14 (77)). Instead of the wealth of particulars which characterizes material taken from identifiable sources, the reporting is vague and loose. The hard information, which simply amounts to a successful phase of warfare in the course of which Jerusalem was captured followed by a shift of fortune and Heraclius' first northern expedition, was probably obtained from oral tradition. Some deformation has occurred: Heraclius' voyage across the Black Sea to join his men in north-east Asia Minor in 627—risky and therefore memorable—has been transposed to the beginning of his first counteroffensive in 624 (130. 21–131. 3 (78)). The deportation of the population of Antioch, after the capture of the city in 540, and their resettlement in Mesopotamia in 'Greater-than-Antioch'—again a striking and memorable event—has been credited to Khusro II rather than Khusro I (129. 19–130. 2 (77–8)). The 682 Historian was, of course, at a disadvantage when he had no written source to hand, but it seems, on the evidence of the opening passage, that he was ready to add touches of his own, drawing on his own general knowledge to combine the written materials he had found.

Editorial tinkering has already been noticed in what purports to be the transcript of part of Khusro's reply to the Turkish ultimatum. Heraclius, who was doubtless derided by Khusro, has been transmuted into a fugitive figure all too reminiscent of Constans II (133. 18–19 (82)). The Turkish ultimatum itself rings true—it is hard to envisage the overweening address as concocted by an Armenian author—but the specific demands made (evacuation of Roman territory, release of prisoners-of-war, return of the True Cross—142.

19–143. 2 (88)) are too close to the actual terms agreed in the eventual peace settlement to evoke complete trust. The 682 Historian, who, as we have seen, gave himself licence to improve the style of his sources, was also, it appears, ready to alter or elaborate what was reported, relying on his own understanding. It follows that care must be taken in handling the *History to 682*. It is fortunate that the editorial work was cut short at a relatively early stage and that the selection of sources was judicious. Whole swathes of text, extracted from the rich local history of Albania in the 620s as well as from the Eulogy of Juansher and the Life of Israyel, dense with particulars of all sorts, appear to have been incorporated without tampering. It should also be noted that the 682 Historian, like ps. Sebeos, confined his own comments to distinct editorial passages and did not allow his apocalyptic fears to colour what he reported.

The 682 Historian's main contribution to his text was negative. There are a series of omissions which are hard to explain, save as deliberate editorial decisions. Very little is reported of Heraclius' two counteroffensives. It is striking that the complex operations of 625, which took place within the field of vision of Albania, are dealt with in so few sentences. Equally striking is the silence about Roman actions before and after their appearance before Tiflis in 627, and the vagueness of the notice about Heraclius' final march towards Ctesiphon that autumn. The coverage becomes fuller once the Eulogy of Juansher comes on stream, but remains largely focused on Albania. There is far less incidental material about Iberia, Armenia, and even nearby Siwnik' than we might have expected. Little interest is shown in the fate of the Roman empire, save when Constans II made his imperial progress through Transcaucasia. All of this contrasts sharply with the inclusive editorial practice of ps. Sebeos, and demands explanation.

A narrow concern with Albania and Albanian affairs may give part of the answer, but the suspicion arises that the 682 Historian may have been aware of the *History of Khosrov* and may have been striving to avoid duplicating material presented there. His work succeeds in remedying several of its deficiencies, above all its silence about nomad powers beyond the Caucasus, Turks, Huns, and Khazars. That, it may be hazarded, was his guiding principle as an editor. Certainly he did fill in the missing northern dimension and then supplied a mass of detailed information on the fate of Albania in the era of Arab expansion, again complementing what was to be found in the *History of Khosrov*. The only area of extensive overlap between the two texts occurs in their respective accounts of the fall of Khusro II.[38] But even here the 682

[38] Movses D., 145. 2–148. 22 (89–92); Ps. Sebeos, 127. 16–31.

Historian may be consciously improving on what he found in ps. Sebeos. His account of the *putsch* and the political background is much longer and more precise. Many details missing in ps. Sebeos are supplied, and there is a telling remark in the brief introduction about the leading conspirator—'in performing all this, he did not summon another king or prince to his assistance, nor did he organise distant peoples and tribes to bring reinforcements' (146. 13–15 (90))—which suggests that the author was familiar with the story of Khusro's flight and restoration with Roman help in 591. The best Armenian account of that episode was that by ps. Sebeos. There are indications then that whoever wrote up the history of Khusro's fall and the actions of the Turks in Transcaucasia may have read the *History of Khosrov* and may have set out to complement its account.

5. *HISTORY TO 682*: RELIABILITY AND HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTION

Selective and episodic it may be, but the account of Heraclius' two Persian expeditions of 624–6 and 627–8 in the *History to 682* does accord with what can be pieced together out of the *Heraclias* of George of Pisidia, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and the *History of Khosrov*. Heraclius' initial attack was, we know, directed at Atropatene (he marched east through Armenia and burned the fire-temple at modern Takht-i Sulaiman) and he did subsequently winter in Transcaucasia, since it was there that he came under attack by three Sasanian armies in spring 625.[39] While none of the sources examined hitherto makes any mention of a Roman–Turkish alliance, the 682 Historian's account of the negotiations is not only compatible with what they report but helps explain Heraclius' choice of winter quarters in 624–5. Albania was a convenient jumping-off point for an embassy to central Asia. The date given for the negotiations, Khusro's thirty-sixth regnal year (625/6), can also be accommodated in what we know without difficulty. If it is taken to mark their conclusion rather than the original Roman initiative, a plausible sequence of events can be reconstructed: formal Turkish acceptance of a Roman proposal for an anti-Persian alliance was conveyed by a return embassy in the first half of 625; as an earnest of their commitment to the joint cause, the Turks launched a first raiding expedition across the Caucasus, in the course of

[39] Movses D., 130. 21–133. 11 (78–81); Geo. Pis., *Heraclias*, II. 144–230; Ps. Sebeos, 124. 22–125. 11.

which their leader Sat' exchanged menacing diplomatic notes with Khusro in the second half of 626 (the date given is Khusro's thirty-seventh regnal year, 626/7); this was an effective riposte to the Persian–Avar siege of Constantinople that year. The next section of Movses' text can be tested directly since there are independent, parallel accounts. His version of the final phase of Heraclius' second counteroffensive—the defeat of Rahzadh, the victorious march on Ctesiphon, and the fall of Khusro—tallies with information provided by the *Chronicon Paschale* and the *History of Khosrov* and is correctly dated to Khusro's thirty-eighth year (627/8).[40]

Potential corroborative evidence thins out with the conclusion of peace in 630. We are left with two isolated notices in the *Chronicle to 636* and an overview of the Islamic conquests provided by the *History of Khosrov*. But there is enough comparative material to engender confidence in the accuracy, and in particular in the chronological reliability, of the biographical material about Juansher, extracted, as we have seen, from a eulogy written on the occasion of his second return from the caliphal court at Damascus. The account of the Persian defensive war against Islam can be fitted without difficulty into the spare framework of events reported by sources of proven worth. Several details in the description of the conquest of Mesopotamia are corroborated by the *History of Khosrov*: a large Persian army *was* mobilized in the north-west, under the command of Rustam, the regional general, and was joined by an Armenian contingent (3,000 strong like Juansher's) as well as a thousand men from Siwnik'; the Arabs *were* driven back to what is described as their own borders, where a major battle was fought and lost; Rustam *was* killed in the battle and was duly succeeded as general by Khorokhazat; Khorokhazat *was* later responsible for the evacuation of Ctesiphon, which *did* go wrong, as Movses implies, when a Muslim army was able to intercept the retreating Persian forces.[41] Although Movses only alludes vaguely to the major battle fought and lost by the Persians in Media in 642 (Yazdgerd's tenth regnal year), he places it correctly after 640, in the five-year period when Juansher continued to serve with his men in the army of Media.[42] Equally accurate is his double dating of the destruction of the Sasanian empire, marked by the death of Yazdgerd (his twentieth regnal year and AH 31).[43] There is nothing implausible about the dating of Juansher's defection in or soon after 644–5 or about the reports that it led to two rounds of civil war in Transcaucasia.[44]

40 Movses D., 143. 21–148. 22 (88–92); *Chron. Pasch.*, 728. 4–730. 2; Ps. Sebeos, 126. 11–127. 31.
41 Movses D., 172. 21–176. 8 (109–12); Ps. Sebeos, 137. 5–29.
42 Movses D., 176. 15–17 (112); Ps. Sebeos, 141. 10–19.
43 Movses D., 180. 13–16 (115); Ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–164. 6.
44 Movses D., 176. 18–179. 15 (112–15).

Bearings can be taken on only two episodes in the history of Albania and Juansher in the post-Sasanian epoch. Confirmation of Movses' dating of Constans' second Transcaucasian visit to his nineteenth regnal year is provided in an incidental remark in the *History of Khosrov* that the Catholicos Nerses, who had left Dvin with Constans before the end of winter 653–4, returned after spending six years in exile (so not earlier than spring 660).[45] The conspiracy to assassinate Constans which involved the caliphal authorities, eunuch ambassadors from Constantinople, and Juansher was hatched in good time (667/8) for its execution by a *cubicularius* (chamberlain), called Andrew, in a bath building in Syracuse on 15 July 669.[46] There are also bits and pieces of evidence which support the various scenarios conjured up by the Eulogy of Juansher: Roman exploitation of first *fitna* (656–61) to project their power over the whole of Transcaucasia; the rise of the Khazars to pre-eminence in the steppes north of the Caucasus in the 660s, a potential counterbalance to the caliphate to which Transcaucasian rulers might look; the departure of Constans for the far west (in 662), taken, wrongly perhaps, to be a sign of weakening Roman power; and revival of Muslim interest in the north in the 660s, also manifest in an independently attested series of attacks on Asia Minor.[47]

As is the case with the *History of Khosrov*, contemporary epigraphic evidence provides additional corroboration. Time is calibrated similarly by reference to regnal years. The interest in chronological precision, evident in the *History to 682* when events of particular importance are in question, such as the battle of Qadisiyya or the consecration of the church built by Juansher to house the fragment of the True Cross given by Constans, is paralleled in four dedicatory inscriptions. They were presumably laying down the date for future annual commemorations of the founders.[48] External honours have a similar impact on the social hierarchy of western Armenia, which is

[45] Movses D., 183. 16–19 (118); Ps. Sebeos, 174. 37–175. 6, a postscript to an earlier note (168. 36–9) about his departure with Constans. Cf. C. Zuckerman, 'Jerusalem as the Center of the Earth in Anania Širakac'i's *Ašxarhac'oyc*', in M. E. Stone, R. R. Ervine, and N. Stone (eds.), *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land* (Leuven, 2002), 255–74, at 259–61.

[46] Movses D., 196. 15–197. 12 (127). The assassination is described and dated in the short, contemporary Life of Pope Vitalian (657–72) included in the *Liber pontificalis*, an official collection of papal biographies down to 870 (ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber pontificalis: Text, introduction et commentaire*, i (Paris, 1955), 344, trans. R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Bishops to AD 715* (Liverpool, 1989), TTH, Lat. Ser. 5, 71–2, with summary account of the formation of the text at pp. i–vii and xxxvii–xxxviii).

[47] See Ch. 16, section 1 below.

[48] Movses D., 174. 10–175. 1, 187. 20–188. 3 (110–11, 121). Greenwood, 'Corpus', nos. A. 3 (Bagaran), A. 5 (Bagavan), A. 10. 4 (Mastara) and A. 11 (Aruč), with comments at 53–4.

determined by status of family and status within family as it is in seventh-century Albania. The middle-ranking Roman court title (*illustris*) held by a local notable, Grigor, who, together his wife Mariam, founded a church at Ałaman in 636/7, probably came to him through an intermediary, a powerful regional aristocrat who, like Juansher, was given a bulk grant of titles for onward distribution among his followers.[49] Finally, the concern of founders for their spiritual welfare and that of their families shows in many dedicatory inscriptions (intercessory prayers may be called for or reference made to the desired outcome, expiation of sins), thus confirming the truth of the general thrust of the prayer given to Juansher at the dedication of his new church.[50]

Given the demonstrably high quality of those elements of the *History to 682* which can be checked, it seems safe to extrapolate and put faith in other, uncorroborated elements. There is no reason to suppose that the soundness of judgement shown by the late seventh-century editor who put it together was confined to those passages which can be compared to other sources of proven worth. At a stroke, then, our knowledge of the seventh century is greatly enlarged. The Turks can be seen to have had a decisive impact on the course of the last Roman–Persian war. Glimpses of a grand, imperial ideology and of an impressive administrative capability are gained from the record of their diplomatic activity, from the information incidentally supplied about the occupation regime in Albania, and, above all, from the detailed description of the ceremonial reception of the Albanian delegation led by the Catholicos Viroy. No less valuable is the explanation—the arrival of news about a grave crisis in central Asia—put forward for the abrupt halt of their military operations in Transcaucasia and their unexpected withdrawal from Albania in 629. This suggests that the T'ang policy of destabilizing the two Turkish khaganates within reach of China had swift, far-reaching consequences for the whole Turkish world.

As for the rise of Islam, the *History to 682* recycles a mass of detailed, datable information, taken from a lost eulogy of Juansher, which enables us to observe more closely than before the slow dismemberment of the Sasanian empire and the gradual disengagement of a traditionally pliant Transcaucasian people from the larger Iranian cause. Solid evidence is presented, to back the claim, implicit in the *History of Khosrov*, that internal divisions helped bring about final defeat. The view of the caliphate from outside cannot be matched. There could be no better evidence of contraction in Muslim influence during first *fitna* than Constans' visit to Transcaucasia and the deference

[49] Movses D., 182. 2–5 (116–17). Greenwood, 'Corpus', no. A. 4, with comments at 62–3 and 66.
[50] Movses D., 188. 6–190. 4 (121–2). Greenwood, 'Corpus', nos. A. 3 (Bagaran), A. 4 (Ałaman), A. 7 (Mren), A. 10. 1–3 (Mastara), A. 11 (Aruč) and A. 12 (T'alin), with comments at 54–7.

shown to him by a leading local ruler. The awesome power of Muʿawiya, once he had reunited the *umma*, is fully acknowledged. Peripheral peoples were aware that a new imperial court had come into existence, in a new location, exercising power on an unprecedented scale. They knew that there was only one serious rival in western Eurasia, the Khazar khaganate, which established its hegemony in the furthest western reaches of the former Turkish empire in the middle of the century. Finally, there is a precious account of the conversion of a nomadic people, the north Caucasus Huns, which is almost unmatched in its vivid evocation of the difficulties encountered in the final phase of a missionary campaign, when the old pagan cults were to be closed down.

6. *KHUZISTAN CHRONICLE*

We must now turn south-east and cross the Zagros (following in Heraclius' tracks) to Sasanian Mesopotamia, a cosmopolitan world of Persians, Jews, and Syrians. A single text, all too brief, known as the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, gives us something of the metropolitan view on events at the time of the last great Roman–Persian war and subsequently. But we have to look through Syrian rather than Persian eyes. The text, discovered and first edited by Guidi, fills twenty folios at the end of a manuscript (*Borg. Syr.* 82) of the *Synodicon Orientale* or collection of the records of councils held by the Nestorian church in Persia. It appears to be a free-standing chronicle which covers roughly the same period as the *History of Khosrov*, from the reign of Hormizd (579–90) to the 650s.[51] A supplement (probably by a different hand) which introduces additional material but does not extend the chronological coverage was tacked on a few years after the composition of the original chronicle. This continuation forms less than a fifth of the whole text. It includes a short but clearly articulated account of the Muslim conquest of Khuzistan.[52]

The chronicle opens with the rebellion of Bahram against Hormizd, of whose reign nothing more is said than that it lasted twelve years and was harsh. The beginning may be abrupt but it serves the purpose of setting the

[51] T. Nöldeke, 'Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik übersetzt und commentiert', *Sitzungsberichte der kais. Ak. Wiss., Phil.-Hist. Cl.*, 128/9 (1893), 5–38 (cited henceforth as *Khuz. Chron.*). Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 182–9 and J. W. Watt, 'The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Historical Sources', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 63–79, at 64–5.

[52] *Khuz. Chron.*, 39–48. Cf. P. Nautin, 'L'Auteur de la "Chronique anonyme de Guidi": Élie de Merw', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 199 (1982), 303–13; C. F. Robinson, 'The Conquest of Khuzistan: A Historiographical Reassessment', *BSOAS* 67 (2004), 14–39, at 14–15.

scene for the main subject, Khusro II's difficult succession and his subsequent long reign. Secular history, chiefly concerning domestic politics and warfare, is combined with more plentiful material about the Nestorian church and its leading contemporary lights. The main body of the text concludes with an account of the turbulent politics following Khusro's deposition and execution, the Arab capture of Ctesiphon (with a brief cast-forward about the flight of the last *shahanshah*, Yazdgerd III, to the region of Merv, where he was killed) and the catholicosate of Mar Emmeh (646–9).The reporting of Mar Emmeh's actions and of headline-catching news is expansive, an indication, surely, that the chronicle was composed when memories of his short tenure were fresh and full.

It is likely that the chronicle was composed not long after Mar Emmeh's death in 649, probably in 652, the date of the last reported event (the death of Yazdgerd III), or very soon afterwards. It is a Syriac pendant to the *History of Khosrov*, written not long before the first Arab civil war, covering much the same period, but slighter in content. Church affairs loom larger than they do in the Armenian work, taking up a little under half of the text, while coverage of the Roman war, which did not impinge directly on the lives of the inhabitants of the Mesopotamian heartland of the Sasanian empire, is very selective indeed. It is tempting, given his ecclesiastical concerns, to assign the author to a clerical or monastic milieu, but he has left no clue as to his identity or any institutional affiliation. Naturally the work supplies information about the metropolitan region—it must take account of changes at court and in the catholicosate—but none of the tabloid stories relished by the author is set in the capital.

The last secular notice in the original chronicle outlines the conquests of the children of Ishmael, 'as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore, whose leader was Muhammad and whom neither wall nor gate, neither weapon nor shield could resist'. It reports, without elaboration, their initial conquest of Persia, crushing defeats inflicted on the Persian and Roman armies mobilized against them, the fall of Ctesiphon, and the subsequent fate of Yazdgerd III (33–4). The brevity of these notices about dramatic events which destroyed the ancient world order is in marked contrast to the full account of recent domestic events in the catholicosate of Mar Emmeh (34–8). It is not hard to explain though. A contemporary observer, especially a churchman leading a relatively secluded existence, would have been hard put to make sense of the flux and reflux of armies over Mesopotamia and the wider Middle East. A brief overview, noting key events, was the most that could be expected.

The chronicle has been put together reasonably well. The material has been arranged generally in chronological order, but with secular and ecclesiastical

notices bunched together to form alternating sections. Chronicle is perhaps a misnomer for the text, since it only gives one exact date (17)—Khusro II's fourteenth regnal year (603/4) for the fall of Dara (in 604). The author was able, however, to piece together a coherent and properly ordered text, something which presupposes a fair amount of chronological labelling in the sources or some of the sources which he was using. He himself evidently had no special interest in absolute dates or in relating separate episodes precisely to one another. So he simply stripped out such dating indications as he found in his sources, along with much other matter which he judged extraneous. His aim, to judge by results, was not to write a flowing, carefully articulated narrative, but to produce a convenient, short *aide-mémoire*, giving an overview of a set of dramatic but complex events which had changed the face of the known world. The *Khuzistan Chronicle* looks like a brief guide, little more than an index to what had happened, or—which amounts almost to the same thing—a set of *résumés* of the variegated set of source materials tracked down by the chronicler. Thus its account of the opening campaign in the war (15–17) consists of little more than heads of narrative, picking out the main episodes covered by what appears to have been a remarkably well-informed source. The same is evidently true of its version, highly abbreviated (13–15), of a complex tale of intrigue and counter-intrigue involving the Sasanian court and its long-standing Arab client dynasty, the Lakhm Nasrids of Hira.

Sober history of church and state has thus been pared down to a minimum, leaving room for the insertion of more entertaining matter. The author's taste was eclectic. He included several complimentary notes about the behaviour of Khusro II's leading Christian minister, Yazdin. Yazdin takes care to ingratiate himself with the *shahanshah*, going so far as to send him a fragment of the True Cross, and then uses his influence on behalf of the Christians of Jerusalem and gains permission for a programme of reconstruction of damaged churches in the city (24–5, 26–7). He is fond of anecdotes, such as the story of the scholar from Qatar who, at work in the archives at Alexandria during the Persian–Roman war, found a prophecy that the city would fall to an attack on the west maritime gate and then slipped a message to the Persian high command (25), or the report that, at the end of the war, the sound of a church gong misled Khusro into thinking that Heraclius was close at hand and caused his bowels to loosen, as he was about to flee from his palace at Dastagerd (28). He slips in bits of scandalous information about the great and the good—the second, bigamous marriage of the court doctor Gabriel of Singara, which the Nestorian catholicos told him to end (13), or Khusro's fury when Nuʿman, the Lakhm king, refused him his daughter's hand on the grounds that Persians made love like cattle (14). Salacious news also finds a

place in its own right, if the story is sensational enough. This it certainly was in the case of the seventy or so Manichaeans accused of murder, sorcery, soothsaying, gang-rape, and cannibalism during the catholicosate of Mar Emmeh. The account is as usual concise but space is found to describe the gruesome fates of three victims, a young man held prisoner underground for a year before being sacrificed to the demons and decapitated, a virgin who was raped and subsequently gave birth, and her baby who was cooked and then ground up into small cakes for eating (36–8).

The chronicler's prime concern is with the actions of individuals in powerful positions. They shape events and are themselves driven by likes and dislikes, slights and grudges. Emotions, above all resentment and rancour, become the prime agents in human affairs. A fateful decision to dismantle the Lakhm nexus of alliances through which Sasanian rulers had managed north-eastern Arabia for several centuries is attributed to Khusro's memory and resentment of Nuʿman's behaviour and offensive remark.[53] Another change of policy, also fraught with significance, Khusro's refusal to authorize the election of a new Nestorian catholicos after the death of Gregory of Prat, is not placed in the wider context of interconfessional relations (Khusro in effect shifting his patronage to the Monophysites) but is credited entirely to the machinations of the resentful Gabriel of Singara.[54] History is trivialized and particularized.

The continuation, short though it be, is a source of considerably greater importance. The hand was probably not that of the original chronicler. For the emphasis is very much on secular events and there is an interest in geography and the distant past which is not paralleled in the chronicle. It was perhaps a reference in the original chronicle to Merv, à propos of the death of Yazdgerd III, which brought to mind a distinguished contemporary, Elias, bishop of the city, and a miraculous feat of his. This story is prefaced by a brief description of the local setting of Merv and a note about the conquests and death of its founder, Alexander the Great. It is followed by a notice about the reign of Seleucus and his chief foundations, and jottings about the founders of four other Middle Eastern cities (39–41). Then comes an abrupt change of subject, to contemporary history. A full account is given of the Arab conquest of Khuzistan, centring on Shustar which proved hard to capture. The narrative is concise and lucid, picking out key stages in the sequence of events—an initial Arab advance, a truce which secured Susa and Shustar from attack in return for tribute, a Persian counterattack two years into the truce

[53] *Khuz. Chron.*, 13–15. Cf. J. Howard-Johnston, 'Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity', in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, vi. 7, 20–2.

[54] *Khuz. Chron.*, 19. Cf. Flusin, *St Anastase*, ii. 107–18.

which ended in defeat, a renewal of the Arab offensive, and the capture first of Susa (after a short siege) and finally, after a two-year siege, of Shustar. Detailed information is given about the places captured by the initial Arab attack, about the canals which added greatly to the strength of Shustar's defences, about the founders and locations of Basra and Kufa, new Arab cities in lower Iraq, about the commanders on both sides, and about the act of treachery (involving a second Qatari) which let the Arabs into Shustar. This combination of clear articulation and density of data retailed is impressive and may well indicate use of a documentary source, possibly an official news release from the Arab authorities at the end of the campaign. At any rate, the account inspires considerable confidence in the modern reader.[55]

The continuator then turns to Arab conquests further west. The treatment is cursory. Only one of the Arab generals is named—Khalid who conducts initial operations on the edge of the desert. A single decisive battle (also mentioned in the original chronicle) is spotlit. It results in the annihilation of a 100,000-strong Roman army commanded by a *sacellarius* (mistaken for a proper name). The subsequent occupation of Syria and Palestine is then reported baldly, together with the vain attempt by the patriarch of Alexandria to strengthen the frontier defences of Egypt and Heraclius' abandonment of the Middle East (45–6). The continuator concludes that God has willed the destruction of both great empires, and jots down various pieces of information about the Arabs and Arabian geography. He knows that the founding of the Kaʿba was attributed to Abraham and that it was nothing new to pray there. He then adds notes about notable places and districts belonging to the Arabs in the peninsula.[56]

The continuation thus presents a well-ordered account of mainly secular affairs, which improves significantly on the exiguous material in the original text about the Arab conquests. It is combined with miscellaneous notes on other subjects. Since it appears to allude to the first Arab attack on Constantinople (thwarted by the weather) in 654 (46) and implies that Elias bishop of Merv (d. 659) was no longer alive (39–40), its composition may be dated some ten years or so after the composition of the main chronicle, around the time when ps. Sebeos was adding the final *scholia* to his text, just before or just after the end of the first Arab civil war.

What then is the historical worth of the *Khuzistan Chronicle*? Checks can be carried out on the main body of the text, which can be compared with passages of proven value in the *History of Khosrov* and other texts already examined. The results are more than satisfactory, if we allow for the brevity and tabloid

[55] *Khuz. Chron.*, 41–4. Cf. Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan'.
[56] *Khuz. Chron.*, 46–7. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 187–9.

character of much of the coverage. Nothing has gone awry with the opening account of Bahram's rebellion, Hormizd's blinding, Khusro's flight and restoration, nor with the notices about the Roman war (including that about the removal of the True Cross from Jerusalem), and Khusro's fall (5–7, 15–17, 24–30). The final summary section of secular history, covering the short-lived regimes which followed Khusro's execution, the return of the True Cross, Yazdgerd's reign, and the Arab conquests, corresponds to what has been documented so far (30–4). However, the chronicler's taste for gory detail leads him astray over the rebellion of Khusro's maternal uncle, Bistam. He gives the impression that the end came (with his flight into the steppes, capture, and execution by a Turkish ruler) before Khusro ordered the dismembering of Bistam's brother Bindoe.[57] He gives a reasonable account of Maurice's fall, although he mistakenly supposes that his wife was killed at the time rather than a year and a half later.[58] His eldest son Theodosius, who escapes his father's and brothers' fates, is crowned by Khusro, as he is in the *History of Khosrov*, and then put in command of a first invasion force which is defeated. Dara duly falls in 603–4 after Khusro has taken personal charge of operations (16–17).

There is much useful material which may be extracted from the text, now that it has been shown to be basically sound. Theodosius' command, doubtless nominal but widely trumpeted, is a first nugget of new information. There are many others, above all items dealing with Sasanian domestic politics. If the colourful elements are stripped away, the underlying stories provide valuable insight into the history of Sasanian Mesopotamia. A great deal of gossipy material is picked up about the Nestorian church and its leading lights. We hear of dramatic changes of policy under Khusro II towards the management of the neighbouring Arab tribes (13–15), and towards the Nestorian church when the catholicosate was left vacant (19). The position of extraordinary influence achieved by Yazdin, Khusro's Christian finance minister, is well documented (22–3, 26–7). Khusro's daughter Boran brings the long-drawn-out peace negotiations to a close, using the Nestorian catholicos as her emissary (32–3).

Light is also cast on contemporary attitudes. Interest in the war is spasmodic. Apart from the opening campaign and headline-catching news from elsewhere in the Middle East, the war only impinges on the text when it impinged in reality on Mesopotamia, with Heraclius advancing swiftly against the capital in winter 627–8. This lack of interest in a distant war probably reflects that of most inhabitants of Mesopotamia at the time. Equally, if not more significant, is the text's complaisant attitude to Khusro II. He comes in for some criticism—for his grudges, as well as for not taking enough trouble

57 *Khuz. Chron.*, 8–9, contra ps. Sebeos, 94. 27–95. 15 and 97. 15–30, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 18–19.
58 *Khuz. Chron.*, 15–16, contra *Chron. Pasch.*, 694. 1–5, 696. 18–20.

to investigate an accusation against a bishop on one occasion—but he is praised for other deeds. He is portrayed at some times as well disposed towards Christians, at others as their enemy. His image varies according to the occasion and, one may surmise, according to the slant of the source being used. What is important to stress, though, is that there is no sustained critique of his character or regime, on the lines of that made by the author of the *History of Khosrov*. If the chronicler's attitude may be taken as representative of that of the Nestorian community at large, it would follow that, despite a transfer of patronage to the rival Monophysites, Khusro had not forfeited the respect of his Nestorian subjects.[59]

The continuator supplies rather more information about the Arab conquests. It is, however, harder to demonstrate his reliability. So far, all that can be said is that the comparatively lengthy account of Arab operations in Khuzistan bears the hallmarks of a documentary origin (in its detailed and lucid exposition of a complex series of events). This makes a prima facie case for its authenticity. The case becomes overwhelming if one glances forward in time to the traditions about the conquest which were picked up and fixed in later Muslim sources. There is enough overlap and agreement, both in general and on points of detail, to demonstrate the value of the continuation's account as an early record of what was remembered about the conquest.[60]

The same positive conclusion may be reached about its account of a great battle which resulted in a decisive Arab victory over a large Roman army in the west. There is a briefer notice in the original chronicle, which gives the same grossly inflated figure for Roman casualties (100,000 dead) and locates it in Syria.[61] Further corroboration is to be found in a later history, written by a well-placed west Syrian author, Theophilus of Edessa, in the middle of the eighth century. His account is fuller and diverges on one important point (there were two Roman commanders involved and disagreement between them played a large part in the disastrous outcome of the campaign). But there can be no doubt that he is describing the same battle: it takes place in Syria; one of the two generals is identified as the *sacellarius*; the combined Roman strength amounts to 70,000 men, a huge, doubtless inflated, figure; and the battle is presented as the final, decisive engagement which determined the fate of the Roman Levant.[62]

[59] Watt, 'Portrayal of Heraclius', 66–72.

[60] Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan'. The later sources go back to the lost history of Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. 796). There is a fleeting reference to the conquest at ps. Sebeos, 139. 10–12.

[61] *Khuz. Chron.*, 33–4.

[62] The scale of Roman losses (100,000 dead) has been greatly exaggerated in the course of transmission of the news to both chronicler and continuator. For Theophilus of Edessa, see Ch. 7, section 3 below.

There is no independent testimony about emergency measures to improve the defences of Egypt, once it was exposed to attack from Palestine, as reported by the continuator. But a near-contemporary source, the Chronicle of John of Nikiu, which ends with a remarkably detailed and well-articulated account of the conquest of Egypt, confirms that the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria (Cyrus) was given plenipotentiary powers when Egypt came under direct threat.[63]

Two of the continuator's notices about the Arabs are of particular importance. There is no denying the significance of their two new foundations in Iraq. The garrison cities of Kufa and Basra still exist as major population centres. Much of the historical material funnelled into later Islamic histories derived from local scholarly circles. It may be tendentious, biased in favour of one or the other city, but there is a solid core of authentic material. So there is a great deal of historically useful information to be culled from the traditions later recorded in writing about their individual histories and their roles in wider events, from the outbreak of the first civil war in 656 deep into the middle ages and beyond.[64] As for the association of Abraham with the Kaʿba at Mecca, corroboration is provided by an authoritative source, the Qur'an. God himself, speaking through his Prophet, vouched for the Abrahamic origin of the sanctuary.[65]

The *Khuzistan Chronicle*'s contribution to knowledge, which, as we have seen, is considerable, is overshadowed by that of the continuation. The final decisive phase in the battle for the Roman Middle East has been added to the opening victories reported in the *Chronicle to 636* and the *History of Khosrov*. An episode passed over in silence by west Syrian and Armenian sources, the determined resistance put up by Persian forces in Khuzistan after the fall of Ctesiphon and the loss of Mesopotamia, is reported in detail. The provincial administration in Egypt is shown to have responded in a very Roman way to the virtually unprecedented danger threatening Egypt after the loss of Syria and Palestine—by building fixed defences to block invasion routes. But even more important are the notices about the principal Muslim cult centre at Mecca and the new cities which secured Arab control over Mesopotamia. The continuator has homed in on two key features of the new Islamic order.

7. CONCLUSION

With the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, we have completed the survey of the four principal contemporary and near-contemporary sources for the rise of Islam (and the

[63] See Ch. 6, section 5 below.
[64] See Chapters 15 and 16 below.
[65] See Chapter 12 below.

preceding great war between the established empires), which are independent of the historical traditions generated within Islam and transmitted to later generations of Muslim scholars and historians. Its contribution (above all its account of diplomacy and warfare in Khuzistan) is significant, but more on the scale of the *Chronicle to 636* than that of the Armenian texts. The *History to 682*, by contrast, provides the missing chronological framework for the Arab and Persian operations in Mesopotamia reported in the *History of Khosrov* and goes on to give a view of the caliphate after the end of the first civil war, with Muʿawiya's court as the acknowledged political centre of the Middle East. There is an even greater discrepancy in the contribution of the two texts to knowledge of the last great war between Persians and Romans. The *Khuzistan Chronicle* produces no more than three supplementary pieces of information—Theodosius' appointment as nominal commander of Persian forces in northern Mesopotamia in 603, the elimination of Nuʿman (and the effective dissolution of the Lakhm client-kingdom), and the final phase of Persian–Roman negotiations which led to a durable peace in 630. By contrast, the *History to 682* provides an impressively detailed and dated account of diplomatic manoeuvres and military operations in the north, where the outcome of the war was ultimately determined, as well as giving fascinating insights into a great nomad state's ceremonial life and its policies towards sedentary peoples.

The data supplied by these two sources (*History to 682* unless indicated otherwise) may be tabulated as follows:

+ flight and coronation of Theodosius (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ initial operations around Dara, defeat of Persian army commanded (nominally) by Theodosius (*Khuz. Chron.*)
603/4: capture of Dara (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ execution of Nuʿman, Lakhm client-king (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ siege and capture of Jerusalem (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ capture of Alexandria (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ Heraclius' first counterattack, into Atropatene
624–5: Roman expeditionary army in winter-quarters near Pʿartaw, dispatch of ambassador to Turks
625: deployment of three Persian armies against Heraclius in Transcaucasia, Turkish embassy to Constantinople
626: first Turkish attack across the Caucasus, exchange of diplomatic notes between Satʿ and Khusro II
627: Turkish invasion across the Caucasus, fall of Chor and Pʿartaw, joint Roman–Turkish siege of Tiflis
627–8: Roman thrust south across the Zagros mountains, defeat of Rahzadh, deposition and death of Khusro II (*History to 682* and *Khuz. Chron.*)

628: Turkish occupation of Albania, formal submission of Albanians by delegation headed by Catholicos Viroy
629: Turkish victory over Persian force in Armenia, crisis in central Asia and Turkish withdrawal
+ conclusion of peace between Persians and Romans (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ major Arab victory in Syria (*Khuz. Chron.*)
637/8: Juansher appointed military commander (*sparapet*) of Albanian contingent, later involved in breaking of Arab blockade of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir and advance east
6 January 638: defeat of Persian army led by Rustam at Qadisiyya (Juansher wounded)
639/40: rearguard action by Juansher during operation to evacuate Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir
+ defences of Egypt strengthened (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ foundation of Basra and Kufa (*Khuz. Chron.*)
+ Arab conquest of Khuzistan (*Khuz. Chron.*)
644/5: rebellion of Juansher, grant of semi-autonomy to Albania
651/2: flight and death of Yazdgerd III (*Khuz. Chron.* and *History to 682*)
660–1: Constans II's progress through Transcaucasia
661/2: Khazar raid across the Caucasus
664/5: north Caucasus Hun raid across the Caucasus, first visit of Juansher to court of Muʿawiya at Damascus
667/8: second visit of Juansher to Damascus, plot to assassinate Constans II
14 September 669: assassination of Juansher at Pʿartaw
681–2: mission of Bishop Israyel to the north Caucasus Huns

There are still some serious gaps in coverage, mainly of the history of the Arabs in the era of dynamic expansion. All four contemporary histories focus attention further east or well to the north of Egypt. So almost nothing is reported about the Arab conquest of Egypt, and some ten years of hard fighting and incremental gains in highland Iran are covered only in the most general terms (in the *History of Khosrov*). Apart from the two glimpses of the heyday of Muʿawiya's power in the 660s given by the *History to 682*, nothing is reported of the history of the caliphate after 661. So it is to local Roman sources written in the seventh century or sources put together later, in Byzantium and elsewhere, that we must look for information about the consolidation of Arab rule in the Levant, about the battle for control of the Mediterranean in the second half of the seventh century, about the offensives launched against Byzantium by Muʿawiya and ʿAbd al-Malik and the climactic siege of the city in 717–18.

5

Supplementary Roman Sources of the Seventh Century I

Those contemporary and near-contemporary sources which have been analysed so far form but a small part of the corpus of diverse materials about the last Roman–Persian war and the Arab conquests which date from the seventh century. They have been singled out for close examination either because of the precision and accuracy of the information which they supply or because of the insights which they give into current attitudes and aims. The remainder will be surveyed in a more cursory fashion, because their contributions, although at times important, are much more limited. They are all Roman in the broad sense of having been written by Christian subjects or former subjects of the emperor on Roman or former Roman territory.

Four of these supplementary sources are histories. One, the *History* of Theophylact Simocatta, is marginal because it only covers the overthrow and execution of Maurice which provided Khusro II with his justification for going to war. Each of the others has its own particular local focus (Constantinople, Jerusalem, the upper Nile delta) which draws attention away from much of the fighting and many of negotiations taking place further afield, but which, at the same time, illustrates the impact of war, Persian occupation, and Arab rule on the localities. Rather more tangential are the lives of contemporary saints, of which four stand out. They are firmly rooted in reality and provide vivid but highly localized accounts of the saint's involvement in worldly affairs as well as his struggles with the demonic.[1] They contain few direct references to warfare or high-level politics, their main contribution to secular history being to throw light on underlying social and economic conditions through their descriptions of odd goings-on in town and country.

Much else was written in the seventh century. It was an era in which religion came to the fore. So there are homilies, disputations, questions and answers, polemics galore, as well as several apocalyptic texts, one of which was

[1] Contra P. Rousseau, 'Ascetics as Mediators and as Teachers', in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward (eds.), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), 45–59, at 49–53, who emphasizes literary artifice in saints' lives and their promotional role.

to prove extraordinarily influential. Useful information may also be gleaned from records of church councils and extant documents on papyrus from Egypt.[2] The aim of this investigation, however, is not so much to catalogue and describe every source from which drops of information may be squeezed (a task already performed admirably well by Robert Hoyland in his *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*)[3] as to identify and analyse those gravid with useful material. Only a handful meet this criterion, since most have little or nothing to say about war, politics, or social and economic structures. They include a hybrid work, both historical and hagiographical (a collection of miracle stories set in Thessalonica), two homilies delivered in Constantinople by a high-ranking prelate about Avar attacks on the city, three poems on contemporary events written by Sophronius who later became patriarch of Jerusalem, a religious tract designed to win Jewish converts which includes fragments of contemporary history, and documentary material connected with show-trials in the middle of the century.

These sources will be grouped together by region, rather than by genre. Although it may give an impression of Romano-centrism, it seems best to work outwards from Constantinople, since the two histories composed there close down soonest, and to proceed thence to the flanking territories which remained part of the medieval Roman successor state (Byzantium), first Asia Minor, then the Balkans (with a brief excursion via Italy to north Africa). The first of these two conjoined chapters will end back in Constantinople, in the middle of the century, because detailed accounts have survived of two show-trials which took place at that time as also of the subsequent tribulations of both principal victims. Then, in Chapter 6, attention will shift to the rich provinces of the Roman Middle East, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, before, during, and after the first phase of Muslim expansion.

Each work will be described briefly. What is known of the author (if anything) will be summarized, and then a brief account given of the contents of his work and the sources used (if detected or detectable). Appraisal will be cursory, not least because comparative material against which to conduct checks is sparse. The presumption, save in the case of one particularly

[2] Averil Cameron, 'New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature: Seventh–Eighth Centuries', in Averil Cameron and L. I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, i: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 81–105; J. Haldon, 'The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief', ibid. 107–47; S. P. Brock, 'Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History', *BMGS* 2 (1976), 17–36; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 78–87, 257–335; *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Erste Abteilung (641–867): Prolegomena* (Berlin, 1998), 43–6; P. M. Sijpesteijn and L. Sundelin (eds.), *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden, 2004).

[3] See Introduction.

problematic text (Strategius' account of the capture of Jerusalem in 614), will be that contemporary local sources do not on the whole incorporate grossly distorted or fabricated material. It will become clear, from the preliminary inspection carried out in these two chapters, that they do much to fill in the background to the dramatic events of those troubled times and to extend the bounds of our knowledge into the middle decades of the century. However, the exact historical value of individual texts and specific statements made by them can only be determined if they are put to historical work, if a narrative of events is pieced together out of all the extant source material. If information presented by these sources fits into the picture put together on the basis of the principal contemporary Roman, Armenian, and Syrian sources, and if it is internally consistent and plausible, then it can be accepted as in general reliable. Reconstruction of substantive history is, however, a demanding task, quite distinct from that of identifying and examining useful sources, and must be put off for the moment.

1. WORKS WRITTEN IN CONSTANTINOPLE

The first of two historical works written in Constantinople is a universal history, starting with the creation of Adam and closing down with the deposition and execution of Phocas in 610. It only survives in fragments, preserved in middle and late Byzantine manuscripts, which attribute them to a certain John of Antioch.[4] The attribution should arouse suspicion, since the principal foci of attention in the text are Rome and Constantinople rather than Antioch. It was probably a guess on the part of a dark age copyist, who may well have had John (Malalas or Rhetor) of Antioch in mind—a not unreasonable guess since the account of the early history of mankind (down to the Trojan War) is based largely on Malalas and Malalas remains a source, although no longer the prime source, for the history of the Roman republic and empire.[5]

[4] U. Roberto (ed. and trans.), *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta ex historia chronica*, Berlin-Brandenburgische Ak. Wiss., Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 154 (Berlin, 2005).

[5] Cf. Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. xvi–xviii, cxxvii–cxxix, who accepts an Antiochene origin for the author. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, 311–29 questions this traditional view (use of Malalas by John of Antioch), postulating instead extensive use by both authors of a shared source, a lost history written by Eustathius of Epiphania in the 520s, which halted in 503. For a fuller exposition of his thesis, including a full-frontal attack on

There are two distinct components to the text: a classicizing history of mankind's past, with a special interest in the evolution of the Roman constitution, which drew on a extensive range of sources and came to a halt at the death of Anastasius in 518, and what looks like a continuation, written early in the seventh century. The continuator operated at a lower intellectual level and in a slightly lower stylistic register than the author of the main body of the text.[6] He seems to have given only the most cursory coverage to the sixth century after 518 (only four fragments have been preserved), apparently so as to provide some sort of link to a chronologically ordered set of notices of his own about goings-on in Constantinople during Phocas' reign.[7]

The original text has been lost, but many fragments have been transmitted by several different routes.[8] One long passage about republican Rome is reproduced in a fourteenth-century Athos manuscript.[9] A large number of other fragments, some of them substantial, have been preserved, largely thanks to the activities of a team of excerptors working on a grandiose historical compendium commissioned by the learned Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the tenth century.[10] They included a great deal of material from the text (186 fragments in total) in three of the extant volumes. Excerpts are also included in a school textbook compiled by Maximus Planudes in the fourteenth century, and in two private anthologies.[11] Finally, shorter quotations are included in the entries of the *Suda*, the tenth-century encyclopedia which also preserves fragments of George of Pisidia's poetry.[12] From this extensive corpus of fragments it is possible to gain a general idea of the scope, structure, and character of the lost text.

The main part, down to 518, has the hallmarks of traditional secular history. It is written in a plain classical style, by an author with a mind of

Malalas, see W. Treadgold, 'The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania', *International History Review*, 29 (2007), 709–45.

[6] C. Mango, *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History*, CFHB 13 (Washington, DC, 1990), 13–14. Cf. Treadgold, 'Byzantine World Histories', 732–3. The continuator to 610 should be distinguished from the author of a second continuation, who extended the coverage to the 640s. It is material from the second continuator's lost work which has made its way into two later texts, the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu (see Ch. 6, section 5 below) and the *Short History* of the Patriarch Nicephorus (see Ch. 8 below).

[7] Ioannes Ant., fr. 314–17.

[8] Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. xxxi–cxxiv.

[9] Ioannes Ant., fr. 145.

[10] Lemerle, *Premier Humanisme*, 280–8.

[11] S. Kugéas, 'Analekta Planudea IX: Zu den historischen Exzerpten des Planudes', *BZ* 18 (1909), 126–46; F. R. Walton, 'A Neglected Historical Text', *Historia*, 14 (1965), 236–51; Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. liii–lxxiv (*Excerpta Salmasiana* II), ci–cxi (*Excerpta Planudea*), cxvii–cxxii (Cod. Vindob. hist. gr. 99).

[12] Lemerle, *Premier Humanisme*, 297–9; Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. lxxix–ci.

his own and of an antiquarian bent. He can be placed in the same category as his near-contemporary John the Lydian. He was probably a government official who gave considerable thought to good government and the safeguards needed to secure liberty for the citizens of a state. Like John, he looked to the past, to the Roman republic with its embedded magistracies and to the emperor who most closely approximated to the ideal ruler (Marcus Aurelius), for his model regime. Since he made use of Malalas' completed text (finished at the earliest in 533), he was evidently writing in the reign of Justinian. His history can clearly be characterized as a dissident work, with a clear, though discreet, message for his contemporaries who had lived through the early tyrannical years of Justinian. He was saved from having to conceal his own views and mouth loyal phrases by his decision (assuredly deliberate) to halt before the accession of Justinian's uncle Justin I in 518.[13]

Very little of the extension linking the original text to the year of Maurice's fall (602) has been preserved, perhaps because its slightly more colloquial style put off later excerptors and scribes, more probably because it was overshadowed by the higher-grade classicizing histories produced by Procopius and his three successors who provided a wealth of attractive material for the sixth century from the accession of Justin I.[14] The continuator shows, however, a particular interest in the circus factions and the troubles which they caused in his own time. So it may well be that it was he who recorded faction acclamations at moments of crisis in the sixth century—notably a long dialogue between Blues and Greens in the presence of Justinian[15]—which are picked up and conserved by Theophanes at the beginning of the ninth century.[16] His main subject seems to have been the reign of Phocas (602–10). Four fragments present condensed accounts of that troubled period, covering Phocas' seizure of power, the fate of Maurice and his family, hostile chanting by the circus factions, the rebellion of Heraclius, the downfall and execution of Phocas. The circus factions play a key part in both violent changes of regime.[17] Additional material about Phocas is preserved in the early ninth-century *Chronographia* of Theophanes (examined in Ch. 9), who evidently had access to a fuller version of the text.

Theophylact Simocatta, the second of the metropolitan historians to be considered in this chapter, operated at a far higher level than the continuator

[13] Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. xiii–xv, xix–xxiv, xxvii, xxviii–xxix.

[14] Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, 311–15, and Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, pp. xi–xii, xxvii–xxx, believe that the early seventh-century chronicler was the author of the whole universal history, contra Mango, *Nikephoros*, 13–14.

[15] Theoph., 181. 32–184. 1.

[16] Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta*, p. xlv.

[17] Ioannes Ant., fr. 318–21.

of John of Antioch. His family was well connected and he had a good education, first at Alexandria, where he was probably brought up, and later at Constantinople, where he arrived around the time of Heraclius' coup in 610. Like his two immediate predecessors, Agathias and Menander Protector, who, between them, covered the period from where Procopius' *History of the Wars* broke off (at the end of 552) to the accession of the Emperor Maurice in 582, he was a trained lawyer but, unlike them, he concentrated on his professional career and rose high. By the later 620s (and possibly early 630s), when he was writing his *History*, he had probably served as prefect of Constantinople, and was currently *antigrapheus* (*magister scriniorum*), head of one of the three central legal bureaux. He seems to have been alive in 641, when an ex-Prefect Theophylact is mentioned in an inscription at Aphrodisias as a member of the twelve-strong board of senior imperial judges and as validating the settlement of a local dispute. He thus lived through the grim years of the long war against Persia, and the dramatic reversal of fortune which led to final victory. He may also have witnessed at a distance the first victories of Islam.[18] He intended to continue his extant *History* which covers the reign of Maurice (582–602) and includes a cast-back to 572 on the war with Persia, into the early seventh century. He planned to describe what he terms, in keeping with Heraclian propaganda, the tyranny of Phocas, and, so it appears from a chance remark, to bring the story down to the time of writing. Age or infirmity may have prevented him. It is more likely, though, that he lost heart when he realized that the Herculean efforts of the emperor had brought about no more than an ephemeral revival of Roman fortunes and that even grimmer times lay ahead.[19]

Alone of all the historians at work in the seventh century, Simocatta sought to write history in the grand classical manner. His subject matter was therefore high politics and warfare, and his task the double one, first of informing his readers, of retailing what had happened to future generations, and second of writing elegant, high-style prose and embellishing a plain narrative of events with speeches (well wrought and often vividly phrased, in Simocatta's case) and digressions (only three, which are introduced rather clumsily). Given the distance separating him from the events he was recording, he was

[18] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 28–33 (career), 39–40 and 44–5 (date of composition). Whitby is inclined (31) to attribute an extant lead sealing of Theophylact *referendarius* (G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1972), I. 1, no. 559) to the historian and thus to have him chosen by Heraclius to serve as one of his eight legal aides, at a relatively early stage of his career. Aphrodisias inscription: C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, JRS Monographs 5 (London, 1989), 146–8. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, 329–40, follows Whitby, but is a sterner critic of Simocatta.

[19] Simocatta, VIII. 12. 14. Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 46–51.

forced to rely in the main on written sources—(i) John of Epiphania's classicizing history of the Roman–Persian war of 572–91 (focusing on the final phase, the flight and restoration of Khusro II), (ii) some Constantinopolitan annals, (iii) a hagiographical biography of Maurice, and (iv–v) dispatch-based military histories which highlighted the achievements of two generals, Priscus (Phocas' son-in-law) in the Balkans and Heraclius the elder (father of the emperor) in the east. Despite lack of military expertise and a loose grasp of geography, he made relatively few errors in combining his source materials into a connected, homogeneous narrative of his own. Simocatta's history is a genuinely classicizing work, concerned with individual character and individual performance, with the political and military management of affairs, written up in an elevated, archaic style—a work of literature as well as a work of history.[20]

But even a traditionalist such as Simocatta was ready to innovate. He broke down the barrier which separated secular from ecclesiastical history in late antiquity, and allowed religion and religious leaders to play their proper part in his account, even going so far as to introduce miracle stories to enliven the narrative. He also downgraded his role as historian. His primary task was to be the mouthpiece of the past, to report rather than to explain, since only God could grasp properly the forces playing upon history.[21] There was thus no need to include information about himself, since he was a mere intermediary. Instead he gave his readers guidance about his text, by including a full table of contents, a practice hitherto confined to ecclesiastical historians. He was also ready to follow their example and quote key documents verbatim. In this last respect, he showed himself responsive to a contemporary intellectual trend, although he did not go as far as the authors of the *Chronicon Paschale* or the *History of Khosrov.* He continued for the most part to rewrite and improve his sources, but he was also alert to the value of displaying evidence more openly. Thus rather than pointing up the most dramatic episode of domestic history which he covered, the abdication of Justin II, with an elegant speech of his own composition, he reproduced the distressed emperor's short, disjointed remarks (III. 11. 8–11). He was similarly careful to reproduce the transcripts of five Persian documents which he found in the text of one of his principal sources, the history of John of Epiphania—an exchange of notes between Khusro II and the rebel Bahram Chobin (IV. 7. 7–11 and 8. 5–8), Khusro's formal request for Roman political recognition and military aid (IV. 11), and two letters which Khusro wrote to

[20] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 92–109, 222–42, 311–21, 336–47.
[21] Ibid. 322–36.

accompany dedications to the shrine of St Sergius at Sergiopolis (V. 13. 4–6 and 14. 2–11).[22]

Simocatta's *History* takes but a small step into the opening phase of the gathering seventh-century crisis. He halts immediately after describing the mutiny of the Roman army in the Balkans and Phocas' seizure of power in November 602, making a few tantalizing references to later events—for example, a review of the troops late in 627, when Heraclius is said to have found that only two had served in the Balkan army which brought Phocas to power, and the execution of Khusro II in 628.[23] But he found it impossible to seal off his account of the recent past from the present. No historian can achieve complete detachment. Inevitably something of current concerns, attitudes, ideas will seep into a historical text, especially if, as in the case of Simocatta, past and present were both dominated by warfare against the same formidable eastern adversary. Indeed the speeches with which classicizing historians customarily adorned their narratives invited the historian to introduce his own interpretations into his text. Such opportunities were not neglected by Simocatta. The tone and substance of the exultant sermon which he puts in the mouth of Dometianus, metropolitan of Melitene, at Martyropolis in 590 was more appropriate to celebration of final victory in the war against Persia than mere recovery of a single city, albeit one of great symbolic importance. After an opening reference to King David, Dometianus' main theme is that of God's power to humble pride, to overthrow arrogant rulers, to crush Babylon . . .[24] A year later, in another sermon on the eve of the campaign to restore Khusro II, he urges Roman soldiers to be ready to sacrifice their lives for future glory and for salvation,[25] while, many years earlier, on the eve of a defensive campaign against Khusro I in 576, Justinian the son of Germanus makes a speech which might well have come from the mouth of Heraclius, exhorting his men not to regard the Persians as invincible, reminding them that unlike the Persians they do not worship false gods, and hinting that the rewards of Paradise lie ahead.[26]

Simocatta was well connected. He may have known Heraclius rather better than George of Pisidia ever did, if he was chosen to serve him as a personal legal aide at a relatively early age. In any case, as a senior judge later in his career, he belonged to the upper echelons of the apparatus of government

[22] Ibid. 319–20.

[23] Simocatta, VIII. 12. 12.

[24] Ibid. IV. 16. 1–26.

[25] Ibid. V. 4. 5–15.

[26] Ibid. III. 13. The most telling sentence comes at III. 13. 20: 'Today angels are recruiting you and are recording the souls of the dead, providing for them not a corresponding recompense, but one that infinitely exceeds in the weight of the gift.'

and, as such, is likely to have been imbued with official views of current affairs. If he needed further insight into contemporary political attitudes, he could gain it through his membership of the literary circle around the Patriarch Sergius. He flatters the patriarch in the Dialogue between Philosophy and History which he placed at the head of his History, and seems deliberately to pick up and reuse several of George of Pisidia's images and phrases.[27] Simocatta is therefore a good potential witness to contemporary government attitudes at the end of the great war between the old empires, when he was writing his history. There is no reason to suppose that he had firmly held, independent views, like George of Pisidia, let alone that he would express them forthrightly in his writings. An incidental aside, when he characterizes Jews as prone to street violence, wicked, untrustworthy, implacable enemies, etc., etc., is almost certainly representative of Roman government attitudes at a time when they were preparing for a concerted drive, involving coercion, to convert Jews.[28] Equally illuminating of contemporary official views is the speech which he puts in the mouth of Khusro II's emissary to the Senate in 590: he elaborates on the basic argument of the letter previously sent, namely that in a world dominated by two great powers, the one should go to the aid of the other when it is struck by disorder. A quite different scenario, however, is conjured up, according to which one of the two great powers is at the mercy of the other, as was the case in 628 but not in 590. A case is made, not so much for aiding Khusro and against recognizing Bahram, as for the international status quo: it is not practicable, it is argued, for a single power to govern the whole sublunary world; Alexander the Great is dismissed as a Macedonian stripling, an immature plaything of fortune, for having tried to realize his insane, unreasonable ambition.[29] These remarks, inappropriate in the context of 590, give us an invaluable insight into government thinking on the eve of the destruction of the familiar binary world order and its replacement by a new, superordinate, divinely empowered Muslim empire.

A third metropolitan writer was even better placed than Simocatta to observe and comment on contemporary events. Very little is known of Theodore save that he was a senior churchman in the 620s and held the post of *syncellus*, responsible for liaison between the patriarchate and the secular power and customarily one of the emperor's most important advisers. He is mentioned once in the *Chronicon Paschale*, as a member of a small deputation of high-ranking officials sent out early in the siege of Constantinople, on 2 August 626,

[27] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 32–3, 44–5, 279 (n. 6), 333 (n. 47).
[28] Simocatta, V. 7. 8–9.
[29] Ibid. IV. 13. 4–26.

to negotiate with the khagan of the Avars at his request.[30] After the Avars were finally forced to withdraw six days later, the patriarch commissioned him to deliver a homily on the siege. He signalled his authorship by effacing himself from the episode of the deputation and noting that he had done so.[31] The homily, delivered, it may be conjectured, at a service of thanksgiving which probably took place a month later, on the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God (8 September 626),[32] is couched in high-flown language and presents the siege as a modern version of the combined attack by Syria and Samaria on Jerusalem in the reign of Ahaz (Isa. 7: 1–9). Much play is made with this and other biblical analogies, and much biblical language is used. This imparts a solemnity and timelessness to the lucid, well-ordered, day-by-day account of the siege which takes up most of the homily. It is a contemporary record, by a privileged observer, which complements the official report drafted by the patriarch for dispatch to Heraclius in the field. It acted as a spur to George of Pisidia, whose verse account was written later, for delivery perhaps on the first anniversary of the ending of the siege. For the *Bellum Avaricum* seems to have been written in emulation of the homily. It has the same basic structure and is similarly grounded in a detailed narrative of events. Among the Old Testament analogies cited by Theodore was one to Phineas' smiting of his enemies, to which George had referred in *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*. George reciprocated the compliment by picking up a whole series of Theodore's images and introducing new and ingenious variants of his own.[33]

A few years later, soon after the end of the war, Theodore was called on to give another long homily, about another memorable occasion, the ceremonial restoration of the Virgin's Robe to the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae.[34] The reliquary casket in which it was kept had been hastily hacked out and taken into the city, when the Avars deceived the Roman

[30] *Chron. Pasch.*, 721. 9.

[31] L. Sternbach, *Analecta Awarica*, Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydział Filologiczny, ser. 2, 15 (Kraków, 1900), 298–320 (omission of one envoy noted at 306. 23–5).

[32] Nicephorus, c. 13. 37–40 for the leading role of the patriarch and Heraclius' son Constantine at the service.

[33] Cf. Speck, *Zufälliges zum Bellum Avaricum*, 18–19, 24–6, 50–3. Phineas: *In Heraclium*, 56–8; Theodorus, *Sermo* I, 314. 1–5.

[34] Text: F. Combefis, *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum*, Graecolat. Patrum Bibliothecae Novum Auctarium (Paris, 1648), II. 751–88. The last contemporary part was re-edited by C. Loparev, 'Staroe svidetelstvo o Polozhenii rizy Bogoroditsy vo Vlakhernakh . . .', *VV* 2 (1895), 581–628, at 592–612, and translated into English by Averil Cameron, 'The Virgin's Robe: An Episode in the History of Early Seventh-Century Constantinople', *Byz.* 49 (1979), 42–56, repr. in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London, 1981), XVII, at 48–56. Theodore's authorship: A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIe au Xe siècle: études et documents*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 5 (Paris, 1955), 114–18.

authorities and launched a surprise attack across the Long Wall in 623.[35] For the Blachernae complex lay just outside the Theodosian walls on the Golden Horn and was open to plundering. Once Blachernae had been fortified (the work was put in hand in 627)[36] and Heraclius had returned from the east, the reliquary was taken in a solemn procession led by emperor and patriarch to Blachernae. There it was opened by the patriarch, who examined the fragment of cloth inside and pronounced it intact, and was then placed back in its shrine. The ceremony took place on 2 July, probably in 628.[37] Theodore prefaced his account of these recent events with the story of the removal of the relic from Galilee by two high-ranking brothers in the fifth century and its subsequent installation in a purpose-built sanctuary at Blachernae, probably in 473. He took the story from a sixth-century hagiographical text and improved it, making it more edifying, upgrading the style, and transforming it into a vivid and dramatic tale.[38]

Information of high quality is supplied by all three of these Constantinopolitan authors. Taking account also of George of Pisidia's poems and the material densely packed into the *Chronicon Paschale*, there can be no complaint about the imperial capital's output of works on the thirty years war at the beginning of the seventh century. Coverage is extensive and distortion no more than is to be expected from official sources or individuals with good government connections. But this stream of Constantinopolitan information swiftly runs dry in the 630s. Nothing whatsoever may be extracted from seventh-century metropolitan sources about the rise of Islam. It is as if the shock of Arab attack and Arab success was so great, the events which unfolded

[35] The date given by *Chron. Pasch.*, 712. 9–713. 14 for the Avars' surprise attack (623) should be accepted rather than the ingenious alternative (619) proposed by N. H. Baynes, 'The Date of the Avar Surprise: A Chronological Study', *BZ* 21 (1912), 110–28, who is followed by Wenger, *Assomption*, 119–20 and Cameron, 'Virgin's Robe', 43–5.

[36] *Chron. Pasch.*, 726. 14–15; Nicephorus, c. 13. 40–1.

[37] It is highly unlikely that the precious relic was put back before Blachernae had been rendered secure (contra Wenger, *Assomption*, 120–3 and Averil Cameron, 'Virgin's Robe', 43–4 who date its return and the delivery of the sermon before the great siege of 626). The annual commemoration of the event took place on 2 July (J. Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, i (Rome, 1962), 328–31).

[38] Wenger, *Assomption*, 128–36 (commentary) and 294–303 (text and translation). Cf. N. H. Baynes, 'The Finding of the Virgin's Robe', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 9, Mélanges Grégoire (1949), 87–95, repr. in Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 240–7. Theodore introduced biblical references, moved the elderly Jewess's house where the relic was kept out of empty countryside and into a village, had the brothers extract her secret without plying her with drink, and made the spiriting away of the relic seem less like theft by stressing their compunction and deferring their departure until daylight.

then so terrible, that a society long accustomed to building on its collective experience in the immediate and remoter past was suddenly forced to contemplate an awesome future, to look ahead at what was self-evidently the beginning of the Last Days. There was also perhaps a more mundane explanation: the silence may have resulted not so much from abandonment of a historical mentality (which was deeply embedded), as from a failure of transmission which affected particularly badly works written later in the seventh century. If so, it should be possible to detect traces of such lost sources in later historical texts. A final judgement should be deferred therefore until the two most important Byzantine histories of the early middle ages, the *Breviarium* (*Short History*) of the Patriarch Nicephorus and the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, have been scoured for material which might have been lifted from lost seventh-century sources.

2. EVIDENCE FROM ASIA MINOR

There is a much greater dearth of local information from Asia Minor in the seventh century. Silence about the peril facing this core territory of the future medieval (Byzantine) state from the Arabs is compounded by silence about Persian invasions and Roman countermeasures in the second and third decades of the century. There is, however, one striking exception, the *Life of St Theodore of Syceon*.[39] This hagiographical text must rank near the top of any canon of the genre, so lifelike is the portrait which it gives of its formidable hero, so rich is it in local detail about the neighbourhood of the monastery founded by Theodore and the regions visited by him further afield. It was written by a young disciple, Eleusius, renamed George in honour of Theodore's patron saint. He had been entrusted to Theodore's care as a small child, to be brought up and educated in the monastery. He introduces himself in the *Life* and explains that he began writing in the saint's lifetime with his tacit approval.[40] He seems to have worked on it for many years, throughout the reign of Heraclius.[41]

He has arranged his material, most of it derived probably from the collective memory of the monastery but some from his own experience and some (mainly about Theodore's childhood and early ascetic feats, up to his

[39] Ed. and trans. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1970).
[40] *V. Theodori*, cc. 22, 165. 8–47 and 170. 1–23.
[41] Theodore's prophecy that Heraclius would reign for at least thirty years (*V. Theodori*, c. 166. 30–5) surely benefits from his biographer's hindsight in 641 or later.

ordination (cc. 1–21)) from what Theodore told him, in chronologically connected clusters, and has taken trouble to place these clusters in the correct chronological order. The main part of Theodore's life, the development of his ascetic practices,[42] the foundation and growth of the monastery at Sykeon, his three pilgrimages to Jerusalem, his miraculous powers, and his unhappy tenure of the bishopric of Anastasiopolis (cc. 23–81), occupies rather less than a third of the text. Much more space is devoted to the last two decades of his life (cc. 82–170), probably because memories of it were fresher and fuller in the monastery and his biographer could draw on his own recollections.[43]

A large store of valuable material about many facets of life in Asia Minor as well as events at the centre is to be found in this section of the text. Villagers and townsmen looked to Theodore for help in adversity. He could work miraculous cures, avert natural disasters, prophesy. He was famed above all as an exorcist before whom predatory demons quailed and as an awe-inspiring, outspoken figure who never deferred to status. Towards the end of his life, his reputation reached the court. Magnates made a point of calling on him if they were travelling on the main road to or from the east. His visitors included Phocas' nephew Domnitziolus (for whose life he later interceded with Heraclius), Phocas' hard man in the Levant, Bonosus, a future exarch of Italy, Photius, and, not long before he died (on 22 April 613), Heraclius who was hurrying south-east to fight the Persians near Antioch.[44] He was invited three times to Constantinople, where his prayers were sought by three patriarchs (Cyriacus, Thomas, and Sergius), by three emperors (Maurice, Phocas, and Heraclius), and by Heraclius' cousin Nicetas.[45] In tracing these connections, Theodore's biographer provides valuable incidental information about high-level affairs, in particular the increasingly sombre mood as the war went badly and a serious rebellion after Heraclius' seizure of power.[46] Even more precious are the glimpses which he gives of life in the Anatolian provinces, both in the densely settled, bustling landscape of Bithynia and in Theodore's home region of Galatia, where social tensions were

[42] He outclassed all his contemporaries in a final phase of self-mortification, when he spent two winters in a small iron cage, loaded with iron chains, collar, belt, and coat of armour, and exposed to all the hazards, climatic and demonic, of the open air (*V. Theodori*, cc. 27. 1–30. 10).

[43] Occasionally he refers to his own presence, but for the most part it has to be inferred from the detail and realism of his accounts of certain episodes.

[44] *V. Theodori*, cc. 120, 127, 142, 152. 9–18, 166. 1–11.

[45] Ibid. cc. 82. 1–9, 128. 14–22, 133. 7–20, 134. 34–43, 135. 15–46, 136. 6–23, 154. 1–4 and 28–48, 155. 1–8.

[46] Ibid. c. 152. 19–67. See W. E. Kaegi, 'New Evidence on the Early Reign of Heraclius', *BZ* 66 (1973), 308–30.

growing in town and country.[47] The war itself remains in the background, merely prompting Theodore to foretell grim times ahead.[48]

There are no local sources covering the regional history of Asia Minor after Theodore's death. However, since Persian forces posed an increasingly serious threat to Constantinople, metropolitan observers and the historians who drew on their observations subsequently were compelled to concentrate on the eastern approaches and the military operations taking place there. Persian advances therefore ensured that Asia Minor received plentiful coverage thenceforth until the last phase of the war. Much more serious, though, is the dearth of similar hagiographical material from the middle and later decades of the century, which might have cast light on the damage inflicted by Arab attacks and the measures taken by the beleaguered Roman state to put society on a war footing and to extract more resources, in terms of cash, manpower and matériel, from its subjects.

Without the various pieces of information supplied by the *History of Khosrov*, the *Maronite Chronicle* (discussed in Ch. 6 below), and later west Syrian sources, we would be hard put to sketch even the outlines of regional history until the last decade of the seventh century, when Theophanes begins to provide relatively plentiful information. As for information about individual localities and local economic and social conditions, hagiography fails us until the late eighth and early ninth centuries, and there are no documentary sources to come to the rescue until the eleventh century. The historian of Byzantium is thus confronted by a large dark hole at the centre of his subject and cannot grapple with the social and economic particulars of localities in the way that Merovingian and Carolingian historians have done so successfully.

3. EVIDENCE FROM THE BALKANS, ITALY, AND NORTH AFRICA

If we reverse our steps and proceed west from Constantinople, we will pick up useful evidence about two extraneous factors which had a marked effect on the fighting capability and ideological cohesion of the east Roman empire in an age of crisis and disaster—the pressure exerted on the Balkan provinces by

[47] P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *JRS* 61 (1971), 80–101, repr. in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), 103–52; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, ii: *The Rise of the Church* (Oxford, 1993), 122–50.

[48] *V. Theodori*, cc. 127. 14–26, 134. 20–34.

Avars and Slavs from around 620 and the officially sponsored anti-Semitism evident in the last stages of the war against Persia, which could not but alienate significant elements of the empire's Jewish population. Finally, back in Constantinople after the first phase of Arab expansion, we can observe the Roman government's drive to eliminate doctrinal contamination (taken to be a prime cause of God's evident anger with his people) and the show-trials in which it culminated, first of the pope and later of the leading theologian of the age.

The *Miracles of St Demetrius* documents the perceived feats of the patron saint of Thessalonica in the second half of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh.[49] It is a hagiographical text with a pronounced historical bent. While Demetrius naturally responds to the troubles of individuals and takes an interest in the physical condition of his church, his prime concern, as presented in the text, is with the welfare of the city as a whole in an age of danger and anxiety. The first book, composed by the archbishop of the city (John) probably in the first decade of Heraclius' reign (610–20), contains a selection of miracle stories arranged in ascending order of importance, beginning with individual cures, going on to the averting of famine and factional disorder, and culminating in the thwarting of enemy attacks on the city. Chronology is disregarded. Thus a surprise night assault by Slavs around 604 (I. 12) is recounted before the first great siege by Avars and Slavs in 586 (I. 13–15). The saint is praised fulsomely by the archbishop, who may well be recycling material from sermons. The city is presented as an island of Roman civilization in a region awash with barbarians, and thus as utterly reliant on supernatural aid from its tutelary saint. History is both squeezed of specifics, and remoulded into propaganda designed to sustain the faith and confidence of the archbishop's flock.[50]

Chronology is the organizing principle of the second book which continues the story of the saint's beneficence deep into the seventh century. Its historical specific gravity increases markedly once it passes beyond the lifetime of Archbishop John, from whom much of the information used up to that point (halfway through ch. 3) probably derives. He was still alive in the 620s when, after an interlude of calm, the threat of Slavs and Avars materialized again and on an even greater scale than before. A failed land and sea attack by a coalition of Slav tribes in 620 (II. 1) was followed up in 622 by a full-scale, Avar-organized siege of the city which lasted for thirty-three days (II. 2). On this second occasion, the archbishop is portrayed as playing a vital

[49] P. Lemerle, *Les Plus Anciens Recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius*, i: *Le Texte* (Paris, 1979), ii: *Commentaire* (Paris, 1981).

[50] Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 32–50, 68–81.

part in reviving the morale of the defenders and enabling them, with the aid of the saint, to cope with everything thrown against them.[51] There follow (in II. 3) accounts of an earthquake which caused damage to the fortifications (concealed by the saint from the Slavs who came to look) and of a fire which destroyed the church, probably after Archbishop John's death (he is not mentioned). Thereafter the narrative becomes longer and richer in detail, leaving the impression that it is based on a full contemporary source, possibly official in character. Well-ordered historical accounts are given of two episodes in which the city was imperilled in the following generation, the first (II. 4) involving a two-year blockade by Slav tribes in reprisal for the execution of a tribal leader (Perbund), the second (II. 5) a carefully planned attempt to take over the city by stealth. It was a scheme masterminded by the Bulgar leader (Kuber) of a successful rebellion against the Avars, whose followers included a large body of sub-Romans, descendants of Romans taken prisoner in the initial Avar offensive sweeps down the Danube sixty or more years earlier (in the 580s).[52] The final chapter (II. 6) describes the capture of Cyprian, bishop of Thenae in north Africa, by Slav pirates on a voyage to Constantinople, his escape with the aid of St Demetrius, and his construction of a church dedicated to his rescuer on his return to his see.

The dating of the last three episodes can be fixed fairly securely to the generation following Archbishop John, because of the approximate date of 650 (sixty or more years after the 580s) given for the appearance of the sub-Roman Sermesiani (taking their name from Sirmium) in the vicinity of Thessalonica under Kuber's leadership (II. 5. 284–8).[53] It is also clear that Roman maritime communications with north Africa were as yet unaffected by Arab naval power (so well before Mu'awiya's first successful attack in 669), at the time of the last episode (II. 6).[54] It follows that the Perbund affair (II. 4) took place in the 640s, not the 670s as suggested by Paul Lemerle, and that the expedition which an unnamed emperor was preparing against the Arabs

[51] It was surely the sustained Avar siege of the city which forced Heraclius to leave his army in the middle of operations in Asia Minor and hurry back to his capital in 622 (Geo. Pis., *Expeditio Persica*, III. 305–40). Contra Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 91–4, 99–103, who dates the Slav attack to 615 and the Avar siege three years later.

[52] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 141–3 (583), 145–51 (586–7), 153–5 (588). Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 138–40, prefers a date between 614 and 619, although there is no detailed evidence to match that of Simocatta on the 580s.

[53] The shift from past to present, signalled in the text at II. 4. 230, need not mark the passage of much more than a decade or two, let alone a leap of two generations, as suggested by Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 128–33 and 141–7, who dates the Perbund and Kuber episodes (II. 4 and 5) to 676–8 and *c.*680 respectively.

[54] Cf. Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 166–9, who thus proposes that chronology is disregarded at the end of the text.

(on the eve of the navigating season) and which led him to defer acting on a petition for Perbund's release presented by a joint Slav–Thessalonican deputation, was probably that sent by Constans II to reoccupy Alexandria in 646.[55]

The following outline of Balkan history in the first half of the seventh century may then be pieced together from information transmitted by the *Miracles*: there was a period of relative calm in the first two decades, secured probably by substantial concessions to the Avars, which enabled Phocas to concentrate his forces in the east; the Avars then intervened in force, first through Slav surrogates in 620, then directly in 622, at a critical point in the Roman–Persian war, and succeeded in extracting more concessions (probably in the form of higher tribute) from Heraclius and delaying his planned counterstrike into Transcaucasia by a year and a half; thereafter, Slav tribes were able to move south and settle in Greece in large numbers relatively unhindered, because the imperial authorities were committed in the east, first to a final effort against Khusro II (624–8), and then to vain attempts to stem the Arab outrush (634–54). It is plain that the Balkans was not allowed to interfere with the empire's prime concern, both before and after the rise of Islam, namely maintenance of the integrity of its core territories in Asia Minor and recovery of lost ground in the Middle East. As a result, the effective exercise of authority in the Balkans was restricted to a number of discrete coastal enclaves by the middle of the century. When the Emperor Constans II was at last free to act, he attached a higher priority to bolstering Roman authority in Italy, and, on his way west in 662–3, could do no more than re-establish land communications between the enclaves and start what was inevitably going to be a long, laborious process of projecting Roman power over the Slav tribes established in their hinterlands.[56]

[55] A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Domination*, rev. ed. P. M. Fraser (Oxford, 1978), 465–75, who, relying on Arab sources, dates the reoccupation to 645–6. This is a year too early, since the initial expedition was mounted in 646 (II. 4. 232) and the task force had probably not yet been withdrawn in spring 647, when Constans could only spare ten ships to revictual Thessalonica (II. 4. 251—discussed below). The following dates may be put on the the sequence of events in the Balkans proposed by Lemerle, *Commentaire*, 128–33: arrest of Perbund—early 646; deputation to Constantinople—late winter or early spring 646; escape, recapture, thwarted second escape, and execution of Perbund—spring or early summer 646; beginning of two-year blockade of Thessalonica (II. 4. 243)—summer 646; arrival of provisions in ten warships, well into the blockade when the city was in the grip of famine (II. 4. 251)—probably spring 647; start of three-day siege of Thessalonica, dated 25 July in the 5th indiction (II. 4. 255)—25 July 647; defeat of Slavs by an imperial army in the following summer and relief of the city (II. 4. 278–81)—648.

[56] J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 59–61; J. V. A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 60–1.

There is no need to linger long over the principal Italian source. The short official record of the public activities of successive popes, the *Liber pontificalis*, was being kept up to date through the seventh century. With the end of each successive pontificate, an account of notable events and major capital expenditure was composed, presumably by a contemporary serving in the papal administration. The notices which comprise the text are therefore a spare Roman analogue to the those gathered together in the *Chronicon Paschale*. The information and chronology presented is therefore to be treasured.[57]

North Africa is the setting for the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, purportedly a record in Greek of several sessions of debate on the merits of Christianity among Jews meeting at a secret location in Carthage, in 634, two years after the authorities had overseen their enforced baptism.[58] The *Doctrina* is an extraordinary text.[59] The ebb and flow of discussion is traced. It is not a polemic, like so much disputation literature, but a genuinely proselytizing work. Every possible Jewish objection is aired and then rebutted. The clinching argument (III. 8–12) is eschatological: now that the power of Rome (identified as the fourth of Daniel's beasts) has waned, it is evident that the Messiah must have come in the past. It takes time and effort on the part of Jacob, the leading protagonist, who has become convinced that Jews are wrong to reject Christ's claims, before he can win round each of his principal antagonists, Isaac and Joseph, leading figures in the local community, and Justus, who arrives from the east a week after the first meeting (III. 1). Jacob too is a visitor, who has come to do business for a Constantinopolitan merchant and has been baptized against his will after his arrival in Carthage (V. 20). His shady past as a Jewish extremist is brought up. While he denies murder, he admits that he did his best to incite violence among Christians in Constantinople, Rhodes, Antioch, and Palestine, masquerading as a member of one or other circus faction (I. 40–1, III. 1, 3, cf. V. 20).

The text is so unusual that its authenticity must be held in serious doubt. Suspicion is aroused by the care taken to show how the record was made (secretly by Joseph and his son Symeon—I. 43, II. 8, III. 2, 4, 11), and by the fortuitous meeting of Jacob and Justus in Carthage, both of whom came from the same milieu in Ptolemais in Palestine (III. 1–2, V. 6). However, general corroboration is to hand for much of the incidental historical detail. Factional

[57] Paul the Deacon, writing at the end of the eighth century, may have had access to a fuller version of the text, to judge by his account of Constans II's activities in southern Italy in 663 (Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, V. 6–11 (for full references, see Ch. 13 n. 16 and Ch. 15 n. 68)).

[58] G. Dagron and V. Déroche, 'Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle', *TM* 11 (1991), 17–273, at 28–38.

[59] Ed. and trans. Déroche, *TM* 11 (1991), 47–229.

troubles are well documented in Phocas' reign, the period during which Jacob confesses to have been active as an agitator (I. 40–1). The same is true of growing tension between Jews and Christians in Palestine a few years later (IV. 5, V. 12).[60] The particular eschatological scenario envisaged by Jacob and his listeners, culminating in the appearance of the destructive Hermolaos, is that of the contemporary Hebrew *Apocalypse of Zerubbabel* (III. 9, 12, V. 1, 4–5).[61] The first notable Arab victory, which opened the way into Palestine, was indeed won early in 634,[62] in time for the news to be conveyed to Justus in Carthage in a letter from his brother Abraham (V. 16). Finally Abraham was right to have the Arab war-leader claim to be a prophet and to hold the keys to Paradise, since rewards in the afterlife for the active faithful were repeatedly proffered in the Qur'an. There can be no doubt then about the authenticity of the background against which the disputation is set. True as it is to the circumstances of the time, the composition of the text should be placed very soon after the time attributed to the extended disputation, in the first half of 634.[63] The disputation itself is assuredly an invention of the author, but one designed to further the cause. Its intended readership is clearly the educated Jewish elite throughout the Roman empire, its purpose the obvious one of winning over the hearts and minds of Jews whose enforced Christianization was all too likely to be superficial and resented.

The *Doctrina* deserves close scrutiny as an authentic text of the 630s. Historical information may probably be trusted, even if there is no corroboration to hand. It includes some additional pieces of evidence about faction rioting (in Rhodes, as well as Antioch and Constantinople) and about disorder in Palestine at the time of the Persian invasion in 613, in which Jews are presented as taking a lead. More important, though, is the general scenario pictured by the author. His text had to mesh with the everyday experience of his target readership. It follows that assumptions made about Mediterranean travel or Jewish attitudes are likely to have corresponded with reality. The Roman empire might have shrunk in the west and might be under severe military pressure in the east, but Romans remained in command of the sea, as they would for another ten to fifteen years.[64] Roman vessels criss-crossed the Mediterranean. A letter from Palestine, bringing news of a disastrous defeat and the death of the commanding Roman general (Sergius the Candidatus),

[60] Dagron and Déroche, 'Juifs et Chrétiens', 18–28, 230–47.

[61] Ibid. 38–43, 263–8; W. J. van Bekkum, 'Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112.

[62] On Friday 4 February 634 (*Chron. 724*, 18–19).

[63] Jacob finally leaves on 13 July (V. 20).

[64] Cf. the evidence of the *Miracula S. Demetrii* discussed above.

did not take long to reach Carthage (V. 16).[65] The Jewish community of Carthage was in regular contact with the main centres of Jewish population in Palestine. There was nothing surprising in Jewish acquaintances from Palestine meeting again in a western city. Commercial activity continued as in the past, a Constantinopolitan cloth-merchant dispatching an agent (Jacob) with a stock of merchandise worth two pounds of gold for clandestine sale in Carthage. Political influence was sought by merchants (a *cubicularius* in the palace in the case of Jacob's boss), since it might be needed to sort out administrative difficulties, such as Jacob's detention in Carthage, presumably on a smuggling charge (V. 20). Of equal interest is the apprehension attributed to crypto-Jews who refuse to renounce their ancestral faith despite their nominal conversion, lest they be betrayed (I. 43, III. 4), and the fleeting hope (swiftly and firmly dispelled by a rabbi) that the self-proclaimed Arab prophet might really be the Messiah (V. 16).

4. TWO SHOW-TRIALS IN CONSTANTINOPLE IN THE 650s

Finally we come to a dossier of material connected with the trials of two leaders of resistance to the compromise doctrinal formula (attributing a single hybrid (divine–human) energy (later amended to will) to Christ) promulgated under Heraclius and backed by Constans II. The formula had been devised by Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople, in consultation with other senior churchmen during the later stages of the war against Persia, and had then been used in an energetic and successful campaign to patch up relations between the official Chalcedonian church and both principal rival confessions, the Nestorians, strongest in Mesopotamia, and the Monophysites, strong in Armenia, Syria, and Egypt. The material, some of it hagiographical but most documentary in character, emanates from dissident circles who insisted on drawing a distinction between the divine and human wills in the Saviour and who would not countenance the new formula, even as a form of words designed to reunite Christendom. The story told is a remarkable one.[66]

[65] Sergius is given the high rank of patrician in Theophilus of Edessa's notice about the battle (Agap., 468–9; Mich. Syr., II. 413; *Chron. 1234*, 146–7). For Theophilus, see Ch. 7 below.

[66] P. Allen and B. Neil (eds.), *Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessories illustrantia*, Corpus Christianorum, Ser. Gr. 39 (Turnhout, 1999), republished and translated in P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002). Commentary: W. Brandes, ' "Juristische" Krisenbewältigung im 7. Jahrhunderts? Die Prozesse gegen Papst Martin I. und Maximos Homologetes', *Fontes Minores*, 10 (1998), 141–212, at 154–9.

A pope (Martin I) was arrested by the governor (exarch) of Italy, Calliopas, and transported for trial to Constantinople in 653. The charge brought against him was conspiracy. He was accused of involvement in the rebellion of Olympius, appointed exarch in 649, who had gone over to the papal side and then laid claim to the imperial throne. Martin had also caused offence by taking up office before receiving the emperor's authorization and, above all, by convening a church council in the Lateran in 649, which not only flouted the ban on further discussion of the divisive Christological issue (decreed in the *Typos* issued by Constans II in 648) but firmly condemned the Monothelete formula.[67] An account of his arrest is given in his Life (flushed out of the church where he was hiding by Calliopas' bodyguards' banging their shields). His suffering on the long voyage to Constantinople, lasting from 17 June to 17 September 653, is described, followed by ninety-three days in solitary confinement (the trial did not begin until the Emperor Constans II returned from Armenia).[68]

By this point a more detailed and apparently contemporary record of the pope's treatment at the hand of the eastern authorities (subsequently used by the hagiographer) has picked up the story. It goes on to describe the trial (which began on 20 December and took place before the Senate), naming witnesses, quoting key parts of their statements as well as mordant comments by the defendant and interventions by the presiding judges, Leo Bucoleon the *sacellarius* (chief financial minister) and Troilus, city prefect. More witnesses had been prepared than were needed to prove the pope's guilt to the satisfaction of the judges, who withdrew to confer with the emperor. When the court reconvened, Martin was found guilty, was taken to the hippodrome, where he was publicly shaved and stripped of the papal insignia. After another eighty-five days in prison, he was exiled to the Crimea, where he died on 16 September 655. The patriarch of Constantinople, who was visited on his deathbed by the emperor on the day after the trial, is said to have groaned, turned his face to the wall and remarked that it was sad when such things happened to pontiffs.[69]

The other leading dissident was the great theologian of the age, Maximus Confessor.[70] He was prepared to stand up against the whole apparatus of

[67] Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 165–70, 172.

[68] P. Peeters, 'Une vie grecque du pape S. Martin I', *An. Boll.* 51 (1933), 225–62, at 255–8.

[69] *Commemoratio eorum quae saeviter et sine Dei respectu acta sunt . . . in Martinum papam*, in *PL* 129, 591A–600B. Cf. Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 159–77.

[70] J. M. Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur: la charité, avenir divin de l'homme* (Paris, 1976), 35–75; A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London, 1996), 3–77; P. A. Booth, 'John Moschus, Sophronius Sophista and Maximus Confessor between East and West' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2008), ch. 4.

church and state. He refused to give even nominal assent to the form of words carefully devised to win back the Monophysites. He was unmoved by the argument that by standing out he fostered division and conflict throughout Christendom. He replied that he was not imposing his beliefs on anyone else, that he was not judging anyone else, but that he could not ignore his own conscience. Blandishments—the promise that he would be received with honour in Constantinople, that the emperor himself would submit to his spiritual direction—were bluntly rejected. He exasperated his interlocutors with his clever repartees and his refusal to recognize the brute reality of changed circumstance.[71] Two high-ranking lay officials who tried to talk him round in private on the evening of the first of two public hearings of his case in May 655 shook their heads and remarked that it was all difficult and they could see no way out. A year and a quarter later the most sympathetic of his judges was berating him for his obstinacy, calling him an accursed bean-eater who would not acknowledge that the new formula did not change but merely occluded beliefs such as his.[72]

For the Monotheletes (Maronites), Maximus was a scheming, evil figure, who single-handedly defeated the drive for union in the church. A brief Syriac biography, written shortly before 680, transformed a philosophically adept, evidently well-educated churchman, who had connections in high places, into a half-caste Persian-Samaritan from a remote village in the Golan Heights.[73] This alternative Maximus owed all his education to an Origenist monk, abbot of the Old Lavra in Palestine, and later hobnobbed with Nestorian monks in north Africa. Whereas in reality Maximus' hostility to Monotheletism was inspired by Sophronius, abbot of the north African monastery which he joined around 630, and took several years to evolve into open opposition (in 640), the Maximus of the Syriac Life is portrayed as the principal moving force behind the resistance from the 630s (Sophronius is under his influence rather than vice versa) and convenor (acting through Sophronius) of an early synod on Cyprus which was meant to approve his (Maximus') doctrinal statement and forward it to the emperor.[74] The psogic

[71] *Relatio motionis* and *Disputatio Bizyae cum Theodosio*, ed. Allen and Neil, *Scripta*, 12–51 and 72–149.

[72] *Relatio motionis*, 43. 383–4; *Disputatio*, 135. 671–86.

[73] Despite its extreme psogic character, this Syriac Life captures biographical reality better than the extant Greek Life, which dates from the late tenth century and fills a void about Maximus' early life with material recycled from a Life of Theodore, abbot of Stoudios in the early ninth century. See P. Allen and B. Neil (eds. and trans.), *The Life of Maximus Confessor Recension 3* (Strathfield, NSW, 2003), 5–26; Booth, *John Moschus*, 114–16.

[74] There is also clear evidence of garbling in the Life: Pope Martin is sent off to Maximus' place of exile; the patriarchal *Psephos* of 634 is conflated with the imperial *Ecthesis* of 638; the Roman–Arab armistice of 651–3 is confused with an interlude of peace during the first Arab

image of Maximus and the real person converge after 640, when Maximus did indeed become intellectual leader of the resistance, engaging in a famous set-piece debate in Carthage in July 645 with Pyrrhus, ex-patriarch of Constantinople (who was temporarily won over), and then playing a key part in organizing the council which met in the Lateran in 649 and formally condemned Monotheletism.

Nothing is known about his immediate response to the arrest, trial, and exile of Pope Martin. But a year and a half later, after the failure of the Arabs' first attack on Constantinople in 654, he made his way to the city at the opening of the navigation season. He was aged 75 and was evidently bent on confronting the authorities in person. He was arrested by a small detachment of Excubitors on arrival and arraigned before the Senate in the palace on Saturday 16 May 655.[75] The same two senior officials as before, the *sacellarius* and prefect of the city, presided at his trial. Five specific accusations were made, amounting to a general charge of disloyalty, even perhaps of treason, to the emperor. All but one were flimsy and easily rebutted (at least in the defence's version of the trial). There was only hearsay evidence for the first two—that Maximus had advised an exarch of Africa (Peter) not to send troops to reinforce the defences of Egypt against the Arabs in 633, and that he had encouraged another exarch (Gregory) to rebel in 646. Maximus also flatly contradicted the well-connected witness who alleged (implausibly) that he had used foul language about the emperor in a conversation in Rome, while his disciple Anastasius denied the charge that Maximus had maltreated Pyrrhus. On one count, though, Maximus stood his ground, insisting that emperors should have no say in doctrinal matters since, in the whole providential story, only one secular ruler had had priestly authority, namely Melchisedech.

A report of the treatment by the authorities of Maximus and his disciple Anastasius, from the moment of their arrest on arrival in the capital, has survived. It carefully distinguishes between the different charges and notes the names of the witnesses who were called. It appears to give a faithful record of

civil war (656–61). The writer finally stretches credulity too far, when, near the end of the extant fragment of the text, he has Maximus lodge in a *nunnery* after his arrival in Constantinople from Rome.

[75] Unequivocal evidence that Maximus arrived in Constantinople by sea only a few days before his trial is provided by the opening sentence of the account of his trial in the dossier of documents (*Relatio motionis*, 13. 4–7). Contra Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 177–9, who follows the psogic Syriac Life and has him return some two years earlier. Brandes connects this spurious piece of information with a garbled notice in *Chron. 1234* (trans. Chabot), II. 208 and Mich. Syr., II. 436 (probably taken from the lost history of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre). This has Maximus brought before an ecclesiastical tribunal and dates the trial to 653.

court proceedings, but to be selective and unofficial, since the spotlight falls on Maximus and his telling ripostes. The author or authors were clearly sympathizers, determined to ensure that information about the trial circulated as widely as possible. It seems to be analogous to the journal of current events disseminated in *samizdat* form in the later decades of the Soviet phase of Russian history. Its coverage extends beyond formal hearings. It tells us how, after a sixth charge—that Maximus was an Origenist—was briefly aired and rebutted, the two defendants were taken back to prison and how, as dusk was falling, one of the two presiding judges, Troilus, prefect of the city, and another senior official visited Maximus in his cell and tried to persuade him to see reason. It then leaps ahead to the second formal hearing a week later, attended by two patriarchs, at which Maximus admits (like his disciple Anastasius in the immediately preceding hearing) that he has anathematized Constans II's *Typos* and confirms that he is not in communion with the Constantinopolitan church, citing the backing of the Lateran council. He vehemently denies, however, that he is anathematizing the emperor himself. The document ends with a note about the sentence of exile for both defendants, at separate places in Thrace, which was recommended by the churchmen in attendance.[76]

In the long run it was the cause of Pope Martin and Maximus which triumphed at the Trullan Council of 680–1.[77] Without this final victory a generation later, it is highly unlikely that the dissident literature about either protagonist would have been preserved as a record of resistance to the authority of church and state, both inside and outside the courtroom. There are six other documents in the extant dossier, which bring the story of persecution to its gruesome conclusion: (1) a long record (written in the course of the following year, unsigned and addressed to the orthodox, i.e. the dissidents) of a series of discussions with Maximus in his place of exile—they began relatively well with a theological debate on 24 August 656 but deteriorated into acrimony and violence after Maximus rejected a compromise put forward by the emperor;[78] (2) a short note of Maximus' (dated 19 April 658), written for the benefit of his disciple Anastasius, recording the key exchange in an interview the previous day with the patriarch (on the central Monothelete tenet) and the news, conveyed by the patriarch, that he had been anathematized and condemned to death;[79] (3) a dogmatic letter from

[76] *Relatio motionis*, analysed by Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 177–203.

[77] J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987), 274–80.

[78] Allen and Neil (eds.), *Scripta*, 53–149 (compromise offered at 131. 629–133. 645).

[79] Ibid. 153–63.

Anastasius written in Latin and addressed to the monks of Cagliari in Sardinia;[80] (4) a letter recounting the suffering and death in exile of Maximus and his disciple Anastasius in summer 662, written (some three years later) by another Anastasius, formerly papal representative in Constantinople, who had been punished and sent to Lazica at the same time;[81] (5) a memorandum dating from 668 and based partly on the second Anastasius' letter (and explaining how it was written with an artificial hand before he died in exile on 11 October 666) about the fates of the principal victims of Monothelete persecution, namely Pope Martin, the second Anastasius and his disciples (two brothers, Theodore and Euprepius), Maximus and his disciple Anastasius;[82] and finally (6) a short and violent diatribe against Constantinople for its persecution of the dissident orthodox.[83]

The assemblage of materials on the fates of Martin, Maximus, and those closely associated with them extends the coverage of the miscellany of sources considered in this chapter deep into the 660s, beyond the end of the first Muslim civil war where the *History of Khosrov* stops and into the heyday of the Sufyanids, vividly pictured in the *History to 682*, when Muʿawiya, in unchallenged control of the caliphate, was renewing his attack on the truncated but still dangerous rump of the Christian Roman empire (Byzantium). Constans II has finally steeled himself to deal with the dissident leaders, who alone have been standing in the way of the effective unification of Christendom (regarded probably as a vital precondition for the recovery of divine favour), and has taken personal charge of the defence of the empire's territories in the west, hoping for the same success in Sicily and Carthage as was achieved at Constantinople in 654.

[80] Allen and Neil (eds.), *Scripta*, 165–9.

[81] Ibid. 171–89. Anastasius died on 22 or 24 July 662 on the road between Apsilia and Suania; Maximus on 13 August 662 in a fort on the Laz–Alan border. They had evidently been brought back to Constantinople for sentence and punishment shortly before Constans II left for the west. A fuller version of the letter is preserved in Latin than in Greek.

[82] Ibid. 191–227. Besides a summary account of the pope's trial and subsequent death at Cherson, the memorandum describes how the writer gathered his information (he was also interested in acquiring relics) and gives details about the punishment of Maximus and the two Anastasii (flogging until blood ran, excision of tongues, and amputation of hands).

[83] Ibid. 229–32.

6

Supplementary Roman Sources of the Seventh Century II

The rich provinces of the Middle East were twice torn from the Roman grasp in the seventh century. It took eight years of attritional warfare before, in summer 610, the Persians were able to exploit the internal crisis induced by the Heraclian revolution and break through the Roman inner line of defence on the Euphrates. Thereafter the pace of their advance picked up markedly and by 620 they were in firm control of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Less than five years passed after the Persian withdrawal (agreed at a summit meeting between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz in July 629) before a yet more formidable threat materialized. From 634, the notables of the close-packed cities of the Levant and Egypt had little choice but to submit to the Muslim *umma*, once Roman armies had been defeated in the field.

Memories of life under foreign occupation may be expected to have given a different colouring to local sources composed in the seventh century. Both occupying powers could be observed at close quarters and described in detail. Attitudes differed from those of sources written at a greater distance. Stereotypes of Persians and Arabs crumbled in the face of reality. The degree of hostility expressed varied from text to text, with Strategius' deliberately inflammatory account of the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians at one extreme, the Life of Anastasius at the other. In aggregate, though, the texts yield relatively plentiful material, and help fill in several gaps in the coverage of the sources examined in Chapters 1–5, notably the Arab invasion and conquest of Egypt and the outward, ceremonial manifestation of an Umayyad caliph's power.

1. PROPAGANDA AND LIVES OF SAINTS FROM PALESTINE

Contemporary and near-contemporary local information about Syria and the adjoining regions of Phoenicia and Palestine is largely confined to Jerusalem

and its environs in the second phase of the Roman–Persian war, although one hagiographical text takes us much deeper into the period of Persian occupation and provides some fascinating glimpses of the Persian governing apparatus at work in the regional capital, Caesarea. The restoration of the True Cross and the mood of excitation at the time is also covered. But for the dramatic events of the following seventy years—the Arab conquest, the establishment of a new imperial capital at Damascus, guerrilla resistance, etc.—local sources fail us, with a single exception, a Syrian text known as the *Maronite Chronicle*. This too is at its most informative about Jerusalem, a cult site which challenged Mecca for primacy within Islam.

The most extensive and superficially most authoritative account of the initial Persian invasion of Palestine is to be found in what purports to be a sermon by Strategius, a monk in the famous lavra of St Sabas, in the Judaean desert outside Jerusalem. He covers the siege and sack of Jerusalem in 614, the removal of a large part of the population, their treatment on arrival at Ctesiphon, and the sterling efforts of the Patriarch Zacharias to keep up their spirits and stiffen their resolve in the face of attempts of persuade them to abandon their faith. The original Greek version is no longer extant. It survives in Georgian and Arabic translations, the latter preserved in three manuscripts and abridged in two more.[1]

Among the texts discussed in this chapter Strategius' history is the exception which must be subjected to critical scrutiny before trust may be placed in it. For certain features suggest that the text may not be what it purports to be. First, it gives a date for the fall of Jerusalem (on the twenty-first day after the start of the siege on 15 April, i.e. 5 May 614) which is at variance with one around 17–20 May backed by the other authoritative sources.[2] The weight of this contrary evidence cannot be ignored and casts serious doubt on the accuracy of a key point in Strategius' account. Second, it is remarkably imprecise about the extent of the physical damage done to the churches of Jerusalem, about the numbers of those killed during and after the sack

[1] G. Garitte, *La Prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*, CSCO 202–3, Scriptores Iberici 11–12 (Louvain, 1960) and *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614 Recensiones Arabicae*, CSCO 340–1 and 347–8, Scriptores Arabici 26–9 (Louvain, 1973–4).

[2] Strategius, 8. 5–6. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 154–8 assembles and discusses the evidence for the alternative later date in May. It consists of (i) *History of Khosrov* (18 May (19 according to Thomas Artsruni's version)), (ii) a letter written in summer 616 by Antiochus, a monk at the lavra of St Sabas (a week after the massacre of forty-four monks by Beduin raiders on 15 May), (iii) its commemoration in liturgical calendars (17 (fire of Jerusalem) and 20 May (devastation of Jerusalem) in the Palestino-Georgian calendar, one or the other elsewhere), and (iv) the *Chronicon Paschale* which supplies a later date (in June, which was probably that of the news' arrival in Constantinople). Despite the weight of evidence in favour of the later date, Flusin remains undecided.

(a deficiency remedied by an appendix added later), and about the names of notable persons among the casualties.[3] Third, there are surprising gaps in its coverage—little is said about Persian operations before the siege or about Roman military countermeasures,[4] and nothing, apart from a reference in the title and three later incidental references in the text, about the discovery and removal of the fragments of the True Cross which loomed large in other accounts of Persian actions after the city's fall.[5] Finally, there is an odd switch from the third person plural (used throughout the account of the siege, the sack, and subsequent events) and the first person plural (used of the deportees on arrival at 'Babylon', i.e. the Persian capital, Ctesiphon).[6]

This last feature provides the key to understanding the text. For it surely indicates that it is an amalgam of distinct types of material. A preliminary analysis suggests that the main body of the text has four components: (i) a collection of hagiographical stories concerning the city's fall and certain Persian atrocities, which were passed along a monastic grapevine;[7] (ii) some sketchy information about the military and political background, representing the main items of news registered and recorded in the collective memory at St Sabas;[8] (iii) texts of two of Zacharias' homilies, which were perhaps smuggled out of Persian Mesopotamia;[9] and (iv) an eyewitness account of the deportees' journey into captivity, which is probably authentic—it is attributed to a prisoner who escaped shortly after their arrival at Ctesiphon and who tacked on some additional information about Zacharias' fate.[10]

Strategius, if he really was the author, has achieved a remarkable level of detachment from the events of 614, not in the sense of smoothing down emotion (far from it), but in that he is silent about the disaster which struck the Lavra of St Sabas a week before the Persians captured Jerusalem. He says nothing about the Beduin raiders who attacked the lavra and killed forty-four of his fellow monks.[11] Incidental troubles, however awful the consequences, were not germane to the theme of Persian ruthlessness and brutality. It looks as if he was acting much more as the mouthpiece of the Christian authorities than as a member of the St Sabas community. It was probably the arrival of the escaped prisoner with his eyewitness account of the deportation which

[3] Strategius, 8. 8–26.
[4] Ibid. 5–7.
[5] Ibid. 18. 2, 19. 2, 20. 4–5.
[6] Ibid. 18. 1–20. 1.
[7] Ibid. 12, 16, 17.
[8] Ibid. 5. 1–21, 7. 1–8. 6.
[9] Ibid. 13. 22–76, 18. 26–38.
[10] Ibid. 18–21.
[11] Antiochus monachus, *Epistula ad Eustathium*, PG 89, cols. 1421–8, trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii, 177–9 (with commentary).

either prompted him to piece his text together or led the authorities to commission it from him. He completed it almost certainly before the Persians returned to Jerusalem, established their own direct administration over all or most of Palestine, and restored order in the Judaean desert (in 616). It would explain the stridently anti-Persian tone of his text, as well as its silence about the removal of the fragments of the True Cross, which was first introduced as a theme into Roman propaganda at the centre in 615. He seems to have worked fast (hence his failure to edit out the discrepancies) and without the benefit of eyewitness experience of the siege of Jerusalem (he presumably had taken refuge with the majority of the monks of St Sabas in the province of Arabia).[12] By itself, though, this cannot explain the disconcerting vagueness of much of his account, which is short on particulars about buildings damaged and acts of brutality. A further supposition is required—namely that there was little concrete material about wanton destruction of churches and atrocities available to Strategius and that *the Persian high command had done its best to prevent the victorious troops running amok inside the city.*

Paradoxically, it is the very lack of specific detail which inspires confidence. Hagiographers were adept at introducing spurious details, for example descriptions of real places with which they were familiar and references to named but probably imaginary witnesses, to give their works an air of verisimilitude. Strategius has not done so, resorting instead to rhetorical exaggeration, which is not so artfully composed as to prevent the reader from observing that it is backed by very little of substance. If, for example, attention is turned to the individual cases of brutality on the deportees' journey from Jerusalem to Ctesiphon which are introduced by Strategius, conclusions can be drawn about Persian behaviour diametrically opposed to Strategius' own line of argument. Only two incidents are mentioned: one, a terrible atrocity, involved a Persian magnate who executed two sisters when they refused to worship fire and then had their father Eusebius, deacon of the church of the Resurrection, burned alive after a severe beating; the other involved the forcible parting of two inseparable twins, the 11-year-old sons of John, a Jerusalem notable, who were assigned to different Persian masters and whose chance meeting as they rode to captivity is graphically described.[13] If this was all that the Persians could be accused of, they do not appear in general to have treated their prisoners badly on the journey. Similar conclusions can be drawn about their behaviour immediately after the fall of Jerusalem, if due allowance is made for rhetorical exaggeration.

[12] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 179.
[13] Strategius, 16–17.

Strategius' history thus contains material which can be turned against his own interpretation. This material can safely be taken to be authentic and can be used in a reconstruction of the dramatic events of 614. In spite of its very obvious bias, his account is of great value to the historian, as long as it is handled judiciously. The error in his dating of the start of the siege must be a mistake, either a slip of the memory or the pen on his part, or a scribal error introduced at a very early stage in the manuscript tradition since it appears in all the versions which survive. At a later stage three appendices were tacked on to Strategius' original text, perhaps as part of a revised version produced soon after Heraclius' visit to Jerusalem in March 630. The first (c. 22) reproduces the text of a later letter of Zacharias' in which he admonishes his flock at Jerusalem not to forget the captives in Persia, warns them to avoid backsliding, and appeals for financial support.[14] The second (c. 23) gives a long, detailed, and almost certainly spurious account of a body-count carried out by a named, but probably imaginary, character (Thomas, who, with the help of his wife, managed to count and bury a grand total of 66,509 corpses, according to what is probably the most reliable extant version of the text).[15] The third (c. 24) covers the military and political background to the ending of the war in Persia, subsequent changes of ruler, Heraclius' actions on his visit to Jerusalem in 630, and the death of Modestus soon after his installation as patriarch in 630.

The most important local Palestinian sources after Strategius are two saints' lives, both completed after the end of the war. The *Life of St George of Choziba*[16] was written by his spiritual son Antony, who knew him from his arrival at the monastery, not long after the siege of Jerusalem and the Persians' withdrawal back to Damascus (Beduin raiders were making travel dangerous at the time and would soon force the monks to flee), to *c.*625 when George

[14] A copy of the Greek original has survived in a text dubbed *Opusculum de Persica captivitate*, ed. F. Combefis, *PG*, 86. 2, cols. 3228–68, at 3228–33. It is then followed by the description of an investigation into the number of the dead left after the departure of the Persians, similar to that in Strategius, c. 23, but without a breakdown by find-spots, and a deathbed homily which breaks off before the speaker is identified. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 135–6 envisages Strategius as incorporating material from the *Opusculum* into his own composition.

[15] Different totals, ranging from 33,067 to 66,509, with different breakdowns by location, are given by the extant versions of the Georgian and Arabic translations of the lost Greek original. They are tabulated by Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 160. The highest figure is that of the single Georgian version, which, on the assumption that the figure of the dead at one site (Mamilla) should read 24,518 as in three of the Arab versions rather than 4,518, tallies roughly with the aggregate of the individual figures (67,589). That a death-toll of this order of magnitude was broadcast is confirmed by the *Opusculum*, which gives a round figure of 65,000.

[16] *Vita sancti Georgii Chozebitae*, ed. anon., *An. Boll.* 7 (1888), 95–144, 336–59.

died.[17] Antony decided to write George's life while he was still alive, at some point after the monks' return to Choziba (datable probably to summer 616). He was well placed to gather material about George's early life, both by listening to him and by questioning his fellow monks.[18] It is a substantial work, although not on the scale of the *Life of St Theodore*, and took many years to complete. A reference to a certain Dorotheus' tenure of the post of *staurophylax* in the patriarchate of Modestus shows that it was finished at the earliest in 630.[19]

Since George, unlike Theodore of Syceon, did his utmost to avoid entanglement in the secular world, his biography contains relatively little material about life outside Choziba, except for a short disturbed period following the Persians' capture of Damascus in 613. George knew that evil was coming fast upon the *oikoumene* because of men's wickedness and simply urged the monks to pray unceasingly for some holding back of the imminent disasters. Travelling with a party of monks towards Jericho, he had a vision of what lay ahead—a great battle involving Indians (Arabs) being fought overhead and the ground shaking. At the same time the rest of the party realized that Jericho was in imminent danger of attack when they saw troops and young men of the urban militia issue forth.[20] Later, the monks had to abandon the monastery, some going with the abbot to the province of Arabia, some hiding in caves, others (including George) in a rocky ravine where they were found by Arab raiders. It was only after the restoration of order, brought about by the Persian occupying authorities, that the monks could return to Choziba.[21] His biographer's chief concern was to give a portrait of a remarkable contemplative holy man. He therefore makes George's homilies on the supreme importance of humility the centrepieces of his life.[22] There is a certain fluidity in the chronology, which makes it hard to date such incidents as are included which did not occur in the years of crisis.[23] Its historical offering is therefore

[17] *Vita sancti Georgii Chozebitae*, cc. 8 (130. 13–133. 13), 57 (355. 17–357. 4).

[18] Ibid. cc. 42 (143. 7–144. 10), 43 (336. 2–337. 13).

[19] Ibid. c. 16 (115. 4–8).

[20] Ibid. ccc. 18 (117. 12–118. 6), 30 (127. 19–129. 2).

[21] Ibid. cc. 31 (129. 14–130. 11), 34–5 (133. 13–135. 5). Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 177–80 for the date of return.

[22] *V. Georgii*, cc. 14 (111. 17–114. 2), 39 (137. 14–141. 18), 44–6 (337. 14–340. 6), cc. 47–56 (340. 13–355. 16).

[23] The arrangement of material is thematic as well as chronological. Thus episodes illustrating George's spiritual fortitude and authority as a solitary (cc. 11–19) are grouped together, as are supernatural episodes involving animals (cc. 20–3) and the Mother of God (cc. 23–8). But there is a general progression from (1) George's upbringing and early years as a monk (cc. 1–10) through (2) memorable incidents from his life as a solitary attached to Choziba (cc. 11–28), (3) the years of crisis, viewed first from George's point of view, then from Antony's (cc. 29–37), to (4) George's last years, which are skimpily covered, since Antony is primarily concerned to reproduce three powerful homilies delivered by his spiritual master (cc. 38–60).

slight, confined to a short period and the reaction of one outstanding individual. For those, though, it is invaluable.

The other individual whose biography is preserved was a Persian, the son of a *herbad* who grew up in a village in the region of Rayy (near modern Tehran) and served as a cavalryman in the army in the early seventh century. He took part in the second Sasanian invasion of Asia Minor in 615, which reached the Bosporus. Soon afterwards he deserted. He had been increasingly drawn to Christianity after hearing news of the removal of the True Cross from Jerusalem. After having worked for a while with a silversmith, a Persian Christian, in Hierapolis, he made his way to Jerusalem and lodged with another silversmith. Through him he asked to be baptized. This was an illegal act (Zoroastrians could not convert to other faiths) and authorization was sought from Modestus, abbot of St Theodosius and acting head of the patriarchate. After the ceremony, the Persian convert, renamed Anastasius, was tonsured and was secreted away in the monastery of St Anastasius, just outside the walls of Jerusalem. There, like a distant precursor of Don Qixote, he immersed himself for seven years (620–7) in reading the lives of great heroes of the past, in his case the Passions of early Christian martyrs, and was eventually inspired to emulate their feats.[24] The main body of the *Life of St Anastasius* describes his determined pursuit of martyrdom, with the connivance of the church authorities, who saw him leave his monastery for Caesarea, capital of Palestine, and provoke the Persian authorities into arresting and imprisoning him. By adamant refusals to compromise, he forced them to repatriate him and eventually, after he withstood blandishment and torture, to sentence him to death for apostasy. The sentence was carried out not far from Khusro II's palace at Dastagerd, on 22 December 627, ten days before the arrival of Heraclius' expeditionary force.[25]

[24] *Vita Anastasii*, cc. 6–12, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 46–55, with commentary in ii. 196–202 and 221–31.

[25] *V. Anastasii*, cc. 14–40, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 54–87, with commentary in ii. 205–15, 231–60. Something has gone awry with the date given in the Life for the martyrdom (c. 40)—22 January, first indiction (beginning 1 September 627), 17th regnal year of Heraclius (beginning 5 October 626), 15th of his son Constantine (beginning 22 January 627). There is an inconsistent element in the year date (Heraclius' 17th regnal year ended a month or so before the start of the climactic phase of the campaign in November 627) and the month (January) cannot be squared with the precisely dated, succinct, and lucid account of the march on Ctesiphon given by Theophanes (319. 22–323. 22, 324. 21–325. 6), which was based almost certainly on Heraclius' penultimate dispatch from the field (see Ch. 9, section 4). Khusro's hasty departure from Dastagerd is dated 23 December, nine days before the arrival of the Roman army (Theoph., 321. 13–19, 322. 21–323. 2). T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden, aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari übersetzt* (Leiden, 1879), 296 n. 1, was surely right to suppose that the author of the Life simply mistook the Syrian month Kanun I (December) for Kanun II (January) and that the date of Anastasius' execution reported by his informant, the

The Life was written in 630 during the short patriarchate of Modestus (March–17 December), by an anonymous monk in the monastery of St Anastasius. He was able to draw on first-hand testimony. For the abbot sent two monks to Caesarea, when news came of Anastasius' imprisonment, with a letter intended to stiffen his resolve. One of them later accompanied him when he was transferred back to Persian territory, with instructions from the abbot both to give what help he could and to report back on what transpired. It is clear that the abbot recognized from the first the potential newsworthiness of a Persian convert's martyrdom and made sure that it would be properly documented. He may have done so with the encouragement of Modestus, who is known to have owned and annotated a copy of the Life when it was written.[26] The Life made the expected splash. The Patriarch Sergius commissioned a new version from George of Pisidia soon afterwards, presumably to inaugurate the cult of St Anastasius in Constantinople.[27] St Anastasius' body was retrieved from Mesopotamia in 631 and transported swiftly and secretly across the desert to the small island of Aradus off the coast of northern Syria. From there it was taken on a triumphal progress down the coast—to Tyre, Caesarea, and Diospolis—and was finally brought back to the monastery of St Anastasius, where it was placed on 2 November.[28] The cult continued to spread, taking firm root in Rome well before the end of the century (relics were acquired around 650), and becoming known as far afield as northern England by the early eighth century.[29]

The Life is therefore a text of great value both as a historical record and as a piece of highly effective propaganda. A question naturally arises as to its accuracy. Was the story improved in the telling? Or was it impossible for author and sponsor deliberately to falsify a story, when they knew all the details and the story was in any case very edifying? This question raises a more general one, which will have to be confronted when early Muslim historical traditions are discussed in Chapter 11. Should we envisage men of deep religious faith, who had witnessed extraordinary events, as being ready consciously to bend the truth, to falsify the record of the past, whether the deeds and words of the Prophet or of a self-immolating individual like

monk who witnessed it, was 22 December, which did thus occur ten days before Heraclius' arrival (*V. Anastasii*, c. 43, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 88–9, likewise pushed forward to 1 February rather than January). Contra Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 265–81.

[26] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 185–93.

[27] *Laudatio Anastasii*, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 202–59, with commentary in ii. 381–9.

[28] *Translatio reliquiarum Anastasii* and *Miracula Anastasii*, 6–11, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 98–107 and 128–41, with commentary in ii. 329–52.

[29] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 353–80.

St Anastasius, so as to improve the message? The closer to the events, the deeper the impression made by them, the less likely, it seems to me, would it be for genuine believers to tamper with the narratives which underpinned their beliefs. In the case of the *Life of St Anastasius*, there is nothing in the plethora of details given about his departure from the monastery, arrest, interrogations, and trial to arouse suspicion. Like Bernard Flusin, author of a recent commentary on the dossier of material about St Anastasius, I put a high value on the text as a record of events, and, no less important, as a description of conditions in the Middle East when it was under Persian occupation. It casts incidental light on many facets of history, but its most valuable contribution is to document the care taken by the Sasanian authorities to avoid antagonizing the local population at Caesarea—an initial reluctance to arrest Anastasius, the discreet location of a small fire-temple, cultivation of a leading notable, the granting of permission for visits to Anastasius in prison, and the temporary release of the saint to enable him to attend the liturgy in the cathedral on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September 627).[30]

2. SOPHRONIUS, POET AND PATRIARCH

Much might be expected of Sophronius, known to posterity both as a sophist (a teacher of rhetoric) and as a doughty theologian who rejected the compromise Christological formula devised by Sergius in the 620s.[31] He was even better placed than George of Pisidia, Theophylact Simocatta, or Theodore Syncellus to observe and report on contemporary events. Brought up at Damascus, well educated, and almost certainly a member of the local elite, in the late 570s he came under the influence of John Moschus, a monk, considerably his senior in years, who had moved from the Judaean monastery of St Theodosius where he had been tonsured to that of Pharan, also in Judaea, where he spent ten years (*c.*568–78). Moschus assumed the role of spiritual mentor to the young notable, and took him with him when he travelled or changed monastic house. Their first journey together (*c.*578) was to Alexandria, where—perhaps through Sophronius' connections—they

[30] *V. Anastasii*, cc. 16–30, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 56–75, with commentary in ii. 232–43.

[31] C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972), 53–98; H. Chadwick, 'John Moschus and his Friend Sophronius the Sophist', *JTS* ns 25 (1974), 41–74.

gained entry into the small intellectual circle around the Patriarch Eulogius and paid visits to noted holy men nearby and in the Great Oasis. Sophronius was tonsured on their return *c.*580 in the monastery of St Theodosius, and thereafter seems to have stayed with Moschus. They spent ten years in Sinai at the Lavra of the Ailiots, moving (before 594) to the Judaean desert, where, based perhaps at the New Lavra, they visited other monasteries. Then, around 603, after the outbreak of war with Persia, they undertook what looks like a systematic tour of monastic centres in the Middle East. Their travels took them north to Phoenicia, Antioch, and Cilicia, then, before 608, south to Egypt, where Eulogius was still alive and they met his future successor, John the Almsgiver, and finally *c.*615, after the fall of Jerusalem, west to Rome.

Both travellers promoted the Chalcedonian cause by their writing. During his second stay in Egypt, probably soon after 610, Sophronius wrote up the miracles of SS Cyrus and John, thereby advertising their cult centre at Menuthis, east of Alexandria on the coast of the Nile delta.[32] He did so after being cured of a painful eye disease which had lasted several months. In Rome John Moschus wrote or completed the writing of his hagiographical compendium, the *Pratum spirituale*, a collection of material on the sayings and deeds of Chalcedonian holy men throughout the Middle East.[33] He died there, probably early in 619, expressing the wish to be buried on Mt. Sinai. Sophronius returned to the Middle East with his body towards the end of the year but was unable to reach Mt. Sinai because of Beduin raiding (probably a side effect of the Persian campaign that year against Egypt). Instead he buried Moschus at the monastery of St Theodosius and seems to have stayed there for the rest of the war. Thus, like the biographers of George of Choziba and Anastasius, he had direct experience of the Persian occupation but, unlike them, he makes no reference to it in his writings. He merely includes an incidental mention of the suffering which followed the Persian sack of Jerusalem in 614 in the course of describing the relief effort organized from Alexandria in his *Life of St John the Almsgiver.*[34] He included Moschus' name as joint author in the title, but evidently wrote it on his own, since Moschus had died well before the death of John (probably on 11 November 619, on Cyprus, to which he had fled on the eve of the Persian siege of Alexandria).[35]

[32] *Miracula SS. Cyri et Ioannis*, ed. N. Fernandez Marcos, *Los* Thaumata *de Sofronio: Contribucion al estudio de la* incubatio *cristiana* (Madrid, 1975). Sophronius describes his own cure in the final chapter (*Mir.* 70. 4–24 (pp. 395–9)).

[33] Ed. *PG* 87. 3, cols. 2852–3112. See Chadwick, 'John Moschus', 41–9, 60–74, and P. Pattenden, 'The Text of the *Pratum spirituale*', *JTS* ns 26 (1975), 38–54.

[34] The original text is lost, but two later versions, one a paraphrase, the other an epitome, have survived. See nn. 55–6 below and von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 106.

[35] Cf. von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 105 n. 39, contra Chadwick, 'John Moschus', 50–3.

Despite his age (his birth is generally put around 550), Sophronius resumed his travels at the end of the war. He established a monastic community in north Africa where he acted as spiritual father to Maximus Confessor. He then set forth to combat the new Christological formula of Monoenergism being put forward by Patriarch Sergius and his ally Cyrus, appointed to the patriarchal see of Alexandria in 631. In 633 he confronted both those protagonists of Monoenergism in person, pleading in vain with Cyrus to refrain from broadcasting the new formula and then yielding to pressure from Sergius but only to the extent of agreeing not to bring up the issue in public. Sergius was undoubtedly anxious to avoid open conflict with so aged and venerated a monk as Sophronius. The silence imposed on all parties would probably have been broken as soon as this most dangerous of antagonists died. From Constantinople Sophronius made his way to Jerusalem, a bastion of Chalcedonianism, reaching the city before Arab forces took control of Palestine and isolated the cities, so by the middle of 634 at the very latest. Before long he was elected patriarch, mainly, it may be assumed, because of his reputation as a champion of Chalcedonian orthodoxy who would have no truck with the compromise Christological formula.[36] His election thus took place some three years after the death of Modestus on 17 December 630.[37] Heraclius cannot have welcomed it but could not insist on prolonging the vacancy when the holy city was in peril from enemies whose victories were inspiring them to aim at world conquest.[38] So it was Sophronius, an aged and venerable figure, who acted as the principal representative of the old Roman order in Palestine after Roman resistance had been broken and the cities had submitted to Arab authority, probably in the early months of 635. He went out to the Mount of Olives in 638 to receive the all-conquering Caliph ʿUmar I, when he came, dressed in Beduin garb, to pray in the holy city.[39]

[36] Von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 78–85.

[37] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 316 n. 90.

[38] See the contemporary reference at the end of his declaration of faith, written immediately after his election (he asks Pope Honorius and Patriarch Sergius to join him in praying for the emperors, in particular that they be enabled to halt the Arab attacks and to subject them once again to their authority (ed. *PG* 87, cols. 3197C–3200A) and a much gloomier turn on the death and destruction the Arabs are causing, their victories in open battle and their boast of conquering the world, which he includes in a sermon on the Theophany or baptism of Christ, almost certainly delivered on 6 January 635 (ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias*, v (St Petersburg, 1898), 151–68, at 166. 24–167. 5). Cf. von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 89–91, whose dating I have amended.

[39] Von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 95–7; F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 151–2. ʿUmar's visit is described in some detail in what appears to be a reliable passage in a medieval Syrian chronicle, taken from the lost chronicle of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (trans. Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 161–2). Dionysius' date, 636/7, is a year earlier than that given by traditional Islamic sources. See further Ch. 7 below.

He died a year or so later, after five eventful years on the patriarchal throne, on 11 March 639.[40]

How we wish that Sophronius had commissioned an official record of Jerusalem's troubles in the 630s, on the lines of Patriarch Sergius' dispatch about the 626 siege of Constantinople, or that he himself had written an account, however brief, in verse or prose, of his meeting with the caliph! He was old, though, and primarily concerned with theological matters, concentrating his efforts on upholding the true faith. Evidently he felt no call to keep the rest of Christendom informed about secular events in the Holy Land, save for two incidental and general remarks made at the end of his synodical letter sent out after his election and in a sermon preached a year or so later.[41] It was different earlier in his career when he was writing poems in archaic verse and archaic language. He lamented the sack of Jerusalem in 614 and wrote nostalgically about the Holy Places in poems written probably very soon after the event.[42] He describes how refugees poured into the city, how all called on Christ to protect them and fought bravely until Persian artillery was brought to bear, how the walls were breached and mayhem ensued. He was probably in Egypt at the time (hence the detailed knowledge of the aid sent north revealed in his Life of the Patriarch John). Sixteen years later he joined in the general rejoicing at the end of the war. A short hymn, written in the same demanding anacreontics, celebrates the execution of Khusro II 'prime generator of wars, evil king of evil, ice-cold persecutor of sweet peace', the return home of refugees, and the restoration of the True Cross which, he stresses, discomfits the lawless Jews who had libelled Christianity.[43] Heraclius' victory celebration in Jerusalem evidently had an ulterior religious purpose, to demonstrate that the different Christian confessions shared the same faith, founded in the gospel story, and to mark them off from the Jews who were blamed for calling on Persian help to halt a pogrom in Jerusalem in 614. Sophronius thus joins George of Pisidia, who included a similar anti-Semitic aside in his poem about the ceremony, and Theophylact Simocatta as contemporary witnesses to a definite hardening of official attitudes to Judaism around 630, which was soon to lead to a campaign of forcible baptism.[44]

[40] Von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 97 n. 136; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 359–60.

[41] See n. 38 above.

[42] Sophronius, *Anacreontica,* ed. M. Gigante (Rome, 1957), nos. 14 and 20. Sponge and Lance seem still to have been *in situ* when no. 20 was written (see line 50). This points to composition at the time the first news reached Egypt, before both relics of the Passion were spirited away in time to reach Constantinople by 14 September (the Sponge) and 28 October (the Lance). See *Chron. Pasch.*, 705. 3–14.

[43] *Anacreontica*, no. 18.

[44] Sophronius, *Anacreontica*, no. 18. 85–8; Geo. Pis., *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 25–6; Simocatta, v. 7. 8–9. See Ch. 5 above for anti-Semitism at the end of the long war.

3. THE *MARONITE CHRONICLE*

With the sole exceptions of Sophronius and the author of the *Chronicle to 636*, who confines himself to two laconic notices, no contemporary living in Palestine or Syria supplies historical information about the coming of the Arabs. Were it not for the nuggets of information picked up and transmitted by the *History of Khosrov*, it would be impossible to corroborate even the main lines of Islamic narratives from independent seventh-century sources. Historians would be left to tease out what they could from material remains and the careful sifting of Islamic historical traditions. Even with the Armenian material, there is much that is conjectural in modern attempts to analyse the strategy of the campaigns of conquest or to determine the extent to which pre-existing provincial and military structures were altered, the scale of new development in and around Jerusalem, and the impact of the relocation of the governing centre of the new empire from Medina to Damascus. There is, however, one fragmentary source which casts a beam of bright light on an episode of immense importance in the early history of Islam. It is impossible to demonstrate its reliability beyond all doubt, but the wealth of detail given inspires confidence and some of it can be corroborated.

The severely mutilated text is preserved in a manuscript in the British Library (BL Add. 17216) of the eighth or ninth century. It is a universal chronicle in Syriac, the extant part of which covers a millennium or so, from the time of Alexander the Great to the seventh century. The principal sources used are Eusebius' *Chronicle* and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoret. The largest of the lacunae extends from 361 to 658 when the first Arab civil war was under way. The last fragment, which runs to three pages in Chabot's translation but has lost a folio, breaks off after describing in considerable detail an invasion of Asia Minor in 664.[45] Neither author nor place of composition is known, but the milieu seems to have been that of local Monotheletes (Maronites), to judge by a hostile passage describing the efforts of Monophysites (Jacobites) to gain favour with Mu'awiya, Sufyanid leader of what might be termed the constitutional party in the first Muslim civil war. It is reasonable therefore to designate it the *Maronite Chronicle*.

The last substantial fragment has the hallmarks of a contemporary or near-contemporary record. It is rich in details, about the ceremonies which affirmed and magnified Mu'awiya's authority after the death of the Prophet's

[45] *Chronicon Maroniticum*, trans. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 4, Chronica Minora II (Louvain, 1955), 37–57. The last two extant fragments are translated by Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 29–35; unless specified otherwise, citations are of Palmer's translation.

cousin and son-in-law ʿAli, leader of the rival monarchical party, as also about military operations against the Romans in 663 and 664. Three events are precisely dated (two earthquakes and the withering of vines caused by an unseasonal late spring frost), days of the week being noted as well as dates in the month. Two of these dates are internally consistent (so probably accurate) while the third seems to have been placed one year early. It is a matter of pure conjecture how far the chronicle reached into the caliphate of Muʿawiya; whether indeed it continued after his death. Two arguments from silence (neither very strong) point to a date of composition before the 680s: there is no hint of the second, longer, more divisive civil war which was to follow Muʿawiya's death nor of the estrangement of Maronites from Byzantium which followed the church council of 680–1. The creation of a new world empire by Muʿawiya and the renewal of the *jihad* against what was left of the Christian Roman empire would have made a suitable ending.[46] On the other hand, the placing of the Nativity in year 309 of the Alexandrian era betrays knowledge of Jacob of Edessa's recalculation of the date. This may have become known as early as 680, but was probably disseminated widely first in his version and continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which may only have been completed in the 690s (since its chronological tables come down to the end of the second civil war in 692).[47]

There is nothing unusual about the subject matter of the fragment, which runs to a little over five pages in the English translation: four natural disasters; an enquiry launched by Muʿawiya into Christianity in 659 at Damascus which was attended by Jacobite (and presumably Maronite) bishops and which found in favour of the Maronites; subsequent payments and a bequest made by the Jacobites to Muʿawiya; demonstrations against Constans II in Constantinople after the execution of his brother Theodosius in 659; an imperial campaign in the same year in the north (the Balkans presumably); skirmishing between Arabs and Byzantines outside Constantinople in 663 (the dispatch of a naval task force and the landing of troops in Thrace would have been described in the folio missing at this point);[48] and a wide-ranging raid which reached Pergamum and Smyrna on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor in 664. Where information can be checked, it is accurate: there is no

[46] Introduction to *Chron. Maron.*, trans. Chabot, 35 (by E. W. Brooks); Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 79–80; Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 29. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 135–9.

[47] Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 80; Ch. 2 above.

[48] This notice has puzzled historians, who have assumed that a siege was in progress (see M. Canard, 'Les Expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende', *JA* 208 (1926), 61–121 at 67–8). Muʿawiya put his son Yazid in charge (perhaps in nominal command), a sign of the importance attached to an attack targeted on the Christian Roman command centre.

mention of the Emperor Constans II in 663, when Constantinople was attacked (the defence was in the hands of his son Constantine), because he had left for the west in 662;[49] the artillery piece which, in 664, failed to hit the walls of a Paphlagonian stronghold with its large missiles, because the team of men working it were not pulling hard enough, was plainly a rope-pulled trebuchet, a Chinese device recently introduced into western Eurasia by the Avars.[50]

These are valuable snippets of information, but they pale into insignificance compared to the detailed information given about Mu'awiya's formal, public assumption of power after the assassination of 'Ali while he was at prayer in Hira. Even the brief notice about 'Ali's death is informative: it is placed in 658 at the latest (well before the date given in Islamic historical traditions); the old name of the Lakhm capital is used of the new garrison town of Kufa built nearby (which tells us that new Arab settlements were not yet seen as altering in any significant way established political geography, at least in Syrian eyes); Mu'awiya, the principal beneficiary, seems to be implicated in the assassination, which averted an imminent attack by 'Ali, and took full advantage of it by going to Hira and receiving the formal submission of the Arab forces there, who 'proffered their right hand to him'. This last phrase provides the first clear evidence of the *baya*, a ritual hand clasp used to seal contracts in pre-Islamic Arabia and in this case to give formal recognition to Mu'awiya's authority.

Two years later, backed by the Syrian army which had compelled each of the other three Muslim regional armies to submit in turn, Mu'awiya was unchallenged leader of the Muslims and ruler of the Middle East. He proceeded, doubtless after considerable deliberation, to consolidate his position, by assuming kingship (expected by his non-Muslim subjects) and entering into a grand contract with the Muslim community (*umma*), sealed in the traditional manner with the *baya*, according to which he was recognized as the deputy of God under the terms of the covenant between God and mankind.[51] His formal investiture took a spectacular ceremonial form, calculated to impress all his subjects. The *Maronite Chronicle*'s description is an important piece of evidence for the inclusiveness of Islam in its earliest phase, as a religion which embraced the two established monotheist faiths. The setting was Jerusalem, recognized by Jews, Christians, and Muslims as a sacred place.

[49] J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987), 263–5.

[50] P. E. Chevedden, Z. Schiller, S. R. Gilbert, and D. J. Kagay, 'The Traction Trebuchet: A Triumph of Four Civilizations', *Viator*, 31 (2000), 433–86.

[51] A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh, 2009), c. 4.

'Many Arabs gathered at Jerusalem and made Mu'awiya king and he went up and sat on Golgotha; he prayed there, and went to Gethsemane and went down to the tomb of the blessed Mary to pray in it . . . In July of the same year (660) the emirs and many Arabs gathered and proffered their right hand to Mu'awiya. Then an order went out that he should be proclaimed king in all the villages and cities of his dominion and they should make acclamations and invocations to him.' The chronicle also reports that he issued gold and silver coins (patterned evidently on Roman coins, but with the crosses removed) to commemorate what was in effect a coronation, although without any crown-wearing, and that he designated Jerusalem rather than Medina his capital.[52] There is nothing in this notice to rouse suspicion: there is early trustworthy textual corroboration for Umayyad and early Abbasid use of the *baya* to secure allegiance to a new caliph; gold coins, of traditional weight and design, but with mutilated crosses, have been plausibly attributed to Mu'awiya; and material evidence (above all the Dome of the Rock, completed in 692, at the site of Creation to which God would return for the Last Judgement) leaves absolutely no doubt about the centrality of Jerusalem in early Islam.[53]

The *Maronite Chronicle* thus gives us a glimpse of a crucial moment in the formation of the Islamic state, revealing the extent to which existing monarchical conventions were reshaped in the new order and a well-established Arab ritual was infused with new religious meaning. The drive imparted by faith and its openness to all the peoples of the book are made manifest in the location of the ceremony and the choice of sites for prayers. Mu'awiya shows due reverence to Christian holy places, but implicitly puts Christ and his mother on the same (human) plane. It is a precious passage because of the insight yielded into the ideology of Muslim rule in 660, only matched in importance by the external view of the new world power obtainable from the accounts of Juansher's two visits to Mu'awiya's court in the *History to 682*.

[52] *Chron. Maron.*, 31–2. The notice is placed under year 971 (659–60) of the Seleucid era, which provides the basic chronological framework for the chronicle. A unseasonal and damaging frost in the early morning of Wednesday 13 April (662) is placed 'in the following year' which is not specified. An explicit date should be preferred to one which is merely implied (the chronicler or a copyist may have skipped over a year).

[53] C. Foss, 'A Syrian Coinage of Mu'awiya', *Revue numismatique*, 158 (2002), 353–65, at 361–3. A. Elad, 'Why did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-examination of the Muslim Sources', S. Blair, 'What is the Date of the Dome of the Rock?', and J. van Ess, 'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: An Analysis of Some Texts', in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds.), *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9.1 (Oxford, 1992), 33–103.

4. EVIDENCE ABOUT EGYPT IN THE EARLY SEVENTH CENTURY

It may be patchy, but the coverage of extant seventh-century Syrian and Palestinian sources is extensive, ranging from the disturbed final years of Phocas' reign to 664. Vital information has been preserved about the disaster which shook the Christian world in 614 (and seriously undermined Roman prestige in the west), about the Persian occupation, about the initial Arab attacks (in the *Chronicle to 636*, analysed in Ch. 2) and the formal accession of Muʿawiya as caliph. There is much more evidence about Egypt in the papyrological record. Although it is unusually thin for the period of Persian occupation (mainly because of the problem of deciphering Pahlavi texts), it soon fills out after the Arab conquest.[54] This documentary evidence makes it clear that from the first the Muslim authorities took a firm grip on the civil administration. There are, however, only two useful contemporary sources which narrate events, the *Life of St John the Almsgiver*, written by Sophronius soon after John's death in November 619, and the chronicle of John of Nikiu, written in the second half of the century. Supplemented by a vignette in another hagiographical text, the *Life of St Spyridon*, they provide much illuminating material, but it is limited to the opening two decades and a few years in the 640s.

The *Life of St John the Almsgiver* derives from a funerary laudation which is no longer extant. It was doubtless well worked by the accomplished *rhetor* who wrote it (Sophronius) and was probably delivered to a congregation in Palestine who would have appreciated the deceased patriarch's defiant championing of Chalcedon in Monophysite Egypt. There are two later versions of the lost text, both preserved in manuscripts of the eleventh to twelfth centuries: (i) a neat précis, which omits nothing of substance and includes the concluding declaration of affection for the deceased by the notional and actual authors, Moschus and Sophronius;[55] and (ii) a paraphrase which is faithful to the content and reproduces many of the expressions of the original.[56]

[54] Sijpesteijn and Sundelin, *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt.*

[55] E. Lappa-Zizicas, 'Un épitomé de la Vie de S. Jean l'Aumônier par Jean et Sophronios', *An. Boll.* 88 (1970), 265–78, text at 274–8 (fifteen chapters plus the concluding declaration).

[56] H. Delehaye, 'Une vie inédite de saint Jean l'Aumônier', *An. Boll.* 45 (1927), 5– 74, text at 19–25 (the first fifteen chapters). It is followed at 25–73 by a paraphrase of what purports to be a collection of supplementary material (in fact a corpus of edifying tales about an earlier hypercharitable patriarch) written in 641–2 by Leontius of Neapolis, of which the original does survive (ed. and trans. A. J. Festugière, *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), 255–637). See C. Mango, 'A Byzantine Hagiographer at Work: Leontios of Neapolis', in I. Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz und der Westen*, Österreich. Ak. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl., Sitzungsberichte 432 (Vienna, 1984), 25–41.

John was appointed patriarch in 610 at the insistence of Heraclius and his cousin Nicetas, who had been left in charge of Egypt. He is praised for making gains at the expense of the Monophysites, for the care which he took to ensure that all ordinands and candidates for episcopal office produced written declarations of faith, for introducing cross-subsidies to raise salaries in impoverished sees, and for charitable activity including the foundation of hostels, poorhouses, and gynaecological hospitals. The war with Persia looms large. John took the lead in organizing emergency aid for Palestine after the sack of Jerusalem in 614. After the situation had been assessed, a large sum of money, supplies of food and clothing, and transport (in the form of pack-animals) were dispatched. Special missions were also sent elsewhere to ransom prisoners, taken, it appears, by Beduin raiders exploiting the crisis.[57] Later, when their prospects of returning dimmed, refugee clergy were given appointments in Alexandria, and John made a point of giving up expensive Palestinian wine. He was eager, we are told, to help negotiate peace (a dangerous business, since the members of Heraclius' first embassy had been executed and the three senior figures sent in 615 had been detained), but was dissuaded by the pleas of his flock. Later still, as Persian forces approached the city, tension seems to have grown between him and a senior general, and reached a head on Cyprus to which both fled. The general was assassinated; John survived a plot against his life and died of natural causes at Amathus on 11 November 619.

A vivid picture of Alexandria under threat is given by another hagiographical text, the Life of a fourth century saint (Spyridon) which was completed in 655–6 by Theodore bishop of Paphos on Cyprus.[58] He describes how he learned of St Spyridon's feat in bringing down the most recalcitrant of the pagan idols in Alexandria from a priest whom he later tonsured. This priest, called John, went to pray at the shrine of SS Cyrus and John shortly before the Persian invasion of Egypt. When enemy forces reached Babylon at the head of the Delta and Nikiu on the west branch of the Nile, he decided to leave and was making his way along the main street in the eastern half of the city when he saw a close friend in a money-changer's shop. The friend, Stephen, was a deacon, in Alexandria apparently on business since a ship he owned was in the harbour of Pharos. He was sitting and leafing through books, including one

[57] The only group or people holding prisoners to be named were the people of Madiane or Madiene (*μαδιανεων* or *μαδιηνεων*)—presumably the Ma'add, the leading tribe of central Arabia in late antiquity (see C. Robin, 'Le Royaume hujride, dit "royaume de Kinda", entre Himyar et Byzance', *CRAI* (1996), 665–714, at 675–7, 681–2, 694–5, and G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532* (Leeds, 1998), 225–40).

[58] P. van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon évêque de Trimithonte*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 33 (Louvain, 1953), 86*–115*.

about St Spyridon, while others in the shop were wondering whether Alexandria would fall. John urged him to leave, before disorder set in. John's story is given as he told it, in the first person, a rare piece of individual testimony from the seventh century.[59]

Incidental information, which is demonstrably accurate, is included about Cyprus in the middle of the seventh century. There had been more than one recent Arab invasion of the island. The first is dated to 649, before the death of John's friend Stephen in the eighth indiction (September 649–August 650).[60] Confirmation comes from an inscription at Soloi which records that damage caused by Arabs in 649 and 650 to the cathedral at Soloi was repaired in 655.[61] The effect of those first two attacks was not so devastating as to disrupt completely the familiar pattern of life. The annual celebration of the feast of St Spyridon took place as usual in December 655 (six years after Stephen's death), and was attended by the archbishop of Cyprus, bishops from four other sees (including Theodore of Paphos), and the archbishop of Crete who happened to have broken his journey from Egypt to Constantinople. It was an occasion made memorable because the depiction of St Spyridon's Alexandrian miracle was recognized for the first time.[62]

5. A DETAILED NARRATIVE OF THE ARAB CONQUEST OF EGYPT

Two saints' lives thus give us invaluable glimpses into everyday life in seventh-century Alexandria and within the city's field of vision (which extended to Palestine and Cyprus), but they cannot match the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu which supplies a mass of information about the city and its Egyptian hinterland at two times of acute crisis. After describing the seizure of Alexandria and Egypt by the Heraclian rebels in 609, which opened the way for their naval attack on Constantinople and seizure of power in 610, John leaps a generation ahead and presents a remarkably detailed account of the Arab conquest of Egypt in the early 640s. His text is potentially a source of great historical value,

[59] *Vita Spyridonis*, c. 20, ed. van den Ven, *Légende*, 81–3.

[60] *Vita Spyridonis*, c. 20, ed. van den Ven, *Légende*, 90–1.

[61] D. Feissel, 'Inscriptions chrétiennes et byzantines 532. Chypre. Soloi', *Revue des études grecques*, 100 (1987), 380–1.

[62] *Vita Spyridonis*, c. 20, ed. van den Ven, *Légende*, 88–91.

but problematic, because of the long and complex process of transmission which has preserved it for us.[63]

John was Monophysite bishop of Nikiu. He was one of five bishops named in the party which accompanied the dying Patriarch John of Samnud to his last service in 688. He then helped mastermind an unsuccessful attempt to elect a new patriarch without reference to the Arab governor. He reached the zenith of his career in the patriarchate of Simon I (691–700), who appointed him general overseer of the monasteries. But before long (Simon was still patriarch) he suffered a vertiginous fall from power after going too far in punishing the ringleader of a group of monks who had had sex with a nun. He was accused of brutality when the monk died ten days after the beating he had received, apparently from John in person, and was dismissed from all his offices and defrocked. He appears to have written his chronicle before the period of his disgrace (there is no hint of it in the text), probably towards the start of his career. This would go some way towards explaining the surprisingly early date at which it halts (643) as well as its pronounced secular bias.[64]

His chronicle is a universal one, extending from Adam and Eve to the Arab conquest of Egypt. Like the *Chronicon Paschale* and the chronicle of John of Antioch, it belongs to the school of Malalas. An abridged version of the rationalization of Greek myths, narratives of the early kingdoms of the Middle East, and history of Roman rulers to be found in Malalas (and John of Antioch) forms the skeleton of John's ancient history.[65] Attention is directed

[63] R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (London, 1916). Recent literature: A. Carile, 'Giovanni di Nikius, cronista bizantinocopto del VIIo secolo', in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos* (Athens, 1986), ii. 353–98; P. M. Fraser, 'John of Nikiou', in A. S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1991), v. 1366–7; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 152–6.

[64] Full analysis and commentary together with selective translation by H. Zotenberg, 'Mémoire sur la chronique byzantine de Jean, évêque de Nikiou', *JA*, ser. 7, 10 (1877), 451–517, 12 (1878), 245–347, and 13 (1879), 291–386; supplementary details in M. Rodinson, 'Notes sur le texte de Jean de Nikiou', in *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici* (Rome, 1974), ii. 127–37. Zotenberg, *JA* 10, 452–6, identifies the author with the late seventh-century bishop of the same name who makes three appearances in *The History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* (ed. and trans. B. Evetts, *PO* V.1 (Paris, 1910), 20–4 and 32–4) and places the composition of the chronicle towards the end of John's life, when he was still *mudabbir* or general administrator of the monasteries of Egypt, since he is given the title in the preface. This date is, however, hard to square with the striking lack of interest shown in the monastic life of Egypt and in the internal politics of the church in the most recent period covered (which ended some fifty years before the postulated time of writing). It makes better sense to view the chronicle as the work of a young man who has not yet become fully engaged in his ecclesiastical career, the reference to his tenure of the post of *mudabbir* being added subsequently the better to identify the author. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 152–3.

[65] E. Jeffreys in *Studies in Malalas*, 254. The suggestion that the first part of the chronicle presents, in the main, an intelligent reworking of Malalas' material by John of Nikiu is advanced contra Zotenberg, *JA* 10, 457–8, who conjectures that John's original text incorporated a much fuller version of Malalas and that it was abridged ruthlessly by the Arabic translator.

at mankind's early technological, social, and cultural advance. Malalas' account of the gospel story and the early Christian missions is condensed.[66] Much local Egyptian material is introduced, covering *inter alia* the foundation of cities, the development of Egypt's hydraulic infrastructure, the campaign of conquest by Cambyses (who is equated with Nebuchadnezzar) and the period of Persian occupation which followed (a subject which had acquired a certain topicality in the early seventh century), public works under Cleopatra and the Romans, Diocletian's activities in the province, and the history of the patriarchate of Alexandria.[67]

The relationship between the Egyptian and extra-Egyptian material in the chronicle changes once John's edition of Malalas gives out (soon after 529, the date of the last notice based on Malalas).[68] He flounders for much of the sixth century, conflating rulers, misplacing key events, and leaving huge gaps in his coverage.[69] Egyptian material now predominates, and seems to come from at least two sources—a history of the patriarchs of Alexandria and a local chronicle composed in Nikiu. Such notices as there are about events elsewhere seem to be arranged around a few large chunks of Egyptian history, which focus on the following topics: (i) the Aphtharto-Docetic doctrinal controversy, (ii) the high-flying career of Aristomachus from Nikiu supposedly in the reigns of Tiberius and Maurice, (iii) a rebellion centred on Aikelah, a city near Alexandria, which took place later in the reign of Maurice, and two near-contemporary events, (iv) the struggle for Egypt between Heraclius' and Phocas' supporters, and (v) the Arab invasion.[70] The only identifiable non-Egyptian sources are the first and second continuations of the chronicle of John of Antioch, both of which were quarried for information about political crises affecting the centre.[71]

[66] Only the Nativity and Crucifixion are reported in short notices (cc. 67. 11–12 and 69. 2) and the treatment of John the Theologian under Domitian and Nerva (c. 71. 2–5 and 12).

[67] cc. 12–19, 31, 51. 18 and 25–62, 67. 1–10, 72. 14–20, 74. 5–8, 77. 1–12, 25–7, and 111–12, 79, 81. 10–18, 82. 20–3, 83. 37–8, 84. 45 and 87–103, 88. 12–16, 23–5, 28–34, and 57–61, 89. 1–16 and 35, 90. 81–3 and 88–90, 91, 92. 1–10.

[68] c. 93. 4–9, derived from Malalas, XVIII. 35.

[69] Justin II has vanished, being merged with Justinian—the composite figure paces through the apartments of the palace in a state of mental derangement and is then replaced by Tiberius (c. 94. 18–19); the plague appears to be placed very late in Justinian's reign (c. 94. 18); and Germanus' bid for the throne is transferred from its correct context in 602, when he was Phocas' main rival, to 582 when he stands aside for Maurice (c. 94. 26).

[70] (i) c. 94. 1–15, (ii) c. 95. 3–20, (iii) c. 97, (iv) cc. 107. 2–109. 17, (v) cc. 111–21 minus the passages dealing with the succession crisis following Heraclius' death itemized in the next note.

[71] (i) Material derived from the first continuation of John of Antioch on Phocas' *putsch*, an insurrection at Antioch late in his reign, the arrest of Heraclius' womenfolk, and Heraclius' attack on Constantinople: cc. 102. 9–12, 103. 4–8, 104, 105. 3–6, 106, 109. 25–110. 9.

The most striking feature of John's account of the recent past is a huge gap which extends from Heraclius' coronation at the beginning of October 610 to the initial Arab invasion, probably at the end of 640.[72] While this may have resulted from damage to the text in the course of its long transmission, it seems to me equally, if not more, likely that John left the period blank for lack of a decent Egyptian source between the end of the Nikiu chronicle and the start of whatever source or sources he found which gave a general account of the swift Arab advance in 641–2 and Roman responses.[73] Be that as it may, the loss is irreparable, and the modern historian is left with only fragmentary information about the Persian campaigns of conquest (which culminated in the capture of Alexandria in 619) and their policies towards their Egyptian subjects during the following decade of occupation.

The chronicle has reached us by a circuitous route. Two manuscripts of an Ethiopic translation have ended up in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the British Museum.[74] The translation was commissioned in 1601 by the commander-in-chief of the Ethiopian army and the queen. It was made from an Arabic version of the original text by the tutor, chaplain, and chronicler of the future Emperor Susenyos (1607–32) in collaboration with a deacon from Egypt.[75] Much mangling and garbling of the original might have been expected to occur in the course of transmission, which involved crossing two language frontiers and extended over 900 years. However, both the original editor Zotenberg and Charles who translated the text into English were able to make sense of the text, only being flummoxed by the deformation of some names and technical terms. In addition the historical content of the last part tallies with what is known from other sources. It may therefore be conjectured that the Arabic version was carefully translated from a good manuscript of the original text at a time when the Coptic church was increasingly moving over to Arabic (in the tenth century or soon afterwards) and that great care was taken over the Ethiopic translation, given the status of its sponsors. As for the language of the original, Zotenberg at first thought that it was Greek (because of the orthography of proper names and certain misunderstandings which he took to be errors of paraphrasing), but later, after noting the Coptic forms

(ii) Material derived from the second continuation of John of Antioch about politics at the centre in 641–2: cc. 116. 4–9, 119. 18–120. 3, 120. 39–55 and 61–5.

[72] At c. 110. 13.

[73] There is scholarly support for both views, Carile, 'Giovanni di Nikius', 388 and Fraser, 'John of Nikiou', 1367 regarding the gap as an accidental lacuna, Zotenberg, *JA* 13, 348 inclining to take it as intentional.

[74] Charles, *Chronicle of John*, introduction, pp. v–vi; Zotenberg, *JA* 10, 452; Rodinson, 'Notes', 132–5.

[75] The fullest manuscript version of the colophon at the end of the text is translated by Rodinson, 'Notes', 129–30, 132–3.

of certain proper names in the Egyptian chapters of the last section (from the reign of Maurice), he modified his original view, suggesting that the chapters in question were written in Coptic, while the rest of the text was written in Greek. Charles accepted this conclusion provisionally, but recognized that further research was needed to substantiate it.[76] This notion of a hybrid Greek–Coptic original is, however, rather hard to swallow. It would seem more likely that it was all written in one language, and that that language was Coptic since it would have been odd for John to use the language of the Coptic Monophysites' Chalcedonian opponents.[77]

John of Nikiu goes into remarkable detail about the actions of civil, military, and clerical officialdom in periods of crisis. The political tensions induced by crisis and the principal structural features of the social order are well illustrated—above all the power exercised by urban notables, and the usefulness of the circus factions once they were mobilized by a political leader.[78] But it is his detailed accounts of military operations in 609 and 641–2, and associated political and diplomatic activity, which are to be treasured above all. He describes the careful preparations made by the Heraclian rebels to ensure a swift, almost bloodless takeover of Alexandria early in 609: the governor of Mareotis on the western approaches was suborned; contact was made with allies in Alexandria; popular opinion was turned against Phocas; the city authorities were warned, in time to sap their will to resist but too late to obtain aid from outside. He then recounts the efforts made by loyalist troops commanded by Bonosus (vilified in the text) to recover the city, in the face of widespread sympathy for the rebel cause in Lower Egypt, and the defeat outside Alexandria which led to their withdrawal.[79]

Of yet greater interest is John's account of the Arab invasion and conquest. It is detailed and reaches out to embrace political machinations at the centre of the empire and their impact on policy in Egypt. Narrative flow, however, is disrupted at one important point, the first half of 642, by errors of arrangement, almost certainly John's fault and occasioned by his piecing together material taken from different sources. A general overview of the fighting in 642, which took the form of three distinct operations, is presented in c. 115. This is separated from a fuller account of events at Babylon and Nikiu, assuredly taken from a local source (cc. 117. 1–118. 10), by an excursus on imperial politics in the unstable phase following Heraclius' death in February

[76] Zotenberg, *JA* 10, 451, 456–7, and 13, 348 n. 1; Charles, *Chronicle of John*, introduction, pp. iv–v. Cf. Carile, 'Giovanni di Nikius', 360.

[77] Cf. W. E. Crum's review of Charles, *Chronicle of John*, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 4 (1917), 207–9; Rodinson, 'Notes', 130–1; Fraser, 'John of Nikiou', 1366–7.

[78] Carile, 'Giovanni di Nikius', 380–97.

[79] John of Nikiu, cc. 107. 1–109. 17.

641 and on local interdenominational troubles (c. 116). Thus, while it is easy to follow the implementation of a brilliantly conceived Arab strategy in 641 and the consequent confusion and dismay induced in the Roman high command and provincial authorities, it is much harder to make sense of what is reported about the second, decisive phase of the campaign of conquest in 642.

Events can be fixed firmly in time. Two dates, in the form of numbered years in a cycle (plainly the fifteen-year indiction cycle in common use), are given, the first for a sweeping Arab raid across the northern Delta (May–June probably, in the fifteenth year, 642) which marked the effective end of Roman resistance in the field, and the second for the arrival in Alexandria of the first prefect appointed by the Arabs (John, previously governor of Damietta) after the evacuation of the city by imperial troops and high officials (the second year of the next cycle, beginning on 1 September 643).[80] The only slip of significance to have occurred in the transmission of the text is the mistaking of the indiction cycle for a lunar cycle of nineteen years.

The beginning of the narrative is missing—hence perhaps the absence of a date for the invasion and of a figure for the strength of the expeditionary force. The story is picked up soon after the crossing of the frontier late in 640. This was near the beginning of the Egyptian campaigning season, which ran from October to June, between Nile floods.[81] ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs was marching across the desert to the east of the Delta, aiming for Oxyrhynchus. The city surrendered. The garrison commander was caught as he tried to slip away with the cavalry at night. Much of the surrounding province of Arcadia submitted.[82] By this initial stroke, ʿAmr severed communications between

[80] John of Nikiu, cc. 115. 2 and 121. 4. Other chronological indications take the form of religious festivals or dates in the month (transformed into their Ethiopian equivalents). Two references to the rising water levels in the Nile and a consequent halt to military operations in the Delta clearly demarcate the two campaigning seasons of 641 and 642 (cc. 114. 4 and 115. 2).

[81] D. Bonneau, *La Crue du Nil, divinité égyptienne à travers mille ans d'histoire (332 av.–641 ap. J.-C.)* (Paris, 1964), 29–38, 40–2; J. G. Manning, *Land and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Structure of Land Tenure* (Cambridge, 2003), 27–30.

[82] The first reconstruction of events to make use of John of Nikiu is that of A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of Roman Domination*, rev. ed. P. M. Fraser (Oxford, 1978). It rests on three questionable assumptions: (i) that precise pieces of information supplied by Arab sources are on the whole trustworthy; (ii) that the initial Arab thrust was directed at the Fayyum and that the Bahnasa which was attacked (c. 111. 7–12) could not have been Oxyrhynchus but an otherwise unknown Bahnasa on the edge of the Fayyum; (iii) that the cycle of years used for dating was a lunar cycle, nineteen years long (used in conjunction with a twenty-eight-year solar cycle to calculate the date of Easter), rather than the fifteen-year fiscal cycle of the late Roman empire. Recent summary accounts of the Arab campaigns: V. Christides, 'Misr, (b) The Conquest of Egypt and Causes of the Fall of Egypt', *EI* (2nd edn.), vii. 153–6; P. M. Fraser, 'Arab Conquest of Egypt', *Coptic Encyclopedia*, i. 183–9; P. M. Sijpesteijn, 'The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule', in R. S. Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700* (Cambridge, 2007), 437–55.

Upper and Lower Egypt and could deal with each as he chose. He had achieved complete surprise. The Romans were never able to recover from the initial disruption which he caused.[83]

A line of defence was organized on the southern edge of the Delta, from Heliopolis to Babylon at its apex, with the Fayyum held as a forward bastion in the west. The commander-in-chief (Theodore) planned to launch a counterattack before the rise of the Nile (in July 641). But once again ʿAmr acted decisively, marching swiftly north from Oxyrhynchus, ignoring the strongholds which he passed, and deploying his troops in three groups, each to menace one of the principal positions held by the Romans. He commanded the central group, which had commandeered ships and established a blockade on the west branch of the Nile, cutting Babylon off from Alexandria. Each group was under orders to engage any force which ventured out against it. The defeat of a sally from Tendunias, commanding the approach from the Nile to the Fayyum, led to the collapse of Roman resistance, first in Tendunias (abandoned by the rump of its garrison) and then in the Fayyum. Collective failures of will, sudden drops in morale, brought about by military reverses, would continue to shape the course of events in Egypt, as previously in Palestine and Mesopotamia.[84]

Bridges (of boats, presumably) were now thrown across the western and central branches of the Nile, thereby tightening the blockade of Babylon and creating a route into the interior of the Delta. Once again Roman resistance collapsed and the whole province of Babylon, apart from the citadel at Babylon, submitted after the fall of two cities (Athrib and Manuf). There was panic in Lower Egypt. Refugees poured into Alexandria, including government officials fleeing their posts in Nikiu. Rising water levels came to the temporary aid of the Romans. A new line of defence was organized, centred on Nikiu in the west and Samnud in the interior of the Delta (recovered in the only recorded successful Roman operation). Nothing is said about the fate of Heliopolis in the east, which may well not have fallen by this stage.

During the respite afforded by the Nile flood (July–September 641), ʿAmr received the reinforcements which he had requested from the caliph, totalling 4,000 men. With the receding of the flood (so probably late in 641),

[83] There is a fair amount of authentic detail in a late local history of the conquest of Oxyrhynchus, the *Futuh al-Bahnasa*, despite its transformation of history into romance and epic. But the order of events has been altered radically. The early capture of Oxyrhynchus, a brilliant move which instantly put the Romans on the defensive, is placed after the conquest of the Fayyum, and follows a long siege. The text's military narrative is summarized by J. Jarry, 'La Conquête du Fayoum par les Musulmans d'après le Futuh al-Bahnasa', *Annales islamologiques*, 9 (1970), 9–20.

[84] John of Nikiu, cc. 111. 13–112. 4, 112. 7–12.

operations were resumed. The citadel of Babylon capitulated on Easter Monday (642). ʿAmr could now use its port as his principal naval base. At the approach of a cavalry force, the commander at Nikiu fled, the troops cast aside their arms, and the fleet dispersed (in May). Alexandria could now be attacked, but ʿAmr did not have the resources to engage in a siege. Instead, he sent a raiding expedition north in early summer before the next flood season, to cause extensive damage and thus to impress forcibly on the citizens of the northern Delta, from Alexandria to Damietta, the powerlessness of the Roman authorities. At the same, time, he drove a paved road (built out of materials plundered outside Alexandria) from Babylon north into the Delta, at which Samnud (recaptured by the Romans in the previous autumn) was abandoned without a fight, and extended his hold on the central Nile valley by taking Antinoe to the south of Oxyrhynchus. The province submitted, after the governor fled to Alexandria, and soon the garrison holding out in the citadel of Antinoe was overwhelmed.[85]

The cumulative effect of these operations was to leave the Romans with no alternative to relinquishing control over Egypt to the victorious Arabs. Authority to do so was granted to the Patriarch Cyrus, who, at talks in Babylon, negotiated an eleven-month armistice. Its terms were then ratified after his return to Alexandria, in successive meetings, by the heads of the civil and military administration, by the army, and by the citizen body. In return for the payment of tribute, military operations would cease and the Romans would make arrangements to evacuate Alexandria by the end of the armistice. In the meantime, control of the rest of Egypt would change hands in an orderly fashion. Three of ʿAmr's senior appointees from among the cadre of Roman administrators are named. The fiscal apparatus was put to work in service of the new Arab regime, in the first instance supplying provisions to ʿAmr's troops. The final act was the peaceful takeover of Alexandria in September 643. ʿAmr came to the city and installed an emollient figure, John, previously governor of Damietta, as prefect of Lower Egypt, in place of his first appointee Menas who was criticized for overtaxing the provincials.[86] John is credited with reducing taxation—despite the need to fund continuing Arab operations, now concentrated on the Pentapolis to the west, and a massive infrastructure project, the clearance and reopening of Trajan's canal linking the Nile to the head of the Red Sea.[87]

[85] John of Nikiu, cc. 112. 5–6, 113. 1–115. 12, 116. 7–8, 117. 1–118. 10, 119. 1–17.

[86] John of Nikiu, cc. 119. 22, 120. 1–38 and 66–72, 121. 1–11. Cf. J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, iii: *A.D. 527–641* (Cambridge, 1992), Ioannes 251.

[87] Butler, *Arab Conquest*, 345–8, 427–31.

With the completion of the orderly handover of power in the provinces of Lower and Middle Egypt which took place during the armistice and the evacuation of Alexandria at its end, John of Nikiu brings his Egyptian version of late antique universal history to a close with a prayer for God's help in a time of tribulation (c. 122). From his vantage point, some twenty or thirty years later, it was all too plain that a new age had begun, that, whatever fluctuations might occur in its allegiance, Egypt was now an integral part of a new Muslim empire. There are, as has been observed, confusions in his narrative, brought about in the course of marrying material from different sources together. At one point material about the fall of Caesarea of Palestine to the Arabs has intruded (c. 118. 10–12), apparently because it featured in an aside on the earlier career of Theodore, the Roman commander-in-chief in 640/1 and 641/2.[88] There are also large gaps in the coverage, nothing being said about the fate of Heliopolis, the key to Roman defence in the south-eastern sector of the Delta, or about the extension of Arab authority over Upper Egypt. But, in the main, John's narrative is lucid and well articulated. It contains more than enough detail about chronology, topography, military commands, military movements, and associated civilian action for the reconstruction of history. The Arabs can be seen to have had good intelligence about Egypt, to have devised a plan which exploited their superior strategic mobility to the full, and to have backed military operations with well-organized logistical support activity (evident above all in the construction of bridges, the mobilization of naval resources, and strategic road works). John's chronicle is as valuable as any non-documentary source to have survived from the seventh century. It reveals the effectiveness of a bold offensive strategy in breaking the resistance of the Christian Roman authorities within two years and in demonstrating in Egypt, as previously in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia, that Islam was divinely sanctioned and that its rising power was unstoppable by unaided human exertions.

6. CONCLUSION

Important aspects of seventh-century history, left in shadow by the sources discussed in Chapters 1–4, have been illuminated in these two chapters. Much more of the propaganda spewed out to sustain Christian morale in the dark days of the war against Khusro has been picked up, as also of the exultant

[88] Martindale, *PLRE*, iii, Theodorus 166.

celebration of victory when it came at last, the Turks evidently acting as divinely sanctioned rescuers of a latter-day chosen people. With the help of hagiographical and historical texts, it has been possible to feel the texture of social and economic life in widely separated localities, in north-west Asia Minor as the sounds of war came ever closer in the first years of Heraclius' reign, in Palestine under Persian occupation, and in Egypt at moments of acute crisis in 609, 619, and 641–3. Several episodes, hitherto only glimpsed fleetingly, have been observed at closer quarters: a series of threatening attacks on the principal bastion of Roman power in the Balkans outside Constantinople; the brilliantly executed Arab campaign in Egypt, which secured the whole province at a minimum cost in lives and material damage; the ceremonial investiture of Muʿawiya as God's deputy on earth, well before the end of the first civil war; the climactic engagements in the intellectual civil war within Christendom between two grossly ill-matched parties (a war unexpectedly won by the dissidents within two decades); and the beginning of Muʿawiya's fifteen-year offensive against Byzantium.

Once again, the important items of information extracted from this set of metropolitan and provincial sources can be summarized most conveniently in a table, which, in this case, is confined to new items, not reported in any of the sources previously discussed:

609: seizure of Alexandria by rebel forces led by Heraclius
May–June 614: deportation of the Patriarch Zacharias and useful trades from Jerusalem
614/19: aid for Palestine organized by John, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria
620: Slav attack on Thessalonica
622: 33-day Avar–Slav siege of Thessalonica
641–2: Arab military operations in Egypt
November 642: beginning of armistice in Egypt
September 643: evacuation of Egypt by Roman authorities
646–7: Roman reoccupation of Alexandria
646: start of two-year Slav blockade of Thessalonica
25–7 July 647: Slav siege of Thessalonica
649: Arab attack on Cyprus
650: renewed Arab attack on Cyprus
c.650: Kuber's attempt on Thessalonica
650s: maritime communications still open between the Aegean and north Africa
June 653: arrest and deportation of Pope Martin
20 December 653: start of trial of Pope Martin
16 May 655: start of trial of Maximus Confessor and his disciple Anastasius
16 December 655: death of Pope Martin in exile in the Crimea

657/8: assassination of ʻAli
659/60: assumption of kingship by Muʻawiya before an Arab assembly at Jerusalem, subsequent prayers at Golgotha and the tomb of Mary
July 660: formal recognition of Muʻawiya as deputy of God, sealed with the *baya*
13 August 662: death of Maximus Confessor in a Caucasus fort
663: beginning of Arab offensive against Asia Minor

The most striking characteristic of the sources which yield up this material is their diversity. The conventions of hagiography were adapted to suit the very different lives and manners of the saints whose achievements were celebrated. To a greater or lesser extent, contemporary realities thrust themselves into the texts. This infusion of history into hagiography, to the immense benefit of the modern historian, was most marked in the last third of the *Life of St Theodore*, throughout the *Life of St Anastasius*, and in the Perbund and Kuber episodes of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* (factually rich historical accounts, given a light hagiographic dusting). Histories proper range from the simple, chronologically ordered presentation of material (the first continuation of John of Antioch, the chronicle of John of Nikiu, and the *Maronite Chronicle*) to traditional, high-style history-writing (Simocatta). Once again, though, it is the amount of innovation which is most striking. Who would have expected the aged classical world, on the eve of an apparent dark age, to bring forth so lively and fresh a record of dialogue and disputation as the *Doctrina Jacopi*? No less unexpected is the preservation of dossiers of Roman propaganda material about the sack of Jerusalem and dissident records of persecution in the 650s and 660s, with extensive verbatim quotations. Once again, it is documentary material, like these two dossiers, or the letters quoted by Simocatta, or the two celebratory speeches delivered by Theodore Syncellus (preserved in full), and document-based material, such as is to be found in Simocatta, the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, the *Maronite Chronicle*, and John of Nikiu's *Chronicle*, which leaves the modern historian wide-eyed with surprise and anticipation.

7

Later Historians

The West Syrian Tradition

An impressive amount of information of high quality about international relations in the first two-thirds of the seventh century has been preserved in contemporary and near-contemporary texts. The ups and downs of the long Persian–Roman war can be followed. With the help of the different viewpoints represented by the extant sources, a reasonable understanding can be gained of the principal factors influencing its course. The sudden irruption of Muslims into the long-civilized world enveloping the Arabian desert can be traced in outline, with key episodes such as the desert engagement which led to the submission of Palestine, the Persian counteroffensive which was broken at the battle of Qadisiyya, and the conquest of Egypt brought under closer observation. The coverage does, however, become thin in places. Very little is reported about Persian operations after 615, apart from the fall of Alexandria in 619 (merely noted) and the failed attack on Constantinople in 626. The bold Roman counter-thrusts into Persian territory in 624–6 and 627–8 are described fitfully and confusingly, seventh-century authors being preoccupied with high-level diplomacy, the final invasion of Mesopotamia, and its dramatic political consequences. There is no connected narrative of the step-by-step conquest and pacification of Iran by the Muslims (642–52), nor of the consolidation of their authority in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, nor of their continuing conflict with the rump Roman state (Byzantium).

The flow of information peters out after the end of the first Arab civil war, the martyrdom of the Chalcedonian dissidents, and the departure of Constans II for the west. The last third of the century is left almost entirely blank. None of the three historians known to have been at work at the time has much to say about contemporary events. In the case of the author of the *Maronite Chronicle* this is an accident of survival, but John of Nikiu chose to halt with the fall of Egypt to the Arabs while there is a marked narrowing in the scope of the *History to 682* as it approaches the time of its compilation, attention being

focused mainly on the mission of Bishop Israyel to the north Caucasus Huns in 681–2. Apart from two raids glimpsed in the *Maronite Chronicle*, there is nothing to indicate that Mu'awiya mounted a sustained offensive against Byzantium after taking firm control of the caliphate in the first civil war. There is only one bare reference (in the *Chronicle to 724*) to the yet more divisive second civil war, and nothing whatsoever is reported about the reform programme of 'Abd al-Malik which both made manifest and strengthened the caliph's authority over the Muslim empire.

It is time then to break out of the seventh century and to see what information can be gleaned from later sources. These can be divided up according to geography into five groups: (1) a closely interrelated set of texts composed in west Syrian lands, (2) two Byzantine histories which have much material in common, (3) non-Muslim texts originating from former Sasanian territory, (4) two Egyptian histories, and (5) early Islamic historical traditions picked up and transmitted by later Arab sources. The most informative of these sources are best examined together in geographical clusters, since mutual influence and deliberate borrowing of material is more likely to occur within a single cultural sphere. In order to be able to trace cross-cultural transfers of information which cannot go against the flow of time, the clusters themselves should be arranged in rough chronological order, by the date of the first important extant text in each cluster.

The first body of material to be considered is the main west Syrian historical tradition, since it had its genesis around 750, even though it is best represented in texts dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Ch. 7). Next come two Byzantine histories, the short, slight work of the Patriarch Nicephorus composed probably in the 770s and 780s (Ch. 8) and the massive compilation of Theophanes completed by the end of 814 (Ch. 9). Strictly speaking, Arabic and Persian versions of the lost Sasanian *Khwadaynamag* ('Book of Kings') and the east Syrian *Seert Chronicle*, which are discussed in Ch. 10, together with the Monophysite *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* and the universal history of Eutychius, ought to be relegated to the end, since they post-date the first stages of collection, arrangement, and writing down of Islamic traditions about the seventh century, the *sira* (deeds of the Prophet), the *futuh* (conquests), the *fitna* (civil wars), and the reigns of Mu'awiya and 'Abd al-Malik. But since my prime purpose is to confront Islamic historical reconstructions and their constituent traditions (which are multifarious and have been much questioned) with a solid array of documented material extracted from carefully evaluated non-Muslim sources, it seems preferable to leave to the end (Chs. 11 and 12) the survey and critical evaluation of the vast amount of early Islamic material which survives in medieval Arabic sources.

In each of the following chapters, whatever can be learned about the identity, position, access to information, and working methods of a text's author is summarized before the text itself is examined. As before, that examination is concerned first with its general character and scope and second with the quality of the material which it purveys. The quality test takes the form of a comparison with the outline narrative of the last Roman–Persian war based principally on the chronologically precise and generally trustworthy histories evaluated in Chapters 2–4. If a text passes the test, there is a prima facie case for taking seriously whatever data it can supply about gaps in the coverage of the war, and, far more important, whatever narrative or fragmentary information it may contain about hitherto obscure facets of the Arab conquests and the subsequent history of the caliphate in the seventh century. If it fails the test, if either its chronology or a fair proportion of the substantive material which it transmits or both diverge from that which has been established, the text (and, after the procedure has been repeated with similar results on related texts, the nexus to which it belongs) must be handled with great caution in any reconstruction of substantive history. Scepticism is reinforced if other indicators of unreliability are present—an abundance of gossipy material, tall stories, exaggeration of the virtues of some characters, vilification of others, vague or confused notices of some events, neat packaging of others, pat phrases, and miracle stories.

Where sources fail the test or arouse suspicion by their content or approach to history, the historian should adopt a strict policy of taking no item of information on trust, unless (1) it is wholly or partly corroborated by at least one text judged reliable or (2) it fits easily and neatly into an already established narrative framework or (3) belongs to a subsection of the text which can be shown to be reliable. Ideally, explanations should be offered for the presence of pockets of solid, trustworthy material in otherwise questionable sources, by probing behind an extant text, identifying lost contributory sources, and distinguishing between different lines of transmission involving varying degrees of editorial interference. Such source-criticism all too easily degenerates into baseless conjecture, but is nonetheless worth undertaking if several distinct stages in the formation, modification, and amplification of a tradition can be observed, as is the case with west Syrian historical accounts of the seventh century.

1. THE LOST *HISTORY* OF THEOPHILUS OF EDESSA AND ITS DERIVATIVES

The two main Syrian accounts of late antiquity were composed many centuries later in the high middle ages. An anonymous Edessan author put

together a massive, unpretentious world history in the middle of the twelfth century. His text is chronologically ordered, but, from the start of the Christian era, he separates secular from religious material and presents them in separate sequences. The coverage was extended to the year 1234 by two later continuators. This *Chronicle to 1234* shares a great deal of material with the even larger universal history written by Michael the Syrian, Jacobite patriarch of Antioch (1166–99), towards the end of the twelfth century. Unlike his anonymous near-contemporary, Michael arranges his material into three discrete, parallel sets of notices, a central column dealing with mainstream political history, two flanking columns supplementing it with church history and a miscellaneous assemblage of curious items (in particular, unusual natural phenomena). The similarities of substance between the *Chronicle to 1234* and Michael's work are especially marked in their accounts of the last Roman–Persian war, the rise of Islam, and the eighth century. They present what are in effect variants of the same basic storyline, taken almost certainly from a single common source.[1]

The source is lost but readily identifiable. For Michael the Syrian names the author. He was Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, scion of a family of Edessan notables, who was Jacobite (Monophysite) patriarch of Antioch from 818 to 845.[2] Michael reports that his history was divided into ecclesiastical and secular parts (each comprising eight books) and that it began in the late sixth century, at the accession of Maurice in 582, and came down to 842.[3] He quotes, apparently verbatim, much of Dionysius' preface, including the opening dedication and a survey of antecedent historical texts.[4] This extraordinary act of deference implicitly acknowledges Michael's dependence on Dionysius for all or almost all of the material which follows, probably up to the point where Dionysius' history gave out. However, Dionysius cannot be the ultimate and prime source of the seventh-century material common to Michael's history and the *Chronicle to 1234*, since a fair amount of that material is also to be found, again with variants, in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes. Since Theophanes stopped work on his text by the end of 814, well before Dionysius completed his lost history, he cannot have made use of Dionysius but must

[1] *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910); *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, ed. J. B. Chabot, CSCO 81–2, Scriptores Syri 36–7 (Paris, 1916–20), trans. J. B. Chabot, CSCO 109, Scriptores Syri 56 (Paris, 1937) and A. Abouna, CSCO 354, Scriptores Syri 154 (Louvain, 1974).

[2] Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 85–104; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 416–19.

[3] Dionysius started work before his appointment as patriarch (cf. Michael the Syrian, II. 453, written in 805/6) and continued for the rest of his life.

[4] Mich. Syr., II. 357–8. Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 80–2 for a new translation and a commentary on this passage.

have taken the shared material from another earlier source on which Dionysius also drew. It may be inferred, from the prominence of Syria and Syrian affairs in both derivative texts, Theophanes' as well as Dionysius', that the source was Syrian and, almost certainly, written originally in Syriac. Its composition may be placed confidently back in the eighth century, to leave time for it to be brought to Theophanes' attention in Constantinople (presumably in the form of a Greek translation). There Theophanes evidently seized eagerly upon it and made extensive use of its material about large swathes of the seventh and early eighth centuries, to compensate for the paucity of information to hand in Byzantine sources.[5]

So far so good. Not many opinions have been ventured on the worth of this Syrian material, although, judging by such chronologies and sketches of early seventh-century history as have been published over the last century, much reliance has been placed on it. Such a trusting attitude is quite understandable, given the sometimes threadbare evidence supplied by other sources. Confidence is also encouraged by the apparently sober character of much of the shared material, which is well ordered and not embroidered with obviously fanciful additions. However, neatness of presentation does not necessarily betoken solidity and reliability of the information purveyed. The historical value of the lost source can only be determined after it has been subjected to rigorous critical scrutiny.

It is easier to establish the identity of the author. A crucial piece of evidence is supplied by an Arabic chronicle written in the 940s by Mahbub son of Constantine the Byzantine of Manbij (Hierapolis), who is more commonly known by the Latinate version of his name, Agapius.[6] He was Melkite (Chalcedonian) bishop of Manbij, which lay just outside the contemporary frontiers of Byzantium. Agapius drew on the same source quite independently of Theophanes and Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, via an Arabic translation. Apart from dates and snippets of official news about governors and the *hajj* taken from a Muslim chronological table, he seems to have relied exclusively on the lost source for the period 630–754.[7] Where he stopped using it, presumably

[5] L. I. Conrad, 'The Conquest of Arwad: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East', in Cameron and Conrad (eds.), *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, 317–401.

[6] A. A. Vasiliev (ed. and trans.), 'Kitab al-'Unvan, histoire universelle écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj', part 2.2, *PO* 8 (1912), 399–547 (covering years 380–761).

[7] L. I. Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission', *BF* 15 (1990), 1–44 (repr. in M. Bonner (ed.), *Arab–Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* (Aldershot, 2004), 317–60) and 'Conquest of al-Arwad'; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 440–2. Material akin to that in Theophilus also made its way (often in garbled form) into a chronicle written in Spain around 741 (see Ch. 13, section 4 below).

because it gave out, after the success of the Abbasid revolution, he introduced a citation. This is the key piece of evidence about the ultimate common source. He took what he refers to as 'these narratives' from 'Theophilus the astrologer'. Theophilus, he tells us, drew on his own experience. He quotes him as saying, 'I have myself been a continuous eyewitness to these conflicts, and I set matters down in writing so that nothing pertaining to them should escape me.' Agapius goes on to say that Theophilus 'wrote many books on such subjects, and from them we have condensed this book, adding what we knew could not be dispensed with, while avoiding prolixity'.[8]

Theophilus is also cited as a major source by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre in the preface to his lost chronicle (reproduced by Michael the Syrian). He calls him Theophilus of Edessa, classifies his lost work as a narrative which resembles ecclesiastical history, one of four genres into which he divides antecedent histories (the others are world chronicles, ecclesiastical histories proper, and annals). He is highly critical. Theophilus, he tells us, was a Chalcedonian (by which he means a Maronite, who accepted the Monothelete variant of Chalcedonian Christology espoused and propagated by Heraclius and Constans II) and 'regarded it as his birthright to loath the Orthodox' (i.e. the Jacobites or Monophysites). His history, he claimed, was fraudulent whenever it dealt with Jacobites. Nonetheless, he was ready to make use of it, where he judged it to be reliable.[9] He probably confined his cuts to open attacks on Jacobites (and passages primarily concerned with the Chalcedonian community in Edessa), and was ready to recycle almost everything he found in Theophilus about high-level politics and international relations in the seventh and early eighth centuries, presumably for lack of a more congenial alternative. He replaced the ecclesiastical excisions with material dealing specifically with the Jacobite church, in particular several notices about Edessa, taken probably from two local sources, which fleshed out the history of the city and gave due prominence to its leading Jacobite families (among them his own).[10]

Theophilus can be identified independently. He was a distinguished intellectual who rose to prominence in the early Abbasid court. He was a scientist, known chiefly for his astrological writing. A work on military forecasting became popular. It was cited by later Muslim astrologers and reached Byzantium, where some chapters were incorporated in a mid ninth-century collection of astrological texts. He surfaces first in the company of the future Caliph al-Mahdi when he was campaigning in the east in the late 750s.

[8] Agapius, 525.
[9] Mich. Syr., II. 378. See also Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 90–2 and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 416–17.
[10] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 418.

He evidently remained in his service, since he was appointed chief astrologer on al-Mahdi's accession in 775 and held the post until he died in 785, reportedly within a few days of al-Mahdi's death. With his Edessan connections and position at court, he was well placed to gather information about the recent and remoter past. All useful sources were accessible to him since beside his native tongue he must have had a good command of Arabic to succeed in his career and of Greek, since he is credited with translating the *Iliad* and a medical text of Galen's into Syriac. The fine work of history attributed to him by Bar Hebraeus in the thirteenth century was assuredly the common source used by Theophanes, Dionysius, and Agapius.[11]

To judge by the use made of Theophilus' history by later writers, as well as by Dionysius' classification, it dealt with a delimited period in a discursive manner and had relatively little to say about church history (as was only to be expected of an astrologer who had been vociferous in defence of his profession against clerical attack). Its starting point may well have been the Sasanian crisis triggered by Bahram's bid for power in 590, which was recounted in similar terms by Dionysius and Agapius.[12] If, as seems likely, Agapius only turned to other sources when its coverage ended, Theophilus was careful to halt his narrative, which undoubtedly became fuller as it approached the present, in 754 with the new Abbasid regime securely established in power. Whether he was at work in the middle 750s or later, he deliberately refrained from covering recent Abbasid history. Prudence dictated discretion. Apart from its confessional stance, the chief failings of Theophilus' history in Dionysius' eyes, like other such secular narrative sources, was that it was 'made in a compartmentalised and discontinuous fashion, without paying strict heed to chronological accuracy or the order of succession of events'. So the characteristics of the material picked up by one or more of the four extant derivative texts should include a loose narrative structure, plenty of extended anecdotes, reportage rather than close analysis, and sparing use of dates.[13]

Material may be attributed with confidence to Theophilus if it occurs in at least two of the four extant derivative texts, as long as either Agapius or Theophanes is one of the two. If, as often happens, an episode features in both the *Chronicle to 1234* and the *History* of Michael the Syrian, it should not normally be assigned to Theophilus rather than their intermediate shared source, Dionysius, unless it also appears in at least one of the other extant derivatives. These are the principles on which the text of Theophilus of

[11] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 400–2.
[12] But see ibid. 402–3, 407–8.
[13] Ibid. 408–9.

Edessa's lost history may be reconstituted.[14] Allowance must, of course, be made for selection by subsequent authors. In the case of Agapius, much detail was undoubtedly dropped in the course of the pruning to which he subjected Theophilus' text, but the basic substance of notices was reproduced, probably in the original order. Theophanes was much more selective, preferring to take information from antecedent Roman sources when it was available (as for much of his account of the last Roman–Persian war), but what he kept he presented in the same order as Agapius. Paradoxically, it was Dionysius, the most antipathetic of Theophilus' derivatives, who reproduced rather more of the lost text, but he added much supplementary matter and excised overtly Chalcedonian passages.[15] Dionysius' text is represented better by the *Chronicle to 1234* than by Michael's *History*.[16]

Given the range and volume of reliable comparative material extracted from earlier sources on the war of 603–30, it rather easier to appraise the first part of Theophilus' history of the seventh century than his subsequent, much more extensive account of the Prophet's career, the early Islamic conquests, the two great crises which affected the nascent caliphate, and its longer-term confrontation with Byzantium, the east Roman successor state. The best course, then, is to analyse Theophilus' history in two stages, first, assessing the quality of the early seventh-century material and, second, in the light of the results, embarking on the more problematic task of appraising his account of the rise of Islam.

2. THEOPHILUS' ACCOUNT OF THE LAST ROMAN–PERSIAN WAR

Theophilus' general history of the Middle East between the outbreak of war in 603 and the final peace treaty negotiated in 630 falls into two distinct parts.[17]

[14] These are the strict rules enunciated by Hoyland, ibid. 631. There is, however, one complex episode (first *fitna*) for which there is only one relatively full account (in *Chron. 1234*), Agapius turning to an independent Muslim source and the remaining two versions being highly condensed. In that case it is more likely than not (as will be argued below) that the full account is reasonably representative of Theophilus' lost text. Another topic, Muslim land attacks on Asia Minor before and after first *fitna*, is covered cursorily by all four extant versions, which tend to pick up different items. It is probably not foolhardy to piece together a narrative of events, itself by no means complete, out of the various preserved notices.

[15] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 402–6; cf. Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 95–8.

[16] *Chron. 1234* quotes much of Dionysius in full, but, unlike Michael the Syrian, drops the brief notes about unusual natural phenomena included by Dionysius, presumably because they broke up the flow of the narrative.

[17] The contents of Theophilus' reconstituted text are itemized by Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 631–71.

He gives a spare account of the first two phases when the Persian offensive was gathering momentum and the whole Roman Middle East, except for Anatolia, was overrun and occupied. He deals briefly with key events, starting with Phocas' entry into Constantinople and the execution of Maurice and his immediate family in 602 which provided Khusro II with a pretext or reason to declare war. The main stages in the Persian advance are reported—the capture of Dara (604), the first successes achieved in Syria which included the capture of Apamea, Emesa, and Antioch (611), the occupation of Caesarea of Cappadocia (611–12), the capture of Damascus (613), the sack of Jerusalem (614), the conquest of Egypt and further advances south and west (619–21), and the capture of Chalcedon (615). Into this highly selective account which focuses on the fate of the major cities in the period are inserted three connected items about Roman domestic affairs where they have a direct bearing on the course of the war—a summary of Roman woes, both external and internal, in the last years of Phocas' bloodthirsty reign, an anecdotal account of Heraclius' seizure of power (October 610) and a notice about his first vain peace feeler to the Persians.[18]

Theophilus, like so much of the Christian world from Transcaucasia to western Europe which had watched the unfolding of the war with bated breath, was clearly more interested in describing the achievements of the Christian Roman empire which brought about an extraordinary reversal of fortunes between 622 and 630. This second part of his account of the last great war is noticeably fuller than the first. After noting the two main Persian gains of the 623 campaigning season (Ancyra and Rhodes) and the tightening grip of the war economy on the territories occupied by the Persians, Theophilus devotes considerable space to the last great Persian offensive, directed against Constantinople in 626, and the Roman riposte in 627 when an alliance was forged with the khagan of the Turks (anachronistically called Khazars), a counterattack was launched by way of Armenia, and a victory won south of the Zagros mountains opened the way for the Romans to advance up to the outer defences of Ctesiphon. After brief notices about Kavad Shiroe's coup, the execution of his father Khusro II, and the peace negotiations which followed, the fuller narrative is resumed, dealing with the Roman reoccupation of the occupied territories and Heraclius' visit to Mesopotamia and Syria. The account of the war is then brought to a close with notes on the rapid

[18] Theophanes, 292. 27–8, 293. 23–6, 295. 14–16, 296. 6–10, 299. 14–18, 299. 31–2, 300. 17–18, 300. 20–2, 300. 30–301. 5, 301. 9–16; Agapius, 447–51; Mich. Syr., II. 375, 377–9, 400–1; *Chron. 1234*, 119–28. Theophanes' remarks about the tyranny of Phocas and the Heraclian revolution (296. 10–12, 297. 5–10), which are also paralleled in the *Short History* of Nicephorus (c. 1. 4–17) may well be taken directly from a Constantinopolitan source rather than indirectly through Theophilus. The dates given in brackets are those calculated from the evidence of the reliable seventh-century sources discussed in Chapters 2–6.

succession of unstable regimes in Persia, a sudden flaring of tension which temporarily disrupted the increasingly good relations between Persians and Romans,[19] and the return of the True Cross to Heraclius.[20]

He included three items of local Edessan history: (1) the rebellion of Narses, commander of the regional field army, at the news of Maurice's death, and his move to Edessa, where he had the Chalcedonian bishop secretly stoned to death and prepared to fight Phocas' forces;[21] (2) Persian repressive measures in the 620s;[22] and (3) the restoration of Roman rule in 630.[23] Passages showing a pronounced bias against the Monophysites, of which there were doubtless a considerable number, were expurgated by Dionysius. The only trace of the sectarianism of the original occurs in incidental references to the Chalcedonian community in Edessa, which is portrayed as being in the majority save for a limited period towards the end of the war when Persian rule became harsher and Chalcedonians, suspected or, at any rate,

[19] This notice is not included by Hoyland, since it is only preserved in Agapius, 452–3. However, it is more likely to have been dropped by the other derivatives than invented by Agapius.

[20] Theophanes, 302. 22–3, 302. 25–7, 323. 22–324. 16, 327. 19–24, 329. 1–10; Agapius, 451–3, 456–8, 463–5, 467–8; Mich. Syr., II. 408–13; *Chron. 1234*, 133–43.

[21] This item is excluded by Hoyland from his reconstitution of the text, since it is only transmitted by *Chron. 1234*, 120–1. However the focus on the Chalcedonian community in Edessa, evidently a potent local force, as is implied by the precautions taken to keep secret the execution of their bishop, points to Theophilus' hand. A reference in Agapius (449), under 609/10, to the Persians' *return* to Edessa provides indirect confirmation that Theophilus did deal with the Narses episode, since it was the occasion for the Persians' first entry into the city. Theophanes' account (291. 27–292. 1, 292. 6–25, 292. 28–293. 5) is independent, and concentrates on military operations.

[22] Agapius, 451 (marble stripped from churches in the occupied cities, under 624/5) and 458–61 (imposition of heavy taxes, removal of marble and precious vessels from the churches of Syria and Mesopotamia (here dated to 622/3), and the phased deportation of the population of Edessa (described at considerable length, under 623/4) after their forced conversion to the Monophysite rite); Mich. Syr., II. 402–3, 411 (without exact dates); *Chron. 1234*, 133–5 (dating the tax increase etc. to 621/2, and the start of the deportations to 627/8). Dionysius evidently excised all reference to the forced conversion of the Chalcedonians, but added details, which were probably to be found in Theophilus' text, about the removal of precious metals from Edessa—noting that the cathedral lost its silver revetment and that the total amount of silver removed from the city was 112 (*Chron. 1234*, 133–4) or 120 pounds (Mich. Syr., II. 403). Cf. Theophanes, 314. 23–6.

[23] Theophanes, 328. 28–329. 1; Agapius, 465–7; Mich. Syr., II. 409–10; *Chron. 1234*, 139–40. In this notice, the Roman reoccupation of Mesopotamia is viewed from the Edessan standpoint, note being taken of (i) the city's initial resistance to the emperor's brother Theodore, (ii) how an officially sponsored pogrom of the Jewish community, accused of having collaborated with the Persians, was narrowly averted by a certain Joseph's direct appeal to Heraclius who was at Tella at the time, (iii) the reconversion of the Chalcedonians to their old rite, on the orders of Heraclius when arrived in the city (only a few families, it was asserted, continued to adhere to the Monophysite rite), and (iv) the dismissal of the Chalcedonian bishop on grounds of illiteracy. The last two items are only included by Agapius.

accused of spying for the Romans, were forcibly converted to the Monophysite rite.

From this cursory survey of the contents of the section of Theophilus' chronicle which deals with the early seventh century, as reconstructed from its surviving derivatives, it is plain that he set out to write history at the grand level of international relations. The last war between the great powers is his main subject. Attention is focused on the region most familiar to him, Roman Mesopotamia and northern Syria, one of the two main theatres of war, with occasional glances into the heartlands of both empires when their domestic affairs impinged upon their mutual relations. A subsidiary theme was the local history of Edessa, the author's home city, which he approached from a partisan, Chalcedonian stance.

Theophilus' view is definitely rather blinkered. Events germane to his major theme of international relations are passed over in complete silence. No attention is given to foreign policy concerns on other fronts which might have distracted the great powers from their quarrel with each other. Worse, the Armenian theatre of war is consistently neglected, even though it was in Armenia that the Persians destroyed, in a series of major engagements, the Roman field forces and thus prepared the way for the invasion of the Roman Middle East. The conquest and occupation of Egypt is likewise relegated to a single short notice. Another consequence of Theophilus' preoccupation with the southern theatre of war, around his home city, is that he passes over in virtual silence the whole of Heraclius' first counteroffensive (624–5), which was confined to Transcaucasia. Finally, his account of Edessa's fate in this turbulent period is disappointingly thin, limited as it is largely to the ups and downs of the Chalcedonian community. The opening item of this local material, which strays into secular affairs, whets the appetite for more about the effect of the war on a great city in a position of considerable strategic importance. But the reader finds but thin pickings, which do not include the most important local event of the period—the coronation of Theodosius, pretender to the Roman throne, in the presence of the *shahanshah* in the cathedral in 603.

Theophilus supplied relatively few dates. This is made plain by the chronological vagaries of the later authors who made use of his text. They come up with different dates for events as important as the siege and sack of Jerusalem, the conquest of Egypt, and the attack in force on Constantinople.[24] Theophilus seems to have done no more than provide a loose dating for most events, by arranging them in chronological order within his principal unit for the measurement of time, a ruler's reign, itself delimited by reference to the

[24] Theophanes, 300. 30–301. 5, 301. 9–13, 323. 22–324. 16; Agapius, 451, 458; Mich. Syr., II. 400–1, 408–9; *Chron. 1234*, 128, 135–7.

Seleucid era (and the *hijra* after the rise of Islam). He did, it is true, calibrate accurately the accessions of both Phocas and Heraclius, but gave all too little guidance on the absolute dating of episodes within each of their reigns.[25] Later writers floundered when they tried to be more precise, above all Theophanes whose annalistic format required him to place every event in a particular year.[26]

There is a definite penchant for anecdotal history in this section of Theophilus' text. Some stories only appear in embryo form—the purchase and execution of Christian prisoners by Jews after the fall of Jerusalem in 614,[27] political intrigue in occupied Edessa in the early 620s, and the plea for Heraclius to intervene and stop a pogrom at Edessa made by a Jew who had slipped out of the city.[28] But proper space is given to two colourful anecdotes which seriously distort history. The first involves a race between Heraclius and Nicetas for the throne, Heraclius setting off by sea and Nicetas by land. Their fathers, Heraclius the elder and Gregory, both patricians posted to north Africa, are said to have agreed in advance that whichever of their sons reached Constantinople first would be crowned emperor. Not unexpectedly it was the younger Heraclius who won, since he had the shorter distance to cover by the swifter mode of transport. There was a modicum of truth to the story. The rebel movement did have its origin in north Africa where the elder Heraclius was governor. Nicetas and Heraclius were both involved in the initial military move, the invasion and conquest (after hard fighting) of Egypt. The story of the race itself, however, is pure fiction, the roles of the cousins (for their fathers were brothers, a crucial fact omitted from the story) being complementary: Nicetas was left in control of Egypt, from where he could apply pressure on Phocas' supporters in Palestine and Syria, while Heraclius made a direct naval attack on the capital.[29]

The longest and most elaborate piece of anecdotal history in the next section of Theophilus' text concerns the siege of Constantinople in 626. There are several delightful touches in the story. Khusro II orders the execution of his

[25] Agapius, 448, 449; Mich. Syr., II. 375, 400; *Chron. 1234*, 119–20, 127. Heraclius' accession (5 October) is misplaced at the end of AG 922 (1 October 610–30 September 611), but correctly correlated with Khusro's 21st regnal year (610–11).

[26] See Ch. 9 below.

[27] Theophanes, 300. 30–301. 3; Agapius, 451; Mich. Syr., II. 400; *Chron. 1234*, 128. The low price paid was noted, and the number involved was left vague. Theophanes put the total at 90,000 (!), transferring the evidently inflated figure for those killed when the city was sacked to the prisoners specially bought by Jews for execution. It is impossible to say whether the mistake was deliberate or accidental.

[28] Agapius, 460–1; Mich. Syr., II. 402–3, 409–10; *Chron. 1234*, 133–4, 139–40.

[29] Theophanes, 297. 5–10; Agapius, 449–50; Mich. Syr., II. 378; *Chron. 1234*, 126–7. In this instance, Theophanes may have taken his version of the story, which closely resembles Nicephorus' (Brev., c. 1. 1–17), directly from a Greek source rather than Theophilus.

great general Shahrvaraz, who has been falsely accused of making derogatory remarks about him. The messenger with the letter conveying the Khusro's order to Shahrvaraz's second-in-command is intercepted by the Romans in Galatia and brought to Constantinople without being observed by the Persian expeditionary force's scouts. Heraclius now invites Shahrvaraz to pay a secret visit to the city and guarantees his safety. There Shahrvaraz is shown the letter. He is then brought face to face with the royal messenger whom he recognizes and questions. Back in his camp he devises a scheme of his own. He substitutes a revised draft which extends the execution order to 300 senior officers, and affixes a forged seal. When it is read out, there is an angry outburst from the assembled officers, who resolve there and then to make peace with Heraclius and offer whatever concessions are necessary to secure his alliance against Khusro.[30]

The story gives a highly misleading picture of the siege. Rather than lasting a mere ten days, it is said to have dragged on for many months, well into 627. No mention is made of the large, multinational Avar army which conducted siege operations on the European side of the Bosporus. The Persians, who, in reality, never succeeded in sending troops across to join the Avars, undertake the siege unaided. Heraclius is spirited into Constantinople, whereas, in reality, he was probably commanding the Roman field army in Anatolia at the time. The story, clearly intended to entertain, has only the most tenuous of connections with the truth (which was probably that a temporary moratorium on the fighting was agreed by negotiations at a distance, to secure for the Romans the early departure of the Persians from the Asian shore of the Bosporus and for the Persians safe passage across Anatolia).[31] It originated, I suspect, as an elaborate piece of disinformation manufactured and disseminated by the Roman authorities soon after the completion of the Persian withdrawal, with the twin objects of souring relations between the *shahanshah* and the greatest of his generals and of encouraging dissident activity among provincials in the occupied territories. The story, which personalized history into a battle of wits between two of the main protagonists, appealed to those who heard or read it, including many later chroniclers who included a version in their works. Its wide currency, though, does not prove its truth, and those chroniclers, especially Theophilus in his position of privileged vantage, can legitimately be criticized for their credulity.[32]

[30] Theophanes, 323. 22–324. 16; Agapius, 461–2; Mich. Syr., II. 408–9; *Chron. 1234*, 135–7.

[31] Howard-Johnston, '626 Siege'.

[32] For the wide dissemination of the story, which is also to be found in the east Syrian *Chronicle of Seert* and Arab sources (Chs. 10 and 11 below), see C. Mango, 'Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse sassanide', *TM* 9 (1985), 91–118, at 107–8.

There are other errors of substance. Some are minor: the honorific title Shahrvaraz, 'Panther of the Realm', was earned in the field rather than being granted before the start of operations; the capture of Chalcedon (615) is reported after the fall of Alexandria (619); it was Turks, not their Khazar successors in west Eurasia, who were Heraclius' allies in the climactic phase of the war (627–8); and there was no question of Khusro's fleeing from the capital Ctesiphon to his palace at Dastagerd at Heraclius' approach, rather than vice versa, since Dastagerd lay north of Ctesiphon—the mistake led to a general garbling of what happened when Kavad Shiroe seized power on the night of 23–4 February 628.[33] Rather more serious is the impression given by the placing of a cast-forward outlining Persian advances *after* 610, over Syria and into Asia Minor as far as the neighbourhood of Constantinople, and pairing them with Phocas' political purges, namely that the breakthrough into the inner territories of the Romans occurred in Phocas' reign. Theophilus may well have picked up, at one or more removes, propaganda issued by Heraclius' new regime which sought to transfer the blame for Roman losses to Phocas. He certainly succeeded in misleading later historians when they set about putting precise dates on events.[34] Theophilus also made mistakes about Heraclius' movements at the end of the war: from his winter quarters in Atropatene, north of the Zagros (loosely described as lying between Assyria and Armenia), he had him march south, preceded by a detachment under his brother Theodore, and forthwith reimpose Roman authority on northern Syria and the Roman sector of Mesopotamia (when, in reality, they were only evacuated by the Persians after July 629). The handing back of the True Cross was reported *after* his visit to Jerusalem, and the solemn ceremony in which Heraclius restored it to its proper place in Jerusalem was expunged from the historical record.[35]

Theophilus made use of his position of peculiar vantage. The sense which he conveyed of the overall pattern of events in the Middle East, south of the line of the Zagros and Taurus mountains, surely reflected his own perspective, looking out from its political apex at Baghdad, as well as that of such Syrian sources as he laid hands on. Direct access to sources written in Greek likewise explains the presence of a considerable amount of material paralleled in Roman and Byzantine sources, some of it of poor quality (the blackening of Phocas, the romanticized account of the Heraclian revolution, and the tale of cunning intrigue involving Khusro, Heraclius, and Shahrvaraz in 626), but

[33] Theophanes, 292. 27–8, 301. 9–16; Agapius, 448, 451, 462–5; Mich. Syr., II. 377–8, 401, 409 (correcting the direction of Khusro's flight); *Chron. 1234*, 135–7.

[34] Theophanes, 295. 14–16, 296. 6–12; Mich. Syr., II. 378; *Chron. 1234*, 125.

[35] Agapius, 464–5; *Chron. 1234*, 138.

some of it rather good (for example, the summary of Heraclius' second counteroffensive in 627–8). A perfectly respectable taste for tales of competition and cunning, which has a pedigree going back to Herodotus, left him vulnerable to the wiles of his sources. He was seduced too easily into recycling entertaining but fanciful anecdotes. His account of the last Roman–Persian war can also be faulted on points of detail (errors naturally creeping in during transmission) as well as his mistaken inference that Heraclius' progress through the Middle East took place immediately after the peace feeler from Kavad Shiroe. But this section of his history was, in general, sound. All major military actions were noted, albeit cursorily, save for Roman operations in Transcaucasia in 624–5, and they were listed in the correct chronological order (with one exception, the fall of Chalcedon). The overall strategy of war was also fairly represented, although the distinction between the first phase of attritional warfare and the second of rapid Persian advance was obscured by a denunciation of Phocas encapsulated in a sweeping and misleading general statement.

The verdict on the accuracy of Theophilus' reporting of major as well as minor episodes must remain open for the moment. His account of the rise of Islam must be approached without a predetermined view about his reliability. If, however, corroboration can be found for key elements in his account of important episodes, from the various sources analysed in previous chapters and judged trustworthy, there will be nothing to bar us from placing considerable faith in whatever information can be extracted from his reconstituted text. In that case, with confidence engendered in his historical scholarship, the amount of reliable evidence about Muhammad, the conquests, and the Umayyad caliphate will be greatly enlarged. As for the Roman–Persian war, he has nothing to add to the pool of information already extracted from other sources, save possibly for a few items of local Edessan news which may have been present in the text before it was revised by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre.[36]

3. THEOPHILUS' ACCOUNT OF THE RISE OF ISLAM

There is no change in Theophilus' historical approach when he turns to the rise of Islam. He is as sparing as before with dates, content to fix Muhammad's emergence as a widely acknowledged prophet and the accessions of successive

[36] See nn. 21–3 above.

rulers, caliphs now as well as emperors, by reference to the Seleucid era,[37] but, as before, he takes care to arrange his material in chronological order and does attach regnal dates to a few events of great importance. He extends his geographical range to embrace Egypt, describing its conquest in some detail and including a few notices about later episodes—Muʿawiya's order for the mobilization of a naval task force in 649, a visitation of plague in the 670s, and Egypt's refusal to recognize Marwan as caliph in 684. North Africa too comes into view, especially in the 660s when it was under increasing Arab threat. Armenia figures more prominently, qua zone of conflict between the Roman successor state and the caliphate from the 650s. But Theophilus continues to neglect the outer regions of the new empire, in the north and east. He says nothing about the efforts of either Constans II or Justinian II to extend Roman influence east of Armenia and to create a bloc of Christian powers in Transcaucasia which might be able to pen the Arabs back behind the Taurus and Zagros ranges and prevent them consolidating their hold on Iran. There is silence too about Islam's first encounter with the steppe world: so nothing about the rise of the Khazars in the 660s and their devastating invasion of Transcaucasia in 685, and nothing about Arab raids into Transoxiana.[38] Admittedly the Khazars are mentioned, but only in connection with Byzantine domestic politics at the beginning of the eighth century.[39]

Theophilus concentrates on his home region and the fate of the once-great Christian Roman empire, increasingly battered by Arab attack. He writes Middle Eastern, not west Eurasian, history, and his Middle East looks out over the Mediterranean rather than its continental hinterland. Within his chosen sphere, his coverage is commendably wide and variegated, and a literary concern—to entertain as well as to inform his readers—is again to the fore. A graphic description of the first large encounter between Arab and Roman forces should probably be attributed to him. We hear how a trap was sprung, the Romans fled, and their general, the Patrician Sergius, told his attendants to flee rather than help him back on to his horse for the third time.[40] Similarly the account of the

[37] Muhammad's reputation established (933, AD 621–2), accession of ʿUmar (946, AD 634–5), death of Heraclius (952, AD 640–1): Agapius, 456, 469, 478, Mich. Syr., II. 403, 417, 426, *Chron. 1234*, 129, 166. Dates of accession and demise of other caliphs and emperors, as well as those of important events such as the conquest of north Mesopotamia or the first direct attack on Constantinople, are either not reproduced in full or come with variants (probably introduced in the course of copying and editing).

[38] C. Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium: The First Encounter'; de la Vaissière, *Marchands sogdiens*, 261–2, 264–9.

[39] Agapius, 497–8; Mich. Syr., II. 478; *Chron. 1234*, 207. Theoph., 372. 26–374. 8 is independent and much fuller.

[40] *Chron. 1234*, 145–7. The anecdote is also transmitted by Mich. Syr., II. 413, but has been squeezed out of the very brief notices of Theoph., 336. 14–20 and Agapius, 468–9. It seems to me

build-up to a crushing Roman defeat by sea, off the Lycian coast in the 650s, is dominated by two anecdotes—how two brothers in Muʿawiya's service, known as the sons of the Bugler, freed Roman prisoners-of-war held at Tripoli and set fire to the Arab fleet assembled there, and how the emperor disregarded an ominous dream before the battle and was able to escape incognito when one of the two sons of the Bugler took his place on the flagship.[41] This taste for the entertaining story, which becomes even more evident later, when Theophilus comes to deal with diplomatic machinations in 667–8, is a defining characteristic of Theophilus' work.[42] It had an analogue in contemporary Islamic literary and scholarly circles, where historical narratives were being pieced together out of numerous discrete *akhbar*, longer or shorter narrative units.[43]

Theophilus' first notice about Islam concerns Muhammad himself, his career, and his message. Most of it, save for a remark about his early contacts with Christians in Palestine and a disparaging description of the Islamic idea of Paradise at the end, was discarded by Theophanes, who turned instead to Jewish and Muslim sources, but the same basic outline is presented by Agapius (in abridged form) and the extant derivatives of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. It probably goes back to Theophilus and is best represented by the version in the *Chronicle to 1234*.[44] Muhammad's rise to prominence is placed where it should be, after the Persian conquest of the Roman Middle East and before the final phase of the war, when the Sasanian regime tightened its fiscal grip and Constantinople came under attack. He is rightly described as a Qurayshi, something being said about the location, designation, and tribal character of the Arabian peninsula. He is reported to have come into contact with monotheist ideas through commercial activity in Palestine and then to have explained them to his fellow tribesmen back home. His rise to prominence is then described. He acquired a small body of followers and assured them that they would gain a land as fertile as Palestine now that they confessed a single God. He led a first raid, returning loaded with booty and captives. This set in train a virtuous circle. Other raids followed. New supporters flocked to join the band of disciples. Success bred success. They ranged further and further afield (this is the beginning of a long cast-forward), until they conquered the whole of the Persian empire and most of the Roman. 'From this hegemony was born an established empire with one

more likely that it was excised in the process of abbreviation, since it forms an integral part of the narrative, than that it was an intrusion added later by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. Cf. also *Doctrina*, V. 16.

[41] Theoph., 345. 16–346. 18; Agapius, 483–4; Mich. Syr., II. 445–6; *Chron. 1234*, 179–80.

[42] See section 5 below.

[43] Leder, 'Literary Use of the *Khabar*'; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 15–17, 92–3.

[44] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 403–5.

ruler following another in regular succession. And God, whose purpose was to chastise us for out sins, nodded in assent while this empire waxed in power.'[45]

The perspective from which recent events are seen is that to be expected from a Christian observer in the middle of the eighth century who enjoyed the advantage of hindsight. Theophilus is clearly expressing his non-Muslim view of the recent past. The old world order has been destroyed. A new imperial power is now firmly established, after an initial period of lightly imposed authority. Muhammad himself is viewed as a ruler on a par with past emperors and *shahanshah*s, whose success has been divinely sanctioned, not just to punish Christians (the 'us' referred to) for their sins but also because he acknowledged and propagated belief in the one true God. This understanding of the role of the supernatural coexists with a conventional historical explanation, in terms of a dynamic growth of power brought about by military success on a larger and larger scale. There is nothing so far which jars. Theophilus' account accords in general with that of the *History of Khosrov* and the *Doctrina Jacobi*. The explanations make sense, especially if, as has already been suggested, the Christians who faced the first fierce onslaught shared Theophilus' belief in the Arabs as agents of theodicy. The only serious error concerns Muhammad's city of origin. For Theophilus, the whole of Muhammad's remarkable career took place at Yathrib (Medina), which, in reality, only became his home city after the *hijra*, thereby usurping the position of Mecca as chief city of the Hijaz and ultimately of the whole Arabian peninsula. The *hijra* itself is thus written out of the story—as clear an indication as any that Theophilus' account is independent of early Islamic tradition. The Meccan phase is distinguished from the Medinan as that preceding the establishment of Muhammad's reputation as a prophet, itself dated to year 933 of the Seleucid era, which just happens to be the date of the *hijra* (621–2).[46]

Muhammad's message is then outlined: belief in one God, Creator of everything, unique in his person, unique in his being, a being neither begotten nor begetting, and having no companion; the Old Testament and elements of the New are accepted as Scripture, but Christ is regarded as entirely human but, like Adam, a direct creation of God's, and as the latest of the prophets; a Day of Judgement is prophesied at which the dead will be resurrected and will answer for their deeds, the good being rewarded lavishly in Paradise. Reference is then made to the rules of marriage and divorce, the requirement to pray five times a day facing the Ka'ba and to wash beforehand, Ramadan (defined as a month of fasting in daylight hours), and the divine origin of the Qur'an. It is a fair and surprisingly dispassionate summary of key Muslim

[45] *Chron. 1234*, 129–31; Mich. Syr., II. 403–4; Agapius, 456–7; Theoph., 333. 1–334. 27.
[46] *Chron. 1234*, 129; Mich. Syr., II. 403; Agapius, 456.

tenets. As was only to be expected of a senior figure in the Abbasid court, Theophilus was careful to refrain from making any critical remark, save about the carnal delights of Paradise.[47] On the crucial issue of the status of the Qur'an, he simply noted Muhammad's statement that it had been transferred to his mind through the mediation of an angel, without either giving or withholding his assent.[48]

Theophilus introduced his first notice about Muhammad and Islam at the proper place, well before the end of the great Roman–Persian war. When he next mentioned the subject, the war was over, Heraclius had made his triumphal progress through the Middle East, and there was political turmoil in the Sasanian empire. His second notice concerns the death of Muhammad 'king of the Arabs' after ten years' rule (i.e. since the *hijra*) and the succession of Abu Bakr.[49] Abu Bakr then dispatched four army commanders to begin the conquest of the world beyond Arabia, region by region.[50] The account of the conquests which follows can be broken down into three parts, covering (1) the opening campaigns in Palestine and Syria, (2) the conquest of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and (3) the Caliph 'Umar's visit to Jerusalem and some tidying-up operations in the Roman Levant (principally the conquest of Roman north Mesopotamia). It is clear, even at first sight, that there has been some garbling of the information picked up and conveyed by Theophilus: serious in the case of the Egyptian campaigns (641–2), which are placed out of sequence before notices about the Caliph 'Umar's visit to Jerusalem (638) and the occupation of Osrhoene (639/40); less so in the case of Palestine and Syria, although some effort is required to correlate Theophilus' narrative with the data already extracted from the *History of Khosrov* and *Chronicle to 724*; there is also a passage incorporating Islamic material which has been grafted on to the wrong battle narrative—it must be separated out and transferred to its proper context. Inevitably there is an element of conjecture involved in the reconstruction proposed, but there is probably enough corroboration and narrative coherence to merit readers' confidence.

[47] *Chron. 1234*, 131–2; Mich. Syr., II. 404–5; Agapius, 457; Theoph., 334. 22–7.

[48] *Chron. 1234*, 132, a note which probably goes back to Theophilus but has been cut out by his other derivatives.

[49] The date, 943 in the Seleucid era (631/2), is only given by *Chron. 1234*, 144.

[50] *Chron. 1234*, 144–6, which alone gives the date according to the Seleucid era; Mich. Syr., II. 410, 413; Agapius, 468 (fragmentary); Theoph., 333. 1–3. The targets were Palestine (approached from the east through Moab), Egypt, Persia, and the Christian Arabs. A slightly different view is presented by ps. Sebeos, 136–7, who, after describing the conquest of Palestine, has three offensives directed against Egypt, Roman territory north of Palestine, and the Sasanian empire. Theophilus (Theoph., 335. 12–14, Agapius, 453–4, 468–9, Mich. Syr., II. 413, *Chron. 1234*, 144–5) has referred to the appointment of four commanders in an earlier notice, which places all their objectives in Syria, as is the case in one of the two main early Islamic accounts. It looks as if Theophilus is trying to combine similar but not identical Muslim and non-Muslim narratives.

1. *Palestine and Syria*. Theophilus, like most military historians, concentrates on the climactic engagements of opposing armies. His account of the conquest of Palestine and Syria is organized around three Arab victories and one reverse. The fighting moves from south to north, save after the Arabs' reverse when they retreat from Emesa towards Damascus. The first engagement, a successful ambush by an Arab army, results in the decisive defeat and death of the Patrician Sergius, who has advanced to intercept the invading force from Caesarea with a large army, including 5,000 Samaritan infantry. This is almost certainly the battle reported in the *Chronicle to the Year 724* and in the *Doctrina Jacobi*, fought inland from Gaza, which opened Palestine to raiding.[51] Nothing explicit is said about the later submission of Palestine, but something of the sort is implied by an immediate shift of focus to Syria.[52]

Sense can be made of Agapius' fragmentary outline of operations in Syria with the help of Theophanes' fuller account which tallies with it (save for one addition) and has not suffered damage. Confirmation can be obtained from Michael the Syrian's version, once it is stripped of additions made by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. Michael presents events in the same order and reproduces more of Theophilus' detailed information. It is Theophilus' account, reconstructed from three of the derivative texts, which offers the best hope of observing the strategy of the two sides as they fought for control of Syria. He seems to deal with the engagements in chronological order and only to have been affected by early Islamic historical tradition at one point. All that is reported in other reliable sources is the swift advance north of Arab forces soon after their victory over Sergius, which brought them to the Euphrates 'in the twinkling of an eye', and the overrunning of Syria, dated to 635–6, which presumably followed the destruction of Roman field forces in the fourth of the battles described by Theophilus.[53]

Heraclius' brother Theodore was in charge of the defence of Syria, which he organized from a base area in Osrhoene, relatively secure behind the great bend of the Euphrates. He marched south to engage Arab forces operating in the Balqa' and the Hawran. Bostra fell before the armies met. There followed a battle near Jabiya in the Golan. The Roman army was routed, with heavy

[51] Theoph., 336. 14–20 (reducing Sergius' force to a mere 300 men); Agapius, 468–9; Mich. Syr., II. 413; *Chron. 1234*, 145–7. *Chron. 724*, trans. Palmer, 18–19. *Doctrina*, V. 16. 3–8.

[52] A notice at *Chron. 1234*, 147, that the Arabs entered Caesarea after the battle, is almost certainly garbled. Mich. Syr., II. 413 has fugitive Roman soldiers bring the news of defeat to Caesarea. Neither Agapius nor Theophanes reports its loss. For the later siege and capture of the city by Muʿawiya, see below.

[53] Ps. Sebeos, 136. 39–137. 2; *Chron. 724*, 19.

losses on its flight.[54] This was the decisive engagement fought near the southern border of Syria, in broken country by the Yarmuk river, which made possible the invasion of Syria, just as the defeat of Sergius inland from Gaza had opened up Palestine.[55]

Theophilus, however, misled by a widespread early Islamic historical tradition, did not identify the battle of Yarmuk, about which he had picked up some graphic details (presumably from a separate source), with Theodore's defeat but with the fourth battle (in fact, fought much further north, between Damascus and Emesa).[56] This confused the author of the *Chronicle to 1234*, who went to great lengths to make sense of the version transmitted by Dionysius (reproduced without significant change by Michael the Syrian), thereby greatly compounding the confusion.[57]

Despite the losses suffered at this second battle, Heraclius was able to mobilize two armies to conduct operations in Syria, from bases at Antioch (under the command of Baanes) and Edessa (under the command of a general identified as the *sacellarius*, 'treasurer').[58] The Arabs advanced past Damascus to Emesa, but were then forced back to Damascus by the two Roman generals. Some time passed (but it is unclear whether it was a matter of weeks or months) after this third battle before the armies met again, in what Theophilus regarded as the principal engagement fought in Palestine and Syria. The two armies met, at an unspecified spot between their previous positions at Emesa and Damascus. The Roman army, said to have numbered 70,000 men, was destroyed as a fighting force, with very heavy losses. Soon

[54] Theoph., 336. 29–337. 3; Agapius, 469; Mich. Syr., II. 418 (including an anecdote, added by Dionysius, about a false prophecy made by a Chalcedonian stylite). Cf. *Chron. 1234*, 147–9, 150, 155 (with the additional anecdote).

[55] Location: Jabiya (Theoph., 337. 1); Yarmuk (Mich. Syr., II. 420).

[56] The graphic details involve a sandstorm blowing from the south in the Romans' faces (only in Theophanes), large numbers of Roman soldiers falling to their death in ravines on a confused retreat after the battle, and many drowning in the Yarmuk (only in Michael). Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 132–6 for the two main Islamic reconstructions of events, one of which associated the rout and the deaths in the ravine with the fourth and final battle.

[57] Theoph., 337. 23–338. 10; Mich. Syr., II. 420–1 (two notices, the first simply reporting a crushing Arab victory, the second identifying it with the fourth battle). Cf. *Chron. 1234*, 156–7. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 637 accepts Theophilus' version.

[58] The *sacellarius* was certainly based at Edessa (Mich. Syr., II. 420, *Chron. 1234*, 149). The larger of the two armies, commanded by Baanes (Mich. Syr., II. 420–1), was, it may be conjectured, assembled close to the great city of Antioch. Antioch is identified as the place of assembly of a huge Roman host, numbering 300,000 men, which marches south to defeat, according to *Chron. 1234*, 156–7. The chronicle is almost certainly picking up an Arabic *khabar*, which not only inflated Roman numbers, but changed the names of the commanders and had the Muslims evacuate Emesa and Damascus and return the payments which they had received before the decisive battle.

Damascus capitulated and the other cities of Syria followed suit.[59] As for the date of the battle, it must be placed in 635, since the whole of Syria was in Arab hands by the start of the 636 campaigning season when the Arabs invaded Mesopotamia in force.[60] Something is therefore awry with the precise date, Tuesday 23 July, given for the battle by Theophanes and probably taken from Theophilus, since day and date did not coincide in 635.[61]

This account of operations in Syria, as reconstructed thus from his derivatives, is unique to Theophilus. A crucial stage in the outward thrust of Islam, largely neglected by seventh-century sources, Roman, Syrian, and Armenian, is at last rendered visible. Although most of what is reported cannot be corroborated and involves some conjecture, it can be seen to make military sense when placed in its geographical context. After the loss of Palestine, Roman forces were detailed to hold the only natural line of defence immediately to the north, the Jebel Hawran or Jebel Druze, a volcanic range which protrudes from the Golan Heights into the desert. After the Arabs broke through on the Yarmuk, all available forces were mobilized for a final effort to meet and break Muslim forces in the field in central Syria. As was to happen in Sasanian Mesopotamia, the Muslims proved remarkably resilient in the face of a reverse, and recovered to inflict a decisive defeat on the Romans. It is at this point that one piece of corroboration can be picked up, from the *Khuzistan Chronicle*. The Arabs win a crushing victory over a great Roman army commanded by the *sacellarius* alone (there is no mention of Baanes). The *sacellarius* and 100,000 men are said to have been killed, and the Arabs take control of the whole of Syria and Palestine.[62] Thus it was that the rich Levantine provinces were excised from the Roman empire in little more than two years. Roman Asia Minor was once again, as in 611, cut off from Egypt by land, giving the enemy the inestimable advantage of inner lines. Like the Persians before them, the Arabs would concentrate their fire first upon Egypt, leaving Asia Minor and the political centre of the empire for later assault. Both attacks, though, were deferred while they launched an independent offensive against the Mesopotamian heartland of the Sasanian empire.

[59] Theoph., 337. 3–338. 12; Agapius, 469–70; Mich. Syr., II. 420–1 (including an anecdote, added by Dionysius, about the involvement and subsequent fate of a son of Shahrvaraz); *Chron. 1234*, 149, 151 (with the additional anecdote). Extraordinary muddle results from an attempt to combine Islamic material about the capitulation of Damascus and Emesa with Theophilus' account in *Chron. 1234*, 149–50, 154–7.

[60] *Chron. 724*, 19.

[61] They coincided a year too late, in 636. The date is not given by Theophilus' other extant derivatives.

[62] *Khuz. Chron.*, 45. The continuator amplifies a brief note about the battle in the original chronicle (33–4), which gives the same inflated figure for the dead. Here as elsewhere, it is probably news, circulating in Mesopotamia, which has been recorded in the chronicle.

2. *Mesopotamia and Egypt.* Theophilus prefaces his account of the conquest of Mesopotamia with the tale of a spy from Hira who gauged the mood of the Arabs after watching a Ma'add tribesman relieve himself and scratch. He gives a bare outline of the campaign. What he says squares with what has been reconstructed on the basis of seventh-century Armenian sources, but his coverage is limited to the battle of Qadisiyya and subsequent events. He omits the opening phase, in which an initial Muslim attack into the alluvial plain, which culminated in a first siege of Ctesiphon, was effectively countered by the Persians, the Arabs being driven back to the desert. Besides the battle of Qadisiyya, he highlights the strategic importance of the Arabs' crossing of the Tigris, a powerful defensive line fully exploited by Sasanian forces, and of the two battles which followed, at Jalula', where a Persian field army (probably the task force sent to secure the safe evacuation of the capital) was annihilated, and at Nihawand, after which Yazdgerd III withdrew to Sistan in the far south-east, leaving the Iranian plateau open to attack. The historical narrative, as in the case of Palestine and Syria, is basically sound—as can be shown by comparing it with the fuller accounts of the *History of Khosrov* and *History to 682*, but only adds one small piece of knowledge: the site of the Persian defeat, beyond the Tigris, is identified as Jalula'.[63]

Before returning to the region most familiar to him, Theophilus presents a scenario for the loss of Egypt which is surprisingly similar to that given a little later for the loss of Osrhoene. A period of grace lasting three years (as against one in the case of Osrhoene) is bought for a heavy price in tribute by Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria, who is presented as plenipotentiary in Egypt; Cyrus is sacked by Heraclius and replaced by a much more belligerent commander; the Arab commander 'Amr b. al-'As then has no difficulty in defeating him and expelling the Romans from Egypt. It is a lucid but largely erroneous account. 'Amr b. al-'As' initial conquest of Egypt in two brilliantly conceived and well-executed campaigns (641–2) has been conflated with the failed Roman counterattack of 646–7. Manuel, who is identified by Arab sources as commander of the task force dispatched to recover Alexandria, is named as the general who replaced Cyrus and took charge of the Roman defence. Cyrus is still alive when Manuel is defeated and the Arabs take over Egypt. History is badly mangled in this passage, almost as badly as in the account of the 626 siege of Constantinople. This section of his chronicle sounds a warning that Theophilus was at the mercy of his sources and could be led wildly astray. One piece of new information is, however, conveyed: the deferral for three years of the Arab attack obtained by the Patriarch Cyrus at the cost of heavy tribute

[63] Theoph., 341. 2–7 (garbled and misplaced); Agapius, 470–1; Mich. Syr., II. 421, 423–4; *Chron. 1234*, 151–5.

payments. It is corroborated by an early eighth-century source used by Nicephorus and Theophanes.[64]

3. *'Umar at Jerusalem etc.* Except for this muddled notice about Egypt (and the earlier misplaced description of a Roman rout), Theophilus appears to cover the main stages in the Arab conquest of the Middle East in a reasonably coherent fashion: first Palestine (634–5), second Syria (635–6), third Mesopotamia and the northern Zagros (636–42), and fourth Egypt (641–3). He then includes a graphic account, evidently derived from non-Muslim observers, of the arrival of the Caliph 'Umar at Jerusalem. He describes his dirty clothes, his meeting with the Patriarch Sophronius, the formal agreement guaranteeing the safety of the Roman population and banning Jews from Jerusalem, and his ceremonial entry into the city, clad in the robes he had reluctantly agreed to wear at the patriarch's insistence.[65] There are clear indications that the episode is recorded out of sequence. For Sophronius formally offers 'Umar the submission of Jerusalem and Palestine (reported immediately after the Arabs' initial victories in the *History of Khosrov*),[66] and the cities of Syria are then subjected to Muslim authority—a development reported previously as following from the defeat of Baanes and the *sacellarius*.[67] Here, as elsewhere, Theophilus evidently had difficulty fitting together notices taken from different sources and has plainly made a mistake. This he compounds, by filling the gap between the conquest of Palestine, previously reported, and 'Umar's delayed visit, with a spurious two-year siege of Jerusalem.

After the loss of Palestine and Syria, Roman defences were organized around Cilicia, shielded by the Amanus mountains, and the massive forward redoubt formed by Antioch in the north-west, and around Edessa, relatively secure behind the great bend of the Euphrates, in the north-east. Far to the south, there was still a Roman toehold in Palestine, where the provincial capital, Caesarea, which could be resupplied by sea, was holding out. Heraclius' instructions were that Roman forces should remain on the defensive, presumably in the hope that the Arabs would refrain from pressing on, if not

[64] Theoph., 338. 12–339. 4; Agapius, 471–4; Mich. Syr., II. 425; *Chron. 1234*, 158–60 which incorporates additional Coptic material (also picked up but kept separate by Mich. Syr., XI. 8, II. 432–3). A second notice of Agapius' (479), not paralleled in the other derivatives of Theophilus, does probably refer to the 646–7 counterattack: Manuel who is holding Alexandria comes under attack; he and his troops withdraw; the Muslims capture the city and march on west, to exploit a recent rebellion in north Africa.

[65] Theoph., 339. 15–340. 26; Agapius, 475–7; Mich. Syr., II. 425–6; *Chron. 1234*, 160–3.

[66] Theoph., 339. 17–18; Agapius, 475; Mich. Syr., II. 425; *Chron. 1234*, 161. Ps. Sebeos, 136. 29–35.

[67] Theoph., 339. 33–4; Agapius, 476; Mich. Syr., II. 426; *Chron. 1234*, 162.

provoked.[68] It was a vain hope, as Theophilus shows, when he picks up the story of Arab expansion after ʻUmar's visit to Jerusalem and the submission of Syrian cities, in effect going back to the point (636) where he left off in order to describe the campaigns against the Persians and in Egypt. The Arabs could choose their targets at will. Antioch, capital of the whole Roman Middle East outside Egypt, was picked off first, while the governor of Oshroene bought a guarantee that the Euphrates frontier would remain inviolate in return of an annual payment of 100,000 solidi. When he was sacked and a second annual instalment was not forthcoming from his successor, the Arabs crossed the Euphrates and took over Roman Mesopotamia, encountering no resistance save at Constantia and Dara.[69] It is at this stage, before his notice about Heraclius' death (February 641), with the whole Fertile Crescent under Arab control except for Caesarea, that the Caliph ʻUmar made a first move to regularize its administration, imposing tributary payments on all the annexed territory.[70] Within a few months, Caesarea finally capitulated, clearing the way for the invasion of Egypt at the end of 640.[71]

4. THEOPHILUS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DOMESTIC CRISES (641–661)

Once Theophilus has brought his dislocated, but intelligible account of the first, dramatic phase of the *futuh*, the Arabs' conquests, to a close, he begins to vary his entries, supplementing his material on international relations with notices about Roman and Arab domestic politics and miscellaneous newsworthy matters, especially portents and natural disasters. Succession crises loom large, whether in Constantinople following Heraclius' death (correctly dated to 952 (Seleucid era) and AH 19) or at the heart of the caliphate after the assassination of ʻUthman and the peaceful death of Muʻawiya a generation later.[72] His prime concern remains Arab expansion, which soon acquires a naval dimension. He describes briefly the final act in the conquest of the Sasanian empire, an expedition sent to track down the *shahanshah* Yazdgerd,

[68] Agapius, 471; Mich. Syr., II. 424–5; *Chron. 1234*, 158.

[69] Theoph., 340. 2–12, 20–6; Agapius, 476–7; Mich. Syr., II. 426; *Chron. 1234*, 162–3.

[70] Theoph., 341. 8–10; Agapius, 478; Mich. Syr., II. 426.

[71] Theoph., 341. 21–3 (including the information that the siege lasted seven years); Agapius, 478; Mich. Syr., II. 430–1 (longest and most detailed version); *Chron. 1234*, 165–6.

[72] Theoph., 341. 12–17, 346. 20–347. 4, 347. 26–8, 356. 15–17, 360. 22–361. 3; Agapius, 478, 484–6, 493, 494–7; Mich. Syr., II. 426, 430, 449–50, 468–70; *Chron. 1234*, 166–7, 181–6, 196, 197–201.

the account of whose death as a fugitive, hiding in a mill near Merv, tallies with the tradition preserved in the *Khwadaynamag*.[73] He reports successive attacks on Roman territory carried out by land and sea both before and after first *fitna*, paying more attention to naval than military activity. He also covers diplomatic aspects of international relations: several temporary agreements between Romans and Arabs are reported, the last of which is regarded as fatally weakening the Roman position at the end of the century. The history retailed is basically Mediterranean history, with occasional forays into the continental hinterland of the caliphate, to note major events such as the demise of the Sasanian dynasty and a change of allegiance on the part of the leading prince of Armenia at a critical juncture.[74]

The narrative up to first *fitna* is, on the whole, solidly grounded. Wherever there is reliable comparative material, against which to check its chronology and substance, it proves its worth. The principal events in the troubled period following Heraclius' death are picked out and culminate, as they should, in the abortive rebellion and death of Valentinus (correctly placed before the assassination of 'Umar (autumn 644)).[75] There is solid evidence for the rebellion of Gregory, exarch of Africa (646), which provided an opportunity for the Arabs to launch an attack (647), as reported by Theophilus.[76] A large-scale naval offensive directed against Cyprus (in 649) is independently attested and dated in an inscription from Soloi and an incidental comment in the Life of St Spyridon (written in 655), while the climax of the offensive, involving coordinated land and sea attacks on Constantinople itself (654), comes, as it should, after the secession of Armenia and Arab military intervention there and before the outbreak of first *fitna* (656), all episodes documented in the *History of Khosrov*.[77] Four other reports about Arab naval activity in this period cannot be corroborated but fit the contexts in which they are placed: (1) an attack, placed after the devastation of Cyprus, which resulted in the capitulation, demilitarization, and depopulation of Aradus (a small but powerfully defended naval base just off the coast of northern Syria);[78] (2) sabotage in Tripoli, designed to delay a naval expedition against

[73] Agapius, 481; Mich. Syr., II. 430; *Chron. 1234*, 178.

[74] Theoph., 343. 24–344. 15, 344. 19–29, 345. 8–14; Agapius, 479–81, 481–3; Mich. Syr., II. 440–3; *Chron. 1234*, 166, 167, 173–8, 180.

[75] Theoph., 341. 12–17, 343. 2–5 (with additional details); Agapius, 478 (brief); Mich. Syr., II. 426; *Chron. 1234*, 166–7.

[76] Theoph., 343. 15–16, 24–8; Agapius, 479; Mich. Syr., II. 440–1; *Chron. 1234*, 167.

[77] Theoph., 343. 30–344. 1, 345. 16–346. 18; Agapius, 480, 483–4; Mich. Syr., II. 441–2, 445–6; *Chron. 1234*, 173–7, 179–80. Cf. ps. Sebeos, *Hist. Com.*, nn. 63, 69–75, 79, 83.

[78] Theoph., 344. 1–15, 345. 8–11; Agapius, 480–1, 482; Mich. Syr., II. 442–3; *Chron. 1234*, 177–8, 180.

Constantinople;[79] (3) a naval battle fought off the coast of Lycia, near Phoenix, from which the Emperor Constans II barely escaped with his life;[80] and (4) the capture of Rhodes and demolition of the Colossus by the fleet sent against Constantinople (in 654).[81]

Useful comparative material thins out after the outbreak of first *fitna*. But the general scenario of civil war between a western and an eastern power bloc within Islam accords with that given by the *History of Khosrov*, while a renewal of offensive action by land and sea against Asia Minor, once Muʿawiya had secured his grip on power and had been acknowledged as ruler of the world, fits the picture painted by the *History to 682*.[82] This also confirms Theophilus' report that Constans left for the west soon after the end of first *fitna*.[83] But most of the information which is purveyed by Theophilus' extant derivatives cannot be checked and must be judged on its merits. All one can do is to extract what one can from the extant versions (even if an item is only retailed properly by one) and see whether the pieces fit neatly together and the resulting picture makes strategic sense. Theophilus passes this test, the only obvious embellishments on the truth occurring in the accounts of first and second *fitna*. We may therefore begin to fill in the blank second half of the seventh century with the narrative of Arab–Roman conflict in the Mediterranean arena, punctuated by two rounds of civil war in the caliphate, which he presents. As before, it is not without its fault, above all because of limitations of coverage, but it provides the foundations for any modern historical reconstruction.

It is not made clear, at the outset, that operations in the west against the two principal remaining components of the eastern Roman empire, Asia Minor and north Africa, were of secondary importance as long as Arab forces were still encountering effective resistance in the Iranian highlands and the Sasanian *shahanshah* was at large. A misleading impression is conveyed that Muʿawiya launched a series of bold offensive campaigns in the first ten years

[79] Theoph., 345. 16–25; Agapius, 483–4; Mich. Syr., II. 445. Theophilus seems to have summarized a longer anecdote about the feats of Sons of the Bugler (see p. 208 above)

[80] Theoph., 345. 25–346. 15; Agapius, 484; Mich. Syr., II. 445–6; *Chron. 1234*, 179–80. A continuation of the tale of the Sons of the Bugler, one of whom put on Constans' clothes and acted as a decoy, fighting to the death on the imperial ship, while Constans escaped.

[81] The best version is to be found in an excerpt from the Greek translation and continuation of Theophilus' chronicle which is included in Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, CFHB 1 (Washington, DC, 1967), c. 21. 49–65—see n. 116 below. Cf. Theoph., 345. 7–11; Agapius, 482; Mich. Syr., II. 442–3.

[82] Theoph., 346. 21–4; Mich. Syr., II. 450; *Chron. 1234*, 186. Cf. Movses D., 193. 11–196. 10 (125–6).

[83] Theoph., 347. 25, 348. 4–6; Mich. Syr., II. 446; *Chron. 1234*, 187. Cf. Movses D., 193. 3–13 (124–5).

of so of his governorship of Syria, up to 652. Their real purpose, however, was almost certainly defensive. It was surely fear of Roman seaborne attacks on Islam's long, indefensible maritime façade, like that which temporarily recovered Alexandria in 646–7, which prompted him to mobilize the naval resources latent in the port cities of Syria and Egypt and to challenge Rome's traditional maritime hegemony. His strategy should be characterized as one of active defence, striking out by land and sea against widely separated targets, so as to disconcert the Romans and prevent them from concentrating their forces for a major counterstrike of their own. Four long-distance, but probably small-scale expeditions are reported from the 640s—a damaging raid which reached Euchaita near the northern edge of the Anatolian plateau (before ʿUmar's death in autumn 644), an opportunistic attack on north Africa soon after the rebellion of the Exarch Gregory in 646, and coordinated autumn raids on Armenia and Cappadocia which caught the defenders unprepared (probably in 648).[84] The weight of the blows struck increased markedly from 649 when a large fleet (said to number 1,700 vessels) was deployed against Roman bases in the eastern Mediterranean.[85]

Muʿawiya's naval offensive forms the centrepiece of the history of the late 640s and early 650s in all four versions of Theophilus' lost text. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre was able to flesh out a relatively brief notice about its first phase, when Cyprus was the target, with a mass of additional, detailed information, incidentally making it plain that there were two separate invasions of the island in successive years (649 and 650 according to the Soloi inscription and the Life of St Spyridon) and that the Roman forces reported to be on their way in the first year were assigned to its defence in the second. Dionysius turns a bald notice into an eloquent narrative, with happy turns of phrase (the sea is transformed into a floating forest by the multitudinous masts of the Arab ships—the inhabitants of Cyprus are winkled out of cracks in the ground during the second invasion, like eggs abandoned in the nest). There are also many substantive details which ring true: the impatience of the Alexandrian sailors at the delay ordered, so as to give the Cypriots an opportunity to submit at the appearance of the great fleet; the gawping of the Arabs at the magnificent town houses of Constantia; the spineless behaviour of the Roman forces sent to protect the islanders after the first attack, who slipped away without a fight; the escape of wealthy citizens on their own ships. The

[84] Raids: (1) Cilicia and Euchaita (Agapius, 478; *Chron. 1234*, 166); (2) Africa (Theoph., 343. 24–8; Agapius, 479; Mich. Syr., II. 440–1); (3) and (4) Armenia and Cappadocia (only Mich. Syr., II. 441).

[85] Theoph., 343. 30–344. 15, 345. 8–11; Agapius, 480–1; Mich. Syr., II. 441–3; *Chron. 1234*, 173–8.

immediacy and vividness of the narrative point to use of a source written by an eyewitness, probably in Greek (hence the use of the term *opsikion* to designate Muʿawiya's entourage).[86]

The two attacks on Cyprus displayed Islam's new-found naval power, its ability to strike at will at target islands, to cause extensive damage, and to net large quantities of booty from defended centres of population, such as Lapithus which was forced to surrender on unfavourable terms by the second expedition. No attempt, though, was made to garrison Lapithus or the capital Constantia (taken, apparently without resistance, a year earlier), let alone to press on with the methodical conquest of the island. Muʿawiya, who delegated the command of the second expedition to a subordinate, was still primarily concerned with defence rather than pushing westward, island by island, towards Rome's inner, island-studded Aegean Sea. The effects achieved may well have been those sought, namely to draw the attention of the Romans away from their most exposed forward base on the small offshore island of Aradus, menacingly close to the north Syrian coast. At any rate Aradus was Muʿawiya's main objective in 650. He took personal charge of operations. The fortress on the island was evidently well defended and well garrisoned. Stiff resistance was put up. The offer of a negotiated settlement, conveyed by a bishop, was rejected at first, a change of mind only occurring when it became plain the following spring (651) that Arab forces would be deployed in overwhelming strength. Muʿawiya was then able to clear the island of its population (offered the choice of return to Roman territory or resettlement in Syria) and to demolish its defences and naval installations.[87]

A raid on Isauria emphasized Arab offensive capability and prompted the Romans to seek a truce (a move noted in the *History of Khosrov*). The negotiator is correctly identified as Procopius in one version (Theophanes), but a two- rather than three-year limit is put on the truce (again by Theophanes).[88] The interlude was of considerable value to the Arabs, as is revealed in the *History of Khosrov*. They were able to shift large numbers of troops from eastern Iran to the Mediterranean lands and to win over Tʿeodoros Rshtuni (called Pasagnathes by Theophilus), the prince to whom the Romans had given the Armenian military command. The narrative of subsequent events (Constans' intervention in Armenia (late 653) and a naval attack in massive

[86] *Chron. 1234*, 173–7.

[87] Theoph., 344. 1–15; Agapius, 480–1; Mich. Syr., II. 442; *Chron. 1234*, 177–8. Cf. Conrad, 'Conquest of ʿArwad'.

[88] Ps. Sebeos, 164. 7–12. Theoph., 344. 19–24 (raid and treaty); *Chron. 1234*, 178 (treaty); Agapius, 481–2 (treaty)—a garbled version, in which Manuel, leader of the 646–7 expedition to Alexandria, is identified as the ambassador; Mich. Syr., II. 446 (raid and treaty)—a misplaced notice which calls the ambassador Ptolemy.

force targeted on Constantinople (654)) agrees in outline with that of the *History of Khosrov*, save for one detail (instead of reaching Dvin, Constans is said to have turned back at Caesarea). But associated operations on land are only mentioned fleetingly and there is a news blackout about the ultimate fate of the Arab fleet. Much additional information is supplied about preliminary operations by sea (raids on Rhodes, Cos, and Crete), the assembly of the great fleet at Tripoli, the covert firing of part of the fleet in port, and a great sea battle, in which a Roman fleet, commanded by Constans, sought to block the Arabs' passage in the bay of Phoenix, behind Cape Chelidonia, but was decisively defeated.[89] The way was now open for the planned attack on Constantinople but Theophilus falls silent, misled, one suspects, by contemporary Arab bulletins which made much of the victory and glossed over the subsequent wreckage of the fleet off Constantinople. He may also have been too taken by stories of the supposed melting down of the Colossus of Rhodes, of the exploits of the sons of the Bugler, and of Constans' escape incognito from Arab hands, to question the official Arab version.

The disastrous end of the first major offensive campaign against the rump of the Roman empire undertaken since the conquest of Egypt in 641–3 put new heart into those fighting the Muslim *umma* in the north. An initial Arab success, the expulsion of Roman forces from Armenia in 654, was followed by a series of reverses in Iberia, Media, and the Caucasus in 655.[90] They too are passed over in silence, as is only to be expected given Theophilus' general neglect of the north. Theophilus merely establishes a connection between the outbreak of first *fitna* and failure before Constantinople. The whole domestic context of growing dissatisfaction with ʿUthman's autocratic style of rule, which forms the background to his murder and the outbreak of fighting in the *umma* according to early Islamic historical tradition, is missing. So too is the story of the three assassins who swore to take out the three leading, divisive figures, of the failure of the two who targeted Muʿawiya and ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, of the completion of his mission by the third who killed ʿAli as he left the mosque at Kufa after the dawn prayers. But a clear outline is given of the civil war: a major engagement on the banks of the Euphrates, involving heavy fighting

[89] (1) Secession of Armenia and Constans' abortive march east: Theoph., 344. 26–9; Agapius, 482. (2) Land operations: Theoph., 345. 26–7 (a single, tantalizing sentence); Agapius, 484 (garbled). (3) Rhodes: Theoph., 345. 8–11; Agapius, 482; Mich. Syr., II. 442–3. (4) Cos and Crete: only Mich. Syr., II. 442. (5) Expedition against Constantinople: Theoph., 345. 16–26, 345. 27–346. 18; Agapius, 483–4; Mich. Syr., II. 445–6; *Chron. 1234*, 179–80. Cf. ps. Sebeos, *Hist. Com*., nn. 68–75.

[90] Ps. Sebeos, 171. 28–37, 172. 19–173. 17, with *Hist. Com*., nn. 76–8. Theophilus only reported the successful Arab military intervention in Armenia: Theoph., 345. 11–14; Agapius, 483.

and many casualties, stops prematurely when the troops on both sides demand a halt to the killing and a resort to arbitration; then comes a variant of the familiar story of how ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs (not named) outwitted the older arbitrator nominated by ʿAli, and secured a decision which favoured Muʿawiya; Muʿawiya takes control of the caliphate; ʿAli withdraws with his kin to Medina, where he is simply reported to have died. His two sons, who regard his acceptance of the result of the arbitration as foolish, then rebel against Muʿawiya, fight hard, lose, flee, and are killed along with their supporters.

Such is the story told in the Greek translation and continuation of Theophilus' chronicle which was used by Theophanes. Admittedly Theophanes made scant use of it, restricting his account to three short notices, but a long excerpt is included in the *De administrando imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. This reproduces Theophilus' account far more faithfully than the version transmitted by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre to the *Chronicle to 1234*, which contains a large infusion of early Islamic historical tradition, including the graphic story of ʿAli's assassination.[91] Theophilus was discreet. Prudence dictated that ʿAli should be exonerated from complicity in the murder of ʿUthman, and Muʿawiya likewise in the case of ʿAli's death. An extended anecdote, about the arbitration which Theophilus places in full view of the watching armies, came to his aid, enabling him to avoid dangerous ground by homing in on a colourful incident. Theophilus thus recycles the core of what had probably become the received account of first *fitna* by the middle of the eighth century. Rather than giving an overview of events, identifying the principal forces brought into play and tracing their interplay, political, military, and ideological, over five years of conflict, as is done very sketchily at the end of the *History of Khosrov*, he follows the example of purveyors of early Islamic traditions and focuses on personalities and an episode which make for good stories. He does, however, quietly distance himself from the conventional view (shown to be wrong by the *Maronite Chronicle*) that ʿAli's death brought the civil war to an end. He states clearly that his two sons fought on, and that Muʿawiya had a hard struggle to impose his authority on the caliphate. He thus implicitly plucks the battle of Karbala, at which Husayn, ʿAli's younger son, and a small band of followers were surrounded in the heat of the day and killed, out of its usual context early in second *fitna*, over twenty years later, and slips it into first *fitna*. This is explicitly stated in Dionysius' version of his text, as relayed by the *Chronicle to 1234*. It is an important point

[91] Const. Porph., *DAI*, c. 21. 65–110; Theoph., 346. 20–347. 4, 347. 26–8; *Chron. 1234*, 181–6; Mich. Syr., II. 449–50 (a highly abridged version of Dionysius); Agapius, 484–6 (an independent account based on Muslim sources).

of disagreement with the mainstream of Islamic historical tradition, of which we must take note.[92]

5. THEOPHILUS' EVIDENCE ON ARAB GRAND STRATEGY BEFORE AND AFTER THE SECOND CIVIL WAR

While Agapius may have transmitted a relatively full version of Theophilus' account of Mu'awiya's rule as caliph (but this section of his text is fragmentary), the other later editors were highly selective, especially the author of the *Chronicle to 1234*. It is therefore impossible to reconstruct a connected history of the 660s and 670s, but what survives of the lost text does not point to any significant change in Theophilus' coverage. He remains relatively uninterested in events outside the Mediterranean arena. Roman domestic politics are normally only brought in when they have a bearing on international relations—as is obviously the case with Constans' departure for the west which is attributed to unpopularity caused by the execution of his brother Theodosius.[93] His main interest continues to lie in Arab–Roman relations, but only a few lumps of information can be picked up from the later versions transmitted to us. Thus it is plain that the offensive against Asia Minor was renewed once Mu'awiya's position was secure and that it took the form of a series of attacks by land, but no more than an impressionistic account can be pieced together out of the information transmitted to us. Single references to the beginning and end of a seven-year truce (negotiated presumably soon after the start of first *fitna* in 656) point to a date for the resumption of large-scale warfare several years after the end of the civil war, which may, in turn, indicate thorough preparation on the Arab side.[94] The second expulsion of Roman forces from Armenia, which is alluded to in the *History to 682*, is fleetingly noted, together with a contemporary Alan raid, early on in Agapius' version.[95] The depth of penetration achieved by Arab forces—as far as Asia, Bithynia, and Pamphylia on one campaign and Pontus and Galatia on another[96]—and their ability to winter on

[92] *Chron. 1234*, 185–6.
[93] Theoph., 347. 25, 348. 4–6; Agapius, 490; Mich. Syr., II. 446; *Chron. 1234*, 187.
[94] Theoph., 347. 16–20 (beginning of truce); Mich. Syr., II. 450 (end of truce).
[95] Agapius, 487. Cf. Movses D., 193. 9–11 (124–5).
[96] Mich. Syr., II. 450. Cf. vague notices in Theoph., 348. 10–11, 16–20, 23, 26–7 (four expeditions against Romania). *Chron. 1234* passes over all attacks on Asia Minor at this time. Agapius' fragmentary text mentions (488) three expeditions, the second apparently coming close to Chalcedon, the third reaching Colonia on the northern edge of the Anatolian plateau.

Roman territory suggest that considerable resources were allocated to the offensive.[97]

We have to wait until 667–8 for a section of detailed narrative. All four later editors chose to give considerable space to an episode of diplomatic history, involving rival embassies to Muʿawiya at Damascus. They were evidently attracted by a long, entertaining anecdote with a great deal of dialogue which Theophilus had included. One emissary, Sergius, comes from Shapur, a rebel Roman general in the east,[98] of Persian extraction to judge by his name. Shapur offers to subject Roman territory to Arab rule in exchange for military support. The version transmitted by Dionysius to the *History to 1234* and Michael the Syrian also has him dangle the prospect of assassinating Constans, by then far away in Syracuse. Constans' eldest son Constantine, who is in charge of the government at Constantinople, responds by dispatching an ambassador of his own, a eunuch chamberlain called Andrew. Muʿawiya remonstrates when Sergius rises and does obeisance at Andrew's entrance. There is an unseemly altercation between the ambassadors at a second audience when Sergius, who has remained sitting, is berated by Andrew and responds with a contemptuous remark about his being neither man nor woman. Andrew rejects Muʿawiya's demand (previously accepted by Sergius) for all Roman revenues, leaves, and takes a circuitous route home, avoiding territory controlled by Shapur. At Arabissus, in the heart of the Anti-Taurus, he instructs a cleisurarch who has remained loyal to look out for Sergius. Sergius is caught as he travels ahead of the Arab force coming to aid Shapur and is brought grovelling before Andrew. He is castrated and then impaled. Meanwhile—presumably not long after the start of the campaigning season in 668—Shapur is waiting in north-east Asia Minor for the arrival of his Arab allies, but he is killed when his horse bucks as he passes through a city gate. Al-Fadl, the Arab commander, halts at Melitene, where he hears of Shapur's death, until he is joined by the main army, commanded by Muʿawiya's son Yazid (an indication of the high hopes held of the campaign). Yazid takes charge of operations and sweeps across Asia Minor to Chalcedon, capturing and garrisoning Amorium on the return march. The chamberlain Andrew reappears at the end of the story, commanding the Roman force which recaptures Amorium at night, when snow lies thick on the ground, and slaughters the garrison.[99]

[97] Theoph., 348. 16–20, 26–7.

[98] General of the Armeniac theme army, according to Theoph., 348. 29–30 and Mich. Syr., II. 451.

[99] Theoph., 348. 29–351. 9 (best version); Agapius, 488–9 (his fragmentary text picks up the story from the tail-end of the Sergius anecdote); Mich. Syr., II. 451–4 (focusing on the behaviour and fate of Sergius); *Chron. 1234*, 189–93. The episode is dated three years after 976 in the

The dénouement, though, comes in 669, when Constans is assassinated in a bathhouse in Syracuse. The idea of doing so was much more than an idle thought of Shapur's. It is made plain in the *History to 682* that it was the result of a conspiracy organized by Muʿawiya, acting on a suggestion conveyed to him by senior figures from Constantinople. Juansher, client-ruler of eastern Transcaucasia, was summoned to Damascus, presumably because he knew Constans (having met him twice during his progress through Transcaucasia in 660–1) and could give useful advice. To judge by the honours and presents given to him subsequently, Juansher seems to have approved of the planned assassination, which, it was reported, certain eunuchs were ready to carry out. The actual assassin was presumably a eunuch, since he was helping the emperor in the bath when he struck him down. He is identified as the son of Troilus, one of the judges at the trial of Maximus, and his name is given as Andrew. While it may be tempting to identify him with Constantine's ambassador to Muʿawiya, it is made clear that the idea came from the rival embassy. It follows that Shapur had allies in Constantinople and that there was a serious policy division in the heart of the Roman government. By his actions Constans had shown that he was committed to shoring up the empire in the central Mediterranean, so as both to keep control of the resources of Italy and Africa and perhaps to use them as bases for a renewed attack on the Arab regime in Egypt. The opposition was evidently ready to collaborate to a limited extent with the Arabs and, to judge by the western forces' proclamation of their commander, Mžež, as emperor immediately after Constans' death, saw east Rome's future survival as requiring an eastern, not a Mediterranean, orientation in foreign policy, with Roman forces retained in Asia Minor and Christian Transcaucasia kept within the Roman sphere of influence.[100]

Muʿawiya, it appears, had no intention of keeping to whatever terms he had accepted in his agreement with the Roman conspirators. He prepared a large expeditionary force for an attack on north Africa in 669, and was, it may be conjectured, behind the assassination of Juansher far away in Caucasian Albania in early autumn that year, because he knew too much.[101] Theophilus' evidence, if it can be safely interpreted in this way, combined with what is reported in the *History to 682*, can thus give us insight into murky goings-on in the middle of an obscure century. The subtle intelligence and diplomatic

Seleucid era (664/5), i.e. 667/8, the same year as Juansher's second visit to Damascus, when he is reported to have held talks with eunuchs from Constantinople.

[100] Movses D., 196. 15–197. 12 (127); Theoph., 351. 14–17, 351. 24–352. 4; Agapius, 490–1; Mich. Syr., II. 450–1; *Chron. 1234*, 193.

[101] Attack on north Africa: Theoph., 352. 13–14; Agapius, 491; Mich. Syr., II. 454; *Chron. 1234*, 194. Assassination of Juansher: Movses D., II. 34 (142–5).

skill attributed to Muʿawiya in early Islamic traditions can be seen in action, as he makes use of dissident members of the Roman governing elite to dispose of his principal foreign adversary, and then exploits the opportunity which opens up to renew the naval offensive which had been in abeyance since the beginning of the civil war. An early example has been found of the use of political assassination in foreign policy.

The new senior emperor, Constantine IV, responded swiftly and effectively to the news of his father's murder and the usurpation of Mžež. He made use of Roman command of the sea, recovered after the act of God which had destroyed much of Muʿawiya's navy outside Constantinople in 654, and led a task force to the central Mediterranean to deal with the usurper. He is reported to have seized and executed Mžež, together with those responsible for his father's death.[102] Nothing is said about the effect of his appearance in the central Mediterranean on the Arabs, but it may be inferred that they did not attempt to hold such ground as they had gained, but withdrew to Egypt. Silence is telling in this case. Some sort of balance of power was thus restored between the truncated Christian empire and its Muslim rival, which had temporarily settled down within stable frontiers. The core lands of both powers—Asia Minor and Syria-Palestine—faced each other across the line of the Amanus and Armenian Taurus ranges, and were flanked to east and west by extensive territories. The remaining outer possessions of the Romans in western Transcaucasia, the Crimea, Greece, other parts of the Balkans, Italy, Sicily, and north Africa could not match, in terms of resources, the outer territories of the caliphate—Iran, eastern Transcaucasia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Pentapolis. But Arab authority was far from deep-rooted. Local structures of government had been taken over nominally, but control was exercised from the top and existing local elites continued to staff senior local posts. The caliphate was therefore susceptible to subversion. It was not inconceivable that subject peoples in one-time Roman provinces might rise up against their Arab rulers, if direct military aid could be supplied.

Relatively few of Theophilus' notices about the 670s have been transmitted by his extant derivatives and they deal mainly with unusual natural phenomena. It is plain, though, that Muʿawiya was implementing a carefully devised strategy. His main objective was not north Africa. Despite the success of the attack in 669 (80,000 prisoners were said to have been taken) and temporary occupation of much of the Roman province, he was ready to withdraw his

[102] Theoph., 352. 4–9; Agapius, 491; Mich. Syr., II. 451; *Chron. 1234*, 193. In the event, the actual seizure and execution of Mžež, who fortified himself in Syracuse, was carried out for Constantine by local commanders some two years later (see Ch. 16, section 1 below).

forces when the Romans counterattacked. His aim was to strike at the Aegean heartlands of the reduced Roman empire, while the main battle fleet was absent. The opening blow was struck against Constantinople itself in 670, the fleet wintering at Cyzicus where the peninsula could easily be secured. The next attack was targeted on provinces well away from the capital. Two fleets operated in Roman waters in 673 and wintered on Roman territory—at Smyrna, on the Lycian coast, and in Cilicia (the outermost province still in Roman hands). These operations were followed by a landing in force in Lycia in 674—probably to secure a permanent forward base from which to direct further forays into the Aegean and to launch raids inland. This time, however, the Romans were prepared. Three generals combined forces, defeated the Arab expeditionary force, and sent fireships in pursuit of the fleet which had brought them. Not one Arab ship is said to have escaped. The figure put on their dead is 30,000. This defeat brought Muʿawiya's second naval offensive to an abrupt halt and shifted the balance of naval power decisively in the Romans' favour.[103]

This combined military and naval operation which eliminated a whole expeditionary force was the Romans' Trafalgar. They were able to exploit their recovered maritime supremacy a few years later, in 677/8, to launch a counterattack aimed at the political heart of the caliphate. Troops were landed on the north Syrian coast, in the region of Tyre and Sidon, and then seized control of Mt. Lebanon. Before long the Roman commando force triggered a local insurgency and extended the area under its control, north to the Amanus mountains and south to the hills of Judaea. There was now a genuine prospect of destabilizing the whole caliphate.[104]

This menacing insurgency, together with a damaging earthquake which affected the desert frontage from Scythopolis to Edessa,[105] could be taken to indicate that God was withdrawing his favour from the Arabs. Worse, from the Arab point of view, was the advancing age of Muʿawiya, a masterly manager of tribal leaders and far-sighted statesman. It is hard to believe that there were no preparatory political manoeuvres, no grouping of tribes and leaders behind court magnates who might act as power-brokers when he died. He died after a reign of twenty years in April 680, and, with the death of

[103] Theoph., 353. 6–7, 14–17, 354. 11–17; Agapius, 492.

[104] Agapius dissents over the date, placing the landing in the 17th year of Muʿawiya's caliphate, 676/7, whereas the other three derivatives place it in the 9th regnal year of Constantine IV (677/8): Theoph., 355. 6–10; Agapius, 492–3; Mich. Syr., II. 455; *Chron. 1234*, 195.

[105] Theoph., 356. 11–13; Agapius, 493; Mich. Syr., II. 457; *Chron. 1234*, 195 (with an additional notice, not paralleled in the other derivatives, about a two-year raiding expedition into Roman territory).

his son Yazid three and a half years later, a succession crisis broke out.[106] It was undoubtedly exacerbated by anxiety at the worsening condition of the caliphate and soon developed into full-scale civil war, a second *fitna*.

Theophilus remains as interested as before in the domestic politics of the two principal actors in international relations. He includes notices about Constantine IV's deposition of his two brothers with whom he had shared power, about the succession of his son Justinian II, and about the coups and counter-coups which followed his deposition in 695.[107] He devotes much more space, though, to the breakdown of central authority in the caliphate which followed Yazid's death (November 683). He picks out the key players who made bids for power—Mukhtar at Kufa, Ibn al-Zubayr with support spread between Medina, Iraq, and northern Mesopotamia, al-Dahhak b. Qays in northern Syria, as well as other local leaders—and the loyalists in Damascus who strove to hold on to power, led for a year by Marwan b. al-Hakam, then, after his death, by his son ʻAbd al-Malik. It is worth noting that ʻAli's son Husayn makes no appearance in any of the extant versions of Theophilus, since he has been killed off before the end of first *fitna*. Theophilus' penchant for anecdotes shows itself in the explanation he gives for the loyalists' acceptance of Marwan's leadership (the arrow bearing his name was shot further than those bearing the names of rival candidates).[108]

ʻAbd al-Malik's ultimate success is implicitly attributed to the treaty which he began to negotiate with Constantine IV and agreed with his successor Justinian II in 686. The terms which he accepted for a ten-year ceasefire involved what amounted to the payment of a massive tribute to the emperor, in the form of slaves, thoroughbred horses, and batches of a thousand gold coins (one of each for every day of the year). He also agreed to share the revenues of Cyprus, Armenia, and Iberia with the Romans. In return he demanded that the Romans should remove the commandos they had introduced into the Middle East and should bring the insurgency to an end.[109] Having thus secured himself from external attack, he was able gradually to impose his authority by force throughout the caliphate, with the help of two able commanders, his brother Muhammad and al-Hajjaj.[110]

[106] Theoph., 356. 15–17, 360. 22–4; Agapius, 493, 494; Mich. Syr., II. 468; *Chron. 1234*, 196, 197.

[107] Theoph., 360. 18–20, 361. 15–16; Agapius, 494, 497, 497–8; Mich. Syr., II. 455–6, 473, 478; *Chron. 1234*, 196–7, 206, 207.

[108] Theoph., 360. 22–361. 3; Agapius, 494–7; Mich. Syr., II. 468–9; *Chron. 1234*, 195, 197–9.

[109] Theoph., 361. 7–13, 363. 6–20; Agapius, 497; Mich. Syr., II. 469 (rather than sharing revenues of Armenia and Iberia, the Romans are granted Arzanene, Gurzan, and Azerbaijan); *Chron. 1234*, 199–200.

[110] Theoph., 363. 21–6, 364. 19–365. 6; Mich. Syr., II. 469–70, 471; *Chron. 1234*, 200–2.

From this point on, it is difficult to be sure what Theophilus covered and what he left out. For both Dionysius and Theophanes made selective use of his account, creating space for supplementary material, while a whole section of Agapius' text, covering twenty years (685–705), cannot be read since the folios are glued together. What is retrievable deals with portents and disasters, perhaps no more than two of ʿAbd al-Malik's domestic acts (his reform of the coinage and the rebuilding of the Kaʿba, which had been damaged in the fighting between al-Hajjaj and Ibn al-Zubayr),[111] political conflict in the Roman empire, and Theophilus' principal subject, relations between the old and the new empires. Justinian II is criticized for providing ʿAbd al-Malik with a pretext to break the treaty before it expired, although, in reality, he was probably taking steps to strengthen the Roman position before the expected resumption of fighting.[112] The fighting itself is not reported properly in extant versions of the text until the tempo increased towards the end of ʿAbd al-Malik's reign. Even the successful invasion of north Africa in 697 is passed over in silence, save for Theophanes who takes his material from a Roman source. Thereafter the narrative fills out and climaxes in a detailed account of the siege of Constantinople in 717–18.[113]

Theophilus has much to say as he approaches the time of writing. He continues to cover the political history of both powers and the conflict between them. As before he reports the most striking natural events which occurred. But there are two discernible changes: he takes note of the emergence of the Khazar khaganate as a power to reckon with, and he devotes increasing space to the internal affairs of the caliphate, especially to the crisis which led to the Abbasid takeover.

6. EDITORIAL TREATMENT OF THEOPHILUS' WORK IN LATER HISTORIES

As has been shown, Theophilus' text was reworked to a greater or lesser extent at each stage of its transmission to later authors. Translation required interpretation of the original and could lead to minor changes of sense, as in the case of Agapius' Arabic version. Rather more significant changes were made

[111] Theoph., 365. 21–8; Mich. Syr., II. 470, 473; *Chron. 1234*, 204.

[112] Theoph., 365. 8–21 (with additional material about Justinian's refusal to accept payment in reform dinars); Mich. Syr., II. 470; *Chron. 1234*, 205.

[113] Agapius, 497–502; Mich. Syr., II. 469–70, 473–4, 477–9, 483–6; *Chron. 1234*, 205, 208–9, 211–12, 215–19.

by the Greek translator, who was probably at work in Syria or Palestine around 780. He added a continuation of his own, bringing the coverage down from around 750 to the present.[114] He excised Theophilus' neutral account of Muhammad's life and doctrines, replacing it with an odd combination of contemporary anti-Muslim polemic[115] and authentic Muslim information about the genealogies of the Arab tribes, the chronological balance of Muhammad's career, and the battle of Mu'ta in 629.[116] He also introduced other items of additional information, some of which were picked up in a selection of historical material about early Islamic history made by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and incorporated in his *De administrando imperio*.[117]

Editorial decisions taken by later historians also affected the balance of the work. Authors with pretensions to being something more than copyists, however receptive they were to the text, allowed their own preferences to dictate the amount of space allocated to individual items in the original, condensing some to brief notes, reproducing much more of the detail of others, and occasionally making complete excisions. Many such divergences in editorial practice have been observed in the process of defining the form and content of the lost original, in the preceding sections of this chapter. The most striking of all was Theophanes' decision to excise almost all of Theophilus' account of first *fitna*.[118]

However, the latter-day reader of the extant derivatives of Theophilus' history is not so much struck by their differences as by their general faithfulness to the original. This is all the more remarkable in the case of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, given the traditional hostility of the rival Jacobite and Maronite communities of Edessa to which editor and original author belonged. Agapius, writing at a considerable distance in time as well as space from Theophilus, shows a yet

[114] C. Mango and R. Scott (trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), pp. lxxxii–lxxxiv.

[115] Theoph., 333. 1–13, 333. 21–334. 17, 334. 20–7.

[116] Theoph., 333. 13–21, 334. 17–20, 335. 12–23. See Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition'.

[117] See for example additional material about the Colossus of Rhodes included in the notice about Mu'awiya's expedition against Constantinople (in 654)—Const. Porph., *DAI*, c. 21. 49–65 (for which see L. I. Conrad, 'The Arabs and the Colossus', *JRAS*, ser. 3, 6 (1996), 165–87). This is one of three substantial excerpts from the Greek translation of Theophilus included in the *DAI*. The other two deal with Muhammad's career (c. 14, somewhat fuller than Theoph., 333–4), and first *fitna* (c. 21. 65–110, which places 'Ali's death in Medina and has the hard fighting take place later, with 'Ali's two sons leading the resistance to Mu'awiya).

[118] Theoph., 346. 21–4 (a brief summary), 346. 27–347. 4 (battle of Siffin), 347. 26–8 (assassination of 'Ali and rule of Mu'awiya). A fourth notice which claims that Mu'awiya negotiated a treaty with Constans in 658/9, on the same terms as in 685/6 (347. 16–18), is not paralleled in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' extensive excerpt from Theophanes' source. It appears to be a conjecture of Theophanes'.

more impressive attentiveness to Theophilus' text. Of the three, it is Theophanes who is readiest to play around with the material which he received.

The worst of Theophanes' editorial initiatives concerned naval warfare in the 670s, where he was ready to disregard the thrust of Theophilus' narrative and to insert, at quite the wrong point, material concerning the 654 attack on Constantinople. A strain of anti-Semitism came out at a much earlier stage, when he retailed an allegation that Jews were responsible for all 90,000 of the deaths reported by Theophilus at the time of the sack of Jerusalem in 614.[119] Other examples of confusion in his account of the last Roman–Persian war resulted from ham-handed or over-bold combination of materials taken from different sources (as is demonstrated in Ch. 9 below). For the rise of Islam, he was much more dependent on Theophilus' account, for lack of alternative sources of information. The only relevant supplementary sources to which he is known to have had access are the Maximus dossier and a Byzantine history which began with the accession of Constantine IV in 669 and paid particular attention to Roman relations with the northern peoples, a source also used by Nicephorus.[120] He had little difficulty in fitting additional material from them into his Theophilus-based text. One item in particular (taken from the Byzantine source shared with Nicephorus) helps to explain the success of the Arabs in the final stage of the Syrian campaign. Theophanes reports that the troops serving under Baanes proclaimed him emperor and left the *sacellarius* and his army to fight the Arabs on their own, in effect consigning them to certain defeat.[121] It is a tantalizing snippet of information, plucked out of context. How one wishes more had been reproduced!

Dionysius of Tel-Mahre excised openly sectarian material, but was ready to reproduce almost all the substance of Theophilus' history. Making use of local sources, mainly Edessan, he was able to add a considerable amount of supplementary material covering *inter alia* the fate of a leading family of Edessan notables during the Persian occupation, Khusro II's sponsorship of Jacobite bishops, the impolitic behaviour of the Jacobite metropolitan of Edessa who refused Heraclius communion, Heraclius' transfer of the cathedral to the Maronites to which no notable dared object, a purge of senior local administrators during second *fitna*, and the extraordinarily successful career of an Edessan notable (Athanasius Bar Gumoye) who amassed a fortune as tutor and adviser of 'Abd al-Malik's young brother 'Abd al-'Aziz in Egypt.[122]

[119] Theoph., 300. 30–301. 3.
[120] See Ch. 9 below.
[121] Theoph., 338. 3–6.
[122] Mich. Syr., II. 379–81, 411–13, 474, 475–7; *Chron. 1234*, 122–4, 125–6, 140–1, 201–2, 202–4.

Apart from his well-written account of the two naval expeditions against Cyprus, he made two other important additions to Theophilus' account of Arab–Roman warfare, both dealing with Roman counterstrikes—a failed pincer attack from Armenia and the west on northern Mesopotamia very soon after the Arab invasion,[123] and the Roman seizure of Alexandria in 646–7 (which, however, is misplaced several years after the end of first *fitna*).[124]

Agapius was least inclined to tamper with Theophilus' text, beyond excising and abridging passages (and turning to an independent source or sources for information on first *fitna*). But the losses suffered because of the damage to his text diminish its value. He too, like Theophanes and the later editors of Dionysius, was ready to introduce additional dating information, like them relying on his own computations.[125] But where his version is complete, it provides the surest (abbreviated) guide to the contents of Theophilus' history.

That history is marred in places by serious errors. Like Theophanes later, Theophilus could go astray when combining material from different sources. His conflation of the battle of Yarmuk and the later, final defeat of Roman forces in Syria is a grave error and has caused much confusion subsequently. His muddled account of the campaign of conquest in Egypt may also have resulted from use of more than one source. Elsewhere his weakness for anecdotes undid him. He retailed the ahistorical story of the cousins' race for Constantinople in 608–10 and accepted as historical truth Roman black propaganda about Shahrvaraz in 626. Editorial slips may account for his misplacing of ʿUmar's visit to Jerusalem, and his truncation of the 654 expedition against Constantinople, but his presumption that Muhammad spent his whole life in Yathrib (Medina) remains puzzling.

One error, though, may be more apparent than real—his detachment of the battle of Karbala from second *fitna* and his dating of Husayn's death soon after his father's and brother's in first *fitna*. If it is an error, it is quite extraordinary and virtually impossible to explain. Alternatively Theophilus may have preserved a vital piece of chronological information which was suppressed in later Islamic historical writing. Further consideration of this intriguing possibility must be deferred until Chapter 11.

[123] Mich. Syr., II. 443–4; *Chron. 1234*, 164–5.

[124] *Chron. 1234*, 188.

[125] The computations produced conflicting results: the date of Muʿawiya's death, for example is variously given as Sunday 6 May 991 (680) by Agapius, 493, 992 (681) and AH 63 (683) by Mich. Syr., II. 468, AH 59 (679) and 11th year of Constantine IV (679) by *Chron. 1234*, 196.

7. CONCLUSION

Now at last an answer may be given to the question put at the end of section 2 above, about the historical worth of the lost history of Theophilus of Edessa. In general his record improves as he advances through time. There are few identifiable errors after the first phase of Arab expansion. Corroboration for his narrative of events from the mid 640s to 669 is obtainable at several points from sources of proven worth dating from the seventh century. Thereafter, it is probably safe to take information transmitted to his later derivatives as good prima facie historical evidence for what happened, unless there is some positive indication to the contrary.

Thus, at a stroke, the amount of reasonably trustworthy material about the Middle East in the seventh century is greatly increased. While little of significance is added to what is known from other sources about the last Roman–Persian war and nothing about the Muslim conquest of the Sasanian empire, the great gap in coverage of the *futuh*, about the campaigns which resulted in the conquest of Syria, is filled in—once a key engagement is identified (the battle of Yarmuk) and a misplaced account of disorganized retreat is relocated. Later, both before and after first *fitna*, Theophilus comes into his own, presenting a history of international relations in the Mediterranean and its hinterlands, with forays at appropriate points into the internal politics of the two belligerent powers, of which only shards can be picked up from earlier reliable sources. Theophilus then is a prime source for the long-drawn-out struggle by land and sea between the great powers, which is shown to have been more evenly balanced than is commonly thought, at least until the conquest of north Africa at the end of the seventh century.

The new additions to our knowledge made by Theophilus may best be presented in tabular form. Here, as at the end of Chapter 6, it is only historical phenomena attested for the first time in the derivatives of Theophilus which are listed:

late 602: rebellion of Narses, commander of Roman forces in the south-east, who establishes himself at Edessa and prepares to fight loyalist forces backing Phocas
611: Persians capture Antioch (8 October), Apamea (15 October) and Emesa[126]
622: prophetic mission of Muhammad (at Medina) becomes known
620s: repressive Persian measures in Edessa

[126] Agapius, 450 (Antioch); Mich. Syr., II. 400 (Antioch); *Chron. 1234*, 127 (Antioch, Apamea, Emesa).

+ restoration of Roman rule in the Middle East
630: assassination of Shahrvaraz
632: death of Muhammad[127]
+ successful Arab ambush of Roman army, death of Roman general Sergius
+ fall of Bostra to Arabs
+ defeat of army commanded by Heraclius' brother Theodore near the southern border of Syria (probably at Yarmuk)
+ reverse suffered by Arab force which has advanced to Emesa
+ decisive Arab victory over a large Roman army between Damascus and Emesa, death of the *sacellarius* who is in command
+ Egypt secured from attack for three years through payment of tribute
+ ceremonial visit of Caliph ʿUmar to Jerusalem
638/9: start of long siege of Caesarea in Palestine
639/40: conquest of Osrhoene triggered by Roman refusal to pay tribute for a second year
643/4: rebellion and death of Valentinus[128]
Thursday 4 November 644: assassination of Caliph ʿUmar[129]
+ rebellion of Gregory exarch of Africa, first Arab attack on exarchate of Africa[130]
648/9: invasion of Cyprus
+ second attack on Cyprus, conquest of Aradus
+ sabotage at Tripoli
+ Arab naval victory off the coast of Lycia, near Phoenix
+ capture of Rhodes and demolition of the Colossus[131]
+ expedition against Constantinople[132]

[127] *Chron. 1234*, 143–4: in the case of the deaths of Shahrvaraz and Muhammad, the Heraclian regnal years (20 and 21) lag one behind the Seleucid date (942 (630/1) and 943 (631/2)); the latter is probably correct, especially since it tallies, in the case of Shahrvaraz, with the additional *hijra* date (10 (9 April 631–28 March 632)). Mich. Syr., II. 410 simply reports Muhammad's death after a reign of seven years. There is a lacuna in Agapius.

[128] There is a discrepancy of one year in the dates given by Theophanes, 343. 3–5 (644/5) and *Chron. 1234*, 167 (643/4).

[129] Agapius, 479 (both dates are wrong, Seleucid era 958 (646/7) and Constans 5 (645/6)); Mich. Syr., II. 430 (Seleucid year 955 (643/4)); *Chron. 1234*, 168 gives the precise date.

[130] Agapius, 479 (Seleucid era 958 (646/7)); Mich. Syr., II. 440 (Seleucid era 958 (646/7), AH 25 (28 October 645–16 October 646), Constans 5 (645/6)).

[131] There is a chronological discrepancy between Agapius, 482 (ʿUthman year 8 (651/2)) and Mich. Syr., II. 442–3 (Seleucid era 965 (653/4)).

[132] The importance of the expedition against Constantinople seems to have been recognized by Theophilus, who, to judge by *Chron. 1234*, gave it an elaborate, quadripartite date. But the date has been corrupted in transmission to the extant derivatives of his history. The four elements given by *Chron. 1234*, 179 are not consistent: Seleucid era 966 (654/5), AH 37 (19 June 657–8 June 658), Constans 13 (653/4), ʿUthman 9 (12 August 652–1 August 653). Different *hijra* years are given by Agapius, 483 (AH 34 (22 July 654–10 July 655)) and Mich. Syr.,

+ assassination of ʿUthman
+ battle on the Euphrates between armies backing Muʿawiya and ʿAli, resort to arbitration
+ Muʿawiya takes over caliphate, ʿAli withdraws with kin to Medina, where he dies
+ warfare between Muʿawiya and sons of ʿAli, defeat, flight, and death of the latter
+ resumption of warfare between Arabs and Romans after seven-year truce
+ rival Roman embassies to Damascus, plot devised to assassinate Constans[133]

668/9: assassination of Constans
669/70: second Arab attack on exarchate of Africa
670–1: Arab naval attack on Constantinople
673–4: Arab fleets winter at Smyrna, in Lycia, and in Cilicia
673/4: Roman victory in Lycia, destruction of Arab invasion fleet
677/8: insertion of Mardaites into Lebanon
682/3: death of Muʿawiya's son and successor Yazid, beginning of second *fitna*
685/6: treaty between ʿAbd al-Malik and Justinian II, withdrawal of Mardaites from Middle East

This list is considerably longer than any of its predecessors. This is not surprising, given Theophilus' vantage point for observing the Middle East in the relatively recent past. Growing up as he did in Edessa, he could be expected to gather reasonably sound information about the Arab operations which drove the Romans from Syria and northern Mesopotamia, as also about interconfessional church politics and the local history of Edessa. Likewise it was not hard for a Christian intellectual who made his way eventually to the very apex of the new Arab governing elite to obtain reliable information about the career of the Prophet and key events in the political life of the Muslim community which he founded. There are no obvious errors in his chronology of the rise of Islam, nor indeed in his account of the battle for control of the Mediterranean launched by Muʿawiya in 649. His track record is good wherever his dating can be checked against that in other sources (as it

II. 445 (AH 35 (11 July 655–29 June 656)). Michael the Syrian also gives the wrong regnal year of Constans (10 (650/1)).

[133] Fragmentary account without date at Agapius, 488–9; the date given by *Chron. 1234*, 189–93 (Constans 26 (666/7)) should probably be emended, since his 27th regnal year, which is identified as the year of his death (15 July 669), is later equated correctly with Muʿawiya's 9th (9 February 669–28 January 670) and Seleucid era 980 (668/9) at *Chron. 1234*, 193; Mich. Syr, II, 451–4 compounds the error, dating the embassies to Seleucid era 977 (665/6) and Constans' 26th regnal year (666/7).

can be over the deaths of ʿUmar, ʿUthman, and Yazid (early Islamic historical traditions), the first Arab attack on Cyprus (the Soloi inscription), the assassination of Constans (*Liber pontificalis*), and the Justinian II–ʿAbd al-Malik treaty (Ch. 8 below)). However, something has gone awry with the precise dates (they are internally inconsistent) with which he has marked out two events of particular importance—the fourth, decisive Roman–Arab battle in Syria and the assassination of ʿUmar, which presaged serious future dissension within the caliphate. It is also possible that he may have confused the date of deployment of Roman special forces (Mardaites) in Lebanon with that recorded by Theophanes for a Roman agreement to restrain the Mardaites in return for Arab tribute in cash and kind.

The historical record which has thus acquired its sixth layer is still far from complete. We still know little of Roman strategy in the climactic phase of the war against Persia in the 620s. We still have no information about the life of the Prophet, before his fame grew after the *hijra* to Medina in 622. The details of the Arab conquest of highland Iran remain unknown, and, yet more serious, coverage of the battle for the Mediterranean peters out in the 680s. The second phase of this initial Arab push to destroy Byzantium, between the end of second *fitna* in 692, and the siege of Constantinople in 717–18, remains a virtual blank. At a later stage (Chs. 11 and 12) we will turn to Muslim sources for information about Muhammad and the Arabia in which he grew up, preached, and commanded, but first we should scour the two histories which have been preserved from dark age Byzantium, in the hope that they may be able to fill in other gaps, notably about diplomacy, warfare, and domestic politics in the last two decades of the seventh century and the first two of the eighth.

8

Later Historians

Nicephorus

The cast of historians who bring us trustworthy tales of seventh-century history or provide contemporary insight into the mood of their times includes many of real distinction, who played an active part in the affairs of their time. Heraclius himself speaks through the dispatches which he handed over to George of Pisidia, as well as that reproduced at the end of the *Chronicon Paschale*. So too does Sergius, the great patriarch who was the driving force behind Heraclius' sustained effort to bring about a grand reconciliation of the main antagonistic Christian confessions after the end of the war, if the long report about the 626 siege of Constantinople is rightly attributed to him. High-ranking churchmen figure prominently—George of Pisidia himself, a senior patriarchal official, Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem, John bishop of Nikiu, Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Jacobite patriarch of Antioch. This is the category to which the first of our Byzantine witnesses, Nicephorus, belongs. He was a senior civil servant who was transformed in a few days into monk, priest, and head of the church, after the death in 806 of Tarasius, patriarch since 784 and previously Nicephorus' departmental chief. He was a heavyweight intellectual, doubtless valued as such by the Emperor Nicephorus I (802–11) who appointed him in the expectation that he would stand firmly on the side of the imperial establishment against dissident monastic elements in the church, as indeed he did, until a renewal of iconoclasm forced him over into the opposition in 815.

Nicephorus' *Breviarium* (*Short History*) is a slight work, covering the period 602–769. There is a gaping hole in the middle of the seventh century. Nothing whatsoever is reported of the reign of Constans II (641–69) save for his accession, the length of his reign, and his assassination. It is the first history to have been composed in the post-Roman, Byzantine period, some two generations after the reality of loss of empire had finally impressed itself on the collective consciousness with a third dangerous attack on Constantinople in 716–18. It makes a useful addition to our pool of information about the last great war of antiquity and the rise of Islam, although its contribution

cannot be compared either in volume or in precision with those made by the materials extracted from the sources which have already been examined. It draws probably on no more than three pre-existing sources, and should be viewed as a work not so much of history as of literature, a throwback to an earlier age in which the stylistic veneer of a text mattered at least as much as its content. Nicephorus' prime concern was not with the solid substance of history but rather with the manner of its presentation: he was conscious of the requirements of the genre of classicizing history and such intellectual effort as he invested in his own work went into improving the style of the sources which he was using.

1. LIFE AND HISTORICAL WRITING

Nicephorus was born around 758. His father Theodore served in the imperial administration, but did not rise to the highest level. He never headed the secretariat in which he served, his career being blighted in the 760s by his refusal to conform to the prevailing iconoclast orthodoxy. This resulted in his disgrace, torture, a first short period of exile intended to increase the pressure on him to change his mind (which it failed signally to do, as became evident at his second interrogation), and a second permanent exile, in which, according to Nicephorus' biographer, he suffered great hardship. He died in 767 or shortly afterwards.[1]

Nicephorus himself does not seem to have been penalized for his father's views. To judge by his own writings, which are for the most part theological, he received a good education, in the course of which he mastered the classicizing Greek expected of members of the official classes and gained a thorough understanding of Aristotelian philosophy. Well before the abandonment of iconoclasm in 787, possibly before the death of Constantine V in 775, he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the imperial secretariat, where he served under the future Patriarch Tarasius. He was present along with a number of imperial secretaries at the Council of Nicaea in 787, and is recorded in the minutes as reading out an important missive from the pope

[1] P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople* (Oxford, 1958), 54–6. Ignatius Diaconus, who wrote a Life of Nicephorus in the next century, has the Emperor Constantine V personally try to persuade Theodore to abandon icon veneration. If true, this story would imply that Theodore was a bureaucrat of considerable importance, destined for very high office. However, Ignatius, who is prone to rhetorical exaggeration, should not be taken too literally.

in the course of the proceedings.[2] There followed a further period of imperial service, ending when, for reasons which have to be surmised, he withdrew temporarily to Bithynia, probably to his family estates, founded a monastery, and led a life of seclusion and asceticism, which he and his Byzantine biographer made out to be preparation for the monastic life. His modern biographer, Paul Alexander, views this as 'a curtain of holiness' deliberately drawn so as to conceal the real circumstances of his temporary retreat or disgrace, which he associates with the blinding of Constantine VI and the return to power of his mother Irene in 797, and to obscure the real nature of his occupations in retirement, which probably involved the improvement of his estates and the reading of secular as well as sacred books.[3]

He was restored to favour probably on the accession of his namesake Nicephorus as emperor in 802, and was appointed director of the largest poorhouse in Constantinople. When Tarasius died and wide consultations in the church failed to produce a consensus about his successor, the emperor nominated Nicephorus, despite the fact that he was a layman. After a show of reluctance, doubtless exaggerated by his biographer, Nicephorus accepted the appointment, made his profession as a monk, and was projected rapidly up the ecclesiatical hierarchy, to be consecrated patriarch on Easter Sunday 806.[4] His tonsure as a monk did nothing to placate the main monastic pressure group led by the Studites, Plato and his nephew Theodore, who acted as the opposition in the church throughout Nicephorus' tenure of office. He was viewed, almost certainly rightly, as the emperor's pliant creature, but, when, on the Emperor Nicephorus' unexpected death in battle against the Bulgars in 811, he gained greater freedom of action, he proved that he was made of sterner stuff, ready to do battle against the monastic party even when *they* had the emperor's support and stalwart in his opposition to the court and the court-sponsored party in the church when they began promoting iconoclasm again, until, outmanoeuvred, isolated, and weakened by illness, he was finally forced into resigning on the first day of Lent 815.[5]

[2] Ibid. 56–61. If due allowance is made for an element of exaggeration in Ignatius' account of Nicephorus' role at the council, there does not seem to be enough solid evidence to back the hypothesis advanced by Alexander (60–1) that Nicephorus was charged with the delicate task of handling the case of a repentant iconoclast bishop, Gregory of Neocaesarea, perhaps the most contentious procedural issue which the council was expected to handle. This would imply that Nicephorus enjoyed the favour and confidence of the Empress Irene and the Patriarch Tarasius and was already destined to play a prominent part in affairs of state.

[3] Ibid. 61–3.

[4] Ibid. 63–9.

[5] Ibid. 68–135.

He was confined initially to a monastery on the Asian side of the Bosporus and instructed to refrain from intervening in the affairs of the church. Then he was transferred to a monastic foundation of his own, possibly that which he had set up during his earlier temporary retirement on his family estates. This was to be his place of permanent exile, and he spent the remainder of his life there. There is no evidence that he suffered any special privations apart from the isolation of exile and confinement. Within two years of his deposition, he stopped lying low and returned to the fray.[6] In the last ten years of his life, from 818 to 828, he wrote three major theological tracts in which he skilfully deployed the weaponry of Aristotelian scholasticism to refute the errors of the main proponents of iconoclasm, beginning with the Emperor Constantine V, then extending his field of fire to two of the main patristic authorities cited by Constantine, and finally engaging in head-on conflict with contemporary iconoclasts, picking holes in the formula which they had produced at the Council of St Sophia in 815 and challenging the *florilegium* of texts with which they had backed it.[7]

Nicephorus can therefore be seen to have been a worldly figure. He was involved in affairs from an early age, proved a tough political operator in testing times, and only withdrew under intense pressure from the emperor and his iconoclast opponents in the church. His theological writings show that he possessed formidable intellectual powers and wide-ranging scholarship. To judge by the skill with which he used Aristotelian concepts, distinctions, and scientific theories to confute his opponents, his was an incisive and well-stocked mind.[8] He was concerned with the surface sheen of whatever he wrote, striving to combine classicism, elegance, and lucidity. This is especially evident in the *Breviarium*, which has rightly been characterized as 'more in the nature of a rhetorical exercise than a work of historiography', an early, if not the earliest, example of the revival of a classicizing style after a long period of cultural depression stretching back to the mid seventh century.[9]

The *Breviarium* is an insubstantial work of history, in contrast to the formidable theological tracts, grounded in deep knowledge of the fathers of the church, which Nicephorus penned towards the end of his life. He flits over the whole dramatic period from 602 to 769, a period which saw the political and economic transformation of the Mediterranean world and the reduction of the east Roman empire into a beleaguered highland *terre d'insolence* on the margin of the new empire of the Caliphate, in a mere sixty-five pages. It is not

[6] Alexander, *Nicephorus*, 147–50.

[7] Ibid. 166–78 and 180–8.

[8] Ibid. 198–209.

[9] C. Mango, 'The *Breviarium* of the Patriarch Nicephorus', in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos* (Athens, 1986), ii. 539–52.

through some Herculean feat of distillation of the primary sources and a rigorous attention to the historically important that Nicephorus achieves this, but rather through his highly selective approach. His principal concern is with politics, as it was of the classicizing historians whose manner he strives to ape. He provides succinct accounts of major domestic events (conspiracies, political upheavals, and civil war are his favourite subject matter, but he does not forget to note the ceremonial highlights of court life) which he accompanies with extensive coverage of foreign relations, in war and peace. He saves space by giving an economical account of church history, until he reaches the 760s, and by leaping lightly over the decisive reign of Constans II (641–69).

The *Breviarium* has three distinct parts. The first, preceding this gap, is naturally preoccupied with the last round of Roman–Persian warfare and the Arab invasions which followed it. The second treats, in a similar manner and from the same Constantinopolitan point of view, the politics of the new world order which was beginning to solidify at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth. The third takes the story on from 720, where there is a striking change of gear (much more attention being given thereafter to natural disasters and the coverage of foreign affairs now being dominated by the Byzantine–Bulgar conflict). It is likely that each of these parts was based upon a single source, hence that the text was simply the sum of three antecedent texts, duly filleted by Nicephorus.[10]

Two drafts of the *Breviarium* have survived, each preserved in a single manuscript dating from the first half of the tenth century.[11] The first, transmitted by what remains (approximately a fifth) of a manuscript of fine quality (with some illuminated initials), halts with the overthrow of Philippicus in 713. The second, transmitted by a manuscript which once belonged to a literary team working for the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913– 59), differs from the first in two respects. Considerable effort has been put into improving the language and presentation of the first eleven chapters, and the history is continued to 769, concluding with a notice about the arrival of Irene in Constantinople from Hellas to marry Constantine V's eldest son, Leo. But there are signs that the second draft was in a far from finished state when Nicephorus left off working on it. No attempt has been made to fill the void in the centre of the first draft, which, as before, is marked with a single sentence (c. 33) noting that the Emperor Constans II was assassinated twenty-seven years after his accession.[12] There is also a discernible slackening in the author's

[10] Cf. C. Mango, *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History*, CFHB 13 (Washington, DC, 1990), 12–18, who does, however, allow for several contributory sources to part I.

[11] Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, ed. and trans. Mango, *Nikephoros.*

[12] His reign lasted just under 28 years (5 November 641–15 July 669).

literary effort towards the end: he allows the format of his chronicle source to show through the surface of his own version from ch. 67 (a year-entry covering a Byzantine attack on Germaniceia and a recurrence of plague in Constantinople (datable to 745–6)) and stops excising the indiction dates given by his source from ch. 77 (the start of a year-entry for 762–3, which continues in ch. 78). He only smartens up his language for one set-piece description, of a severe winter, when the Black Sea froze and icebergs came down the Bosporus (ch. 74). Finally, he includes only one of the formal speeches with which a respectable classicizing historian was expected to embellish his text, and not a single antiquarian excursus, the other main type of decorative feature.[13]

There is no doubt that Nicephorus was consciously operating within the confines of the genre of classicizing history. That is made plain by the whole thrust of his editorial work (irrespective of the varying amount of effort which he invested in it), which was concentrated on language and style rather than historical substance. He seems to have intended his work to be a continuation of the *History* of Theophylact Simocatta, the last classicizing history produced in the east Roman empire (in the later 620s) which itself was the fourth in a chain of histories headed by the *Wars* of Procopius. That at any rate was how his work was taken by Photius in the ninth century, who commented approvingly on Nicephorus' style in a bibliographical entry which is placed immediately after that on Simocatta, and by the scribes who, a century later, were charged with producing a vast, thematically organized compendium of historical extracts for the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The second draft of the *Breviarium*, originally a separate manuscript, was appended to their working copy of Simocatta's text.[14]

A date of composition early in Nicephorus' life, long before he became absorbed in church affairs, can safely be inferred from the disproportionately small amount of space allocated to church history in the *Breviarium*. It is furthermore inconceivable that he would have been unaware, as he evidently is in the *Breviarium*, that the Patriarch Pyrrhus (638–41) was a heretic, once he had turned his mind to church affairs and the theological background to the controversy over the legitimacy of icons which was dominating the age in which he lived.[15] It is equally unlikely that he would have contented himself with the human explanations which he advances for political disasters at two places, had he been writing in the second half of his adult life.[16] Confirmation

[13] Mango, *Nikephoros*, 5–7 and 19–25.

[14] Ibid. 7, 18–23.

[15] An unanswerable point first made by Mango, '*Breviarium*', 544–5 and 551 and repeated in his *Nikephoros*, 11–12.

[16] At c. 52. 1–7 he finds an explanation for Arab successes against Byzantium in 716–17 in the decline of the level of education and of military expertise in the latter (I take *ta taktika* in line 4

of an early date of composition comes from an incidental reference to the continuing Avar control over Pannonia, which could not have been written by a man with any political awareness after 796.[17]

The first draft evidently pre-dated the second by several years. If we envisage Nicephorus as a precocious schoolboy, its composition could be placed perhaps as early as the last years of Constantine V (741–75). This would help explain why Nicephorus chose to halt the revamping of his second source early, not where it gave out (around 720) but at the overthrow of Philippicus in 713. If he had continued into the reign of his highly competent successor, Anastasius II (713–15), who took a firm grip on fiscal and military administration and prepared Constantinople for the coming Arab siege, he would have found himself documenting the rise to power of Leo III, father of the reigning emperor, and at risk of causing offence by an inevitably selective narrative into which an unwary phrase might slip. However, the first draft should probably be dated a few years later, to the reign of Leo IV (775–80), when Nicephorus probably completed his education. Caution would still have been advisable, especially if he had already joined the imperial secretariat.

The first draft may therefore be dated with reasonable confidence to the 770s. It was perhaps discovery of a third historical text, which took the story well beyond 720, probably to the end of Constantine V's reign in 775, which prompted Nicephorus to revise and extend the draft which he had written. Since this text seems to have combined a full set of notices about creditable imperial actions at home and abroad with some overtly hostile accounts of the persecution of iconophiles, its completion and circulation should certainly be dated after the death of Constantine V and probably also after that of Leo IV, that is, to a period when the iconoclast policies pursued since 730 were being reviewed by the new regency regime of Irene. If so, Nicephorus' second bout of historical writing should probably be dated to the middle of the 780s, and his decision to halt his version at the coming of the protector of icons

to refer to military education, passed on partly through the medium of tactical manuals, rather than to military *organization* as proposed in his translation by Mango, *Nikephoros*, 121), the causes of which he traces back to domestic political instability. Later (c. 65. 14–20), he does not detect the hand of God behind the horrors brought by civil war in 741–3 (and there was one obvious sin, Iconoclasm, for which God could have been punishing his people) but attributes them instead to human causes, the political rivalry of the two claimants to the throne and the unnatural behaviour customarily induced in men at times of internecine conflict. The only point at which a supernatural explanation is advanced occurs in his account of the plague of 747–8: those able to think aright, Nicephorus writes, judged it to have been inflicted by God's wrath at the sacrilegious deeds of the emperor and other iconoclast activists (c. 67. 38–43).

[17] Nic., c. 35. 17–18. Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene* (London, 1889), ii. 450 n. 1. However, Mango, *Nikephoros*, 8 and 195, suspects that Nicephorus was merely copying out a phrase already present in his source.

and icon veneration (Irene) to Constantinople should be attributed to the prudence of an ambitious young civil servant, well aware of the danger of venturing into the politics of the recent past.[18]

Nicephorus himself does not appear to have allowed either draft of his short history to go into circulation, presumably because he did not wish any critical eye to light upon his unfinished work. His contemporaries George Syncellus and Theophanes, the first of whom he must have known through Tarasius whom they both served, were unaware of its existence.[19] It was only after his death and, perhaps, because of his fame as a patriarch who had fought doughtily against iconoclasm, that both drafts were disinterred from among his papers and attracted attention in high places.[20]

2. NICEPHORUS' ACCOUNT OF THE PERIOD 603–641: SOURCES

The first part of Nicephorus' short history deals with the reign of Heraclius. It is prefaced (c. 1) with a summary statement about the evils brought about by Phocas and an account of Heraclius' seizure of power, after he won a race to Constantinople against his cousin Nicetas (a story, which, as we have seen, also made its way into the west Syrian historical tradition), and concludes (cc. 27–32) with a description of the disease which killed him and the political troubles which erupted after his death. The narrative breaks off before the resolution of the succession crisis in favour of Constans II, his young grandson. We are left in suspense. Constans is at the mercy of his step-grandmother Martina and her eldest son Heraclius who are entrenched in Constantinople, but he has the open backing of an army encamped on the Asian shore of the Bosporus.

The main body of part I (cc. 2–26) gives an episodic narrative of Heraclius' reign. It is very much a metropolitan history, concerned above all with the imperial family and the court, but warfare looms large, principally against Persians and Arabs. Attention shifts back and forth between war and diplomacy, on the one hand, and domestic politics and notable court events, on the other. The tone is serious for the most part, but some lighter, gossipy items are included, such as an unfortunate incident during the funeral of Heraclius' first

[18] As proposed by Mango, *Nikephoros*, 12.

[19] Ibid. 12.

[20] It is tempting to suggest that it was Photius, the first attested reader of the *Breviarium*, who found the drafts in the course of the search for rare books which led to the writing of the *Bibliotheca*.

wife Eudocia, when some spittle landed on the vestment enveloping the corpse in the open coffin (c. 3), or the chance identification, at the races in Constantinople, of a landowner whose retainers had killed the son of a neighbour during a dispute (c. 4). The narrative is at its best when it is dealing with politics and ceremonial, whether Heraclius' sidelining of a dangerously powerful supporter, Priscus (misspelt as Crispus), in 612 (c. 2), or preparations for three summit meetings together with accounts of procedure and transactions in the two which took place (cc. 6 (Shahen), 10 (Avars), 12 (Turks)).

Northern peoples get a fair amount of coverage, not only when their leaders meet Heraclius but also when they impinge directly on the capital. Hence detailed accounts of two Avar attacks (623 and 626), and notices about a Hun state visit during the war, in the course of which the whole party was baptized (c. 9), and the arrival much later of an embassy from the Onogundur leader, Kubrat, when he rebelled against the Avars (c. 22). The main non-Roman subject, though, is the progress of Persian armies, then, after an interlude of Roman success, of the Muslims. Key episodes are singled out for description from the war against Persia, but they are not always placed in the correct chronological order. Shahen's thrust to the Bosporus (615) is mentioned immediately after the invasion of Egypt (619) and serves to introduce a scene selected for full treatment, his negotiations with Heraclius (the pithy exchanges of the first draft were replaced by a wordy, vacuous speech in the second—c. 6). The fall of Jerusalem (614) serves a similar purpose in a later chapter (12), where it prefaces a summary account of Heraclius' counter-offensive campaigns of 624–6 and 627–8, which have been conflated. Considerable space is devoted to a meeting of Heraclius and the Turkish khagan in 627, especially the ceremonial acts and presents which fostered mutual goodwill, and the subsequent detachment of a Turkish force to fight with the Romans. The spotlight then switches to Constantinople and the siege which it survived in the previous year (c. 13), before picking out Heraclius' victory over Rahzadh at the battle of Nineveh, the *putsch* which deposed Khusro, and the opening of negotiations between Kavad Shiroe and Heraclius (cc. 14–15).

There is a fair amount of mangling and trivializing in this history of the Persian war. Modestus is made out to be patriarch as early as 614, rather than simply acting as deputy for the deported Patriarch Zacharias (c. 12).[21] Shahen is killed off soon after his return from the Bosporus in 615, punished by Khusro for doing obeisance to Heraclius when they met (c. 6). The fire-temple of Adur Gushnasp (modern Takht-i Suleiman), sacked by Heraclius

[21] Mango, *Nikephoros*, 180 and 185. Modestus' behaviour during the period of Persian occupation is examined in Ch. 6. His brief tenure of the patriarchate only began after the restoration of the True Cross on 21 March 630.

in 624, has been transmuted into a place where Khusro himself is worshipped (c. 12).[22] The decisive battle of Nineveh is reduced to a duel between Rahzadh, the Persian commander, and Heraclius, which Heraclius wins by cheating (c. 14).[23] An extraordinarily garbled list is given of the short-lived shahs who succeeded Khusro II (c. 16).[24] Finally, the two ceremonies which celebrated the end of the war, Heraclius' triumphal return to Constantinople in 628 (c. 19) and his solemn restoration of the fragments of the True Cross in their sealed container to Jerusalem (c. 18), have been transposed, and he is reported, falsely, to have sent the precious relics immediately after the Jerusalem ceremony to Constantinople.

The mixture remains the same after the victorious conclusion of the war, save that it is now the Arabs who are centre stage in foreign affairs. More attention is given to domestic politics, which assume increasing importance, as the narrative approaches Heraclius' death, until, with the constitutional crisis which followed it, they elbow out the story of the continuing Arab advance altogether. An exception to this is the account of the conquest of Egypt, which has been successfully integrated into the history of domestic politics. The high-grade material includes diplomatic episodes (the ransoming of a nephew of Heraclius from the Avars (c. 21) as well as the alliance with the Onogundur Kubrat (c. 22)), and political notices (the dismissal of Heraclius' brother Theodore from his command in northern Syria (c. 20), the failed conspiracy of his illegitimate son Atalaric and Theodore's son, also called Theodore (c. 24), the appointment of Pyrrhus as patriarch (c. 26), promotions in status of Heraclius' sons and daughters by Martina (c. 27)). But the narrative is again disfigured by the presence of low-grade material (notably cc. 24–5 which explain Heraclius' residence outside the capital for much of this period by a phobia of water which kept him on the Asian side of the Bosporus). It is also difficult to piece together a coherent narrative of the Arab conquest of Palestine and Syria from the odd snippets of information which are given (cc. 18 and 20), while confusion has entered the fuller account of the conquest of Egypt (c. 23).

[22] Mango, *Nikephoros*, 180–1 for conflation in this passage of Heraclius' first and second counteroffensives and for the reference to the destruction of the fire-temple of Thebarmais.

[23] Heraclius only takes up Razhadh's challenge because everyone else hangs back. Razhadh has first blood, grazing Heraclius' lip with one arrow and scraping his ankle with another. One of Heraclius' bodyguards then disarms Razhadh by slicing off his shoulder, leaving Heraclius with the easy task of spearing and decapitating his defenceless opponent.

[24] Kavad-Shiroe (February–September 628) has been divided in two, Kavad succeeding on Shiroe's death and reigning a short time; his successor is Hormizd (in reality a defeated rival of Yazdgerd's), who sends his son (probably meant to be Kavad-Shiroe's son Ardashir III, September 628–April 630) to Heraclius for protection; after Hormizd's death Heraclius duly recognizes that son, who is not named, as king.

This preliminary evaluation of the multifarious component parts of the section of the *Breviarium* dealing with the first half of the seventh century has relied entirely on their apparent quality, i.e. the coherence, plausibility, and precision of the accounts of individual episodes which it presents. But too much confidence should not be placed in subjective judgements of this sort. Other, more soundly based criteria for establishing the worth of passages should be found, if we are to trust part but not all of the *Breviarium*. We need to explain how the text has suffered damage and to define the limits of the damage, if we intend to make use of its evidence where it is not backed up by that of demonstrably reliable sources.

An obvious possible explanation for the diversity in the character and quality of the material included in the first part of the *Breviarium* is that Nicephorus was drawing on more than one source, and that the strengths and weaknesses apparent in his text reflect those of his sources. This seems at first sight a fruitful approach. It is tempting to suppose that at least one inferior historiographical strain has been injected into the main body of sounder material. An origin in east Syrian circles in contact with the Sasanian court at Ctesiphon might plausibly be suggested for several items, which either show a trace of anti-Roman bias (such as the account of Heraclius' duel with Rahzadh)[25] or take considerable liberties with history such as the stories of the cousins' race for the throne in 610 and Heraclius' phobia of water. But such inferior strains would have to be multiplied to account for the full range of obviously poor matter in the *Breviarium*, since, for example, there is no question of an east Syrian origin either for the garbled account of the last Sasanian rulers or the particular form in which Nicephorus retails the story of the forged letter which Heraclius substituted for one sent by Khusro II to Shahrvaraz in 626 (the west Syrian version, which is entirely different, is likely to correspond to and probably to derive from an east Syrian account). Then there is the gossipy, trivializing material for which a source specializing in anecdotes might be postulated . . .

But with each new step, with the introduction of each new hypothetical source to account for a particular category of material in the *Breviarium*, this approach encounters increasing resistance. For it would have been quite out of character for the young Nicephorus to have engaged in the complex editorial task of integrating material from a number of distinct sources. It is

[25] The odd usage of *parresia* in this passage, where it means 'boldness in action' rather than the usual 'forthrightness in speech', in connection with Heraclius' far from heroic feat (c. 14. 15), demands explanation. One possibility worth exploring is that it may have originated as an awkward translation of a Persian or Syriac word of similar but broader meaning. I am grateful to Zeev Rubin for suggesting *gumdanuta*, 'audacity, importunity', as a Syriac possibility.

highly unlikely that the rather complaisant historian of parts II and III of the *Breviarium*, who was content to paraphrase the chronologically contiguous sources which had come his way, would have embarked on the serious research necessary to collect a range of diverse sources on a relatively remote period (not to mention the unlikelihood of their surviving the intervening dark age) and to combine their material into a narrative of his own.

It is much more plausible to suppose, as does Cyril Mango, that part I was composed in much the same way as the rest of the *Breviarium*, and that Nicephorus was working from a single source, his own contribution being to transform it into something more compact and much more classical in style. That source is readily identifiable, from the range and balance of interests shown in his text, as a Constantinopolitan chronicle. The author may be judged to have been a Monothelete sympathizer from his treatment of Pyrrhus. He was probably writing in the 640s, not long after the succession crisis to which he paid such close attention. The last few chapters, which describe in considerable detail the political manoeuvring of the two principal parties in contention after Heraclius' death, look like the finale of his work. A connection of a loose sort can be made between this chronicle and the continuation of John of Antioch, likewise a Constantinopolitan chronicle, which was probably completed soon after Heraclius brought Phocas' reign to a bloody end. For Nicephorus made use of both texts. His brief cast back to 602 (c. 1) is a pithy and highly selective summary of the continuation's relatively full account of Phocas and his fall, and leads seamlessly into his narrative of the beginning of Heraclius' reign (cc. 2–5). This easy transition points surely to juxtaposition of the two texts in the manuscript Nicephorus was using. This in turn suggests that the Constantinopolitan chronicle to which he turned was a second continuation of John's chronicle and that it extended its coverage for another generation, to the early 640s.

There is a family resemblance between Nicephorus' account of the fraught politics of the early 640s and that of John of Nikiu. John of Nikiu admittedly goes into far more detail and looks at the crisis, as is only to be expected, primarily from an Egyptian point of view. He also reveals that beneath the dynastic dispute described by Nicephorus there was an underlying policy disagreement, between hardline advocates of war against the Arabs and more conciliatory elements in the government. But the main lines of the story are the same. So the question arises as to whether John of Nikiu drew on the second continuation of John of Antioch or wrote his account independently. It is hard to give a firm answer, since we do not know whether Nicephorus was ready and able to reduce what would have to have been an expansive narrative to this degree, whether he could devise a version which would fit into a few discrete, compact paragraphs (cc. 28–32). It is, of course,

possible that the *Breviarium* came into being as an *intellectual* exercise, that is as an extended test in comprehension and in the ability to précis, as well as an exercise in prose composition and test of his ability to paraphrase a plain text in a classicizing style. This would make sense if, as suggested above, the first draft was produced in the early 770s, when Nicephorus was a teenager. It could then be envisaged as an elaborate school exercise imposed on a boy of outstanding and acknowledged intellectual ability. However, this is no more than a possibility. It is more likely that the resemblances between the two accounts are to be explained not by a shared source but by independent perception of the historical phenomena on the part of a Constantinopolitan witness, the second continuator of John of Antioch, and of John of Nikiu, a younger and more distant near-contemporary of the crisis.

Similar issues arise with regard to the *Chronographia* written by Theophanes some thirty years after the *Breviarium*. Theophanes records the key episodes of the crisis in a series of brief notices grouped together in three successive year-entries—(1) the deaths of Heraclius (from dropsy) and his eldest son, Heraclius the New Constantine (allegedly poisoned by his stepmother Martina and the patriarch Pyrrhus) (640/1), (2) the succession of Heraclonas, together with his mother Martina (640/1), (3) the deposition, mutilation, and exile of Heraclonas and Martina ordered by the Senate (641/2), (4) the dismissal of Valentinus from his command (641/2), (5) the ejection of Pyrrhus from the patriarchal throne and his replacement by Paul (641/2), (6) the installation of Constans II as emperor by the Senate (641/2), and (7) a summary in direct speech of Constans' formal address to the Senate at his accession (642/3). His account is much shorter than Nicephorus', no more than a brief digest of the principal items of news. This makes it difficult to tell whether or not he too drew on the continuation. For the moment, the prudent course is to assume that the two accounts are independent, but it is a matter which may be worth reconsidering in the light of a thorough review of the full range of sources used by Theophanes (see Ch. 9 below).

The great value of the first part of the *Breviarium* derives from the very modesty of Nicephorus' aims. He has preserved for us much of the substance of a near-contemporary account of the extraordinary drama of the first half of the seventh century. Thereby he has done an inestimable service. For the second continuator, whose chronicle of recent and current events would have remained largely, if not entirely, unknown but for Nicephorus, was well placed to piece together a history of the Arab invasions which destroyed the old bipolar world order, as well as being able to take advantage of the half-generation which had elapsed since the end of the last Roman–Persian war, to take a detached view of it, while not being too far removed to have access to authoritative sources of information. From the dismembered corpse of the

Breviarium there emerges a living mid seventh-century text. Both its positive and its negative features tell us much about the history of the time.

3. NICEPHORUS' ACCOUNT OF THE PERIOD 603–641: HISTORICAL VALUE

How much trust, though, can be put in information transmitted by the second continuator through Nicephorus? The chronological mess created by the decision to summarize Sasanian conquests in two consolidated notices induces considerable caution. So too the taste for the tabloid. Confidence in the critical acumen of the second continuator is liable to plummet. His memory seems to have been far from infallible and his intellect does not seem to have been engaged properly in his historical enterprise. Rather it looks as if he simply gathered up whatever information came his way, either in written form or orally transmitted, including mutant versions of the truth (notably the story of the cousins' race for Constantinople and throne in 610, which was also picked up later by Theophilus of Edessa), and wrote it down in a loose, agglutinative historical record. The errors and confusion of his account of the Roman–Persian war can then be attributed, at least in part, to the distance in time and space separating the events half a generation earlier and the milieu in which he worked, Constantinople in the 640s. However, on this hypothesis—that he was a comparatively innocent registrar of circulating news—the closer he was to the events, the less deformation should we expect to find in his accounts of them. This should give us renewed hope that material of value may lurk in what has been transmitted of his text, save for items of news which were already deformed when they were put into circulation, such as the spurious story that Shahrvaraz had made a secret agreement with Heraclius in 626 (identified in Chapter 7 above as Roman black propaganda).

We should also allow for some editorial intervention on Nicephorus' part. It was (and is) all too easy to alter inadvertently substantive elements in the course of paraphrasing a text. The second, improved draft of the first eleven chapters may be more classical but has become blander, with some smoothing away of details. If, as seems not improbable, the second continuator's account was long and loosely constructed, the task of reducing it to something of manageable length and more tightly knit would have imposed intellectual as well as literary demands on the metaphrast, whether schoolboy or young civil servant. The more condensing and reshaping of the

original he undertook, the more opportunities there were for errors, major as well as minor, to slip into his version of the continuation. Modestus might be designated patriarch too early. Shahen's execution might be associated with the wrong invasion of Asia Minor, that of 615 rather than 626. It is conceivable then that Nicephorus was responsible for the worst nexus of errors and confusion in part I of the *Breviarium*, concerning the Roman–Persian war. It may be that information about the fighting was interspersed with domestic and other items of news in the continuation and that the editorial decision to bring it together into two summary notices was taken by Nicephorus. There is evidence in favour of this hypothesis. A literary rationale—to be associated with Nicephorus—can be detected behind the reshaping of the raw material. In each notice, a brief review of Persian military success sets the scene for an assertion by Heraclius of traditional Roman superiority: Shahen arrives at Chalcedon and does not refrain from showing due deference to the Roman emperor (c. 6); the most striking success (the capture of Jerusalem) achieved by Shahrvaraz, Khusro's other great general, is picked out at the start of the second notice (c. 12), because Shahrvaraz will feature later; there follow several demonstrations of Roman power—the obeisance of the Turkish leader when he meets Heraclius, the destruction of a great fire-temple in which Khusro is glorified, the submission of Shahrvaraz. It seems more likely than not that the responsibility for the resulting deformation of history should be attributed to the later classicizing writer, who was interested above all in appearances, rather than to the near-contemporary chronicler.

Nicephorus' version of the second continuator's *military* history of the past must therefore be viewed with deep suspicion. He appears to have improved the substance as well as the style of his source, and, in doing so, to have garbled chronology and confused causation. It does not follow, however, that he subjected the rest of the continuation, dealing with non-military subjects, to a similarly thorough reworking. There is no reason as yet for regarding the whole of his version as a distorted representation of the lost second continuation of John of Antioch. There was no need for wholesale restructuring if a source could be cut down to manageable size by the simple process of deselection. For example, if the second continuator noted down all ceremonies and events involving members of the imperial family, his long list could without difficulty be reduced by picking out a small minority for inclusion. Nicephorus, whose prime concern was style, would surely only have disturbed the order of the second continuation *in extremis*. We may surely view part I of the *Breviarium* as in the main a selective *metaphrasis* of the lost second continuation, as containing seventh-century material in new linguistic garb.

The material itself should include much of value, since it was gathered and written down soon after the events by a near-contemporary witness in Constantinople in the 640s. But this proposition must be tested before trust can safely be put in information originating in the continuation. Testing is a simple, mechanical process: individual notices, as transmitted by Nicephorus, can be checked against information extracted from sources of proven worth; the rough dating deducible from their relative positions in the *Breviarium* can also be compared to absolute dates given in other sources. Individual notices can then be grouped together by subject matter—ceremonial events in the life of the court, metropolitan affairs, important diplomatic episodes, military operations—and the different categories separately appraised.

There were good sources of information about the imperial family available in the seventh century. Court circulars were regularly issued, providing much of the material picked up by the *Chronicon Paschale*. Several centuries later, a few were reproduced whole in the *De cerimoniis*, a text commissioned by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. So the second continuator should have had little difficulty in getting hold of copies. His credentials as a serious, conscientious recorder of the past can best be tested by comparing his dynastic notices against the testimony of independently preserved extracts or full texts of court circulars. The death of Heraclius' first wife Eudocia (c. 3—612), the ceremonies involving her baby son (baptism, coronation, betrothal) which took place before the end of the year (c. 5), a failed conspiracy in which Atalaric, an illegitimate son of Heraclius, was implicated (c. 24—636 or 637), and a flurry of promotions of Heraclius' children by his second wife Martina towards the end of the reign (c. 27—638) are all corroborated.[26] In the light of this record, it seems safe to impute considerable historical value to other items of dynastic news retailed by the second continuator, above all his placing of Heraclius' second controversial marriage to his niece Martina after the surprise Avar attack on Constantinople in 623 (c. 11).[27] Without his evidence, we would be hard put to date it. With it, the ceremony which flouted God's law and offended public opinion can be firmly placed on the eve of the start of Heraclius' first counteroffensive against the Persians. This in turn casts new light on his decision to take personal

[26] *Chron. Pasch.*, 702. 19–703. 2, 703. 17–704. 2; ps. Sebeos, 93–5; *De cer.*, II. 27, 29. Excessive compression in the last of these four notices has resulted in three minor errors, which are detectable thanks to the two documents preserved in *De cer.*, II, 27 and 29: Heraclonas' coronation as co-emperor has been omitted; Martin has been given the wrong title (he was *nobilissimus* on 4 January 639); and the younger girl's name was Anastasia, not Martina.

[27] Indirect confirmation comes from *Chron. Pasch.*, 713. 19–714. 3: Martina is first mentioned as empress in spring 624; she leaves Constantinople with the imperial party on the eve of the campaigning season.

command of military operations. He may have been partly motivated by the need to distract attention from his private affairs and to recover lost prestige. The second continuator remains an important source for this central theme of dynastic history up to the installation of Paul as patriarch (1 October 641), not long before the final removal of the stain of incest, with the ousting of Martina and her eldest son a month later (not covered by Nicephorus).[28] He also provides a fascinating snippet of additional information about Heraclius' agreement with Shahrvaraz in 629 (c. 17. 16–19)—Shahrvaraz's son was given the title of patrician, while a daughter of his was betrothed to Theodosius, one of Heraclius' sons by Martina.[29]

There was almost certainly plenty of information available in Constantinople in the 640s about the city's recent history, much of it, one would assume, orally transmitted. While not as accurately preserved as dynastic news, there is no reason to suspect that this second category of material was extensively corrupted before it reached the second continuator, given the comparatively short time which had elapsed and given that the milieu in which the reports were circulating was the milieu affected by them. Direct experience of crises was likely to imprint them firmly on the collective memory. There is some exaggeration in the version transmitted by the second continuator through Nicephorus: the cutting of Constantinople's Egyptian grain supply leads not only to the ending of the bread dole (cf. *Chron. Pasch.*, 711. 13–15) but also to a famine, itself followed by a serious epidemic (c. 8. 2–6); a grossly inflated figure (270,000) is given for the number of prisoners taken off by the Avars, after their surprise attack on Constantinople in 623 (c. 10. 37–41). The rest of the account of the Avars' attempt to capture Heraclius when he ventured out beyond the Long Wall has the hallmarks of sober historical reporting. It both tallies with what is reported in the *Chronicon Paschale*, which is primarily concerned with damage done to church property in the suburbs, and adds much that is new. It gives a lucid account of fast-moving events, which are placed in a wider context (negotiations which are to culminate in a summit meeting). There is much specific detail—placenames, names of individuals (two Roman ambassadors to the Avars), the three days' gap between the arrival of the emperor at Selymbria and the approach of the khagan of the Avars, the emperor's swift

[28] Nicephorus' account of the details of the succession crisis (cc. 28–32) is uncorroborated, unless both Theophanes, 341. 24–342. 3, 342. 9–20 and John of Nikiu, 185, 186, 191, 191–2, 196–8 are judged to have made no use of the continuator. However, ps. Sebeos, 140. 35–141. 8, 142. 16–143. 9 confirms that there was a serious political crisis at the time.

[29] Mango, 'Deux études', 105–6, 110–12.

donning of ordinary clothes when he realized he had fallen into a trap, and his hasty flight with the crown under his arm.

Two other important episodes in the history of the city feature in Nicephorus' version of the continuation—the Avar siege of 626 and the victory parade at the end of the war (628). They are placed correctly after the ending of the bread dole in 618 and the Avar surprise attack of 623, but there is some syncopation at the end. The triumph which Heraclius celebrates in Constantinople after his return from Persia (c. 19, corroborated by Theophanes, 327. 24–328. 10, based on George of Pisidia's *Official History*) is placed after, rather than before, the ceremony in which he restored the True Cross to Jerusalem (c. 18—March 630).[30] The account of the siege is sober and fares well when compared to the official account preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale.* As in the case of the 623 surprise attack, the second continuator adds new information: he prefaces his account with details about the treaty negotiated by Heraclius after his escape in 623, whereby he secured Avar neutrality for a huge (annual) payment of 200,000 solidi. He then gives a fair summary of siege operations, picking out the two major threats to the city (from Avar siege engines and Slav naval attack), and plugs a gaping hole in our knowledge about the climax of the Avar siege of Constantinople, caused by the loss of a folio from the only extant manuscript of the *Chronicon Paschale.*[31] His account, abbreviated though it be in Nicephorus' version (c. 13. 19–36), explains the purpose of the Slav naval attack (a diversionary action to provide cover for a mass assault on the land walls) and why it went disastrously wrong (the Romans got wind of the plan and took appropriate countermeasures).

Eight separate diplomatic episodes are covered in the first part of Nicephorus' text. He does not seem to have tampered with the content of the second continuator's work. For his notices about four of the episodes can be checked against independent sources of proven value. He knows that Heraclius negotiated with the commander of the Persian army which reached Chalcedon in 615 (cf. *Chronicon Paschale*, 706. 11–709, and *History of Khosrov*, 122. 9–123. 7). Much of the detail which he gives is accurate (cc. 6–7): the general was Shahen; Heraclius did look to his own safety and conduct the talks from a boat; Shahen did agree to escort an embassy to Khusro, and the ambassadors are correctly identified. It is Shahen, however, rather than Heraclius who is presented as the suppliant, a shameful episode in

[30] It was probably Nicephorus who imagined that the True Cross was transferred immediately afterwards to Constantinople, rather than when Jerusalem was under threat from the Arabs.

[31] As noted by Barišič, 'Le Siège de Constantinople', 375 and Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, n. 473.

Roman history being thereby transformed into something more acceptable. Or it may be that Nicephorus did intervene at this point, being unable to conceive of the abject state of the empire in 615. Three other episodes—Heraclius' summit meeting with the ruler of the Turks (c. 12), his negotiations with Kavad Shiroe at end of the war (c. 15), and the meeting which finalized Heraclius' political deal with Shahrvaraz (c. 17)—fare even better. They are corroborated in essentials by the *History to 682* (137. 20–138. 4 (85)), the *Chronicon Paschale* (733. 14–737), and the *Chronicle to 724* (114).

No great leap of faith is required to place confidence in the other four uncorroborated diplomatic items, all of which concern Roman relations with northern peoples and seem to have been recycled without significant alteration. The first covers a state visit to Constantinople by the ruler of the Huns and an entourage of nobles and their wives, in the course of which they were all baptized (c. 9). It is placed before the failed summit meeting with the Avar khagan in 623 and probably derives ultimately from a contemporary communiqué. A specific piece of information—that the emperor's brother Theodore acted as godfather to the Hun ruler—is what is to be expected from a court circular. The second item (c. 13. 1–9) outlines the high price of the peace which Heraclius negotiated with the Avars after his narrow escape in 623—annual payments of 200,000 solidi and three named hostages, a bastard son of Heraclius, a nephew of his, and a bastard son of Bonus. The details point to use of some sort of written record, possibly official. This is equally true of Nicephorus' note (c. 21) that the hostages were ransomed several years later, by the emperor's sister and the magister Anianus. Finally, the fourth and last uncorroborated item (c. 22), dated, like the ransoming, to the time of the first Arab attacks on Palestine, is a succinct report on a durable Roman success—an alliance with Kubrat, ruler of the Onogundurs, who had declared his independence from the Avars. One may suspect once again that it derives from an official bulletin noting the successful outcome of negotiations and giving some background information.

The second continuation of the chronicle of John of Antioch thus makes a substantial and vital addition to the stock of retrievable trustworthy information about the Roman empire at the time of its last war with Persia. Its most important contribution comes in the sphere of diplomacy, where it fills in some serious gaps in the patchy record provided by the other principal sources. It is a prime source of information about the ideological stance adopted by the Romans towards both the other great powers, the Turkish and Persian empires, as the war drew towards its climax, as also about their aggressive northern diplomacy which was intended to distract and weaken the expansionist Avar empire, Persia's ally in Europe. Its second main contribution comes in the sphere of domestic politics: it provides the most complete

record of Heraclius' attempts to entrench his first family as a new dynasty in the years immediately following his coup; it fixes the date for his incestuous marriage to Martina, around which revolved much of the subsequent politics of the reign; it documents his efforts to strengthen the position of his second family towards the end of his life; and it provides the only satisfactory account of the constitutional crisis which broke out at his death. We would be equally indebted to the second continuator for the information which he supplies about Constantinople, but for the good fortune of the survival of a manuscript of the *Chronicon Paschale* which renders the continuation redundant in this sphere, except for information unique to it about the climax of the Avar siege.

4. LATER SEVENTH- AND EARLY EIGHTH-CENTURY HISTORY: NICEPHORUS' SOURCE

Nicephorus could look back on the traumatic decades when the future of Byzantium hung in the balance from a time of comparative security in the 770s and 780s. The Abbasids might be resuming the war of aggression, but Byzantium was by now well organized and had developed a guerrilla strategy which could counter Muslim superiority in numbers by exploiting every advantage offered by terrain and a loyal population. He could view the swift early advances of Islam in the context of the harder-fought war of the second half of the seventh and early eighth centuries. He could give a more balanced account than near-contemporaries who had found it hard to free themselves from apocalyptic fears. In this respect he resembled Theophilus of Edessa and Theophilus' principal transmitter, Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. Unlike them, however, he had few useful sources of information on which to draw, probably no more than three. The first of these, the second continuation of John of Antioch, turns out to have provided him with good material, which he has transmitted in something close to its original form, with one important exception—the narrative of military operations, originally probably very long, which he has mangled in the course of condensing.

Nicephorus' copy of the second continuator's text must have been defective, since he broke off his detailed account of the long political crisis following Heraclius' death before reaching its dénouement (the accession of Heraclius the New Constantine's son Constans II, a boy of 11, at the beginning of November 641). He must also have been unable to find any Byzantine historical text dealing with the reign of Constans (641–69). It is inconceivable

that he might have chosen to pass over the supreme crisis of the Roman state and the efforts of Constans II, when the first civil war relieved the pressure, to project imperial power first east over Transcaucasia, then west into the central Mediterranean. The first item he found in his second source was a brief note about Constans' assassination in a bathhouse in Syracuse, in 669 (c. 33). The source, clearly written in Constantinople, since the politics of the palace loom large, was evidently sparing with information about the reign of Constantine IV (669–85). Nicephorus covers Byzantium's foreign relations, the sixth ecumenical council of 680–1, and the final few calm years of the reign in four chapters (34–7). To judge by the space devoted to them, it was the rise of the Bulgars and the consolidation of their presence south of the Danube, within military reach of Constantinople, with which Nicephorus' source was primarily concerned.

Nicephorus', and presumably his source's, coverage remains thin for two more decades. He has relatively little to say about the first reign of Justinian II (685–95). He disposes of foreign affairs in one chapter (38). A preoccupation with northern peoples is again evident. For it is the treachery of a special force of 30,000 men, recruited from Slavs resettled in Bithynia, which accounts for a decisive Roman defeat at the hands of the Muslims at Sebastopolis. The Christian insurgents entrenched in Lebanon—supposedly 'from ancient times'—are merely mentioned in passing on the occasion of their withdrawal. A second short chapter on domestic affairs (attacking Justinian's chief ministers) serves to introduce a vivid short narrative, punctuated by two snatches of direct speech, about the coup of Leontius and the resulting deposition, mutilation, and exile of Justinian (cc. 39–40). Political infighting has now joined northern peoples as a central theme. In the following chapter (41), the loss of north Africa is mentioned but only as the context for the mutiny of the defeated expeditionary force on the return voyage and its proclamation of one of the officers, Apsimar, as emperor.

The seven years of Apsimar's reign as Tiberius II (698–705) are passed over in silence. Instead Nicephorus, surely reflecting the coverage of his source, turns his attention to the north, to Cherson, principal city of the Crimea, where Justinian II is living in exile. He has not given up hope of recovering his throne, suspects that the Chersonites want to kill him or hand him over to Tiberius, and slips out of the city. A colourful story is now retailed, which ends, several years later, with his escape from the territory of the Khazars (Tiberius is demanding his extradition or his head) and his restoration backed by a Bulgar army (c. 42). The two principal themes of Nicephorus' source have become intertwined and, from this point on, coverage becomes much fuller. Sixteen chapters, packed in places with detailed information (cc. 43–58), deal with the fifteen years from the beginning of Justinian's

second reign (705) to the coronation as a baby of Constantine V in 720, in contrast to the eight chapters (cc. 34–41) which sweep over the preceding thirty-six years from the death of Constans II in 669. Considerable space is given to Justinian's second reign: his harsh treatment of his subjects (c. 42. 69–75); a defeat after he provokes war with the Bulgars (c. 43); the loss of Tyana in the east (c. 44); and, the main topic, his vendetta against Cherson in the course of which he manages to unite Chersonites, Khazars, and his own expeditionary force against him and is, in the end, isolated and executed when the rebel fleet arrives and installs Philippicus as emperor (c. 45). Thereafter the spine of the narrative (cc. 48, 50–2) consists of a series of political notices about the turbulent period which followed (the short reigns of Philippicus, Anastasius, and Leontius (711–17)), preceded by short notices about Philippicus' Monothelete church council (c. 46) and Bulgar and Arab successes (c. 47). A great deal of detailed information is added to the bald list of events given by Theophilus of Edessa.

The climax comes in 717–18 when the Arabs attack Constantinople in massive force and besiege the city for thirteen months, until a new emperor, Leo III, whose accession is merely noted, forces their early withdrawal by the use of fireships against their supply convoys (cc. 54–6). The account of the siege is incomplete—nothing is said about the vital part played by Bulgar harassing of the land forces through a severe winter—but the information provided is remarkably precise (as, for example, about a successful sally, led by the emperor, which cut off and destroyed by fire twenty warships at the rear of the enemy fleet struggling against the current in the Bosporus (c. 54. 9–15)). Two notices about contemporary events are inset—suggesting that Nicephorus' source was chronologically organized by year-entry—the first about a mission sent to Sicily to scotch rumours that Constantinople had fallen and to deal with the rebellion of the military governor there (c. 55), and the second noting the birth of a son, the future Constantine V (c. 56. 1–2). The most likely sources for both these items as for the successes achieved by the defenders at sea were official news releases. Other information is unlikely to have been made public: there was nothing whatsoever to be gained by detailing the full ramifications of the plot to restore Anastasius to power soon after the end of the siege (c. 57). This and earlier instances where Nicephorus' source apparently had access to privileged information—about Justinian II's exile (c. 42), about murky goings on in and around Cherson during his second reign (c. 45), or about the abortive plan for a pre-emptive strike against the Arab fleet when it was cutting timber (c. 50) in 714—point to an author who was a contemporary (with bitter memories of Justinian II) and was highly placed.

Since Theophanes makes use of the same source and reproduces material omitted by Nicephorus, a firm conclusion about its nature and authorship must be deferred to the next chapter. For the moment, it may be postulated that it was written by a high official, privy to secrets of state, who had lived through Justinian II's reign of terror and who made him his *bête noire.* A date of composition in the early 720s would explain both the increase in the volume of information provided as the narrative approaches the Arab siege and the sudden silence which falls for a few years after a short (official?) notice about the coronation of Constantine V in 720 (c. 58). The author's memories of what he had witnessed and heard at the time probably provided much of the raw material, but he also turned to official bulletins as convenient sources of precise information and also as a safe way of dealing with potentially sensitive topics (hence the anodyne reference to Leo III's election by an anonymous group of senior officers and officials after they have persuaded Leontius to abdicate (c. 52. 13–20)).[32] Notices seem to have been arranged in chronological order. As has already been suggested, they were probably originally grouped in individual year-entries, but the dates have been carefully stripped out as being inappropriate in a classicizing history.

The anonymous author of what may be called the *History to 720*[33] is given to exaggeration, when his emotions are engaged. His portrait of Justinian II is probably blacker than it should be. What he writes should be viewed as a rhetorical outpouring, a *psogos*, and should not taken too literally. He is ready to magnify numbers for effect: so 100,000 men, both regular soldiers and others recruited from all walks of life, are dispatched on Justinian's first punitive expedition against Cherson (c. 45. 1–9), while 1,800 ships take part in the Arab attack on Constantinople in 717 (c. 52. 10–11). Like the second continuator of John of Antioch, he has a penchant for the anecdotal and the curious (shown in a story about a baby plucked from the womb and boiled in a pot at Pergamum and the paralysis which affected the men who put their right arm in the pot (c. 53)).

But there is nothing in the great majority of the notices recycled by Nicephorus to arouse suspicion. While dates cannot be checked, since none are given, with the single exception of Constantine's coronation (c. 58—25 March 720), the swift turnover of emperors correlates with what is reported by Theophilus of Edessa. The order of their reigns is the same. Such other notices as can be checked occur in the right context and tally in their substance with what is known from the sources already evaluated: Justinian

[32] The succinct but well-articulated account of the great siege of Constantinople in 717–18 (c. 54) was probably based upon such a bulletin.

[33] Cf. Mango, *Nikephoros*, 17.

II is blamed for the renewal of war with the Muslims in the 690s (c. 38. 13–15), as he is by Theophilus of Edessa; the defeat of a relieving force outside Tyana and subsequent surrender of the city in 708/9 (c. 44. 1–18) is picked out as it is by Theophilus; and there is, of course, plenty of corroboration for the main lines of the account of the siege of Constantinople (cc. 54–6).[34] Some surprising incidental detail also inspires confidence. Who would have thought that the well-heeled families of Constantinople would have kept up the custom of going into the country for grand picnics as late as the reign of Philippicus (711–13), but for a notice that many were caught and killed, and others captured along with their silver plate, in a surprise Bulgar raid on the Bosporus (c. 47. 1–6)?

5. NICEPHORUS' ACCOUNT OF ROMAN–ARAB RELATIONS: HISTORICAL VALUE

The lost *History to 720* is therefore a source worth taking seriously, as long as it is handled critically. If the author really was a senior figure—possibly one of those who intervened decisively on the eve of the Arab attack to bring about a bloodless change of regime—we should take what he has to say about recent events, certainly from the overthrow of Justinian II, very seriously. Equal attention should be paid to what seems to be inside information on earlier coups, especially the account of the mechanics of Leontius' seizure of power in 695 (c. 40) and the failed plot of which Anastasius was the unexpected beneficiary in 713 (c. 48). While there may be legendary material in his account of Bulgar origins (c. 35), there is nothing to quibble at in his account of their relations, hostile and friendly, with recent emperors.

Given this favourable appraisal, we can legitimately expect Nicephorus to transmit useful information on the rise of Islam after Constans II's reign, as well as on the first phase of conquests before his accession which fell in the period covered by the second continuator of John of Antioch. We are, however, disappointed. Not just by the long lacuna blanking out the critical intervening years, for which we are most in need of material to supplement what is reported in Armenian and Syrian sources. One major event, omitted by Theophilus of Edessa, the final, successful Arab attack on north Africa (in 697) together with the repulse of the predictable Roman counterattack in the

[34] Agapius, 497–502; *Chron. 1234*, 205, 208–9, 211–12, 215–19; Mich. Syr., II. 469–70, 473–4, 477–9, 483–6.

following year, is reported, but only cursorily and as a preamble to the story of Apsimar's coup (c. 41. 1–15). A first attempt at mass mobilization of the rural population of the interior of Asia Minor (which ended in disaster) is reported on the occasion of the siege of Tyana (c. 44. 8–13). Of interest too is the notice about Anastasius' 714 plan to attack a Muslim naval force from Alexandria while it was engaged in cutting timber around Phoenix on the south coast of Asia Minor, for which the units involved were to rendezvous at Rhodes (c. 50. 1–11). There is invaluable information about aspects of naval operations during the 717–18 siege of Constantinople (see above). But otherwise there is comparatively little to be gleaned from Nicephorus' selection of material from his sources, and the selection itself can be shown to contain elements of very doubtful worth.

There is, surprisingly, no report about the first Arab success, the seizure of Palestine, including Jerusalem. Nicephorus begins with a notice about the conquest of Syria, merely including a flashback about the unfortunate end of a certain Sergius whose advice to Heraclius—to introduce a trade ban on the Arabs and to cut off their annual subsidy of thirty pounds of gold—is blamed for the start of Arab raids (c. 20. 11–21). When the Arabs have penetrated as far as Antioch, Heraclius comes to the east and sacks his brother Theodore from the high command on suspicion of criticizing his second (incestuous) marriage, replacing him with the imperial treasurer, Theodore Trithyrius (c. 20. 1–11). An unnamed subordinate of Theodore's harbours imperial ambitions, ignores orders to avoid open battle, and is defeated when he falls into an Arab ambush (c. 20. 21–31). This battle seems to be an amalgam of three separate engagements—(1) the third and final battle described in the *History of Khosrov*, which was followed by the general submission of Palestine, (2) a battle of some sort fought at or near Gabitha (Jabiya), by which may be meant the battle of Yarmuk, and (3) the decisive battle fought between Emesa and Damascus after which Syria was abandoned.[35] But an interesting piece of new information is supplied about political dissension on the Roman side and its fatal effect on the defence effort.

His second notice also focuses on Roman political disagreement, this time over the defence of Egypt. Again there is an intriguing piece of information. Cyrus, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria and effective governor of Egypt, has established good relations with 'Amr, commander of Arab forces nearby (c. 23. 17–18). He recommends that 'Amr be treated in the traditional way as a client, that he be offered tribute (to be raised from a sales tax, without

[35] Nicephorus, c. 20. 27. (1) Ps. Sebeos, 136. 9–28. (2) Theoph., 336. 29–337. 3; Mich. Syr., II. 420; *Chron. 1234*, 148–9. (3) Theoph., 337. 3–338. 7; Agapius, 470; Mich. Syr., II. 420–1; *Chron. 1234*, 149.

affecting imperial revenue) and an imperial bride on condition that he convert to Christianity (c. 23. 11–17). The emperor rejects the advice and opts for war with disastrous consequences. Three successive Roman commanders are killed (c. 23. 1–10, 18–21). The name of the third is mistakenly given as Marianus instead of Manuel. Arab strategy is left vague.

Such is the unsatisfactory material extracted by Nicephorus from the second continuator. While some of the more recent items of information taken from the *History to 720* are of much higher quality (see above), the first few need to be scrutinized with care. Nicephorus knows that the Arabs launched a direct attack on Constantinople very early in the reign of Constantine IV (in fact, as we have seen, in 670, immediately after a feint in force against north Africa in 669), but he supposes that this was merely the first of seven years of continuous blockade and harassing of the city (c. 34. 2–18). Since the same scenario is presented by Theophanes, who likewise draws extensive material from the lost history, we can be certain that this was its author's view at the time of writing in the 720s. It is not corroborated, however, by Theophilus of Edessa, and is hard to square with his reports that an Arab expeditionary force was defeated in 674 by three Roman generals on land in Lycia, that the fleet evacuating the survivors was destroyed by fireships, and that Roman special forces were landed in Lebanon in 677/8.[36]

It is therefore far from clear how much confidence should be put in a notice that the whole Arab fleet was destroyed in a storm on its voyage home, off Syllaeum in Pamphylia (c. 34. 18–21). It is possible that this did occur and consequently hampered the Arab naval effort over the next few years. But if so, it should probably be placed a few years after the single winter which, according to Theophilus, the Arabs spent at Cyzicus.[37] There is nothing improbable about the second new item of information taken by Nicephorus from the lost history, namely that a thirty-year peace treaty was negotiated after the end of the blockade at the caliph's suggestion, under the terms of which the Romans were to receive 3,000 solidi, 50 freed prisoners-of-war, and fifty horses each year (c. 34. 21–31). The Roman ambassador who extracted this tacit admission of defeat from the Arabs is named as John Pitzigaudius. The details given in this notice may point to use of a communiqué.

[36] See Ch. 7, section 5 above.

[37] Syllaeum was a powerful fortress within easy striking distance of the coast in Pamphylia, not far from the boundary with Lycia (V. Ruggieri and F. Nethercott, 'The Metropolitan City of Syllion and its Churches', *JÖB* 36 (1986), 133–56). Marek Jankowiak, in a forthcoming article, makes the attractive suggestion that Nicephorus' notice contains a garbled recollection of the Arab attack on an unnamed Lycian fortress which ended in disaster in 674.

A third important episode covered by the *History to 720* occurred in the first reign of Justinian II: he is blamed for breaking the treaty out of overconfidence, after a successful Balkan campaign (in 688) boosted troop numbers. It may be dated approximately to the early 690s, if time is allowed for the resettlement of substantial numbers of captured Slavs in north-west Asia Minor and for the recruitment and training of 30,000 of them. The Arabs take pains to show that they have not broken their word, by holding aloft a text of the treaty on a lance as they go into battle. The battle takes place at Sebastopolis (not located by Nicephorus). The Slavs change sides and enable the Muslims to win a decisive victory (c. 38. 7–28). Nicephorus' account is short and condensed. He has omitted to note that the treaty agreed by Constantine IV and Muʿawiya was renegotiated by ʿAbd al-Malik, who offered greatly improved terms (1,000 solidi, one freed prisoner-of-war, and one horse *every day*) in return for the withdrawal of Byzantine special forces, the Mardaites, from Mt. Lebanon. He does indeed mention the withdrawal of the troops, but *after* rather than before the Roman defeat at Sebastopolis, where it makes no sense at all. This garbling of history almost certainly results from over-eager pruning by Nicephorus, as happened earlier in his highly abridged notices on the Roman–Persian war.

Nicephorus thus contributes a number of isolated and intriguing pieces of information to what has already been gathered from seventh- and eighth-century sources about the rise of Islam. There is nothing implausible in the account of early Roman reactions to Arab attacks which he found in the second continuator of John of Antioch. They are taken to result from incompetent client management—non-payment of customary subsidies, the severing of traditional commercial ties. The response of the Patriarch Cyrus may seem laughable in retrospect, but, if hindsight is cast aside, the policy he advocated—of massively increased subsidies and an imperial marriage, in the expectation of ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs' conversion—was in keeping with traditional Roman policy to powerful neighbours. Heraclius had provided a recent precedent for the offer of an imperial bride at his summit meeting with the Turkish leader. The lost *History to 720* supplied him with a few valuable nuggets of information about a later phase in Roman–Arab relations, when the Romans had no choice but to treat their opponents as equals—a sudden shift in the balance of naval power in the 670s which left Muʿawiya with little choice but to sue for peace, a renewal of fighting (loosely datable to the early 690s, when ʿAbd al-Malik emerged victorious from the second civil war) which the Arabs took care to blame on the Romans (they could not break a treaty themselves without flouting God's word), and the Arab conquest of north Africa.

Nicephorus continues to transmit material from the lost history until it ends in 720. The quality improves as its author approaches the time of writing. He is at his best when he deals with Roman actions—for example, Justinian II's expedient of calling peasants to arms, the first clear evidence that the Roman army was becoming once more, as under the Republic, a citizen army. Anastasius emerges as a key figure in organizing Roman defences on the eve of the great Arab assault in 717–18: it is he who sends an embassy specifically to gain intelligence about Arab preparations, and who then strengthens the walls of Constantinople, deploys anti-siege weapons, and requires any inhabitant unable to stock up with three years' provisions to leave the city (c. 40). His abortive attack on the Alexandrian fleet is intended to gain time. The well-informed historian clearly implies that he as much as Leo III deserves the credit for saving the empire in 717–18, although he naturally spotlights the personal contribution of Leo III to the victory, in effect the application of guerrilla principles to naval warfare with the aim of forcing the enemy's early withdrawal.

The errors and confusions which have been detected should probably be attributed to ham-handed editorial work by the young Nicephorus. He does not seem to have taken enough trouble to gain a firm grasp of the military or naval operations which were described in detail by his sources. Without a proper sense of the strategy pursued, based on a thorough analysis of the texts before him, he seems to have produced rough and ready summaries, in the course of which he telescoped episodes together and confused chronology. Luckily the muddles can be sorted out. There is enough independent evidence to make it possible to untangle his account of the initial Arab conquest of Roman territory, while a better view of the content of the important *History to 720* is provided by Theophanes' fuller and more faithful version.

There is, however, too little material accessible in other sources to fill the long lacuna covering the reign of Constans II. Resort must be had to conjecture to answer a whole range of vital questions about the state's adaptation to the dramatic change in its fortunes. How much restructuring was there of the central organs of the state, especially those concerned with finance? How was the defence of Asia Minor organized after the loss of Syria? Were there extensive army reforms? How much investment was there in military infrastructure and what were the priorities? Even Theophanes, who did considerably more research than Nicephorus and wrote his chronicle late in life, provided no information to help us answer these and other questions. He had equal difficulty in finding an indigenous source about Constans' reign. All he could do was to paper over the gap with notices about warfare taken from Theophilus of Edessa and some ecclesiastical history (based on the Maximus dossier).

6. CONCLUSION

A fair amount of new information may therefore be gleaned from Nicephorus' youthful venture into historical writing. Its historical worth increases markedly once he resumes his account after his abrupt leap over the reign of Constans II (641–69). We should note incidentally that he does not warn his readers about this gaping hole in his narrative, let alone offer any apology. Before he breaks off in 641, apart from a few items of domestic political news, he has very little to add to the evidence assembled from the histories examined in previous chapters. The flow of information after the gap takes a while to pick up, but from the deposition and mutilation of Justinian II in 695 the narrative fills out and provides a rich, albeit slanted, account of Byzantine domestic and foreign affairs. The following table lists the main items of new, probably trustworthy information which may be extracted via Nicephorus from his two principal sources for seventh- and early eighth-century history—namely the second continuation of John of Antioch (before the gap) and the *History to 720* (after it). Very few dates can be given, since they are casualties of the classicizing makeover given to his sources by Nicephorus, but the ordering of the notices in his text should be taken to reflect the actual chronological order of the events described. Where dates have already been established on the basis of the sources analysed in previous chapters, they are given in brackets. Where Theophanes draws on the same passages in the *History to 720* and includes chronological detail, this too is indicated in brackets but in italics.[38]

+ baptism of Hun ruler and entourage in Constantinople
+ marriage of Heraclius and his niece Martina (reported after Avar surprise attack of 623)
+ tough terms exacted by Avars for renewal of peace
+ agreement with Shahrvaraz, grant of title patrician to his son, betrothal of his daughter to Theodore, son of Heraclius and Martina (629)
+ alliance with Kubrat, ruler of Onogundurs
+ Egypt secured from attack for three years, in return for payment of tribute
+ death of Heraclius, short reign of his eldest son Heraclius Constantine (*641*)
+ military challenge by Valentinus to rule of Heraclonas and Martina, ousting of Patriarch Pyrrhus (*641*) (cc. 29–32)

[38] References are given for episodes not previously discussed in this chapter.

October 641: installation of Paul as patriarch of Constantinople (c. 32)
+ 30-year peace agreed with Muʿawiya (*677/8*)
+ Bulgar defeat of army commanded by Constantine IV, Bulgar settlement south of Danube
+ sixth ecumenical council (*680–1*)
+ accession of Justinian II (*685*)
+ expedition of Justinian II to Thessalonica, resettlement of Slavs in Opsikion (*688*) (c. 38)
+ resumption of war with Arabs, desertion of recently enlisted Slavs at battle of Sebastopolis, decisive defeat of Justinian II (*692*)
+ tyrannical rule of Justinian II
+ coup of Leontius, mutilation and exile of Justinian II (*695*)
+ fall of Carthage to Arabs (*697*)
+ temporary recovery of Carthage, mutiny of Roman fleet, coup of Apsimar (renamed Tiberius) (*698*)
+ counter-coup of Justinian II, tyrannical second reign (*705–11*)
+ Bulgar victory over Justinian II near Anchialus
+ fall of Tyana to Arabs after defeat of relieving force (*708/9*)
+ failure of Justinian II's punitive expeditions against Cherson, coup of Philippicus (*711*)
+ successful Bulgar raid up to Constantinople
+ fall of Mistheia and other places to Arab raiding army
+ coup of Artemius (renamed Anastasius), Constantinople prepared for expected siege (*713*)
+ coup of Theodosius (*715*) (cc. 50–1)
+ accession of Leo III (*717*)
+ fall of Pergamum to Arabs (c. 53)
+ Arab siege of Constantinople (*717–18*)
+ abortive rebellion of Sergius, governor of Sicily (*718*) (c. 55)
+ birth of Constantine (misplaced during siege of Constantinople) (c. 56)
15 August 718: withdrawal of Arab forces from Constantinople, storm damage on return voyage (c. 56)
+ abortive counter-coup of Artemius (Anastasius) (c. 57)
Easter 720 (25 March): coronation of Constantine V as co-emperor (c. 58)[39]

One of Nicephorus' sources, the *History to 720*, was known to his contemporary Theophanes. He made extensive use of it when, late in his life, he took to writing history. Since his selection differs from Nicephorus' and his version is more faithful to the original, in terms of both preserving its phrasing and

[39] The date given is wrong. Easter fell on 31 March in 720.

transmitting its details (including dates), a full evaluation of this important lost source should be deferred to the next chapter.

It is now Theophanes' turn to be examined. Given the range of books to which he had access, more may legitimately be expected of him. His chronicle ought to be a rich quarry of information. He should undoubtedly be able to add rather more than Nicephorus to the stock of information gathered from non-Roman and local Roman sources of the seventh and eighth centuries.

9

Later Historians

Theophanes

Theophanes (759/60–818) has long been recognized as the prime source for the history of Byzantium in the seventh and eighth centuries. He tells a heroic story of ceaseless struggle, against sometimes overwhelming odds, in the course of which the east Roman empire was transformed into a highly militarized highland state, a large Christian redoubt on the north-west flank of the new world empire of Islam, all too aware of its vulnerability and of the vital necessity of retaining God's favour. His chronicle, which runs to 501 pages in the printed edition and covers a wide chronological span (284–813), is a digest of information extracted from a wide range of earlier sources, much more compilation than composition.[1] Like Nicephorus, he has to abridge, sometimes savagely, but unlike Nicephorus, he does not try systematically to improve his material, recasting it and coating it with a classical veneer. His main purpose is akin to that of the authors of the *Chronicon Paschale*, the *Chronicle to the Year 724*, and the *History of Khosrov*. It is the modest one of conveying concisely and clearly as much precise information as he can, attending carefully to chronology and generally refraining from editorial intervention save when matters of faith are involved. His chronicle is not only much fuller than Nicephorus' *Short History* but also has a much higher specific gravity.

So it is to Theophanes that all historians turn for a narrative of events as well as for vital pieces of information which cast light on institutional, social, economic, and religious developments in Byzantium in its formative, early medieval phase. His chronicle has been extensively mined for data, especially the last part, from the death of Constantine V in 775. For the recent past, the memories of contemporaries could be called upon, making it possible to give more observed detail about important episodes in the life of the palace, the church, and the capital. Detailed information about the implementation of

[1] Ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883), trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History* AD *284–813* (Oxford, 1997).

policies both at the centre and in the field could also be extracted from government communiqués. Something too of the atmosphere of the time was conserved, not least the hostility aroused in a good Christian by those who deviated from orthodoxy, whether in the deep past (Arians) or in the recent past (iconoclasts), and the rancorous contemporary opposition to the policies of the reforming Emperor Nicephorus (802–11) who is lambasted as a skinflint ruler.

There is no shortage of biographical information about Theophanes. He belonged to a rich family which had prospered in imperial service. He was undoubtedly well connected, hence well placed both to gather material about secular and ecclesiastical affairs in his own day, as well as to assemble a library of relevant works dealing with the past. Much, then, can be expected of his chronicle. It can surely be used to fill out the narrative of the last Roman–Persian war, threadbare as it is after the Sasanian record of operations in Armenia used by the *History of Khosrov* gives out. It is to Theophanes too that we may look for information to fill the many gaps left by contemporary local Roman sources about the actions and reactions of what was left of the east Roman empire during and after the initial Arab conquests. It is from him that we can legitimately hope to gain a better idea of the content of the lost Greek *History to 720* used by Nicephorus.[2]

So it is with high hopes that we can begin our investigation into his life, his ideas and prejudices, his sources and working methods, before then homing in on that section of his text which deals with the seventh century. For the main task of this chapter will be to tabulate and evaluate what he has to say about the last Roman–Persian war, the rise of Islam, and the response of the rump Roman state which survived the first onslaught.

1. LIFE AND WORK

As a well-born abbot who stood his ground for iconophile principle and died in exile after two years' incarceration, Theophanes deserved and obtained the attention of biographers. The most informative of the extant biographies was written before 832 by the future Patriarch Methodius (843–7). His life also served as an edifying theme for homilies, one of which was written by

[2] Modern studies: P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier: Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros* (Bonn, 1988); I. Rochow, *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes: Quellenkritisch-historischer Kommentar zu den Jahren 715–813* (Berlin, 1991); A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 215–34; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. xliii–c, with review by W. Brandes, *BZ* 91 (1998), 549–61.

Theodore the Studite, once a monastic protégé of Theophanes. Theodore probably wrote it for delivery on the occasion of the reburial of Theophanes' body at his monastery of Megas Agros in 822. There is therefore no shortage of information about him, although it is hard to handle. For the praise which biographers and preachers heaped upon him obscures as much as it illuminates the real details of his life.[3]

His family belonged to the highest echelons of the governing apparatus. His father held the important naval command of the Aegean Sea at the time of his death (when Theophanes was 3). He was brought up in an aristocratic household which probably spent part of the year on the family estates on or near the south coast of the Marmara. For it was surely there that he rode and hunted, two of his favourite pastimes as he grew up, along with wrestling, boxing, running, and jumping. A grand marriage was arranged when he was 10 and assured him additional protection from the father of the girl to whom he was betrothed for the next eight years. The two families vied to display their generosity towards the betrothed couple. The wedding was eventually celebrated in style, and soon afterwards the young bridegroom, who had probably already received his first government appointment as a *strator*, was instructed to help supervise the fortification of Cyzicus. But three years later, in 780/1, when the Emperor Leo IV and Theophanes' father-in-law both died and the two chief obstacles barring the route to the monastic life were removed, Theophanes and his wife parted and made their vows. Theophanes' vocation was clearly genuine. The decision was made, we are told, on his wedding night, but grew out of long-held convictions, originally inspired by conversations which he had had as a boy with the household goldsmith.[4]

Up to this point there is no reason to suspect the biographers of tampering with reality so as to make Theophanes conform to the type of the holy man,

[3] Extant lives: Methodius, *Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris*, ed. V. V. Latyshev, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie*, ser. 8, Cl. hist.-philol., 13.4 (1918)—*Vita A*; Anonymous, *Vita et laudatio S. Theophanis*, ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, II. 3–12—*Vita B*; Nicephorus, *Vita et laudatio S. Theophanis*, ibid. 13–27—*Vita C*; Anonymous, *Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris*, ibid. 28–30—*Vita D*; Anonymous, *Vita Theophanis*, ed. K. Krumbacher, *Sitzungsberichte der k. Bayer. Akademie* (1897), 389–99—*Vita E*. Extant laudations: Theodorus Protasecretis, *Laudatio*, ed. K. Krumbacher, *Sitzungsberichte der k. Bayer. Akademie* (1896), 608–18; Theodorus Studites, *Laudatio*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, 'Le Panégyrique de S. Théophane le Confesseur par S. Théodore Stoudite (*BHG* 1792b)', *An. Boll.* 111 (1993), 259–90. F. Halkin (ed.), *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca* (Brussels, 1957), ii. 293 and *Novum auctarium BHG* (Brussels, 1984), 207 for other short works about Theophanes. Cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. xliv–li.

[4] *Vita A*, cc. 4–20 gives the fullest account. It was written in a remarkably high style by Methodius after, but probably not long after, Theophanes' relics were brought back to his monastery of Megas Agros in 822 (see *Vita A*, ed. Latyshev, p. vii). There is a more graphic account of the chaste wedding night in *Vita B*, 4. 36–6. 32.

save for the insistence of Theodore the Studite that he had not had a good secular education (an assertion contradicted by one of the extant biographies).[5] After this, though, only those traits which contribute to an aura of sanctity are described, often probably in exaggerated terms. He gives away all his property. He refuses the post of abbot in his second monastery, preferring to spend long hours in his cell copying manuscripts and improving the calligraphic skills which he has taught himself. The aristocratic monk becomes an agricultural labourer on the site of his future monastic foundation of Megas Agros. He is said to have attended the Council of Nicaea in 787 dressed in rags, and is credited with a number of miracles. Finally much play is made of the disability and pain caused by a kidney stone in his last years, from 809/10 to his death in March 818, as well as of his persecution at the hands of Leo V, who had him confined for two years to a cell in the palace of Eleutherius (with only one person in attendance).[6]

The composition of the *Chronographia* is not mentioned in such biographical texts, but the circumstances of its production and the procedures followed are touched upon in the preface. Theophanes, who is self-depreciating throughout, presents himself as embarking on it reluctantly, out of deference to his friend George, formerly *syncellus* of the Patriarch Tarasius (784–806). George, he tells us, had decided to write a world chronicle, stretching from the beginning of time to his own day. When he realized that he could not carry the work to completion himself, he urged Theophanes to do so, and, to help him, supplied certain unspecified materials as well as the book which he had composed. Theophanes thus presents himself as a mere continuator of George's chronicle, extending it from Diocletian's accession in 284 to 813. He does claim, however, to have done a considerable amount of research of his own, and may even, at one point, show a trace of condescension towards his friend, when he comments that George did his best to produce lists of

[5] Theodorus Studites, *Laudatio*, c. 8 describes him as 'unused to the cleverness which nurtures folly', perhaps a deliberately ambiguous phrase designed to leave the impression that he was ill educated (as it is taken by Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. li–lii). *Vita D*, 4. 17–21 claims, on the other hand, that his education included secular learning but that he was discriminating in his use of it.

[6] *Vita A*, cc. 21–55. Methodius notes (c. 22 (p. 16. 13–21)) that Theophanes strove for perfection as a scribe, 'both as regards accentuation and writing' (by which presumably he means both avoidance of errors in transcription and elegant formation of letters, abbreviations, and accents). *Vita C* stresses that Theophanes worked the land which he had bought at Megas Agros from a peasant *with his own hands* (19. 34–20. 4), provides additional details about his refusal to conform to the official policy of iconoclasm backed by a mixture of blandishments and threats from the emperor (23. 33–24. 25), and makes rather more of his suffering during his imprisonment (25. 4–11: he is ill nourished and the kidney disease progresses fast for lack of medical attention).

holders of the patriarchal sees, both orthodox and heretical. Theophanes insists that he is a compiler, that he has composed nothing himself. So he has merely selected excerpts on different aspects of history from the histories and chronicles he has read,[7] has refrained from merging them together, and has placed them in what he judges to be their correct chronological positions in his text. There is no reason for us to doubt this description of his editorial practice. If anything, we may suspect that he underplays his role and minimizes his contribution to the world chronicle which he undertook as a joint venture with his friend George, the ex-*syncellus*.[8]

Theophanes states that George entrusted him with the task of completing his work, when death came upon him. This statement should not be taken literally, since George was probably still alive in 813 and Theophanes stopped work before December 814 when Leo V decreed a return to iconoclasm and thereby forfeited the good opinion of stalwart iconophiles like Theophanes which he still retains in the *Chronographia*. The key moment, when George passed the great project on to Theophanes, surely occurred some time (a year or two?) before his death when he realized that he could not possibly finish the task on his own. Given the short time available, Theophanes must have worked at considerable speed, and cannot have been seriously hampered by his illness.[9] Careful analysis of the text bears out both the account given in the preface and the haste which has been inferred. It is composed of a large number of excerpts, most short but some substantial, taken from a variety of sources. While there is considerable evidence of abridgement, much of the language of the sources used has been preserved.[10] Individual extracts are usually placed end to end, just as Theophanes claims, rather than being blended together to form a smoother narrative. The organizing principle is chronology, the individual

[7] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lxxiv–lxxxi for a provisional list of eight identifiable sources for late Roman history down to the middle of the sixth century: a chronological compendium of rulers and patriarchs, a compendium of ecclesiastical history, four chronicles of which at least one was pro-Arian, Malalas, and Procopius. Thereafter nine other sources come on stream, all but two of which are discussed below. The exceptions (for which see Mango and Scott, pp. lxxxvii and lxxxviii) are a tract dealing with the opposition of Maximus and others to Monotheletism (on which see Ch. 5, section 4 above) and a Constantinopolitan chronicle beginning around 720, the latter also used by Nicephorus.

[8] Theophanes, 3–4. His claim to have done research is made at 4. 8–9 (he too sought out to the best of his ability and examined many books); the remark with a trace of condescension comes at 3. 18–19.

[9] Contra Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lxi–lxii.

[10] Cf. ibid., pp. xci–xcv. Rephrasing was required in order to condense his sources. But there is no evidence that Theophanes made systematic or even intermittent attempts to paraphrase the passages he had selected for inclusion, whether to homogenize the style or, as had been true of Nicephorus a generation earlier, to improve it. E. Jeffreys in *Studies in Malalas*, 257, reaches a similar conclusion apropos of Theophanes' treatment of material taken from Malalas.

year-entry being the basic unit of the chronicle. Evidently he took particular pride in the tables of office-holders which preface each entry, and invested considerable effort in placing events in the appropriate years. Finally, there is evidence of swift, sometimes careless, editing, in clumsy juxtapositions of material and occasional misunderstanding of sources.

Theophanes was no slavish imitator of George. He made his own choice of sources, for example making use of Malalas' chronicle which George spurned but neglecting Agathias' history from which George took material on Sasanian kings. He showed less interest in intellectual history, abandoning George's custom of noting the *floruits* of famous literary and intellectual figures, and gave much fuller coverage to secular Roman history. While he was George's heir in his documenting of the temporal framework of events, he paid much less attention to chronological problems and did not follow George's example in including elaborate chronological computations in his text.[11] Nor did he retain George's format (introduced at *annus mundi* 2776 (ed. Mosshammer, 101)), in which a mass of information, subdivided into geographical categories, is grouped together in sections under the heading of a selected *annus mundi*. This enabled George to tailor his coverage to the available material, if necessary leaping over individual years or periods for which he had no information. In its place Theophanes adopted a far more precise and demanding chronological format, consisting of a *complete set* of individual year-entries. Each entry was headed by a rubric written horizontally across the page, which listed the *annus mundi*, the concurrent regnal years of Roman and eastern rulers, and the years of tenure of patriarchs.[12]

He made it plain from the start that his chronicle was merely part of the grand joint venture conceived by George and was intended to be read

[11] George's chronicle: Georgius Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica*, ed. A. A. Mosshammer (Leipzig, 1984), trans. W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford, 2002). Use of Malalas: E. Jeffreys in *Studies in Malalas*, 257–9. George's learning, coverage, sources, format, and chronological argumentation: Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography of George*, pp. xxix–lxii. Theophanes and George: C. Mango, 'The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), 360–72, at 367–9.

[12] Mango, 'Tradition of Byzantine Chronography', 268–9 and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lii–lv trace the origin of Theophanes' format back to the world chronicle of Eusebius, which was arranged in vertical columns of rulers intersected by a horizontal grid of dates given in Olympiads and years from Abraham, leaving room only for a succinct summary of events in the *spatium historicum*. The immediate inspiration, he suggests, was to be found in Syriac chronicles, which kept this tradition alive. Cf. G. L. Huxley, 'On the Erudition of George the Synkellos', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 81, C, 6 (1981), 207–17, at 214 and 217, for the difference between George's and Theophanes' presentation of material. It will be argued below that Theophanes modelled his format on that of Theophilus' chronicle. It was from this that he took the annalistic principle for organizing his lists of rulers and prelates and his historical notices.

after the first part written by the senior partner. He also acknowledged the direct help which he received from George. This probably took the form of a bequest of relevant books. One of the most important was a Greek translation (with continuation) of Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle, which George had found during a long visit to Palestine and which provided Theophanes with much useful material on seventh- and eighth-century history. Even more valuable perhaps were some drafts of George's about recent political events, together with some personal reminiscences.[13]

2. LAST ROMAN–PERSIAN WAR: SOURCES

Some thirty-three pages of the printed edition of the *Chronographia* deal with the period 603–30. It is a rich and variegated section of the text, the analysis of which poses considerable problems. While the worth of Theophanes' account of the first two phases of the war (603–21) can be determined without difficulty by checking it against the information supplied by earlier sources, most of the detailed narrative of Heraclius' counteroffensives in the third phase (622–8) is unique to him. In order to evaluate it, therefore, it is necessary to scrutinize the individual campaign histories which make up the narrative of the third phase for clues as to their origin and value.

First, though, let us see how Theophanes handles the history of the period in general, taking the three phases of the Roman–Persian war one by one.

The first phase extends from Phocas' seizure of power in November 602 to his overthrow and execution in October 610. Theophanes (286. 21–298. 4) supplies a mass of detailed information about domestic politics. This deals with the coups which opened and closed Phocas' reign, key appointments made by him, political machinations against him, his increasingly savage countermeasures, the gradual alienation of the Green faction (whose support had been vital at the time of his seizure of power), and the associated disturbances in Constantinople . . . The material is overwhelmingly political and metropolitan. Other events, whether unusual natural phenomena, or disasters with human causes (such as disturbances in the cities of the Middle East towards the end of the reign), or the war with Persia, get skimpy coverage. Only when the war impinged upon domestic politics at the centre, on the occasion of the senior eastern commander's refusal to acknowledge

[13] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lv–lxii, together with Mango, 'Who Wrote Theophanes?', 12–16.

Phocas' regime and his appeal to the Persians for aid, is any serious attempt made to give a connected account of events in one of the theatres of war.

The second phase (October 610–the end of 621) saw the Persians overrun the eastern provinces of the empire. It was a period of unmitigated and unparalleled disaster for Roman arms. Theophanes' account (298. 5–302. 30) is skeletal. He confines himself to noting a few grand court ceremonies and to reporting briefly the main successes of the Persians. The Roman counterstrokes delivered in the third phase (622–30) and the extraordinary reversal in fortunes which they brought about, by contrast, get very full coverage (302. 31–329. 10). The war monopolizes attention. Domestic politics, even grand court occasions, are squeezed out altogether, until victory has been achieved. The text is filled instead with a set of factually rich campaign narratives, which are the principal sources of information about the Emperor Heraclius' two bold counteroffensives against Persia (624–6 and 627–8). They are preceded by a lengthy summary of George of Pisidia's *Expeditio Persica*, which described, often rather obscurely, the preparatory manoeuvres and opening operations of this phase in 622, and are followed by a fairly cursory account of the negotiations which led to peace and the Roman recovery of their territories in the Middle East.

Theophanes' coverage of the war and the domestic politics and diplomacy associated with it is very uneven. The amount of space allocated to events varies markedly between the phases. No attempt appears to have been made to strike a balance between domestic and foreign affairs; instead they take it in turns to hog the limelight. If this distribution of attention is the result of editorial decisions freely taken by Theophanes, we must conclude that he was a wayward editor with very odd ideas about what constituted history. However, Theophanes was very far from being a free agent, able to pick and choose from a wide range of sources. There were constraints upon his research and editorial activity, the principal ones being the pace at which he was proceeding and the limitations of his library. Ultimately his work was conditioned by the chance availability of books at the right time (*c.*811–14) and place (his monastery of Megas Agros). So it is worthwhile asking whether the unevenness of the section dealing with the period 603–30 stems ultimately from the sources which Theophanes had to hand, and reflects their interests and limitations.

The search for the sources lying behind an extant text is time-consuming and all too often inconclusive, if the suggested sources have not survived or have done so only in very fragmentary form. But Theophanes' abnegation of the normal editorial right to mix and rework his source material, together with the preservation of a considerable amount of material from his putative sources, either in extant fragments from the original texts or in edited versions included in later derivatives of them, increases the chances of success in his case.

Six sources can be identified with reasonable certainty as contributors to the section of the *Chronographia* with which we are concerned. Between them their contributions account for almost all the text as we have it, the residue consisting mainly of a small number of linking passages inserted by Theophanes but not introducing new information.[14] The six sources made the following contributions to Theophanes' text, which are taken in the order of their appearance.

(i) The (extant) *History* of Theophylact Simocatta, the principal source for the preceding reign of Maurice, supplied the account of his overthrow.[15]

(ii) The (largely lost) continuation of chronicle of John of Antioch was the source for Theophanes' detailed information on Phocas' reign. Like other chroniclers, the continuator seems to have spread himself more and more as he neared the time at which he was writing and was able to draw on increasingly fresh memories or full records of events. He provided full coverage of Phocas' reign, ending with a detailed account of his overthrow.[16]

(iii) It has long been recognized that Theophanes had access to an important eastern source, composed originally in Syriac, which also supplied a large quantity of material to three extant non-Greek chronicles, two written in Syriac, one in Arabic. This source can now be confidently identified as the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa (see Ch. 7, section 1, above). It provided him with snippets of information about the progress of the Persians in the first and second phases of the war, as well as some more substantial items in the account of the third phase. George's main service to Theophanes, in this section of the *Chronographia*, was to supply him with a Greek translation and continuation of the Syriac original.[17]

(iv) A (lost) second continuation of John of Antioch's chronicle carried the story on into the mid 640s, when, presumably, it was written. The

[14] Theophanes, 314. 23, 315. 11–14, and 319. 22–5.

[15] Ibid. 286. 21–291. 26, based upon Simocatta, VIII. 6. 8–13. 15. Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 24–7.

[16] Theophanes, 291. 27–292. 25, 292. 28–293. 23, 293. 26–295. 13, 295. 27–296. 6, 296. 10–12, 296. 17–298. 4, 298. 15–299. 14. The only obvious extraneous element in these passages is a phrase quoted from George of Pisidia at 298. 16–18. Since the first continuation of John of Antioch's chronicle only survives in very fragmentary form (see Ch. 5, section 1 above), it is only possible to demonstrate that Theophanes drew on it where passages in the *Chronographia* (294. 11–24, 295. 27–296. 2, 296. 25–297. 2, 298. 26–299. 5) can be compared against extant fragments dealing with Phocas' reign and downfall (Ioannes Ant, fr. 319, 320, 321. 3–11). In spite of the condensed form in which the fragments have been transmitted (the first comprises bald summaries of three connected incidents), there can be no doubt about Theophanes' dependence on the continuation in these cases. The attribution of the remainder to lost passages in conjectured on the basis of similarities of style, approach, and substance.

[17] Theophanes, 292. 27–8, 293. 23–6, 295. 14–16, 296. 6–10, 299. 14–18, 299. 31–2, 300. 17–21, 300. 30–301. 5, 301. 9–16, 302. 22–7, 314. 23–6, 316. 25–7, 323. 22–324. 16, 327. 19–24, 328. 13–329. 10.

chief witness to this text is the first part of the short history of Nicephorus, which, as has been seen, is in the main nothing more than a paraphrasing derivative of the lost second continuation.[18] Theophanes' sparse notes about the history of Heraclius' family were taken from it. His account of the surprise Avar attack on Heraclius and his entourage (in 623) was condensed from it. So too probably were his summary account of the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626, a notice about Heraclius' negotiations with the Turks in 627, and two fleeting references to operations against the Persians in 626 and 627. Much later, when domestic politics assumed great importance in the prolonged succession crisis which followed Heraclius' death in 641, Theophanes made selective use of the full record of events kept by the second continuator who could draw on his own direct knowledge as a contemporary.[19]

(v) Theophanes knew the poetry of George of Pisidia, whom he cites by name when quoting a phrase of his about the arrival of the rebel fleet led by Heraclius before Constantinople in October 610.[20] He based the main part of his long notice about Heraclius' military preparations and defensive operations in 622 upon the *Expeditio Persica*, George's only full-blown poem about the Persian war.[21] Theophanes, like subsequent readers, had considerable difficulty in making sense of it, and misunderstood it on a number of important points. There is also a scattering of verse fragments in the next section of the text which have been attributed to George. They will be discussed below.

(vi) Finally, the material which makes up the vast majority of the lengthy account of the third phase has certain characteristics in common—

[18] This proposition, that the second continuation contributed a significant amount of material to Theophanes' text, is at odds with the view of Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxi.

[19] The following passages in the *Chronographia* can be attributed with confidence to the second continuation (arguments in favour of the underlined attributions are presented in the next section): Theophanes, 299. 18–20, 300. 7–16, 300. 25–8, 301. 6–7, 301. 16–19, 301. 26–302. 21, 302. 27–30, 315. 2–11, 315. 14–316. 25, 335. 1–5. The misplacing of some of these notices contrary to the indications provided either explicitly or implicitly by their sequence in the second continuation (as reflected in the *Breviarium*) will be discussed below. Theophanes' account of the succession crisis following Heraclius' death (341. 11–343. 5) combines material from the second continuation (341. 24–342. 3 and 342. 9–20) and Theophilus of Edessa (341. 11–17 and 343. 3–5).

Four other items in the *Chronographia*, which are otherwise unaccounted for, may also have originated with the second continuation: two concern Roman embassies to Persia (300. 21–5, 301. 21–4), two the state of the Roman army at Heraclius' accession and in 622 (299. 32–300. 6, 302. 32–303. 17).

[20] Theophanes, 298. 16–18.

[21] Ibid. 303. 17–306. 8.

> a preoccupation with military operations, an appetite for specific details about them and a clear, simple style—which suggest that it may well be drawn from a single source. If so, there can be little doubt about the nature of the source—it must have been a set of campaign narratives, which were concerned exclusively with Roman offensive actions. The quality as well as the volume of information supplied looks impressive, if it is reasonable to infer accuracy from precision in reporting.

The identification of the sources used by Theophanes and the definition of their contributions to his text go a long way to explaining the striking unevenness of his coverage of the period 603–30. For he was entirely at the mercy of his sources. His account of Phocas' reign was inevitably going to concentrate on domestic Roman affairs, since they were the prime concern of the only decent source to hand, the first continuation of John of Antioch. The only decision made by Theophanes was to allocate as much space to this material as he did. For the first eleven years of Heraclius' reign, he had even less freedom of manoeuvre since both his sources, the translation of Theophilus of Edessa and the second continuation of John of Antioch, supplied him with scanty information.

It was only when he came to the revival of Roman fortunes in the last phase of the war that he had the luxury of choosing between competing sources. He was not, however, free of all constraints, because he had to prevent this section of his chronicle growing disproportionately large. He made a number of sensible editorial decisions. First he designated the postulated set of campaign narratives his principal source. Second, he focused attention on warfare as opposed to diplomacy, doubtless because the former made for a more dramatic story and because the subtlest and most successful diplomacy would have been quite fruitless unless underpinned by successful action in the field. Third, to keep his own text manageable, he summarized and abridged large chunks of the detailed military information which the campaign narratives supplied. Again it was the degree of agitation in the history of events which caught his eye. This led him to provide fuller versions of the more dramatic episodes in the first counteroffensive and to give a blow-by-blow account of the climactic phase of the war, between 1 December 627 and 10 January 628 when the final victory was won.

Fourth, he limited his use of the other available sources in the main to filling in gaps in the campaign narratives' coverage of events and to adding small additional items which he thought worth including. His editorial procedure here, as indeed in many other sections of his chronicle, was, as it were, to have only one tap turned on full, with the remainder (if there were others available) either turned right off or left dripping. In this section both Theophilus' chronicle and the second continuation of John of Antioch, which, we know from their other derivatives, contained a fair amount of relevant material, were

given the subsidiary function of supplementing the main source, save for one episode (Heraclius' negotiations with the Turks in 627) for which the second continuation of John of Antioch supplied a conveniently condensed account. This Theophanes substituted for the much longer version which he probably found in the relevant campaign narrative. Later, though, after the conclusion of the war, came the turn of Theophilus' chronicle to be designated the prime source, for the initial Arab conquests.

3. LAST ROMAN–PERSIAN WAR: EDITORIAL ERRORS

Theophanes has emerged with considerable credit from our investigations up to this point. He discharged competently the first editorial task which he set himself, that of selecting material from the available sources. What, though, of the second task? How successful was he in arranging and hence dating the material which he had chosen to include? The answer to this question can best be presented in tabular form. It will then be obvious at a glance that Theophanes has made a multitude of often gross errors. There are, indeed, so many documented cases of misplaced notices, hence of misdated events, in this section of his chronicle that the reader is hard put not to throw up his hands and discard the whole text as virtually worthless.

But before we examine them, let us remember three mitigating factors, which should lead us to soften a little our harsh judgement on Theophanes' skill or conscientiousness as an editor. First, many of his troubles stemmed from the demands of the chronologically precise format which he had adopted, following the example of the translation of Theophilus presented to him by George Syncellus. It left him no room for hesitation when it came to the inclusion of undated notices. He had to plump for a particular year-entry, even if there was no dating clue in his source. There was also a standing temptation to spread events about so as to fill in otherwise blank year-entries. Second, his difficulties were compounded by the fact that his eastern source employed different measures of time from those used by his Greek sources. The former numbered the years from the death of Alexander the Great, and had the individual years begin on 1 October. The latter computed time from Creation (as did George in his part of the world chronicle) and based the individual years on the Roman financial year which began on 1 September. Theophanes had great difficulty in reconciling the two systems. Third, Theophilus' dating was by no means always sound, and thus undoubtedly misled and confused Theophanes.

Chronological errors in Theophanes' account[22]

1. Fall of Dara to the Persians after a siege lasting a year and a half: 604 (ps. Sebeos, 107. 19–23; *Chron. 724*, 113); 605/6 (Theoph., 293. 23–6).
2. (Conspiracy of Germanus, involving the ex-Empress Constantina and Philippicus;) Phocas' punishment of the principals: 602/3 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 695. 1–5); 605/6 (Theoph., 293. 8–23).
3. (Second conspiracy against Phocas, involving Constantina and two senior ministers, Theodore and Elpidius;) Phocas' execution of these and other principals: 7 June 605 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 696. 5–697. 3); (i) 606/7 (report centred on Constantina—Theoph., 294. 27–295. 13) and (ii) 608/9 (report centred on Theodore and Elpidius—Theoph., 297. 16–298. 4).
4. Appointment of Thomas as patriarch of Constantinople: 23 January 607 *(Chron. Pasch.*, 697. 10–14); 11 October 606 (Theoph., 293. 26–8).
5. Fall of Edessa to the Persians: 608/9 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 699. 7; *Chron. 724*, 113); May 611 (Theoph., 299. 14–15 (indiction)).[23]
6. Penetration of Persian forces west of the Euphrates: 610/11 (*Chron. 724*, 113); 606/7 (Theoph., 295. 14–16).
7. Penetration of Persian forces into Asia Minor: 611 (*Vita S. Theodori*, c. 153. 1–6); 607/8 (Theoph., 296. 6–10).
8. Decisive Persian victory near Antioch: 613 (ps. Sebeos, 114. 29–37); May 611 (Theoph., 299. 15–17 (indiction)).
9. Renewal of diplomatic contact between the Romans and the Persians: 615 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 706. 13–709. 23); (i) 612/13 and (ii) 616/17 (Theoph., 300. 21–5 and 301. 20–4).[24]

[22] At some point between *anni mundi* 6096 (603–4) and 6102 (609–10), Theophanes allows his calculation of years of the Alexandrian era to fall one behind the indiction date where it is given. The discrepancy between the two reckonings lasts into the second half of the seventh century, until at least 6150 (657–8), which is equated wrongly with the second rather than the first indiction (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lxv–lxvii). Allowance should be made for this apparently systematic error when Theophanes' chronology of the early seventh century is scrutinized. The dates from Theophanes given in the table correspond to his uncorrected *anni mundi*, unless otherwise indicated. Events which are correctly placed on either reckoning have not been included. Examples are the fall of Jerusalem, placed correctly in *annus mundi* 6106 (613–14, at 300. 29–301. 5) but probably intended for the following year, and a number of short notices about the imperial family (two births, one baptism, one death, and two coronations, which have slipped back one *annus mundi* before the stated indiction dates (299. 18–20 and 300. 7–16, cf. *Chron. Pasch.*, 702. 10–703. 8, 703. 16–704. 2)).

[23] Theophanes has substituted Edessa for Emesa which was named in Theophilus' corresponding notice.

[24] The two notices refer to the same (fictitious) embassy and were probably taken from the second continuation of John of Antioch where they were associated with a notice about Heraclius' marriage to Martina (as is the first notice in his text). Theophanes transferred them to the early years of Heraclius' reign in the process of redating the associated marriage to 612/13 (for which see below).

10. Persian conquest of Egypt: 619 (*Chron. 724*, 113 (fall of Alexandria)); 614/15 (Theoph., 301. 8–10).
11. Surprise attack by the Avars on Heraclius: Sunday 5 June 623 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 712. 12–713. 14); 617/18 (Theoph., 301. 25–302. 4).
12. Heraclius' marriage to Martina: between June 623 and March 624 (Nicephorus, c. 11; *Chron. Pasch.*, 713. 19–714. 8); 612/13 (Theoph., 300. 25–7).[25]
13. Heraclius' first and second counteroffensives: 624–6 and 627–8 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 713. 19–714. 8, 727. 7–14; ps. Sebeos, 123. 15–124. 10); 623–5 and 626–7 (Theophanes, 306–14 and 317–27 (indictions)).[26]
14. Birth of Martina's son Heraclius (later known as Heraclonas): after 623/4 when she married Heraclius (Nicephorus, c. 12. 14–16) and before the boy's appointment as Caesar in 632 (see below); 613/14 (Theophanes, 301. 6–7, who mistakenly calls him Constantine).[27]
15. Consulship of Heraclius the New Constantine: 632 (datemark on the letter of Pope Honorius I to Honorius bishop of Canterbury, *PL*, 80, cols. 477–8; cf. also Nicephorus, c. 19. 9–10); 617 (Theoph., 301. 16–18 (indiction)).[28]
16. Appointment of Heraclius (later known as Heraclonas) as Caesar: 632 (it coincided with the start of the consulship of Heraclius the New Constantine—Nicephorus, c. 19. 10–11); 617 (Theoph., 301. 18–19 (indiction), who again gives the wrong name, calling him Constantine the younger to distinguish him from his half-brother).

It is plain that Theophanes had little regard for the order in which the first continuator of John of Antioch presented his material, and decided, for no discernible reason, to shake it up as in a kaleidoscope. The result is a very

[25] Mango, *Nikephoros*, 14 is surely right to suppose that the sequence of notices in Nicephorus corresponds to the chronological order of the events covered. In which case Heraclius was married after the surprise attack by the Avars on 5 June 623, which is reported in the immediately preceding notice (and before the start of the first counteroffensive when, so the *Chronicon Paschale* informs us, he was accompanied by his wife Martina). Explanations for this error are advanced below.

[26] One indiction date is given in the course of the account of each counteroffensive: March of the 11th indiction (306. 19), i.e. 623, for the emperor's departure from Constantinople for Armenia (actually 624); 9 October of the 15th indiction (317. 26), i.e. 626, for the start of the week's rest which preceded the final bold thrust into Persian Mesopotamia (actually 627). Both dates are not synchronized correctly with the numbered *anni mundi* also given, which, as usual in this part of his text, designate the year before the indiction stated and are therefore two out. These indiction dates were almost certainly introduced by Theophanes, since it is highly unlikely that the campaign narratives were wrongly dated when they came into his hands.

[27] Mango, *Nikephoros*, 179–80.

[28] Mango, ibid. 180, concludes that Theophanes has transferred this and the following notice, which are paired together in his text, to the corresponding indiction year in the previous 15-year indiction cycle. This in turn would imply that the items were labelled with indiction years in his source, the second continuation of John of Antioch, and that, on this occasion at least, he paid attention to them.

jumbled and confused account of the developing opposition to Phocas' rule. He also appears to have reinterpreted the material supplied by Theophilus, so as to shift responsibility for the Persian breakthrough into the interior provinces of the Roman empire entirely on to Phocas' shoulders. In this case, though, he may have been prompted to do so by a rhetorical turn already present in his source which exaggerated the misfortunes of the empire in Phocas' last years. But Theophanes went further and altered several of the dates given by it.

Yet more grievous errors can be detected when he reaches Heraclius' reign. Heraclius' second, controversial marriage to his niece Martina has been plucked out of its true context, the eve of his first counteroffensive, and relocated ten years earlier. What Theophanes' motive was must remain uncertain, although the possibility should not be excluded that he transferred the notice so as to associate the marriage, which self-evidently should have aroused divine displeasure, with a phase of disaster and to separate it from the later victorious counteroffensive campaigns.

The most arbitrary shift of all was that of the Avar surprise attack on the emperor and his entourage. Theophanes moved it from 623, where it is securely placed by the evidence of the *Chronicon Paschale*, to 617/18, a year-entry which chanced to be blank. It attests a cavalier disregard, at any rate on this occasion, for the date implied, if indeed it was not specified, by its position in the source he was using (the second continuation of John of Antioch). This error generated others. The series of imperial campaigns against the Persians, which in reality was interrupted in 623 when the Balkan crisis demanded the emperor's attention, as it were, closed ranks, all those after 623 shifting a year back in time. This in turn created appalling problems for Theophanes when he came to integrate a dated notice about the siege of Constantinople, which he probably took from the second continuation of John of Antioch, into his main narrative of field operations in the east which was not synchronized but was running a year early.

From this second investigation, only one conclusion, a very unpalatable one, can be drawn, namely that no trust should be put in any of Theophanes' dates, unless one of the two following conditions is satisfied—either corroboration is provided by one of the sound sources evaluated in previous chapters or a specific and compelling argument can be drawn from the content of a notice to confirm its chronological positioning in the text.

The most charitable explanation which can be offered for this catalogue of chronological errors would run roughly as follows: any chronicler who attempted to write a coherent account of the last great war some two centuries later was going to be hard put to make sense of the long series of complex and interrelated events which comprised it; the rot originated, not with Theophanes, but with one of his sources, the chronicle originally written in Syriac

and made available to him by George Syncellus which was shot through with erroneous dates; Theophanes, who was compelled by his chosen format to fix dates for every event he recorded, was initially misled by the eastern source and then progressively more and more bewildered as he confronted disagreements between it and his other sources; he ended up by adopting a relativistic position, suspecting all his information of deviating from the truth, and concluded that he could legitimately construct a chronology of his own which made sense, as long as he paid some attention to the raw data which had reached him across the years; this allowed the annalistic chronicler's *horror vacui*, of which note has already been taken, to exercise too strong a sway over the distribution of material across year-entries; finally, a sense of urgency, of the need to keep going if he was to finish the task within a reasonable period, made him ration his time and lose patience with the intractable matter he was confronting.

Whether such a charitable view can be sustained or Theophanes should be charged with gross editorial irresponsibility and incompetence must be left an open question for the moment. For, to give a fair answer, it will be necessary first to scrutinize closely his handling of the material which he extracted from his sources. This was the third task which faced him as an editor. His approach, he claims in his preface, was one of minimum intervention, of presenting the excerpts, in condensed form, one by one. The question arises as to whether in reality he did restrain himself from reworking the material in the process of condensing it. A comparison of Theophanes' versions against those in the original sources, where they have survived, and those in other derivatives readily yields an answer.

Theophanes' text can be compared with what survives or is derived from five out of the six sources identified above (the exception is the sixth, the campaign narratives which are unique to Theophanes). A comparison of Theophanes' version of Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle with those of other extant derivatives has revealed that, in general, he was faithful to the substance of his source, but that he did not allow himself to become a mindless abridger. It is clear that he applied his intelligence and intervened selectively, with two principal purposes in mind—first, to clarify or amend where he could not understand the source (a good example of this is to be found in his summary of George of Pisidia's *Expeditio Persica*) or where he judged it to be implausible; second and more rarely, to reshape the material to suit his own preconceptions or his considered interpretation. A particularly discreditable example of tampering with the substance of a source occurs in his version of Theophilus' notice on the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians in 614, which is given an extra anti-Semitic twist.

To the conclusion drawn above, that no date given by Theophanes should be accepted without corroboration or other good cause, must now be added a

second—that the reader must remain watchful at all times for signs of editorial interference with the substance of the individual notices which make up the text of the chronicle, whether by way of addition, omission, or reshaping. For it is clear that Theophanes allowed himself too much licence to tamper with the content as well as the ordering of the material which he found in his sources. The problem was that he had inadequate information to do so successfully (he did not have access to the Armenian texts available to us, nor apparently to the *Chronicon Paschale*) and was at the same time willing to allow his prejudices, whether religious or political, to deform as well as inform his versions of material extracted from his sources.[29]

It follows that there is relatively little useful matter to be quarried from the twelve pages of the printed edition of the chronicle dealing with the first two phases of the war (603–21). The chronology has been mangled out of all recognition, and much of the information can be extracted more safely from other extant derivatives of the sources used by Theophanes. On the other hand, Theophanes' text is a unique witness to the last, contemporary section of the first continuation of John of Antioch's chronicle, except for those items which are dealt with in the few surviving fragments. This material is valuable and, as long as it is handled carefully, adds significantly to our knowledge of domestic Roman affairs in the reign of Phocas.

4. A HISTORICAL TEXT DISINTERRED: THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF HERACLIUS' PERSIAN CAMPAIGNS

The sixth source used by Theophanes in this section of his chronicle has been characterized as a set of campaign narratives. It was the most important of the sources identified, since it provided much the largest volume of material and since the material has a high specific gravity. But the information derived from it is now unique to Theophanes. The original, whatever it was, is lost, and it has

[29] These conclusions tally with those reached by R. Scott in *Studies in Malalas*, 42, after examining Theophanes' account of the sixth century (down to Justinian's death in 565). Theophanes carefully selected, conflated, and rearranged material from his two principal sources for the period, one of which was the chronicle of John Malalas, the other the *History of the Wars* of Procopius. His objects were two, (1) to achieve a more even spread of information over the years, and (2) to highlight the victories in the west (which involved playing down the inconclusive wars with the Persians). He also tampered with the substance of the material he had chosen, both to simplify the terminology where it was difficult and *to help his readers interpret it in the right way* (my italics), for example by adding loaded adjectives of his own or by judicious rearrangement. There is therefore, one might add, an element of covert moralizing in the *Chronographia*, but it is kept on a tight rein until the last contemporary part.

left no direct trace in any other extant text. This creates a major problem for the historian who seeks to reconstruct the history of the war and who must evaluate this source, like any other, before making use of it. He has no choice but to examine the material which it supplies for internal evidence as to its reliability, its ultimate origin, the route of its transmission to Theophanes, and the extent and effect of editorial intervention by Theophanes. Until some answers are provided, the material should be handled with the utmost caution or, if the highest historiographical standards are strictly enforced, it should be disregarded. The identity, position, and veracity of a witness should be established before confidence can be placed in his testimony.

Fortunately there is so much of this military material that careful scrutiny of its form and content can provide clues both as to its ultimate origin and as to the form in which it reached Theophanes. Its coverage is impressively wide. It appears to provide an almost complete record of the major military operations undertaken by Heraclius' expeditionary force in the course of the two counteroffensives which carried the war first into Persian Transcaucasia (in 624–5 and 627) and later (in autumn 627) into Mesopotamia and the metropolitan region around Ctesiphon.[30] The language is clear, the exposition lucid, and the narrative rich in factual detail. It is remarkable for the precision with which it identifies, describes, or itemizes persons, places, buildings, distances, dates and times, commands, military units, military equipment, booty of all sorts, etc. This mass of detailed information does not, however, obscure the main flow of events. Quite the contrary. Attention is focused on the strategic movements of both sides, the major engagements which they fight, and the debates which take place at critical moments in the Roman high command and determine its future course of action. The emperor is presented throughout as the prime mover; space is given to the pep talks which he gives to his men to dispel their anxiety in the face of danger, as also to his personal heroism on the battlefield. Finally, when victories are gained, especially in the last phase when the army is advancing on Ctesiphon, there is an evident triumphalist tone to the narrative: it glories in the quantity and range of the booty which is gathered almost effortlessly from the abandoned palaces of the *shahanshah*; and it crows over him as he flies for his life before the advancing army of Heraclius.

The quality of the narrative is such that the reader would be predisposed to trust it, even if it were impossible to establish its pedigree. For it would seem to have been beyond the power of any author to invent so much plausible detail and to develop so coherent a narrative line. But the characteristics and

[30] Theophanes, 306. 19–314. 21, 317. 11–319. 2, 319. 25–323. 22, 324. 16–327. 16, 327. 24–328. 10.

interests which have just been noted themselves prompt conjectures about the ultimate origin of the campaign narratives. Who, we may ask, was in a position to gather, sort, and write up lucid and detailed accounts of military campaigns which, in this case, took place well beyond the old Roman frontiers? There is only one serious contender—the emperor's headquarters staff. They alone were in a position to collate a mass of intelligence information and reports from subordinate commanders so as to produce a coherent narrative of events. They were, of course, involved in strategic planning all the time, and were concerned to maintain the emperor's prestige in the army as a whole, hence they were well placed to write about strategic issues and to provide the expected enhancement of the emperor's role. If this suggestion is accepted, then the ultimate source of the campaign narratives in Theophanes' chronicle was a written record of the campaigns produced by the headquarters staff, partly for their own information in the future but mainly for the authorities and people of the empire whose morale would sink unless they received regularly news from the field. In other words, the campaign narratives were drawn ultimately from military dispatches issued in Heraclius' name.

This suggestion is more than mere conjecture, although I for one would be ready to embrace it if that were all it was. For corroboration is provided by the last part of the text of the *Chronicon Paschale*. As has already been shown, two whole documents and a large part of a third have been incorporated into it and left quite untouched by its admirably unassuming author. One of them occupies the last, undamaged pages of the one extant manuscript of the chronicle, and is incontrovertibly an example of the sort of official military dispatch which, I am suggesting, underlies Theophanes' narrative of Heraclius' Persian campaigns. The preservation of the preamble and closing phrases leaves no room for doubt that it is a military dispatch, addressed by the emperor to his people, and the dates at which it was sent, received, and published in Constantinople are carefully recorded.[31] Now, the characteristics of the campaign narratives in Theophanes' text match those of this attested official imperial dispatch. This correspondence provides strong support for the suggestion that Theophanes' campaign narratives were based upon official dispatches.

Confirmation of this is provided by explicit references to two dispatches sent back from the expeditionary force to the authorities in Constantinople. The first is to be found in the *Chronographia*. As Theophanes is nearing the end of his account of the first counteroffensive, having just finished describing Heraclius' march south across the Armenian Taurus and his manoeuvres

[31] *Chron. Pasch.*, 727. 7–14 (proclamation of the dispatch), 727. 15–728. 4 (preamble), 728. 4–734. 9 (text), 734. 9–17 (conclusion).

against Shahrvaraz's large pursuing army in March 626, he notes that Heraclius halted when he reached Amida, rested his troops and the prisoners-of-war, and sent off a dispatch to Constantinople. The scope of the dispatch is only defined vaguely as 'all his news', by which operations undertaken since the start of the year's campaign are probably meant. The ultimate source for this reference was presumably the closing section of the dispatch itself in which the emperor postmarked it.[32]

There is a second set of citations (three all told) to a later imperial dispatch in the text of the one reproduced in the *Chronicon Paschale* (reporting the political revolution in Persia in February 628 which sealed the Roman victory in the field). Its chronological scope is defined (17 October 627–15 March 628) and that part of its contents is summarized which related to the hot political news being conveyed by the new dispatch. It covered, we are told, Khusro's flight from Dastagerd to Ctesiphon (which exposed him to the danger of a coup), the destruction of his palaces and many provinces of the Persian state (which destroyed his prestige), and the plan for his son Shiroe's coup attempt.[33] Despite Theophanes' penchant for changing gear in the course of transmitting material from a source to his own text, often omitting whole episodes not lacking in importance, there is a remarkably close correspondence between the outline of the dispatch given by its author, Heraclius, and important elements in Theophanes' account of military and political events in the winter of 627–8. He begins his account earlier, with Heraclius' bold march south over the Zagros trailed by the Persian general Rahzadh. He indicates that it began on 17 October, the starting date of the dispatch.[34] He then leaps ahead and concentrates on the climactic phase of the war, when a decisive victory was won near Nineveh and the Roman army then advanced triumphantly on Ctesiphon, plundering the royal palaces on the way. He then summarizes in a single sentence the events of the next month and a half, preferring to give details about the political machinations and military mechanics behind Shiroe's planned coup, of which, he writes, Heraclius was given advance notice. If allowance is made for editorial discretion (in this case, Theophanes' decision to carry the story of Persian politics on to its dénouement and to summarize the terms on which Shiroe as king sued for peace, which leads him to neglect Heraclius' winter march back over the Zagros to Ganzak), there can be very little doubt but that the material

[32] Theoph., 312. 28–313. 2. He also notes the effect of Heraclius' dispatch in boosting morale in Constantinople.

[33] *Chron. Pasch.*, 728. 13–15 and 729. 15–730. 4.

[34] Theoph., 317. 26–7.

presented in the chronicle is taken from the dispatch cited in the *Chronicon Paschale*.[35]

It would therefore seem reasonable to suppose that other dispatches supplied Theophanes with the rest of his detailed information about the two counteroffensives. Like the two which we have been discussing, these other dispatches were probably drafted on the rare occasions when the army halted its ceaseless movement, and a week or so's rest and recuperation allowed the emperor and his staff to take stock and transform a bare record of events into something more presentable. A halt was a first precondition for the production of a dispatch. Great care must also have been taken to ensure that the completed and confidential document might be conveyed safely to its intended recipients and did not fall into enemy hands. There was therefore a second precondition which had to be satisfied before a dispatch was drafted and sent off—the army must be not too far from Roman-held territory and the route used must go through friendly or neutral country. With these two considerations borne in mind, it should be possible to go through the dispatch-based material in Theophanes to find likely dates and places for the composition and forwarding of successive reports and hence to observe the outlines of the individual documents which underlie the text as we have it.

But how, we must ask, did Theophanes manage to get hold of this valuable dossier of Heraclius' dispatches? Did he do archival research and turn up the originals? This is unlikely, since we have no evidence that Theophanes did research in Constantinople and since we know that he was working in a considerable hurry. Did he somehow, somewhere, stumble across a full set of copies of the documents? This is a possibility. But, before we toy further with this attractive notion, we should pause to consider a feature of Theophanes' account of the third phase of the war, which has been noted in passing above, for it may provide a valuable clue as to the form in which the dispatch material reached him.

Theophanes was, of course, writing in prose. So it causes surprise and considerable interest to discover that a certain amount of verse, written in iambic trimetres, is embedded in the rich, dispatch-based military narrative of Heraclius' two counteroffensives. Sternbach, who first noticed the snatches of poetry lurking in the text, managed, with little difficulty, to reconstitute the original lines, by making allowances for minor changes to the word order and occasional small additions or excisions (all of which he viewed as occasioned by the transfer from verse to prose in Theophanes' hands). His attribution of the verse to George of Pisidia has won general acceptance. The verse frag-

[35] Theoph., 317. 32–319. 22, 319. 25–323. 22, 324. 16–327. 16.

ments therefore appear in Pertusi's authoritative edition of George's panegyrical poetry.[36]

So far so good. But where did these fragments come from? And how did they end up lodging in Theophanes' dispatch-based account of Roman–Persian warfare 624–8 and nowhere else? These are distinct but related questions. The first is hard to answer. The obvious candidate for the host poem is the lost part of the *Heraclias* (the third canto and the tail-end of the second). But there is an insuperable objection. The two extant cantos are general, rhetorical, and selective. They show that the poet's purpose was to maximize the encomiastic content and that he spanned the whole career of his imperial hero to date. Hence he made only fleeting and occasional references to specific important events in the midst of long literary flourishes. It is highly unlikely that George changed both tone and pace at the end of the second or the beginning of the third canto and started dealing with individual incidents in considerable detail. Apart from the bizarre effect that it would have had on the poem as a whole, there was no room in one canto and a bit for a full exposition of all the emperor's exploits on these campaigns.

Were there then other *fully developed* poems by George on the theme of Heraclius' Persian campaigns from which Theophanes could have taken them? If there were, it is surely rather puzzling that there are no cross-references to them in George's extant poems, that they have not left their impress on later Byzantine texts, in spite of the interest which poems on the achievements of Heraclius in the field would have aroused, and above all that scribes and their patrons showed so little interest in them in later centuries that no manuscript copies of them have survived. Although arguments from silence are always perilous, doubly so where a culture was severely disabled as was that of Byzantium from the later seventh to the early ninth century, they should be listened to. In this case, their cumulative force pushes us towards the conclusion that the verse fragments preserved in Theophanes' text are not the detritus of an otherwise unattested long and fully developed poem written in George's usual grand manner.

This leaves only one likely alternative source for the fragments of George's verse which have been detected in the *Chronographia*, a set of shorter, more concrete verse compositions in which the author strove to convey his meaning clearly and simply. Corroborative evidence that George did write about Heraclius' campaigns between 624 and 628 is provided by the tenth-century antiquarian encyclopedia known as the *Suda*. It has conserved twenty-four

[36] L. Sternbach, 'De Georgii Pisidae apud Theophanem aliosque historicos reliquiis', *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydział Filologiczny*, ser. 2, 15 (Kraków, 1900), 1–107; Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 276–307.

fragments of his poetry which make recognizable references to known episodes of the war. Five of the eight episodes to which they refer are episodes to which fragments of verse adhere in Theophanes' text.[37] Like the fragments in Theophanes' text, those in the *Suda* appear only to deal with highlights of the war and to do so in a fairly concrete manner. The poet's concern in both sets of fragments seems to have been to express himself clearly and succinctly rather than to lay down a barrage of grandiloquent verse and subtle conceits. We may therefore conclude that George wrote a highly selective verse account of Heraclius' Persian campaigns which took the form of a number of short poems (a total of at least twenty) dealing with individual episodes of special significance (this would explain the absence of any traces of verse concerning the great majority of more humdrum operations and manoeuvres) and that he did so in an uncharacteristically simple style.

The verse fragments are sprinkled over the factually dense military narrative presented by Theophanes. The job of combining the poetic with the documentary material appears to have been done with great skill. The snatches of verse highlight dramatic moments in the history of the campaigns. Shorter or longer versified speeches from the emperor, sometimes answered enthusiastically by his troops, pick out crucial moments in the campaigns, as when the army is about to strike deep into enemy territory or faces growing danger and has no choice but to fight its way out of it. Other verse-based passages underline the emperor's heroism on the battlefield and the significance of Roman successes or the scale of Persian defeat (there is a cluster of them concerning Khusro II as he flees for his life from Heraclius only later to be imprisoned and executed by his eldest son Kavad-Shiroe). The poetic matter has been deployed judiciously and to good effect. The workmanship is of a very high order, and beyond the editorial capacity of Theophanes, certainly at the pace he was working. We would expect to find the occasional awkward transition or inappropriate association of the two types of material, judging by his track record elsewhere in his chronicle. But if Theophanes was not responsible for introducing the poetry, it follows that it was already present in the version of dispatch-based military narrative when it came into his hands. That is our second conclusion.

If the scattering of verse-based passages in the *Chronographia* reflects, as almost certainly it does, the distribution of a number of short narrative poems in a revised version of Heraclius' war dispatches, if the poetry was already

[37] L. Sternbach, 'De Pisidae fragmentis a Suida servatis', *Rozprawy Ak. Um., W. Filol.*, ser. 2, 15, 108–80 inventories and analyses all the detectable fragments. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, 276–307 reprints those which he takes to refer to Heraclius' Persian campaigns and appends brief commentaries.

grafted on to the prose when both types of material came into Theophanes' hands, and if, finally, the short poems were not free-standing compositions but were, as they appear to be, specially composed to point up and embellish the dispatches, a hypothesis which has the great virtue of simplicity suggests itself, namely that George was commissioned by the emperor to write an official history of the war and designed it with two components, a revised and improved version of the emperor's own dispatches in which he introduced a modest amount of stylistic retouching and twenty or more short poems which he composed specially as their literary adornment. This hypothesis provides the only satisfactory explanation for the odd character of the largest and most important body of documentary material about the war which has been preserved.[38] It adds to the perceived value of this body of documentary material. For it can then be trusted not only as a record of military operations (no more authoritative sources can be found than the contemporary official dispatches) but also as an expression of the official view of the war, a view which both stressed its religious significance and propagated an image of the emperor as chief progenitor of ultimate victory.

Let us then pause to explore this hypothesis in greater detail, to see whether each of the three propositions which it is advancing stands up under closer scrutiny. The first proposition is that Heraclius commissioned the poet George of Pisidia to write an official history of his campaigns, presumably sooner rather than later after the end of the fighting in spring 628. As we have seen, George had been in disgrace since his unintentional offering of exceedingly ill-timed moral advice to the emperor in late 622 or 623 but had done much to assuage the emperor's anger since then, through two unsponsored war poems, the *In Bonum* and *Heraclias*, which were overflowing with laudatory remarks about the emperor. The first proposition brings back the date of his rehabilitation from late 630 or early 631, when we know he was commissioned by the emperor to write the *Contra Severum*, by two years or so. There is nothing inherently improbable in this. For George, who was without doubt the foremost writer of his day, was an obvious choice. While he may have been best suited by temperament and profession to writing religious verse, he had never detached himself from current affairs and had shown himself ready and competent to write about warfare and in doing so to shower praise upon the emperor.

The only other available candidate known to us was his contemporary Theophylact Simocatta. He was writing a history of the reign of Maurice in the 620s, and, like George of Pisidia, he benefited from the patronage of the

[38] For a full exposition of the case in favour of the hypothesis, see J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns', in Dąbrowa (ed.), *Roman and Byzantine Army*, 57–87 (reprinted in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, iv).

Patriarch Sergius. He was the leading historian of his day and appears to have finished his extant history soon after the end of the war. He therefore had a track record as a historian and was free to take on a new project. However, there is no evidence that he wrote any contemporary history (save insofar as he allowed contemporary allusions to seep into his account of events a generation earlier), let alone that he was commissioned to write an official history of any part of Heraclius' reign, despite his efforts at the start of it to ingratiate himself with the new regime. He was, we know, pursuing a successful career in the judiciary in the 630s. It is highly likely then that he was passed over in favour of George.[39]

The emperor's preference for George is understandable. Theophylact was a dull writer by comparison. He operated within the narrow confines of the genre of high-style classicizing history. He was reasonably competent at assembling a body of decent source material and at editing it (although he made some grievous errors), and he took great trouble to impart literary polish to his finished composition, writing in an elevated and occasionally convoluted style. But it was low-grade, laboured stuff compared to George's political verse. George was by far the better writer and was probably recognized as such by Theophylact himself. For he shows signs of having come under George's literary influence (presumably they met thanks to the patron whom they had in common) and George seems to have taken an interest in Theophylact's history, since he seems to give it a puff in the *Bellum Avaricum*.[40]

The second proposition is that it was George who devised the form which the official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns took. He was an original, independent spirit, as he showed in his poetry. So it is surely to him that the strikingly innovatory character of the official history should be credited. The great mass of its material was taken, probably with only minor linguistic retouching, from the emperor's war dispatches. This documentary material performed the essential function of a work of history, which was to *report*, accurately and in full, a complex series of events, in this case the military operations and associated diplomatic activities of the emperor on campaign. The narrative provided by the revised dispatches was then embellished, lightened, and, to a certain extent, interpreted by twenty or more short poems composed specially for the history by George, who thus substituted something fresh and of far higher literary quality for the moralizing speeches and antiquarian excursuses which convention required high-style historians to include. By this innovation, George succeeded both in escaping from the desiccating hold of an ageing literary tradition and in separating more clearly

[39] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 30–3, 50–1.

[40] Geo. Pis., *Bellum Avaricum*, 41–3.

than any of his Roman predecessors his own *commentaries* on events and the celebration of the emperor's achievements which he was expected to include from the basic narrative. He allowed the authoritative official record to speak for itself, using his own verse compositions to pick out key moments and to probe the motives and intentions of the Romans and thereby to throw some light on to the inner psychological and ideological history of the war.

This was a remarkable work of history. There were precedents for the incorporation of whole documents in a historical text. They were to be found in the genre of ecclesiastical history which had taken shape in the preceding three centuries. Their authors, whose principal concern was to document doctrinal developments and associated debates and politicking in the church in a way that forwarded the interests of their own party, had given an air of authority to their works by quoting documents of all sorts, ensuring by their selection of the documents as well as the accompanying narrative that their own favoured cause was furthered. But George went far beyond this, by avoiding tampering with the documentary record and allowing it to preponderate in his history, which was concerned purely with secular affairs. For this there was no recent precedent, and none that he was probably aware of (since there is no reason to suppose that he was familiar with the *Commentarii* of Caesar, the most notable example of the genre of military memoirs to survive from Rome or the earlier Hellenistic world where it had developed). His history marked a complete break with the tradition of classicizing history as it had evolved in the more recent past, which had confused the tasks of historian and writer and had, by requiring that all sources be thoroughly rewritten, opened the way for historians to reshape the substance of their raw materials. Finally, there was no precedent for the inclusion of verse in place of the traditional rhetorical pieces, mainly speeches and antiquarian digressions, which adorned histories. Of all George's literary innovations, this was the boldest. While it may have surprised the emperor, it cannot have caused him much consternation since the short poems were superior as vehicles of propaganda on his behalf to the usual prose embellishment of histories, certainly to the carefully worked but often obscure speeches which Theophylact Simocatta incorporated in his history.

The third proposition is that George took great care to toe the official line in his history. This needs little justification. The history was obviously intended, like most commissioned histories, both to provide a permanent record of events and to serve the interests of the central actor who was sponsoring it. George knew that he must not deviate from the imperially sanctioned interpretation of the war which gave it a very strong religious colouring. It is highly unlikely that he showed the independence of mind which had been evident before in his poetry, especially in his own particular

circumstances. It would have been an act of folly for one who had only been restored to imperial favour with the grant of this commission not to take great care accurately to reflect the emperor's views. Equally there could be no question of his not seizing the opportunity to stress the emperor's personal contributions by word and deed to the success of the two counteroffensives and thereby to enhance his prestige and standing throughout the empire and the neighbouring Christian worlds.

The hypothesis emerges intact, perhaps even strengthened, from this close examination of its constituent propositions. This being so, it is worth asking two more questions—first, when was the official history composed by George and what was its intended audience? A date of composition sooner rather than later after the emperor's return from Persia in mid 628 has been suggested above. For it was in the emperor's interest to broadcast without delay the scale of his achievements in the last phase of the Persian war. The intended audience was presumably the educated elite of the empire, both at the centre and in the recently recovered provinces of the Middle East. Possibly it was also intended to circulate more widely in Christian circles outside the boundaries of the empire. As a record of extraordinary, near-miraculous success, it would both strengthen his political position at home (always a principal concern in an autocracy) and impress the majesty, power, and resilience of the Roman empire on the surrounding world. Such considerations also lay behind Heraclius' decision to make the return of the fragments of the True Cross to Jerusalem in March 630 the ceremonial climax of the victory celebrations. By taking part himself in the ceremony, he transformed it into a great public event which attracted the attention of the whole of Christendom, while the formal act of restoring the Cross to its rightful place after years of captivity in Persia both recalled recent history and the emperor's part in it, and reminded Christians, irrespective of the differences of doctrine and rite over which they quarrelled, of their common faith and their shared struggle for salvation in the material world. Indeed it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the official history was commissioned as part of the preparations for the religious triumph at Jerusalem and that the Middle Eastern clergy was an important element in its intended audience. Since it did not entail a great deal of new composition or complicated editorial work by George, it was probably completed in good time and copies could well have been taken to Jerusalem for distribution during the emperor's visit.

That, however, is to stray deep into the realms of speculation. Not that it is entirely unsupported by evidence. For there are echoes of George's history in later Syrian and Armenian texts which are most easily explained if the official history did indeed circulate widely in the Middle East. And—to pile hypothesis on hypothesis—it was perhaps in the Middle East that a single copy of the full text survived into the late eighth or very early ninth century, the copy

which was to make its way into Theophanes' hands. The case of George's history, which was known to Theophanes but to no one else in Byzantium, recalls that of the Greek translation of Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle which is also unique to Theophanes. It seems not unreasonable therefore to suggest that George's history reached him from the same place of origin, Palestine, and through the same channel, his friend and literary mentor George Syncellus, as Theophilus' chronicle.

5. ARAB CONQUESTS: SOURCES AND EDITING

Theophanes took much of his material on the rise of Islam from the Greek translation and continuation of the history of Theophilus of Edessa. This provided a narrative framework, into which could be slipped additional items of information from the second continuation of John of Antioch and the *History to 720*, both also used by Nicephorus. In general, Theophanes condensed what he found in the Greek translation, sometimes reducing an extended narrative to a single pithy notice. The biased account which he gives of Muhammad's career ending with a short critique of his idea of Paradise (333. 1–334. 27) was taken from the Greek translation, which substituted it for Theophilus' brief sketch of the growth of Muhammad's power as spiritual and political leader, and his summary of Islamic beliefs. Thereafter he recycled Theophilus' history of the early Arab conquests, as transmitted by the Greek translation, without intervening save to condense it, to divide it up between successive year-entries, and to introduce additional items.[41]

Thus he compresses into a single bald notice Theophilus' extended account of the main attack by four generals on Palestine, noting that they attacked Gaza together with its district and killed the Patrician Sergius in a battle fought south of Caesarea.[42] Two glosses have been added (probably by the Greek translator and continuator of Theophilus), which are both at odds with Theophilus' account as reconstructed from his other derivatives—that Sergius' army was small, only 300 soldiers being killed with him in the battle. The glossator also

[41] Theophanes (335. 12–336. 3) describes an unsuccessful Arab expedition north which met with defeat at Mut'a (south-east of the Dead Sea). Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition', 21–6 has shown that it derives ultimately from an early Islamic tradition picked up and transmitted by the Greek translator of Theophilus.

[42] Theoph., 336. 14–20, who substitutes the placename Hira for the reading of the Greek translation of Theophilus, namely the district surrounding Gaza (cf. *DAI*, c. 18. 3–4), thereby giving the unwarranted impression that a simultaneous attack was launched on the approaches to Sasanian Mesopotamia.

denies that the battle decided the fate of Palestine (336. 14–20). Theophanes goes on to summarize the basically sound account of the conquest of Syria which may be extracted from Theophilus, isolating the same three battles. He dates the first after the fall of Bostra and the occupation of the Hawran and locates it at Gabitha (Jabiya). The defeat inflicted there on Heraclius' brother Theodore is the reason for his dismissal and replacement by the general Baanes and Theodore the *sacellarius*. Operating together they manage to drive the Arabs south, away from Emesa, but then Baanes fails to come to the aid of the *sacellarius* who is defeated by a large Arab army, supposedly on Tuesday 23 July.[43] As in Theophilus, the description of this battle incorporates elements which belong properly to the battle of Yarmuk—the desert wind blowing sand in the Romans' faces and the ravines of the Yarmuk (it is named) into which many Romans fell.[44] The explanation for Baanes' absence at the decisive battle accords with that given by Nicephorus for an unnamed subordinate of the *sacellarius*—his troops had proclaimed him emperor. It was evidently taken from the second continuation of John of Antioch (337. 23–338. 12).[45]

Theophanes then jumps ahead to the conquest of Egypt. For this, he returns to Theophilus' account, which focused on the relations between the Patriarch Cyrus and the Arab general, 'Amr. Three years' grace was bought with substantial payments of tribute (hence the elliptical reference, taken from the second continuation by Nicephorus, to the good relations of 'Amr and Cyrus). Theophilus' figure, 200,000 solidi per year, is reproduced. The arrival of a new military governor, wrongly identified as Manuel in Theophilus, marks a policy change. Manuel refuses to pay the tribute, announcing that he is a fighting man. This results predictably in an Arab attack and Manuel's defeat and flight to Alexandria. A return to Cyrus' conciliatory policy is now authorized, but his approach is rebuffed. Theophanes ends his notice prematurely, without reporting the evacuation of Roman forces from Egypt (338. 12–339. 4). This material taken from Theophilus is a useful supplement to the much fuller account of John of Nikiu, since high politics on the Roman side is the main subject rather than military operations. The figure given for tribute is plausible—the same as that which bought a breathing space from the Avars in 624–5. Theophilus' liking for anecdotes larded with snatches of direct speech is in evidence. It is a liking shared by the second continuator of John of Antioch, the *History to 720*, and Theophanes.

[43] Either date or day is wrong, since they coincide a year after the decisive battle, in 636 (see Ch. 7 n. 61 above).
[44] Cf. Ch. 7 n. 56.
[45] Cf. Ch. 8, sections 2 and 5.

Theophanes then retraces his steps (without saying so) and describes the first, solemn visit of the Caliph ʿUmar to Jerusalem, quoting a remark of Sophronius that the abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel was now standing in the holy places. He retains Theophilus' reference to a previous spurious two-year siege directed by ʿUmar (339. 15–29). The final stages in the conquest of Roman territory are then swiftly noted—the submission of the whole of Syria to ʿIyad, payment of a year's tribute to ʿIyad by the governor of Osrhoene, the capture of Antioch, the appointment of Muʿawiya as governor of Syria, the invasion and conquest of northern Mesopotamia by ʿIyad after the sacking of the conciliatory governor (339. 33–340. 26), before a brief account is given of the Arab conquest of Mesopotamia, the flight of the *shahanshah* (mistakenly called Hormisdas) to the interior of Persia, and the dispatch to the Caliph ʿUmar of the captured royal treasure (341. 2–7). The order of these notices corresponds to the chronological order of the events. Theophanes has, it seems, reproduced Theophilus' account more faithfully than did the late Syrian historians, who, influenced by Islamic historical tradition, sandwich the battle of Qadisiyya between two phases of the Syrian campaign.[46]

Theophanes' editorial approach remains the same until he reaches the first reign of Justinian II (685–95). If there is a Roman source available with relevant material, he introduces it at the appropriate place into his main Theophilus-based narrative. He appears to have pointed up Theophilus' account of the succession crisis following Heraclius' death with extra details (such as the cause of his death, the month (March), and the specific mutilations inflicted on Martina and Heraclonas), and he introduces, in the following year-entry, a summary in direct speech of Constans' grateful address to the Senate. This additional material may well have come from the second continuation of John of Antioch (if so, Theophanes' copy had the folio missing from Nicephorus'). He brings the story to a close with a report, taken from Theophilus, that Valentinus, a dangerous general who had been exiled when Martina fell, rebelled and was killed two years later (341. 12–17, 341. 24–8, 342. 9–20, 343. 3–5).[47] These items about domestic politics

[46] The scene has been set for the Arab advance into Sasanian territory by two earlier notices on the political turbulence which followed the early death in 628 of Kavad Shiroe (331. 1–10, 335. 9–10). They derive ultimately from Theophilus but have been garbled in transit, the final *shahanshah* being misidentified as Hormizd rather than Yazdgerd (a mistake repeated later in the notice about his flight into the interior of Iran at 341. 4–6).

[47] Nicephorus, cc. 30–2 shows that Valentinus was a major player in the succession crisis, who was suspected of harbouring imperial ambitions. He first supported the claims of Constans II, but, just before Nicephorus' account breaks off, is reported to have composed his differences with Martina. Theophanes' misspelling of his name as Valentinianus at his second appearance (343. 3) was probably a slip of the pen, by a historian for whom the fourth-century Arian emperor was an important figure.

alternate with summary notices about other matters taken from Theophilus (the fall of Caesarea of Palestine to Muʿawiya after a seven-year siege (a figure not found in the other derivatives of Theophilus), the start of construction on the al-ʿAqsa mosque in Jerusalem, an eclipse, and the assassination of ʿUmar (341. 21–3, 342. 22–8, 343. 5–6, 343. 8–12)).

Indigenous Roman sources failing him for most of Constans' reign, Theophanes has to make as much use as possible of Theophilus. His is the fullest version of the four derivative texts. So key events and unusual natural phenomena reported by Theophilus all appear (except for the second attack on Cyprus), with a few additional details (for example, the names of the Roman commander sent to defend Cyprus after the first attack in 649 and of the ambassador who negotiated an armistice with the Arabs around 652 (344. 1–2, 21–2), and a note that Muʿawiya had reached Caesarea of Cappadocia when the Arab fleet sent against Constantinople was intercepted by the Romans off the Lycian coast in 654 (345. 26–346. 1)). He includes several notices, which were not picked up either by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre or by Agapius, but which are nonetheless attributable to Theophilus. Some of the episodes covered date from the first decade or so of Constans' reign—a successful Arab raid on Isauria, the secession of the Roman client-ruler of Armenia, the expulsion by the Arabs of Roman forces from Armenia, and an abortive Roman raid on Tripoli intended to disrupt preparations for an attack on Constantinople (344. 19–21, 26–9, 345. 19–25). Others belong to the later 650s and 660s—a successful Balkan campaign which brought back many Slav prisoners, a peace treaty agreed at Muʿawiya's request,[48] five successful raids on Asia Minor and one on Sicily, the resettlement of 5,000 Slavs, who had voluntarily gone over to the Arabs, in the territory of Apamea, and a night attack, with thick snow on the ground, which resulted in the slaughter of the whole Arab garrison of Amorium (347. 6–7, 16–18, 348. 10–11, 13–14, 16–20, 23–4, 26–7, 351. 5–9). Like Theophilus he is silent about the ultimate fate of the 654 Constantinople expedition, describing instead a decisive naval victory won on the way there over the main Roman fleet off the coast of Lycia and Constans' escape in disguise (345. 28–346. 18). Then he follows Theophilus' example and turns to deal with first *fitna*. He reduces a rich narrative to a few, very laconic notices (346. 20–4, 346. 27–347. 4, 347. 26–8). The only

[48] According to Theophanes, Muʿawiya paid exactly the same price for peace with the Romans during first *fitna* as did ʿAbd al-Malik in 686, during second *fitna*, namely 1,000 solidi, a freed prisoner-of-war, and a horse every day. Unlike the second treaty, the first is not reported by the other derivatives of Theophilus. The terms do not accord with circumstances at the time, when the Arabs were in a position of great strength and had no need to buy peace. I suspect that the note about the terms is a *scholium* introduced by the Greek translator of Theophilus, who assumed that the terms were the same as in 686.

additional material which he slips in here continues a summary account (introduced under the year 630/1) of the Monothelete controversy and the sufferings of the champions of Orthodoxy, based on the dossier compiled by Anastasius (329. 21–332. 8, 344. 16–17, 347. 7–14, 21–3).

These are thin pickings, given the importance of Constans' reign. Roman–Arab warfare is the only subject systematically covered. Constans' activity in Transcaucasia is passed by as are domestic politics (of which the *History of Khosrov* provides a few glimpses) and Roman relations with northern peoples. A single notice about a campaign in the Balkans is far from satisfactory, when we know, from the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, that there were two serious crises affecting Thessalonica. But Theophanes has done what he can to flesh out the history of the reign, finding something to put in each year-entry but at the cost of mauling chronology in places. He retails the basically sound account of Theophilus, more faithfully than Dionysius of Tel-Mahre and much more fully than Agapius. Like them, he reveals that the main development in the first part of Constans' reign was the ominous extension of the Arab war effort to the sea, which resulted in attacks on Cyprus, Aradus, Rhodes, and an expedition against Constantinople (although nothing is said about its disastrous outcome). The resumption of offensive action after the end of first *fitna* is likewise better documented than in the other texts which recycle material from Theophilus.

Apart from his role as transmitter of Theophilus' lost text (a useful role, but not one which adds significantly to knowledge), Theophanes contributes relatively little new information to the pool already formed about the first fifty years or so of Islamic history (counting from the *hijra*). But three items, unique to him, are of some interest: his note that Baanes rebelled and was proclaimed emperor helps explain the final Roman defeat in Syria (338. 3–4); he shows that Justinian II's policy of resettling captured Slavs in Asia Minor had a precedent (not a good one) in Constans' reign (347. 6–7, 348. 18–20); and he records an otherwise unattested early Arab attack on Sicily, and the apparently voluntary migration of some Sicilians to Damascus (348. 13–14).

6. BATTLE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN 669–718: SOURCES AND EDITING

Once the *History to 720* comes on stream, Theophanes' year-entries become much fuller. Indeed he replaces Theophilus with the history as his main source from the accession of Justinian II in 685. He makes considerably

more use of it than does Nicephorus. He reproduces items, some of them substantial, which Nicephorus dropped—about Transcaucasian affairs, Justinian II's building projects in the palace, and background material on the career of Philippicus before his elevation to the throne.[49] He also gives rather more detail about the series of coups which punctuated the period 695–717, especially Justinian II's machinations in the north and later dealings with Cherson, as well as fuller versions of some notices about Roman–Arab warfare, in particular a much longer account of the 717–18 siege of Constantinople.[50] It becomes easier to make a judgement about the scope and quality of the lost history. It is also possible to confirm the hypothesis that the author based his accounts of some recent events on government communiqués. One official notice is quoted, about the transfer of Germanus from the see of Cyzicus to the patriarchate (384. 19–385. 4). Other passages—above all the full accounts of the siege (395. 13–398. 4) and of the suppression of the Sicilian rebellion (398. 7–4)—have the hallmarks of document-based information—lucid, concise exposition, plain language devoid of emotion, and precision about dates and persons.[51]

Theophanes takes large chunks of flowing narrative from the lost history once it reaches the accession of Justinian II in 685 and provides something approaching a continuous account. Thenceforth he interleaves this Roman material with passages on Roman–Arab relations taken from Theophilus, to produce a richer, wider-ranging history. Theophilus and the anonymous historian may well be his exclusive suppliers of information. For the only substantial addition which he appears to make—a long digression about the adventures of the young Leo III in the Caucasus and his subsequent career (391. 5–395. 12)—was probably written by the anonymous historian, who, we know, was ready to include biographical cast-backs (as in the case of Philippicus) and may well have sought to ingratiate himself with the new emperor.[52] On the whole, Theophanes does the work of

[49] Transcaucasia: Theoph., 363. 26–31, 364. 4–6, 366. 25–9, 368. 13–14, 370. 3–4, 372. 6–7, 13–18, 382. 6–7. Building projects: Theoph., 367. 12–14, 367. 32–368. 11. Philippicus: Theoph., 381. 6–20.

[50] Justinian in the north: Theoph., 372. 26–374. 8. Cherson: Theoph., 377. 22–379. 29. Siege: Theoph., 395. 13–398. 4.

[51] Use of different sources explains occasional variation in language and attitudes in material taken by Theophanes from the *History to 720*. Naturally the official communiqué about the siege referred to divine aid and designated the Arabs as enemies—two features of the account of the siege in Theophanes which lead D. Afigenov, 'The Source of Theophanes' *Chronography* and Nikephoros' *Breviarium* for the Years 685–717', *Khristianskij Vostok*, NS 4 (2002), 11–22 to hive it off from the single source for the period up to 717 which he has identified.

[52] Cf. Afigenov, 'The Source of Theophanes' *Chronography* and Nikephoros' *Breviarium*', 14–17, who notes similar use of Latin words and similar political attitudes in the biographical material about Leo and in the main body of material taken from the lost history.

editorial joinery competently. Some of his dates may be a year or two out, because of his concern to fill otherwise blank year-entries, but few serious chronological errors can be detected. By combining information taken from two different vantage points, Baghdad in the middle of the eighth century and Constantinople in the 720s, he can provide a broader view of the resumed outward drive of Arab forces after ʿAbd al-Malik's conclusive victory in second *fitna* than either of his sources. It is in the pages of the *Chronographia* that we can best follow its various phases: first (366. 25–7, 367. 1–2, 368. 13–14) operations designed to pen back the Romans in their borderlands and to reassert Arab authority in what had once been Persarmenia (692–5); next (370. 6–18), an attack in force by land and sea which resulted in the conquest of Carthage and the heartland of Roman north Africa (697–8)—this brought about a decisive shift in the balance of power in the Arabs' favour as well as opening the way west to the Maghreb and Spain; next (371. 27–372. 4, 372. 18–26, 376. 31–377. 22, 382. 6–10, 382. 28–383. 3, 383. 27–8), amid Roman counterstrikes into the Arab marches, a renewal of attacks on Asia Minor which eventually netted the Arabs important strategic positions in the borderlands—Tyana in the south and Camacha in the north; finally (386. 25–391. 2, 395. 13–398. 4, 399. 5–19), the climactic expedition by land and sea against Constantinople in 716–18, which was resupplied by three separate fleets. Only the Arabs' entry into Spain in 711 and their thrust deep into Transoxiana (705–15) lie beyond Theophanes' scope.

Three vital steps in the adaptation of traditional fighting methods to the Romans' new position as a comparatively weak antagonist facing a new world empire are noted in passing: mobilization of the peasantry of Asia Minor for the defence of the rump of the old Christian empire—first detectable in the Tyana campaign (377. 2–7); improvement of the defences of Constantinople—the great service of the Emperor Anastasius, of which Leo III was the principal beneficiary (384. 7–14); and, most important of all, adoption of guerrilla methods, as developed by special forces in the Lebanon, for the defence of the Roman heartland, by land and sea, when the metropolitan region came under direct attack (397. 15–19). We would indeed be hard put to document and explain the survival of Byzantium in the early eighth century, as well as its remarkable record of resistance to Islam in the seventh, if we did not have the *Chronographia* to hand. It is Theophanes too who supplies a vital piece of diplomatic information, the forging of an alliance with the new hegemonic power of the west Eurasian stepppes, the Khazar khaganate, through the betrothal of the future Constantine V to the khagan's daughter in 732/3.[53]

[53] Theoph., 409. 30–410. 3.

There are, however, three notices into which error has crept near the beginning of this third tranche of seventh-century history in the *Chronographia*. The fault in two cases was the anonymous historian's, but in the third Theophanes'. The *History to 720* supplied relatively little information about the reign of Constantine IV (669–85), presumably because there was little that the author judged reliable some forty years later when he was writing. The four items he found served as an introduction to the first reign of Constantine's son Justinian II (685–95), who was for him the central, malign figure of the recent past. The Bulgar problem loomed large. Most of Theophanes' version of the lost history's account of the reign is devoted to their origin myth, their defeat of the emperor, and the consolidation of their position south of the Danube (356. 18–359. 25). Domestic politics were also covered—the sixth ecumenical council of 680–1 which reversed the Monothelete policies of Heraclius' and Constans' reigns (359. 25–360. 12), and the demand of the Anatolic theme army[54] that Constantine's brothers (Tiberius and Heraclius) be crowned co-emperors which evoked a savage response (the arrest and execution of the organizers, and the mutilation of both brothers). The episode is also reported by Theophilus, who dates it towards the end of Constantine's reign, in 682, and explains it as clearing the way for the succession of his son Justinian. Theophanes, however, has preferred to use the history's fuller notice, has inferred from its position that the episode occurred soon after Constantine's accession, and has put it under 669/70, his first regnal year (352. 12–23).

Much more serious, though, was the historian's report that Constantinople was under attack for seven successive years in the 670s (353. 14–354. 11). This simply cannot be squared with the detailed information provided by Theophilus about Arab naval activity in the same period (see Ch. 7, section 5 above). Theophilus' scenario has an Arab fleet launch a bold attack on the capital in 670 and, after wintering at Cyzicus, withdraw in 671 before the main Roman fleet returns from the central Mediterranean, where it has been drawn by the Arab attack on the province of Africa in 669 (353. 7). After a pause, the Arabs apply more pressure, this time on rich coastal provinces. Two Arab fleets raid in 672 and temporarily occupy Cilicia, Lycia, and Smyrna through the following winter (353. 14–16). Then, in 674, comes one of the decisive battles of the seventh century—the defeat by three Roman generals of an Arab expeditionary force which has landed in Lycia, followed by the complete destruction by fireships of the fleet which brought them (354. 11–17). This brings the Arab naval offensive to an abrupt halt, save for

[54] The old Roman field armies had been reorganized, redeployed within Asia Minor, and rebranded as 'themes' well before this date (see Ch. 15, section 4 below).

the occupation of Crete (where there is no danger of attack by large land forces) through the winter of 674–5 (354. 20–1). Then, after a brief interlude, the Byzantines are able to deliver a devastating counter-blow, in 677/8, when they land special forces (Mardaites) in Lebanon. The Christian insurgency which follows swiftly threatens Arab rule in Syria and Palestine (355. 6–10).

Theophanes simply superimposes the very different scenario of the *History to 720* onto Theophilus'. So while the various naval actions are taking place in the Aegean and on the south coast of Asia Minor (the dates are probably taken from Theophilus), Constantinople is under continuous attack for seven years (so from 670/1 to 677/8). He cannot explain how the blockading fleet is resupplied, nor how the Romans are able to destroy an Arab fleet off Lycia and then transport troops to Lebanon, with their own capital in grave danger. He simply puts the material from both sources into his own text, and leaves the reader to make of it what sense he can. Most readers have been misled into supposing that Constantinople was isolated from the rest of the Roman state and under continual attack in the 670s and that the blockade was only broken, seven years on, by the deployment of fireships. It seems to me, however, much more likely that the anonymous historian was mistaken. He may have been influenced by contemporary Arab propaganda, which doubtless sought to conceal or to minimize the significance of the naval defeat. To judge by the rather garbled version picked up by al-Tabari much later, the spotlight was turned on the one striking naval success of the period, the capture and temporary occupation of a strategically important island. The island, mistakenly identified as ʻArwad (Aradus, just off the north Syrian coast) and mistakenly located close to Constantinople, must have been Rhodes, which was captured in 673. It was abandoned, al-Tabari reports, when news came of Muʻawiya's death in 680 (thus seven years later).[55] The anonymous historian was also probably vaguely aware that there had been a grave and extended crisis in the 670s, when it became all too apparent that the vital parts of what remained of the Roman empire were exposed to Arab depredation from the sea, including the metropolitan region. With the siege of 717–18 fresh in his memory, he envisaged the danger taking the form of a prolonged blockade of Constantinople. The figure of seven years may correspond to the period when Rhodes was in Arab hands, or it may have been calculated as the time which elapsed between two precisely dated events, the attested attack on Constantinople in 670–1 and the conclusion of a treaty with the Arabs (if Muʻawiya's

[55] *The History of al-Tabari*, xviii: *Between the Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muʻawiyah* (Albany, NY, 1987), 166 (capture of Rhodes, dated 673), 172 (capture of ʻArwad, dated 674). The same naval commander, Junada b. Abi Umayya al-Azdi, was involved on both occasions. It is likely that the second notice both garbles and partially duplicates the first. Cf. Bal., I. 376.

peace initiative, reported in the *History to 720*, is to be dated, where Theophanes puts it, in the same year as the Mardaites' landing).[56]

The blockade of Constantinople in the 670s is a myth which has been allowed to mask the very real success achieved by the Byzantines in the last decade of Mu'awiya's caliphate, first by sea off Lycia and then on land, through an insurgency which, before long, aroused deep anxiety among the Arabs, conscious as they were that they had merely coated the Middle East with their power.[57] The Romans' position grew yet stronger after Mu'awiya's death in 680 when a succession crisis broke out in the caliphate and soon degenerated into full-scale civil war. When he succeeded his father in 685 as a 15-year-old, Justinian II set out to take advantage of the tempting opportunity. An expeditionary force was able to operate at will in Transcaucasia, attacking and killing any Arabs they encountered and raising taxes from virtually the whole region as well as part of north-west Iran. 'Abd al-Malik could not do much in response, merely sending forces to occupy Antioch (so it had not yet been permanently annexed by the Arabs) and Circesium on the Euphrates (363. 26–32). Like Mu'awiya in 677/8 he now had to sue for peace, to relieve the pressure being brought to bear on his core territory in Syria and Palestine by the Mardaites as well as to halt Roman operations in the Christian north, beyond the Taurus and Zagros mountain ranges. He managed to obtain a promise that the Mardaites would be withdrawn, but had to pay a heavy price—the tribute was increased to 1,000 solidi, one freed prisoner-of-war, and one horse per day, and, in addition, he ceded half the tax revenues of Cyprus, Armenia, and Iberia to the Romans, making those regions in effect *condominia* (363. 6–16). It was a treaty, comments Theophanes, or more probably his source, which was nonetheless to have grim consequences for the Romans in the long run (363. 16–20).

Theophanes pieced the story together out of both his sources. The *History to 720* supplied the information about the military expedition into Transcaucasia, while Theophilus detailed the terms of the treaty. Theophanes placed both items quite rightly in the first year of Justinian's reign, 685/6. But he transposed them, which makes a nonsense of history, since, no sooner has Justinian negotiated an extraordinarily advantageous treaty than he breaks it and takes all the taxes of Armenia and Iberia by force, rather than his allocated

[56] Theoph., 355. 10–356. 2 (cf. Nic., c. 34. 14–31). The *History to 720* connects the negotiation of a thirty-year peace with the destruction by storm of Mu'awiya's fleet as it sailed home at the end of the blockade of Constantinople (see Ch. 8, section 5, above). A Christian insurgency, orchestrated from without and spreading like wildfire, provides a better context for what was a humiliating treaty forced on the caliph.

[57] Quite independently, Marek Jankowiak has reached the same conclusion in a forthcoming article on the first Arab sieges of Constantinople. I have learned much from discussing the issues with him.

half, and more from other named regions. Nonetheless the treaty remains in force, since Justinian, in his folly, breaks it in 692 (365. 7–9). It is obvious that the order of events has been reversed. The terms of the treaty imply that the Romans had already asserted themselves in the north, their prime motive probably being to put on a show of force for the benefit of the local Christian peoples and to reassure them that the Christian empire still existed and would do what it could to protect them against outside attack. This was needed in 686, as the Khazars had invaded Transcaucasia and had inflicted a crushing defeat on a coalition of local princes in 685.[58]

The anonymous historian who was highly critical of Justinian doubtless encouraged Theophanes to view him as a hothead, eager for offensive action, however provocative it might be. That certainly was the interpretation he put on the renewal of war in 692, which Theophanes took over. It was an act of folly according to the historian, who seems to have swallowed the Arab version of the cause of the outbreak of fighting in Abasgia (well outside the Arab sphere of influence in Transcaucasia). It was Justinian's fault for refusing to accept the tribute when the type of gold coin in which it was paid was altered so as to carry a specifically Muslim message, as also for authorizing the resettlement of some Cypriots at Cyzicus. The Arabs were right when they insisted that they had not broken the treaty (which would have been a serious sin in the eyes of God) by ostentatiously raising aloft a copy of the treaty of 686 as they marched into battle (365. 8–21, 365. 30–366. 16).

Theophanes has left much the fullest and most useful account of Roman history in the last third of the seventh century and first quarter of the eighth, above all because he was ready to recycle more of the lost *History to 720* and of the lost work of Theophilus of Edessa and to do so more faithfully than the very few other extant sources which also transmit information from them. His editorial restraint, his readiness merely to juxtapose rather than to blend together passages from different sources, makes it possible to disentangle sometimes contradictory versions of the same events presented by two sources, and, once they have been separated as in the case of naval warfare in the 670s or the order of events in 686, to make a considered judgement as to which version is closer to the truth. From his detailed notices about Arab actions and Roman reactions, it is possible to sketch the strategies and tactics employed by the two sides and their evolution through time. He also provides valuable information about northern affairs—the rise of the Khazars as the hegemonic power in the west Eurasian steppes, the establishment of a Balkan

[58] Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium', 430–1; T. Greenwood, '"New Light from the East": Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late Seventh-Century Armenian Source', *JECS* 16 (2008), 197–254, at 245.

Bulgar state, the skilful handling of the Bulgars by Justinian II towards the end of his period of exile—and enables us to fill out the detailed but narrowly focused account in the Armenian *History to 682*.

But it is Theophanes' account of a uniquely turbulent period of domestic history after the overthrow of Justinian II in 695, together with his concomitant record of the steadily growing Arab threat, which is to be valued above all. He casts a clear light on to what could well have remained an obscure series of coups and counter-coups. He highlights the leading role played by the navy in politics (quite without precedent in Roman history). He reports a new vogue for mutilation as a relatively humane way of neutralizing political rivals (which failed in the case of Justinian II). Both storylines, domestic politics and Arab advance, culminate in the full account of the future Leo III's skilful handling in 716–17 of Maslama, supreme commander of the Muslim expeditionary forces, of his accession in 717, and of the successful defence of Constantinople in 717–18. The historian of medieval Byzantium would be groping in the dark without the material transmitted by the *Chronographia* on the period 669–720.

7. A HISTORICAL TEXT IDENTIFIED: THE POLITICAL MEMOIRS OF THE PATRICIAN TRAJAN

One teasing question remains unanswered—who wrote the *History to 720*? The author, as we have seen, was in a privileged position, since he was able to get hold of politically sensitive information and showed considerable understanding of the inner workings of court politics in the recent past. He was an insider, presumably a postholder of some sort, who took care to avoid giving offence to the new ruler, Leo III. He had strong views on politics, concentrating his fire on Justinian II whom he viewed as a disastrous, brutal emperor. It was Justinian whom he blamed for provoking war with Islam in 692, when a thirty-year treaty was providing the Romans with security. Theophanes' comment that Justinian's resettlement of the Mardaites in south-west Armenia (Armenia IV) 'destroyed a wall of bronze' (a Homeric tag) was, it may be postulated, lifted from the history, since it fits in with its fierce critique of the emperor. When Justinian returns, hideously disfigured, it is to inaugurate a reign of terror and to launch revenge attacks on the outlying city of Cherson. It is a grim tale and well told. It bespeaks a devouring interest in politics and in the characters of the leading protagonists—not just Justinian II, but also other occupants of the throne, Leontius, Anastasius, Theodosius, and the two of whom biographical sketches have been preserved by Theophanes—Philippicus and Leo.

The anonymous historian benefited from inside knowledge, but does not seem to have done much research. It looks as if he wrote history drawing on his own experience, on information to hand on the events of the previous twenty years or so (probably gathered from contemporaries in the know), and on government news releases (useful sources of precise data). The further back he reached from the present, the more selective his coverage and the greater the influence of hindsight and the general opinion of his own generation. Hence the meagre information, probably free-floating in time, which he gathered about the reign of Constantine IV and his reluctance to venture further back beyond Constans' assassination in 669. So he was not a true historian. He was not drawn deeper and deeper into the past, in order to understand each successive chronological tranche. He did not delve into odd corners for evidence about the remoter past. He did not systematically cross-examine his oldest contemporaries about what they could recall of the past or what they had heard from a previous generation. His history was more of a memoir, fleshed out probably with some reminiscences from others, giving a picture of the past as he and his contemporaries remembered it, a past over which loomed the grim, destructive figure of Justinian II.

An identification proposed in the past should be entertained seriously.[59] The *Suda*, an antiquarian encyclopedia commissioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the tenth century, mentions a certain Trajan, with the rank of patrician, who was a contemporary of Justinian II and to whom a 'most remarkable short chronicle' is attributed. The anonymous historian did, indeed, live in the time of Justinian II—hence his portrayal as the evil figure, responsible for so much harm—and was almost certainly highly placed. The title patrician held by Trajan would put him near the apex of government, and would provide him with inside political knowledge. The Patrician Trajan may be identified provisionally as the author of the *History to 720*.[60]

8. CONCLUSION

The *Chronographia* of Theophanes has to be handled with care. It is a work of variable quality. It is an assemblage of materials taken from older, written sources. The value of any specific statement, the historical accuracy of a given

[59] Notwithstanding the cautionary remarks of Mango, *Nikephoros*, 16–17.

[60] Contra Afigenov, 'The Source of Theophanes' *Chronography* and Nikephoros' *Breviarium*', who attributes the lost history to a close associate of Leo III, if not to Leo himself, and limits its scope to 685–717.

passage, the general picture presented of a period can only be gauged if full account is taken of the source from which the statement, passage, or picture derives. There is a world of difference between the series of short notices on the reign of Phocas and those longer passages on the fraught politics of the turbulent twenty years preceding the accession of Leo III in 717. The Patrician Trajan who was probably calling on vivid memories of the recent past was a greater authority, with inside knowledge, and a better writer than the first continuator of John of Antioch a century earlier. Both had axes to grind, Trajan being out to blacken the memory of a tyrant, the first continuator to transfer as much as possible of the blame for the disasters of the second decade of the seventh century from Heraclius to Phocas. But Trajan provides so much more information that it is often possible to reach below the surface of his text (as over the renewal of war in 692) and to reconstruct a past at variance with his overt interpretation.

The coverage of foreign affairs is equally variable. In the case of Theophilus of Edessa, the quality of the material taken from his text improves from the third quarter of the seventh century as one approaches the time of writing. His account of Arab offensive operations and of Roman responses, certainly from the opening of Mu'awiya's naval offensive in 649, is more reliable than his account of Persian–Roman warfare earlier in the seventh century. The *History to 720*, which may now be attributed with reasonable confidence to the Patrician Trajan, likewise improves as it approaches 720. Trajan's imagined scenario of the 670s should be dismissed as phantasm but he goes on to provide an invaluable supplement to the material in Theophilus on the foreign policy of the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik and his immediate successors. But ranking well above the other sources is that innovative, hybrid work of contemporary history commissioned by Heraclius from George of Pisidia. The vestiges of that text transmitted by Theophanes should be highly prized both for the quality of the information purveyed, based as it is on contemporary documents, and for the insight into the mood of the times and official thinking provided by the poetry.

Theophanes himself is to be respected as a scholar who saw his role as that of transmitting historical material about the Roman past, from the accession of Diocletian in 284, to his own and future generations, with little editorial interference by himself (unless questions of right belief were involved). Unlike Nicephorus, he refrained from rewriting what he read and took from other texts. Doubtless he too could have paraphrased and given antecedent materials a classicizing veneer, but he chose to convey whatever material he selected for inclusion in its original form (with some abridgement but without the introduction of antiquarian or anachronistic terminology). His historical compendium thus became a repository of material quarried from texts

written much closer to the periods covered and all the more valuable for that reason. He could, of course, be misled by older sources. He could not be expected to discount the deliberate Roman disinformation which had made its way into Theophilus' work, nor to free himself from the Patrician Trajan's ferocious critique of Justinian II. He was also left with a serious problem whenever a source did not label an event with a precise date, since his annalistic format demanded that a precise date be attached in order to place an event in a particular year-entry. His answer was to spread such unlabelled events in such a way as to fill otherwise blank years. With this single caveat, Theophanes' *Chronographia* should be treasured as a rich source of often unique material on the history of the seventh and early eighth centuries. Without the work of this becomingly modest scholar, modern historians would be quite at sea.

The following table summarizes Theophanes' principal contributions to knowledge of Middle Eastern history in the seventh and early eighth centuries. The dates have been corrected to take account of the backward slippage discernible from 610 to the first regnal year of Justinian II (685–6), as also of the removal of the Avar surprise attack from 623. Thus the start of Heraclius' Persian campaigns is placed where it should be, in 624 rather than 622. Since Theophanes tends to reproduce more of the detailed information (including dates) provided by the Patrician Trajan than does Nicephorus, there is a fair amount of duplication with the list of episodes given at the end of Chapter 8. These doublet items are printed in italics.[61]

624: Heraclius' invasion of Atropatene, flight of Khusro II from Ganzak, destruction of fire-temple at Thebarmais (306. 19–308. 12)

autumn 624: withdrawal north to Caucasian Albania (308. 12–25)

625: march south, victories over pursuing Persian armies (308. 27–310. 19)

autumn 625: withdrawal north towards Caucasus, departure of Laz and Abasgian contingents, march south-west to region of Lake Van (310. 19–312. 8)

spring 626: Heraclius' withdrawal and Persian pursuit, through northern Syria and Cilicia (312. 19–314. 26)

16 October–1 December 627: Heraclius' march south across the Zagros range to the Great Zab river (317. 26–318. 2)

Saturday 12 December 627: victory over scratch Persian force commanded by Rahzadh near Nineveh, followed by victorious advance south (318. 2–321. 12, 321. 21–322. 21)

23 December 627: flight of Khusro from palace at Dastagerd to Ctesiphon (321. 13–21, 322. 21–323. 22)

[61] Full citations are given, for ease of reference.

10 January 628: arrival of Roman army at Nahrawan canal (324. 16–325. 6)
February–March 628: devastation of Shahrazur region (325.6–8)[62]
628: Heraclius informed of plot against Khusro (325. 8–326. 20)
628: deposition and execution of Khusro, opening of peace negotiations (326. 20–327. 16)
23 July 636 (?):[63] rebellion of army commanded by Baanes in Syria, Arab victory over army commanded by the *sacellarius* Theodore (337. 23–338. 12)
663/4: successful Arab expedition to Sicily, resettlement of prisoners at Damascus (348. 13–14)
664/5: Arab invasion, resettlement of captured Slavs in region of Apamea (348. 16–20)
666/7: Arab raid on Hexapolis (Cappadocia) (348. 26–7)
668/9:[64] proclamation of Mžež as emperor, expedition of Constantine IV to Sicily, and re-establishment of order in the west (352. 1–9)
669/70: Arab attack on north Africa
672–3: Arab naval forces winter at Smyrna, in Lycia, and in Cilicia (353. 14–16)
673/4: defeat of Arab expeditionary force by three Byzantine generals, destruction of Arab fleet by Greek Fire (354. 11–17)
674–5: two Arab naval commanders winter on Crete (354. 20–1)
677/8: insertion of Mardaites into Lebanon, *peace negotiated by Muʿawiya* (355. 6–356. 2)
679/80: *failure of Roman expedition against Bulgars, settlement of Bulgars south of Danube, sixth ecumenical council* (356. 18–19, 358. 11–360. 12)
682/3: outbreak of second Arab civil war (360. 22–361. 3)
685/6: *accession of Justinian II*, Roman military intervention in Transcaucasia, Arab response (occupation of Circesium and Antioch), peace agreement between Justinian II and ʿAbd al-Malik (tribute and condominium over Cyprus, Armenia, and Iberia conceded in return for withdrawal of Mardaites) 361. 15–16, 363. 6–20, 26–32)
686/7: evacuation of Mardaites (364. 4–5)
687/8: *declaration of war against Bulgars, expedition of Justinian II to Thessalonica, resettlement of Slavs in Opsikion (Bithynia)* (364. 5–18)
690/1: breakdown in Roman–Arab relations over resettlement plan for Cypriots and new coinage used for annual tribute (365. 8–21)

[62] An extra month has slipped into Theophanes' dating: since Khusro's deposition is securely dated to 24 February 628 (*Chron. Pasch.*, 728. 12–23) and since Heraclius turned back from the Nahrawan canal on or soon after 10 January, the devastation of Shahrazur should be placed in January–February.
[63] Ch. 7, 213 above for doubts about this date.
[64] A long sequence of events, reaching into 672, has been compressed into this notice (see Ch. 16, 491–2 below).

691/2: *expedition of Justinian II to Abasgia, decisive defeat at Sebastopolis after desertion by recently enlisted Slav contingent* (365. 30–366. 20)
692/3: submission of Armenia and Khurasan to Arabs (366. 25–7)
693/4: *tyrannical rule of Justinian II* (367. 12–368. 11)
695: *coup of Leontius, mutilation and exile of Justinian II* (368. 15–369. 30)
696/7: submission of Lazica to Arabs (370. 3–4)
697: *Arab conquest of north Africa* (370. 6–8)
698: *temporary recovery of Carthage, mutiny of Roman fleet, coup of Apsimar (renamed Tiberius)* (370. 8–371. 13)
699/700: successful Roman expedition to Samosata (northern Syria) (371. 27–30)
700/1: vain Arab siege of Tarantum, fortification and garrisoning of Mopsuestia (Cilicia) (372. 2–4)
701/2: Arab conquest of south-west Armenia (Armenia IV) (372. 6–7)
702/3: Armenian rebellion with Roman backing crushed by Arabs (372. 13–18)
703: victory of Roman defenders over Arab expeditionary force in Cilicia (372. 18–26)
705: *counter-coup of Justinian II, tyrannical second reign* (372. 26–374. 8, 374. 16–375. 21)
707/8: *Bulgar victory over Justinian II near Anchialus* (376. 13–29)
708/9: *fall of Tyana to Arabs after defeat of relieving force* (376. 31–377. 14)
710/11: surrender of many Cilician forts to Arab expeditionary force, submission of Camacha and surrounding country (377. 20–2)
711: *punitive naval expeditions sent by Justinian II against Cherson, coup of Philippicus* (377. 22–381. 20)
711/12: Armenians on Roman territory resettled in Melitene and Armenia IV, Amaseia and other forts captured by Arabs, *Bulgar raid up to Constantinople*, Mistheia and other forts captured by Arabs (382. 6–9, 22–30)
712/13: Arab raid and capture of Antioch in Pisidia, *coup of Artemius (renamed Anastasius)* (383. 2–21)
713/14: *defensive preparations put in train by Anastasius* (383. 29–384. 14)
714/15: *rebellion and seizure of power by Theodosius* (385. 5–386. 13)
715/16: Arab advance into Asia Minor, prevarication by Leo, general of the Anatolic theme army, *fall of Pergamum* (386. 25–390. 14, 390. 26–391. 2)
717: *accession of Leo III* (390. 14–26, 391. 5–6)
717–18: *Arab siege of Constantinople* (395. 13–398. 4)
718: *abortive rebellion of Sergius Strategos of Sicily* (398. 7–399. 4)
15 August 718: *withdrawal of Arab forces from Constantinople, storm damage on return voyage* (399. 5–19)
718/19: *birth of Constantine, abortive counter-coup of Anastasius* (399. 28–401. 3)
Easter 720 (31 March): *coronation of Constantine as co-emperor* (401. 9–12)

The length of this list makes plain the importance of Theophanes' digest of earlier information about seventh- and early eighth-century history. Without Theophanes, we would be hard put to make sense of the more fragmentary material provided by other non-Muslim sources, as also to vet the voluminous Muslim traditions about the western wars of the early caliphate.

10

Later Historians at Work in Egypt, Iraq, and Iran

The further removed a historian in time and space from the events of the seventh century, the less likely was he to pick up material of value about warfare and diplomacy, secular and ecclesiastical politics, or ideas and individual protagonists in that era of crisis. There is little point in scouring the texts of middle and late Byzantine chronicles for odd items of additional information of unknown provenance and uncertain value. For they were largely parasitic on earlier texts (principally Malalas and Theophanes), and relatively few new items can be picked up. There are some to be found—for example in the pages of George Cedrenus and John Zonaras, two educated men of high status who pieced together universal chronicles in the twelfth century—but they are meagre scraps, which add little to knowledge. The same is true of works written later by Palaeologan scholars. Equally unforthcoming is a much earlier universal chronicle, written in the middle of the ninth century, because the author, George the Monk, was less interested in recording the past than sermonizing about it and was far from temperate in what he said.[1]

There is rather more to be gained from close examination of later eastern sources. The *History to 682* has been disinterred from a late tenth-century universal history of Caucasian Albania. The lost work of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, the fullest and most faithful transmitter of Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle, was recycled at length in works dating from the end of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The most recent of all the texts scrutinized in previous chapters was the early seventeenth-century Ethiopic translation of the Arabic translation of the chronicle of John of Nikiu. So a survey of non-Islamic sources of seventh-century history should not be brought to an end without a final search for later materials deriving from relatively scantily

[1] Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, i. 347–9, 393–4, 416–19, 476–80.

covered regions of the Middle East, namely Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. That is the task undertaken in this chapter.

Four texts may be picked out, three written in Arabic, one (the last) in Persian. The earliest is embedded in what amounts to an official history of the Coptic (Monophysite) church, the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*. It brings together the lives of sixteen holders of the see, from the middle of the fifth to the early eighth century, with extensive coverage of secular affairs. It is a rich source of information, much of it unique to the text. Next, in chronological order of composition, comes the *Seert Chronicle*, written probably in the early tenth century, which is, alas, incomplete. It is an ecclesiastical history of the Persian (dyophysite or Nestorian) church, which acts as a useful complement to the *Khuzistan Chronicle* and its continuation. It provides much detailed information about leading churchmen—catholicoi, bishops, and abbots—and views their lives against a backdrop of secular events. Then we have a second Egyptian text, which provides a few pieces of additional evidence about Egypt and the wider Middle East—the *Annals* of Eutychius, Melkite (Chalcedonian) patriarch of Alexandria (935–40), a world history comprising a variegated assemblage of excerpted materials.

Finally, the discussion turns to the principal Persian source for seventh-century history, the *Khwadaynamag*, 'Book of Lords'. This is one of many Sasanian works to have been lost in its original, Pahlavi form, but it has made an important contribution to several extant historical texts, among them the two seventh-century Armenian histories and Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle. Procopius' continuator Agathias made extensive use of it via a translation, and so too did Muslim historians, notably the doyen of universal annalists, al-Tabari (d. 923).[2] Another important later tributary text is the *Annals* of Eutychius. No study of seventh-century historical writing would be complete without proper critical scrutiny of the Persian tradition in its own right. So we will follow it down to the end of the first millennium, where it is gathered in a massive epic poem, the *Shahname*, written by Firdawsi, one of the great poets of the middle ages, on a commission from the Ghaznavid sultan.[3]

[2] Averil Cameron, 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *DOP* 23–4 (1969–70), 67–184; Howard-Johnston, 'Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity'.

[3] D. Khaleghi-Motlagh, 'Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qasem', *EIr* ix. 514–23.

1. *HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS OF ALEXANDRIA*[4]

The *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* was put together and edited at the end of the eleventh century by Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrij, a well-connected Alexandrian layman, who had held high office in the city administration and had used his influence to good effect on behalf of the Coptic church before being ordained deacon. It seems to have been his idea to produce a connected history of the church in the form of a set of patriarchal biographies and he evidently gained official blessing. For when he announced his intention on a visit to the monastery of St Macarius in Wadi Habib, he did so in the presence of the patriarch and three bishops. Thereupon he set to work, with a principal collaborator, Abu Habib ad-Damanhuri, a deacon from St Macarius. Their first task was to track down useful sources of material, concentrating on monasteries with good libraries. It took them less than four months (February/March–end May 1088) to assemble the raw materials for the project in the course of visits to three monasteries (the Blessed Virgin at Nahya, St Theodore in the Fayyum, and St Macarius). The main phase of translation from Coptic to Arabic and of editorial work then followed in Alexandria. It took at least six years. A copy of the finished text, brought up to date with lives of two recent patriarchs written by Mawhub himself, was presumably lodged with the patriarchate. It was subsequently topped up with later lives by three continuators (one of them a patriarch himself) in the course of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[5]

Foremost among Mawhub's sources were two long texts, a history of the early church in Egypt dating from the late fifth or early sixth century, which has survived independently but only in fragments, and a set of patriarchal lives written at St Macarius in the early eighth century. The first of these brought the story down to the death of Timothy the Cat in 477, when the conflict between the sees of Alexandria and Constantinople over the Council of Chalcedon was at its height. Mawhub decided to drop its concluding section, on Dioscorus and Timothy, probably because of its length, substituting two brief notices and giving a reference to a full life of Dioscorus to be found in a St Macarius manuscript.[6] The two notices act as a link to the lives of sixteen successive patriarchs, from Peter Mongus (477–90) to Simon

[4] B. Evetts (ed. and trans.), *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, PO* I. 2 and 4, V. 1 (Paris, 1907–10).

[5] J. den Heijer, *Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarriğ et l'historiographie copto-arabe*, CSCO 513, Subsidia 83 (Louvain, 1989), 1–13, 86–93, 96–116.

[6] *Hist. Patr.*, I. 101–214, 381–445; den Heijer, *Mawhub*, 3–7, 119–41.

(691–700), written by George, a monk at St Macarius and archdeacon, who belonged to the inner circle of Simon's predecessor but one, John III (679–88).[7] He allows himself one fleeting appearance in his text, when he tells us that he was John's spiritual son and that he accompanied him on his last journey back to Alexandria, on a boat provided by the Emir ʿAbd al-Aziz when he was taken ill on a visit to Fustat.[8] His connections with the patriarchate must have remained good through the 690s, to judge by the sensitivity of some of the information he obtained. It is he who supplies details about the scandal which led to the sacking of John of Nikiu as inspector general of monasteries.[9] He also tells the inside story of the contested election of Simon, and knows of two subsequent episodes fraught with danger, one for Simon personally, the other for the church as a whole.[10]

It was, one suspects, no accident that George picked up the story of the patriarchate from the point where Mawhub's first source, the ecclesiastical history, left off, at the death of Timothy the Cat. His work was probably intended to be its continuation, taking the story of the relations of the Coptic (Monophysite) church and the imperial authorities down into the period of open antagonism inaugurated by Justinian in the 530s. His main theme was that of the struggle of the orthodox (i.e. the Monophysites) to survive in the face of government hostility (which culminated in a decade of active and effective persecution in the 630s) and of rivalry from theological splinter groups within Egypt itself. It is followed, after the forced departure of the Roman authorities in 643, by an account of the ups and downs of the church under Muslim rule, the emphasis being very much on the growing pressure applied after ʿAbd al-Malik had secured his position at the end of second *fitna* in 692. After completing the full set of sixteen lives, during the early years of the patriarchate of Simon's successor, Alexander II (703/4–728), George seems to have kept it up to date with notices about contemporary events until the death of the Caliph al-Walid, and the replacement of his appointee, Abu Qurra, by a new, hardline emir of Egypt, Usama, whose arrival is carefully dated to the 13th indiction and the year 431 of the era of Diocletian (714–15).[11] George must have lived on a little, since he alludes to the repressive measures introduced by Usama, but not much longer, since

[7] *Hist. Patr.*, I. 445–518, V. 1–48; den Heijer, *Mawhub*, 7–8, 142–5.

[8] *Hist. Patr.*, V. 20.

[9] Ibid. 32–4.

[10] Ibid. 27–9 (election), 36–42 and 43–5 (perilous moments). In the first case, Simon was accused of having unsanctioned dealings with a foreign power; in the second, knowledge of the whereabouts of the patriarchal treasures was nearly lost when Simon inadvertently alienated the *oikonomos*, the official in charge, and the latter nearly died.

[11] Ibid. 67.

he notes that Anastasius (713–15) was still on the throne, at the end of a short aside on the turbulent politics of Byzantium in the early eighth century.[12]

Most of the lives, whether edited or composed by George, are tinged with hagiography and retail the official line of the church. Allowance can be made for inherent bias, but it does not follow that what is left is trustworthy. Deliberate misinformation at the time or muddle in the minds of later receivers and transmitters of information may have introduced serious distortions. It is important then to try to corroborate as much as possible of the interesting matter in George's contribution to the *History of the Patriarchs*, by testing passages where there is overlap against sources of demonstrable worth. Such passages are to be found in occasional asides on extra-Egyptian history or notices about episodes in which the outer world impinged on the internal affairs of Egypt and the fortunes of the Coptic church. The initial test results are ambiguous. A limited amount of material about the dramatic events of the first half of the early seventh century is included, but often in somewhat mangled form. There is then a large gap, extending over most of Constans II's reign, with coverage picking up from the late 670s. While the reporting of ecclesiastical affairs and of government policy towards the church in Egypt fills out markedly as George approaches the time of writing, he is plainly less at home with the history of the wider world and still allows muddle to obtrude.

A short summary of Persian military successes elsewhere in the Middle East prefaces a notice about the conquest of Egypt. Nothing is reported about individual military operations. The emphasis is on the *shahanshah* Khusro's insatiable appetite for tax revenue and on Persian atrocities: massacres of monks, both those who stayed put in a suburb of Alexandria densely packed with monasteries and those living in the vicinity of Nikiu; also the cold-blooded execution of 80,000 men of fighting age outside Alexandria. It is plain that Roman propaganda, on the lines of that which has survived in Strategius' text, has had a massive impact on the material picked up and recycled by George. There are incidental references, which may well be accurate, to the presence of Shahen in the vicinity of Alexandria, presumably as one of two senior commanders in charge of the invasion forces, and to the construction of a new building in Alexandria to house the Persian military administration (as at Caesarea in Palestine). We are told nothing else about the occupation save that it lasted six years into the patriarchate of Benjamin I (623–62), ending when Heraclius marched against the Persians,

[12] Ibid. 57.

slew Khusro, and left his city a wilderness (a far from accurate account of the last phase of the war). George, or his source, was much more concerned with Heraclius' dispatch of Cyrus to take charge of the church and civil administration in Egypt, which prompted the Coptic patriarch Benjamin I to go into hiding and to urge all his bishops to do likewise.[13]

Information about the secular context of church history becomes somewhat more plentiful with the Arab conquest. Initial operations against Oxyrhyncus and the Fayyum have been omitted but the strategy of avoiding the Delta and marching across the desert is understood. The main objectives of both campaigns are identified correctly as Babylon and Alexandria. The chronology, calibrated according to the era of Diocletian or the Persecution of the Martyrs (beginning at Diocletian's accession in 284), tallies in the main with that given by John of Nikiu and ends with 'Amr b. al-'As' entry into Alexandria which is placed, as it should be, in 360 (September 643–August 644).[14] The salient features of a short and violent episode in the history of Egypt, when it was torn from Roman control and a new era was inaugurated, were impressed firmly on the collective memory several generations later. But there is confusion about some details: events before the surrender of Babylon are left vague, it being simply noted that three engagements were fought; the initial peaceful takeover of Alexandria, after the evacuation of the Roman authorities in September 643, has been conflated with the storming of the city after it was reoccupied by Roman forces in 646–7; the Patriarch Cyrus, effective ruler of Egypt in the last years of Roman rule, is reported, wrongly, to have committed suicide after Alexandria fell.[15] Two items of precise information, picked up by George, do, however, inspire confidence: his assertion that Heraclius bought an armistice, which secured Egypt from attack for three years before 641, at the cost of a large annual tribute, is corroborated by the west Syrian historical tradition originating with Theophilus of Edessa and by the *Short History* of Nicephorus;[16] there is also nothing implausible in an incidental reference (in a hagiographical story about the absolute refusal of St Mark's skull to leave Alexandria) to use of a naval supply column when 'Amr marched west against the Pentapolis, soon after his entry into Alexandria.[17]

[13] *Hist. Patr.*, I. 484–7, 489–90.

[14] The one precise date given (6 June 641) seems to have been attached wrongly to the initial invasion rather than a key episode of the first campaign.

[15] Ibid. 493–5.

[16] Ibid. 493. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 574–90, citing Nic. (c. 23. 6–21), Agapius (471–2), Theoph. (338. 12–24), Mich. Syr. (II. 425) and *Chron. 1234*, 158–9.

[17] *Hist. Patr.*, I. 498–500.

Thirteen years after he went in to hiding, the Coptic patriarch, Benjamin I, is invited to come out and take charge of the church by ʿAmr.[18] From this point, about halfway through his patriarchate (623–62), the life of Benjamin tails off. Nothing is said about the new Arab regime, apart from a note about the construction by ʿAmr's successor as emir, ʿAbdallah, of a *diwan* at Misr (Fustat, Old Cairo) which was to be the tax-centre for Egypt.[19] Of Benjamin, all we hear is that his prayers helped bring a famine to an end, that he chose Agathon, his chief administrative assistant, as his successor, and that he died after two years of illness at the end of a thirty-nine-year tenure.[20] Whatever George's source, it was not a biography of Benjamin and it ended with the Arab conquest of Egypt. He fleshed it out with a detailed account of Benjamin's ceremonial reconsecration of the monastery of St Macarius in Wadi Habib, which probably took place soon after the Arab conquest halted Chalcedonian persecution of the Coptic church. The account was a free-standing text, which has survived independently in two versions (Coptic and bilingual Coptic–Arabic), written by Agathon, who was present and was able to question Benjamin afterwards.[21]

George, like Nicephorus some two generations later in Constantinople, evidently could not find a decent source for most of the reign of Constans II (641–69), when the war between the long-established Christian power and the upstart Muslim *umma* was reaching a climax, even though Egypt was both a prime Roman target and an important Arab base. Nothing is said about first *fitna* or the temporary apostasy of Muslim troops in Egypt. What news reached him was garbled in transit. He knows that Sicily was raided (in 664 according to Theophanes, 348. 13–14) because some of the prisoners were later put on sale at Alexandria. He knows that there was heavy fighting around that time and implies that the many islands of which the emperor made use were of considerable strategic value.[22] It is obviously Constans II whom he has in mind, but he does not know his name. There are two references to his assassination, once in the guise of Tiberius (who reigned 698–705), the second time simply as an anonymous Augustus who, some time after exiling Maximus Confessor for heresy, goes off to Sicily and is killed by one of two attendants.[23] There is an equally vague allusion to a decisive shift in power following the great naval victory won by Constantine IV's forces in Lycia in 674: Tiberius' successor, the anonymous Augustus who doubles as

[18] Ibid. 495–7.
[19] Ibid. 501.
[20] Ibid. 501–3.
[21] Ibid. 503–18. Cf. den Heijer, *Mawhub*, 7–8.
[22] *Hist. Patr.*, V. 4–5.
[23] Ibid. 10–11.

Constantine as well as his father, is able to move on to the offensive against the coasts controlled by the Arabs, as well as to recover many islands; his son and successor, correctly identified as Justinian, is rightly portrayed as instilling fear into the Arabs and extracting a large tribute from them in return for a ten-year truce.[24] A later aside on the turbulent politics of Constantinople (likened to a children's game) at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century lists successive coup leaders in the right order—Leo (a mistake for Leontius—695), Apsimar (698), Philippicus (711), Anastasius (713).[25]

With little or no comparative material to hand, George was at the mercy of his sources. It was impossible for him to counter the propaganda infused into the account of the Persian invasion in 619 which reached him nearly a hundred years later. Equally he could not correct errors of fact in the summary of the Arab conquest which he was recycling, let alone plug the gaping hole in coverage which he found afterwards. There are signs, though, that the information which he gathered about secular events outside Egypt was ultimately founded in reality. Whether it is the strategy followed by ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs or the elliptical reference to the later battle for control of the Mediterranean, he has grasped the general pattern of events. Where it can be checked, as over ʿAmr's progress or, in the recent past, the correlation of Roman and caliphal reigns, his chronology is sound. Where it is free-standing, as it is for individual tenures of the patriarchal throne, it is internally consistent. If the election of Benjamin, which is dated six years before the evacuation of Persian forces from Egypt, is placed in 623, and if to his thirty-nine years in post those of his three successors to Isaac are added (17, 9, and 2¾), the total comes to 67 years, 9 months, and brings us down to 691.[26] This tallies with what George reports about Isaac's successor Simon I: he died on 18 July 700 after nine and a half years in post, from which it follows that he was appointed early in 691.[27]

Can it be assumed that George was rather better informed about the history of the Coptic church than the wider world? His chronological record is encouraging. The only error, almost certainly scribal, concerns the death of Anastasius, Andronicus' predecessor (placed in 330 rather than 333 (616–17)).[28] He can also be shown to be well informed on matters of substance. He reports, correctly, that Anastasius was responsible for bringing about a reconciliation with the Jacobite patriarchate of Antioch, on the election of Athanasius there. As is confirmed by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre

[24] *Hist. Patr.*, V. 11, 13.
[25] Ibid. 57.
[26] Ibid. 10 (Agathon, 17 years), 21 (John III, 9 years), 26 (Isaac, 2¾ years).
[27] Ibid. 46.
[28] Ibid. I. 483.

who gives the date as 616 and notes that Nicetas, governor of Egypt, presided over the talks, a delegation headed by the new patriarch of Antioch sailed to Alexandria for formal negotiations between the two churches. The negotiations are passed over, but the outcome of the talks, re-establishment of communion, is reported by George, as is the joint celebration of the liturgy attended by both patriarchs which made it manifest.[29] Extraneous information about the high social status of two early seventh-century patriarchs (Andronicus and Benjamin I) also inspires some confidence.[30] Finally, there is corroboration for the energetic campaign by Cyrus, the new non-Monophysite patriarch appointed by Heraclius in 629, to impose a new doctrinal formula on the Monophysite majority as well as the Chalcedonian minority in Egypt. The remarkable success achieved, which assuredly owed much to the imperial authority's enhanced status in the wake of the divinely aided defeat of the Persians, is not concealed.[31]

The quality as well as quantity of information picked up by George improves markedly towards the end of the period he covers. He was, as has been seen, in a privileged position, which gave him access to confidential matters. The problems posed by his text, once he reaches his lifetime, are those of inherent bias. The grievances of the day, strongly felt by members of the church, find forceful expression in his writing. The impression given, of a church driven too hard, stripped of almost all its resources, may be misleading. It is plain from the emotional tone that he is exaggerating the effects of the policies adopted by successive emirs of Egypt towards the church, but the policies themselves may well be fairly represented. If so, George can add significantly to the stock of knowledge built up in the course of examining contemporary seventh-century sources and later west Syrian and Byzantine historical texts.

There was, it is generally agreed, a perceptible change in the attitude of Islam to the two antecedent monotheist faiths some fifty years after the death of the Prophet, a shift from a generally inclusive to an increasingly exclusive stance. Competition for support within the ramified *umma* during second *fitna* led both sides to emphasize their Muslim credentials, and, in doing so, to mark off the Muslim community from the Christians and Jews who had been subjected to its rule. This was much more than a war of words between ʿAbd al-Malik, the Umayyad claimant to caliphal authority, and his chief rival, Ibn al-Zubayr. The Muslim slogans, which were inscribed on the interior of the Dome of the Rock at the end of the civil war and which were publicly circulated on a new, purely epigraphic coinage, marked the start of a

[29] Ibid. 480–3. [30] Ibid. 484, 487. [31] Ibid. 490–2.

conscious drive to spread Islam. The Muslim authorities might have been complaisant for the first generation or two of their rule over the conquered peoples, until their power was firmly rooted, but it was plainly their duty to encourage conversion to the one true faith which they were bringing to the attention of the whole of mankind. It was only to be expected that they would resort to coercion as soon as they felt it was safe to do so.[32]

George provides probably the best account of the first phase of this newer, harder line. He shows how 'Abd al-Aziz, the emir appointed by Marwan (probably when he had secured control over Syria in 682), and the three following emirs gradually ratcheted up the pressure on the Coptic church. 'Abd al-Aziz first demanded a huge sum of money from the patriarch (settling eventually for 10,000 dinars); next he ordered the destruction of crosses and the placing of anti-Christian declarations of Muslim faith over church doorways in Fustat and throughout the Delta; a few years later, in 691 probably, as second *fitna* was drawing to a close, he summoned church leaders of all denominations to Alexandria and detained them there for three years, going so far as to prohibit the celebration of the Eucharist when news came of Justinian II's overthrow in 695.[33] Two high-ranking Christian secretaries whom Marwan had sent out with 'Abd al-Aziz to manage the finances of Egypt seem to have acted as loyal and efficient agents of the Muslim emir. One of them, an Edessan, Athanasius, was called to account by the caliph and forced to disgorge a large sum at the end of his term of office. Even so he could be lauded by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre for the wealth which he brought home.[34]

Ten years or so later, the pressure was raised further, to a level close to outright persecution. Al-Arbagh, 'Abd al-Aziz's son, under the guise of overseeing the collection of taxes throughout Egypt, began to crack down on monasticism, with the aid of a trusted Christian collaborator. Doubtless there is some exaggeration in what George writes: the wholesale mutilation of monks which he reports may have been a punishment inflicted on those who tried to evade the poll-tax, and there may not have been as many forced conversions as he makes out; but there is little reason to doubt that al-Arbagh imposed the poll-tax on monks for the first time or that he issued a decree prohibiting the tonsuring of new monks in future or that he extracted

[32] R. S. Humphreys, *Mu'awiya ibn Ali Sufyan: From Arabia to Empire* (Oxford, 2006), 102–6, 125–9; W. L. Treadwell, 'The "Orans" Drachms of Bishr ibn Marwan and the Figural Coinage of the Early Marwanids', in Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii. 223–69; F. M. Donner, 'From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Muslim Community', *Al-Abhath*, 50–1 (2002–3), 9–53; C. F. Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford, 2005).

[33] *Hist. Patr.*, V. 13–16, 25, 34–5, 42.

[34] Ibid. 12, 48–9, 54. Cf. Mich. Syr., II. 475–7, *Chron. 1234*, 202–4.

a surcharge of 2,000 dinars from each episcopal see.[35] There was no easing of the pressure when first al-Arbagh then ʿAbd al-Aziz died suddenly in 703. The new emir, ʿAbd al-Malik's son ʿAbdallah, announced, to an assembly of bishops, notables, and monks, that their status was no different from that of the Roman enemies of Islam and that their killing was licensed by God. He increased the poll-tax by two-thirds and took measures to tighten the government's fiscal grip.[36] Both his successors as emirs, Abu Qurra (well known from contemporary papyri) and Usama, maintained the pressure. More cash was demanded with menaces from the patriarchate; large sums were raised through confiscation of the estates of deceased office-holders; Abu Qurra's local Christian adviser could do no more that divert some of the fiscal burden from Copts to members of other denominations. The climax came with the arrival of Usama, who imposed travel restrictions, had all monks branded, and set about stripping churches of their columns and wooden fittings. At which point George's reporting of current events breaks off.[37]

The second half of George's contribution to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* does thus catch the general features of Egyptian history in the seventh and early eighth centuries and places it in a recognizable context. Some of the detail can be faulted, some can be corroborated (notably the chronology and the administrative career of the Edessan notable Athanasius in Egypt), and some of the novel material looks plausible and may be seriously entertained. But all in all relatively little can be added to the sum of knowledge extracted from the sources examined in previous chapters, save for material transmitted about the internal affairs of the Coptic church, its struggle (ultimately successful) for dominance within Egypt, and (much the most important new strand of information) its increasingly difficult relations with the Muslim authorities from the 680s. Some of the best evidence for a phase of intolerance on the part of the Muslim authorities, once they were confident of their position, comes from Egypt. It was a policy which had to be abandoned eventually, but not before provoking widespread disorder in town and country.[38] The dissemination of Islam was best left to the words of God, as directly transmitted to the Prophet and passed on by the individual faithful.

[35] *Hist. Patr.*, V. 50–2.

[36] Ibid. 54–6.

[37] Ibid. 57–64, 68–71.

[38] H. Kennedy, 'Egypt as a Province of the Islamic Caliphate, 641–868', in C. F. Petry (ed.), *Cambridge History of Egypt*, i: *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (Cambridge, 1998), 62–85.

2. CHRONICLE OF SEERT[39]

At the end of the nineteenth century Addai Scher, a senior Chaldaean churchman, discovered a manuscript containing a full and variegated history of his church in late antiquity and the early middle ages, written in Arabic. The script was, he remarked, large and clear, but marred by mistakes of grammar and orthography. The manuscript was incomplete and was divided between two libraries—that of the Chaldaean patriarchate at Mosul and the episcopal library at Seert (on the edge of the upper Tigris basin, not far from the southern outlet of the Bitlis pass). Folios were missing at the beginning and at the end. There was also a lacuna between the first part at Mosul, covering the period from around AD 250 to 423, and the second at Seert, picking up the story from 483 and halting abruptly around 650. The first part had been rebound and disarranged in the process, so that folios dealing with events after 364 preceded those dealing with the previous century or so.[40]

The preserved part of the text thus covers the whole of late antiquity, from the reign of Valerian (253–60) to the beginning of the catholicosate of Isho'yahb III (649–59), except for the middle decades of the fifth century. To judge by the scale of coverage, the chronicle's centre of gravity lay in the second half of the sixth and the first half of the seventh century. Almost certainly it began with the gospel story, since that was the ultimate point of origin of the Chaldaean (i.e. dyophysite or Nestorian) church. It cannot have been composed before the late Umayyad or early Abbasid period, when the Muslim authorities began to apply pressure on the Christian churches. For it is surely to this toughening of the Muslim stance that a leading abbot refers when, soon after the Muslim conquest, he predicts future calamities for the church.[41] Other apparently late references—to new foundations of the eighth and ninth centuries (Baghdad, Samarra, and Jazirat ibn 'Umar (modern Cizre)), to the elevation of Mosul to metropolitan status (823/9), and to al-Zahir (probably the Abbasid caliph of 1225–6) who is extolled like Kavad Shiroe (Khusro II's son) despite the shortness of his reign—could have been slipped in by copyists in the course of transmission.[42] This, however, is much

[39] A. Scher (ed. and trans.), *Histoire nestorienne (chronique de Séert), PO* IV. 3, V. 2, XIII. 4 (Paris, 1908–19).

[40] Scher, *PO* IV, 215–18; L. Sako, 'Les Sources de la chronique de Séert', *Parole de l'Orient*, 14 (1987), 155–66, at 155 n. 1.

[41] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 593. For the change of policy towards Christians, see works cited at n. 32 above and Ch. 16, section 5 below.

[42] J. M. Fiey, 'Išo'dnah et la *Chronique de Seert*', *Parole de l'Orient*, 6–7 (1975–6), 447–59, at 455.

less likely in the case of the purported text of an edict of toleration, with explanatory preamble, issued by Muhammad for the Christians of Najran (and everywhere else), which runs to many pages and was taken, we are told, from a document only discovered in AH 265 (878–9).[43] A substantial addition such as this should surely be credited to the chronicler, along with material integrated into early sections of the text which has been taken from comparatively late authors—Shadost, bishop of Tirhan (middle of eighth century), Hnanishnoʿ Bar Sarushweh (early ninth century), Catholicos Ishoʿbarnun (824–8), and Qusta ibn Luqa (d. *c.*912).[44] The *Chronicle of Seert*, as it is called, cannot therefore have been written before the very late ninth or early tenth century, nor after 1020 when Ishoʿyahb IV became catholicos (Ishoʿyahb III is described at the last of that name).

Several other sources, beside those just mentioned, are cited. Lengthy summaries of the lives of the two principal antagonists in the Nestorian church in the early seventh century, the Catholicos Sabrisho and Gregory of Kashkar, are credited respectively to a hagiographer (Peter, abbot of Beyt ʿAbé) and two church historians (Theodore Bar Koni and Elias, metropolitan of Merv).[45] The *Khwadaynamag* is cited in the heading of the first of several chapters which recycle late sixth- and seventh-century material from it. The chronicler presumably gained access to it through an Arabic translation or an intermediary text itself based on such a translation. From it he took a small number of secular notices, dealing with important episodes in the final phase of Sasanian history, namely the flight and restoration of Khusro II in 590–1, the estrangement of the Arabs after the poisoning of Nuʿman, Shahrvaraz's agreement with Heraclius, the final victorious Roman campaign, the political troubles following Khusro's execution, the Arab conquest of Mesopotamia, the flight and death of Yazdgerd III.[46]

But no indication is given as to the identity of the main source or sources of the ecclesiastical and monastic material which makes up the bulk of the text. It looks as if the chronicler was ready to cite authors or works from which he took supplementary material but regarded the core of the chronicle as his own handiwork. However, the character of the principal source or sources is readily discernible. The text as we have it combines a linear history of the Nestorian church, viewed from the perspective of successive catholicoi, and a large set of potted biographies of leading abbots and bishops, noted either for their writings or their foundations or both. It is fairly safe to postulate at least

[43] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 601–18.
[44] Sako, 'Sources', 159–61, 165.
[45] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 474–504, 507–15.
[46] Ibid. 443–4, 540–2, 551–4, 555–7, 579–81.

two principal sources—an ecclesiastical history of the type developed in late antiquity and a biographical dictionary of notable churchmen. Two such sources spring readily to mind, both written by Isho'dnah, metropolitan of Basra, probably in the middle of the ninth century: a set of biographies of founders of schools, monastic founders, and writers about monasticism, collected together in *The Book of Chastity*, which survives, and an ecclesiastical history, which has been lost but is cited by Elias of Nisibis (writing in the early eleventh century).[47] A comparison between the treatment of such individuals as feature in both *The Book of Chastity* and the *Chronicle of Seert* leaves no doubt about the dependence of the latter on the former. Similarly the lost ecclesiastical history can be shown to be a second source when material taken from it by Elias of Nisibis is compared with parallel passages in the chronicle.[48]

The *Chronicle of Seert* can perhaps best be described as a revised and combined edition of Isho'dnah's two historical works, fleshed out with material taken from several supplementary sources. This seems to be a reasonably sound conjecture. What remains uncertain is the scope of Isho'dnah's lost ecclesiastical history. The *Chronicle of Seert* incorporates material on the history of the rival Jacobite (Monophysite) church (noting the gains it made under Khusro II in the occupied Roman provinces as well as Mesopotamia)[49] and on political events in Constantinople. The Roman notices, which have been kept short, deal with several of the seventh-century episodes covered by Theophilus of Edessa—Phocas' *putsch*, Theodosius' flight, the siege and capture of Dara, faction troubles (garbled), the race for Constantinople between Heraclius and his cousin, and political troubles following the death of Heraclius.[50] This westward outreach is probably best explained by use of a west Syrian source. It is impossible, however, to say whether Isho'dnah extracted it from a west Syrian text and integrated it into his history of the Nestorian church of Mesopotamia, or whether the chronicler made direct use of a supplementary west Syrian source.

The *Chronicle of Seert* can thus be seen to have been pieced together out of several sources, themselves organized on different principles. The material

[47] J.-B. Chabot (ed. and trans.), *Le Livre de la chasteté, composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Baçra* (Rome, 1896); L.-J. Delaporte, *La Chronographie de Mar Élie bar-Šinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences hist. et philol. 181 (Paris, 1910).

[48] J.-M. Fiey, 'Ichô'dnah métropolite de Basra, et son œuvre', *L'Orient syrien*, 11 (1966), 431–50; P. Nautin, 'L'Auteur de la *Chronique de Séert*: Išo'dnah de Basra', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 186 (1974), 113–26; Fiey, 'Išo'dnah et la Chronique de Séert'.

[49] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 472–3, 542–5, 634. Cf. N. Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'orient*, CSCO 574, Subsidia 100 (Louvain, 1999), 374–84.

[50] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 517–20, 526–8, 628–9.

has not been heavily reworked, so as to form a smooth homogeneous literary product. The chronicler simply juxtaposes the material he has selected, in a series of discrete chapters of varied character. Where there is overlap in coverage between his sources, in extreme cases complete doublets of episodes, he may reproduce both versions.[51] The overall appearance of the text is that of a patchwork, in which biographical notices, often bunched together, are dispersed through the ecclesiastical narrative, itself occasionally filled out with information about the secular historical context. The chronicler has made an effort to marshal his material in rough chronological order, but is ready to reach back or forward in time if a potted biography he uses does so.

Later historians have every reason to be grateful for the editorial restraint observable in so many of the sources for seventh-century history. Texts which might have been opaque are found to be relatively transparent. Modern historians can discern, beyond texts like the *History of Khosrov*, the *History to 682*, and the *Chronicle of Seert*, the outlines of older contributory sources and can look directly into the content of those sources, thus reaching back well before the time of writing. If the sources of an extant text were put together in a similar way by similarly modest editors and the same is true of the sources of those sources . . . it becomes possible to tap genuinely primary sources (written within living memory of the events). This cannot, alas, be proved in the case of the *Chronicle of Seert*, but there is no evidence of significant editorial intervention in the course of transmission where notices can be checked against parallel material in other sources. For example, there is no sign of tampering with the official public version of the fraught story of Khusro II's accession, according to which he was carefully exculpated from the charge of parricide. The same is true of the period of civil strife following the death of Boran in 632, as also of the Arab conquest of Iraq.[52] The chronicle's version of the *Khwadaynamag* does not deviate on any point of significance from other, apparently faithful versions.

On the presumption (not unreasonable) that Isho'dnah and any intermediary editors of texts used by him were equally restrained, there is much of value to be extracted from the main body of the *Chronicle of Seert* (and the *Book of Chastity*). The historical accuracy of individual pieces of information cannot, of course, be assumed, but there is a prima facie case for accepting them. The only obvious exceptions are reports of early contacts at the highest level with Islam—the dispatch of presents and 1,000 drachms in cash to Muhammad by the Catholicos Isho'yahb, and his subsequent visits to

[51] Flight of Khusro II: XIII. 439–40 (eccles. hist.), 443–4 (*Khwadaynamag*), 465–6 (west Syrian?). Qadisiyya and the conquest of Iraq: 580 (*Khwadaynamag*), 627–8 (eccles. hist.).

[52] *Seert Chron.*, XIII. 443–4, 555–7, 579–81.

Medina, first to petition Abu Bakr on behalf of the Christians of Mesopotamia and later to receive an edict of toleration and protection from ʿUmar (XIII. 618–23). These reports served an ulterior purpose, strengthening the case for special treatment of Nestorian clergy two or more generations later. Undoubtedly there was some reworking and improvement of historical reality.

However, special interests were not normally involved. Where the substance and dating of notices can be checked, the chronicler's record is good. His brief notice about the extended political crisis in Constantinople following Heraclius' death (XIII. 628–9) is sound, save for an error about the date (given as year 992 rather than 952 of the Seleucid era), after a reign which is put at thirty years and five months (correct). There are other chronological errors, but they are venial, no more than scribal slips. Imperial accessions (XIII. 461, 517, 527) are placed in the right years (Maurice 894 Sel.; Phocas 914 Sel., year 13 of Khusro II; Heraclius 922 Sel., 21 Khusro II), the only slip affecting the day and month of Heraclius' coronation (1 September rather than 5 October). The date given for the death of Catholicos Sabrisho (XIII. 503) is internally consistent (Sunday 18 September, 15 KII (604)), as is that for the appointment of Athanasius as Jacobite patriarch of Antioch (XIII. 543: 936 Sel., 34 KII—AH 3 (623/4)). The chronicler was less sure when he came to calibrate the passage of time: he puts Tiberius II's exercise of power at nine rather than eight years, including five as co-emperor in the last years of Justin II (XIII. 437)—in reality, he acted as regent with the title of Caesar for four years (December 574–October 578), before a four-year reign as emperor (October 578–August 582); he has the Roman–Persian peace of 591 last over twelve rather than eleven years (XIII. 498) and the siege of Dara (603–4) take nine months (XIII. 520) rather than a year and a half; he is also unsure whether Kavad Shiroe's reign lasted six months or eight months (XIII. 553–4).

As for the rise of Islam, he is somewhat at sea (XIII. 600). He equates the first year of the new Islamic era (622/3) with year 935 of the old Seleucid era (623/4), year 12 of Heraclius (621/2), and year 31 of Khusro (620/1). He produces an interesting date for the beginning of the Arab conquests (XIII. 600–1)—Heraclius' 18th regnal year (627/8), when Kavad Shiroe's young son Ardashir was on the Sasanian throne (628–9). He appears to be associating the beginning of the *umma*'s political expansion with the Hudaybiya pact of 628.[53] Conflicting dates are given for the battle of Qadisiyya in passages based on different sources: two notices, embodying material probably taken over from Ishoʿdnah, date ʿUmar's visit to Jerusalem correctly to the fourth year of

[53] See Ch. 12, section 4 below.

his rule (637/8), but, under the influence of Muslim historical traditions (for which see Ch. 11, section 4 below), place the battle of Qadisiyya two years earlier (XIII. 623-4 (Jerusalem visit), 627 (Qadisiyya)); a third notice (XIII. 580–1), recycling material from the *Khwadaynamag*, focuses on the occupation of Mesopotamia after Qadisiyya (dated to Yazdgerd's 5th regnal year (636–7)) and the escape of Yazdgerd from Ctesiphon eighteen months later, dated correctly to AH 19 (639/40). There is, of course, a tell-tale inconsistency in the chronology, caused by the deliberate misplacing of Qadisiyya in 636, before ʻUmar's visit to Jerusalem in 638: if, as is made plain, Yazdgerd's presence in Ctesiphon (under siege) lasted no more than eighteen months and he left the city in AH 19, the decisive Persian–Arab battle must have been fought in AH 17 (637/8), a date which tallies with that extracted from the *History to 682*.

What then can the *Chronicle of Seert* add to the material which has been garnered so far from non-Muslim sources? Nothing on Roman domestic history. Nothing on the course of the last Roman–Persian war or on the Arab conquests. Nothing on the origins of Islam or the institutional development of the caliphate. Very little on secular affairs in Mesopotamia. For the chronicle is a church history and is preoccupied with the internal affairs of the Nestorian church of Mesopotamia. It can only provide occasional glimpses of the outside world, first Sasanian, later Arab, mainly from the perspective of the higher clergy, above all the catholicoi. Some of those glimpses, however, are invaluable.

One notice fills in the background to the estrangement between the Sasanian government and the Lakhm client-kingdom of Hira, which led eventually to the dissolution of a centuries-old system of client-management and to considerable disturbance among the Arab tribes neighbouring Mesopotamia. Beginning with the conversion of the Lakhm king, al-Nuʻman, which is dated to 593/4 (4 KII) and is credited to a monk and two bishops, one the future Catholicos Sabrisho, Christianity spread through the whole ruling Nasrid family and their households.[54] Thereafter al-Nuʻman and his son Hasan are reported to have been on good terms with both imperial powers and to have performed services for both (XIII. 468–9). There would be nothing surprising then if Sasanian–Lakhm relations were to have come under strain when war broke out in 603. Although nothing explicit is said in the brief cast-back heading a later notice (XIII. 539–40) about the deaths of al-Nuʻman and Hasan and the ensuing turbulence in the desert, there was more, it may be

[54] Al-Nuʻman's conversion is also reported by Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vi. 22. The date suggested by the context is around 593.

conjectured, to the poisoning of father and son than the court intrigue mentioned in the *Khuzistan Chronicle*.

The first of the notices about the Lakhm also contains a snippet of information about the rebellion led by Khusro II's uncle, Bistam, in the 590s (XIII. 469). Hasan is reported to have played a key role in his defeat (c. 60). Otherwise it is only where ecclesiastical and secular history intersect that incidental information is given about Sasanian affairs. The *shahanshah* was eventually forced to intervene when a bitter theological dispute, which had its epicentre in Nisibis, began to threaten public order. After rioting broke out in 612/13 and the local military governor (*marzban*) was killed, troops were sent in and considerable force was used to restore calm (XIII. 513–14). Previously, at some point between 605 and 609, Khusro had ordered the convening of a church council to produce a new definition of the faith, with annexes clarifying the church's official position on contentious issues.[55] The object seems to have been to isolate the dissidents and to halt the dissemination of their views. The documents agreed at the council were subsequently submitted to him (XIII. 528–30). Khusro also took note of the steady inroads made by the Jacobite (Monophysite) church, centred in northern Syria, into the traditional sphere of the Nestorian church (XIII. 543). Around the same time as the council, he withdrew the royal patronage traditionally enjoyed by the Nestorians (the catholicosate was left vacant for the rest of his reign) and encouraged Monophysites to fill episcopal sees and take over episcopal churches in the occupied Roman provinces (XIII. 523–4). The policy is described in greater detail in the west Syrian historical tradition. There was no question, though, of his abandoning the traditionally tough line taken towards apostates from Zoroastrianism, especially if they were persons of rank, as was revealed in two headline-catching cases (XIII. 536–9, 549–50).

The single most important contribution of the *Chronicle of Seert* concerns the final round of negotiations which brought the Roman–Persian war to a formal end. By this date (630), Khusro's daughter Boran was on the Sasanian throne and the vacant catholicosate had been filled. The catholicos was deputed to negotiate a final settlement and then entered into doctrinal discussions with the Roman side. The chronicle is the principal source for both sets of negotiations and their outcomes—a durable peace and formal reconciliation of the Nestorian and Chalcedonian churches, sealed by a concelebration of the liturgy (XIII. 557–60).

Finally, we catch glimpses from below of the Umayyad regime in Iraq. Stability returned after five years of disruption caused by military operations

[55] Date: Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 114–18.

(636–40). The Arabs then consolidated their position and instituted a capitation tax on Jews and Christians. Otherwise both were treated well, and prosperity returned. After noting that the Christians rejoiced in their hearts at Arab rule, this extraordinary short passage ends with a prayer for God to strengthen the Arabs and to give them victory (XIII. 581–2). One may suspect that it has been lifted from an earlier source, written by a Christian at the time who was anxious not to cause offence, and well before the governorship of al-Hajjaj, ʿAbd al-Malik's strongman in the east, when relations deteriorated markedly.[56]

3. *ANNALS* OF EUTYCHIUS

The *Chronicle of Seert* is a rich source of information on the life of the church in Mesopotamia, but has relatively little to offer on secular affairs. This is a pity, given the impressively high quality of the material which Ishoʿdnah had picked up and preserved from earlier written sources. His younger contemporary Saʿid ibn Batriq (877–940), writing in Egypt, was much more concerned with general history. Secular material is very much in the ascendant in his *Annals*.[57] He belonged to a Christian family of Fustat (Old Cairo). Both he and the brother to whom he dedicated his historical work trained as doctors. The milieu in which they grew up was thoroughly Arabized. Fustat, the successor to Alexandria as capital of Egypt, was already renowned as a centre of Muslim scholarship in the eighth century. Saʿid seems to have been educated entirely in Arabic (he knew little or no Greek and made no direct use of Greek sources). His teachers included the leading contemporary scholar of the Fustat school of Muslim traditionists, Yahya (*c*.826–95), son of the greatest of those traditionists, ʿUthman b. Salih (761–834).

Not much is known about his life. He does not seem to have practised as a doctor, but to have used his training to write about medicine. He was evidently well connected. It would be hard otherwise to explain his sudden election as Melkite (Chalcedonian) patriarch of Alexandria towards the end of his life, probably in January 935. It was a controversial election, probably because he was raised directly from the laity, possibly at the insistence of the Muslim authorities. Opposition came both from within Fustat and from

[56] M. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984), 352–3.

[57] Eutychius, *Annals*, ed. and trans. M. Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: Ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Sa'id ibn Batriq um 935* A.D., CSCO 471–2, Scriptores Arabici 44–5 (Louvain, 1985).

dioceses outside. He took the name Eutychius on his election (and he will be so called henceforth). It may be presumed that he wrote much of the *Annals* beforehand, when he was living in Fustat and hobnobbing with the local intelligentsia, both Christian and Muslim. A reputation as a Christian historian would have strengthened his credentials as a candidate for the supreme position in the non-Coptic church of Egypt. A precise date of composition cannot be fixed, nor can an identification be proposed for the patron (if any) who commissioned the work.[58]

It is plain, however, from the text itself that Eutychius pieced it together out of excerpts taken from pre-existing texts of many different sorts, composed by pagans and Muslims as well as Christians. The excerpt is the building block of the chronicle. It tends to be large and to be reproduced whole with relatively few interpolations, whether of matter taken from other sources or of editorial comment. In the principal manuscript, *Sinait. Arab.* 582, which may well be in Eutychius' own hand, the end of each excerpt is marked with a symbol, as is each passage of summary or comment written by Eutychius. The *Annals* is thus a work written in the Muslim manner, a patchwork of diverse materials transcribed from antecedent texts together with authorial additions, each component part of which is clearly demarcated. This is, of course, only to be expected given the milieu in which Eutychius was working. The only missing feature is the *isnad* or citation of a chain of intermediary authorities, linking the author in the present with the original witness in the past (discussed in Ch. 11 below), for the obvious reason that Eutychius was extracting his material from written sources rather than relying on orally transmitted traditions.[59]

Several, but not all, of the sources quarried can be identified with confidence. All were probably used in Arabic translations. Ancient history, both religious and secular, was taken mainly from a Syrian collection of biblical material, the *Cave of Treasures*, and from the *Alexander Romance*. After the Incarnation a larger set of texts was exploited, including the New Testament itself, legends, and legendary reworkings of history.[60] Stories, some well known, some not, are retold, sometimes with unique features—the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, the dream in which grand futures are

[58] M. Breydy, *Études sur Sa'id ibn Batriq et ses sources*, CSCO 450, Subsidia 69 (Louvain, 1983), 1–11; F. Micheau, 'Sa'id b. al-Bitrik', *EI* (2nd edn.), viii. 853–6; J. Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle: contribution à l'étude de la littérature arabe chrétienne*, ii.2: *750–Xe. S* (Louvain, 1988), 23–34.

[59] M. Breydy, 'La Conquête arabe de l'Égypte: un fragment du traditionniste Uthman ibn Salih (144–219 A.H.=761–834 A.D.) identifié dans les Annales d'Eutychios d'Alexandrie (877–940 A.D.)', *Parole de l'Orient*, 8 (1977–8), 379–96, at 379–83; Breydy, *Études*, 29–41.

[60] Breydy, *Études*, 12–15, 22–3.

foretold for two young friends who live by selling firewood in Constantinople (Theodosius the Great and Theophilus patriarch of Alexandria), the deathbed repentance of the Brigand of Thrace in the reign of Maurice (another dream, that of his doctor, reveals that his sins have been wiped away), the murder of Maurice by a page whom he has slighted and Khusro's determination, qua son-in-law, to avenge his death . . . Eutychius evidently had a penchant for anecdotes, especially if they involved visions or unusual incidents such as the great general ʻAmr b. al-ʻAs' two narrow escapes from death at the hands of the Roman authorities in Gaza and Alexandria.[61]

Whole sections consist of excerpted material from Arabic versions of saints' lives in circulation in the Melkite monasteries of Palestine and Sinai. Attention is focused on saints of great renown, Epiphanius of Salamis whose life was much transmuted in the writing, Euthymius and Sabas, the main organizers of Palestinian monasticism, and the most famous Chalcedonian patriarch of Egypt, John the Almsgiver (taken from an elegant early Arabic translation).[62] Three secular sources, only one of which is independently known, contribute most of the material to be found in the final part of the text. This covers the period from the accession of Maurice (582) to the second capture of Alexandria (647) which brought to an end the first round of Arab conquests.[63] It forms roughly a quarter of the whole. As is the case with the *Seert Chronicle*, the *Annals* seems to be weighted towards the critical decades in which the late antique world order came under increasing strain (582–628) and the following decade and a half in which it collapsed. Eutychius' stated aim was to write a universal chronicle, but he lowered his sights when he reached the Christian era. To judge by the manuscript which he left and versions produced later at Antioch, he was content to compile a patchwork history and stopped well short of his own time. He prefaced it with a selection of material about the more distant past (biblical and secular) and brought it to a close soon after the beginning of the Muslim era, apart from two notices connected with the presence of ʻAbdallah b. al-Tahir in the Middle East, the first concerning a decision in favour of the patriarch of Jerusalem (taken probably when he held a command covering northern Mesopotamia and Syria (821–6)), the second reporting the outbreak of a rebellion after he had pacified Egypt during a brief period as governor (826–7).[64]

[61] Eutychius, cc. 174–6, 219–20, pp. 50–2, 71–3 (Sleepers), cc. 209–12, 215–18, pp. 64–8, 69–71 (Theodosius and Theophilus), c. 266, pp. 94–5 (Brigand), c. 268, pp. 97–8 (Khusro), cc. 276, 285, pp. 111–12, 125–6 (ʻAmr).

[62] Breydy, *Études*, 15–18; Eutychius, cc. 225–7, pp. 74–6 (Epiphanius), c. 237, p. 80 (Euthymius), cc. 243–7, 250–2, pp. 81–3, 85–8 (Saba), c. 269, pp. 99–101 (John the Almsgiver).

[63] Ch. 5 n. 55 above for the redating of the Byzantine counterattack on Egypt to 646–7.

[64] Eutychius, cc. 286–8, pp. 127–8.

Pride of place among the three sources which supply material about the end of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh goes to an eighth-century Arabic translation of the *Khwadaynamag* ('Book of Lords'), a Sasanian work which, as has been seen, also supplied valuable material to the *History of Khosrov* and the *History to 682*). The translator was 'Abdallah b. al-Muqaffa', an important figure in the early Islamic intelligentsia.[65] The Sasanian material taken from it comes on stream well before the final, climactic episodes in the history of the classical world. Together with secular material extracted from other sources it provides the historical framework for the sections which commemorate great saints and which were probably regarded as the core, inspiring elements in such a record of the Christian past.[66] The section on Epiphanius of Salamis is followed immediately by accounts of the reigns of Yazdgerd I (399–421) and Bahram V Gor (421–39). The troubles, religious and political, which followed the defeat of Peroz in the steppes in 484 are reported after extensive extracts from the lives of Euthymius and Sabas. This second tranche of Sasanian material concludes with an overview of the reign of Khusro I Anushirvan, interspersed with short notices about Roman affairs. Then after legendary material about the Brigand of Thrace, which has a strong hagiographical tinge, a full account is given of the reign of Hormizd IV, his fall, the flight and restoration of Khusro II Parvez, the early years of his reign, and the events in the Roman court which precipitated war in 603.[67] Then comes a section on John the Almsgiver, itself followed by an account of the last Roman–Persian war taken from another source (and discussed below).

Relatively little damage has been done to the *Khwadaynamag* material in the course of transmission. The official line which exonerated Khusro II from ordering the death of his father Hormizd, without denying that he was forewarned, is followed, the main responsibility being placed upon his uncles Banda (Bindoe) and Nistam (Bistam). Key elements of the historical narrative are faithfully retailed—the harsh rule of Hormizd, the rebellion of Bahram Chobin after a victorious campaign in the east, Khusro's escape with the help of his uncles, and, very briefly, the military and political dénouement (his victorious return with Roman assistance, the flight and assassination of Bahram, and the later liquidation of his uncles). Minor errors have crept into the chronology, in particular in the correlation of Persian and Roman reigns, but the general picture presented is sound. Khusro II's accession is misplaced in Maurice's seventh year (588–9) rather than the eighth, and the

[65] For more about him, see section 4 below.
[66] Breydy, *Études*, 18–22.
[67] Eutychius, cc. 231–3, 244, 257–8, 267, pp. 76–9, 82, 91–2, 95–7.

length of his reign is put at thirty-nine as well as the correct thirty-eight years. Phocas' coup, on the other hand, comes at the end of Maurice's twenty-year reign and is correctly dated, on Eutychius' reckoning, to Khusro's fifteenth year (602–3). He then reigns, as he should, for eight years.[68]

A second source, probably Syrian, takes over once the fighting begins. It may also be responsible for the story that, once he was restored to his throne, Khusro asked for the hand of Maurice's daughter Mariam, and that his proposal was only accepted on condition that he should convert to Christianity. The scenario presented is one of warfare on the grandest possible scale, as attacks are launched *simultaneously* against Jerusalem, Egypt, and Constantinople. Only the first of these campaigns is described: the general in command (in reality Shahrvaraz) is called Khazrawayh; the Jews of Galilee and the Jerusalem area are active collaborators, helping to destroy churches and massacring Christians both before and after the capture of the holy city; there are allusions to the contemporary Roman propaganda broadcast by Strategius, which stressed the scale of damage done to the main churches in and around Jerusalem and the large number of Christians slaughtered by Jews at Maqella (or Mamila, as it is at Strategius, 9. 6); there follow reports about the deportation of Patriarch Zacharias and about the entrusting of the True Cross to Khusro's Christian wife Mariam for safekeeping.[69] A second tranche of anti-Semitic material, which has no parallel in Strategius, is introduced later, after a summary of the Life of John the Almsgiver. The Romans have evacuated Syria. The patrician in post in Tyre must therefore be Persian. He and the citizenry get wind of a Jewish plan to attack Tyre on Easter night, and then to march south to seize Jerusalem and massacre its Christian population. The precautions taken—arrest of Jews inside the city, closure of the gates, positioning of artillery on the walls—work. The attack is resisted effectively. For every extramural church the Jews destroy, the defenders execute a hundred Jewish detainees and shoot their heads over the walls. A sally then disperses the attackers who flee to their various localities.[70]

Nothing is said about the course of the Egyptian campaign. As for that directed against Constantinople, we are simply told that Khusro took personal command of the army and that the city was besieged for fourteen years (a figure which is correct, if it is intended to measure the time between the initial attack on Jerusalem in spring 614 and the end of the fighting in February 628).[71] Heraclius arrives in the city in charge of a convoy bringing grain from Thessalonica, proposes that Phocas be killed for bringing troubles on the Romans, does the deed himself, and is then appointed emperor on his

[68] Ibid. cc. 267–8, pp. 95–7.
[69] Ibid. c. 268, pp. 97–9.
[70] Ibid. c. 270, pp. 101–2.
[71] Ibid. c. 268, p. 98.

own recommendation. Eutychius' source—probably the same Syrian history which has supplied the Palestinian material—here presents a highly simplified and distorted version of the two-year Heraclian revolution which led eventually to the fall of Phocas.[72] It goes on to give a barely recognizable account of Heraclius' counterstrikes in the 620s. It is here that Eutychius can be seen to have been seriously handicapped by his ignorance of Greek. He evidently had no choice but to recycle the content, however much it might strain credulity, of the source to which he had access because it was written in Arabic.

As a result, Eutychius transforms Heraclius' bold expeditions into the north-western territories of the Sasanian empire into a single, much grander heroic venture into the heart of Asia. The immeasurably enlarged arena in which he performs is that of a past, either legendary or historical, when Iran confronted Turan, and of a present in which the Abbasid caliphate bestrides western Eurasia. Six years into his reign, fourteen years after the start of Khusro's siege of Constantinople, Heraclius decides to break out and take the fight to the enemy. The government which he leaves behind is authorized to agree terms with Khusro, if he does not return within twelve months. He obtains permission from Khusro to go out and collect the tribute he has demanded. He then sails with 5,000 crack troops to Trebizond, negotiates an alliance with the kings of the Khazars, Abasgians, and Sariba, and marches east. Up to this point, Eutychius gives a recognizable, although much deformed, account of Heraclius' second counteroffensive in 627–8. Turks have become Khazars. Armenians and Iberians have vanished, Sariba (whoever they might be) appearing in their place. Henceforth Heraclius moves onto a mythic plain. He marches east, collecting taxes from every city he passes (including Dvin, Ardabil, Isfahan, and Merv), beheads every Persian he encounters, besieges and storms a city named after Shapur, massacring the inhabitants. Then, like Bahram Chobin in 590, he turns back to the west (although his march takes him beyond Mesopotamia to south-west Armenia) and sends Khusro a letter announcing what he has done, by the hand of Khusro and Mariam's son Kavad, shaven and riding a donkey. Shaken by the news, Khusro breaks off the siege of Constantinople, marches east, and takes up a position on the river Arsanias, commanding the ford which Heraclius must use. By a simple ruse, Heraclius lures him upstream, crosses over, and reaches Trebizond, where he takes ship for Constantinople, arriving amid much rejoicing.[73]

Eutychius now loses interest in Khusro, who realizes the scale of the disaster and leaves to visit one of the devastated cities. He simply notes that the

[72] Eutychius, c. 270, pp. 102–3. [73] Ibid. c. 270, pp. 103–7.

Persian kingdom grew weak from the seventh year of Heraclius' reign.[74] He continues to recycle material from the source which he has been using and follows Heraclius' movements as he returns to the Middle East. Heraclius' journey is described, with details given about his reception and representations made to him at different places. When he reaches Jerusalem and appreciates the scale of the damage done and the loss of life, he is persuaded by casuistical reasoning to abrogate the guarantee of safety which he has given the Jews of Tiberias. This opens the way for a pogrom in Jerusalem and Galilee. The episode ends with the appointment of Modestus as patriarch, and the grant to him of a share of the taxes of Palestine for church reconstruction.[75]

From this point Eutychius switches his attention to the rise of Islam. Apart from a short passage based on the Ibn al-Muqaffa' translation of the *Khwadaynamag*, which brings his Persian history to a close (covering events from the fall of Khusro II to the accession of Yazdgerd III)[76] and some additional material from his Syrian source about church history[77] (which may also have covered certain written guarantees restricting Muslim worship in Jerusalem and Bethlehem given by 'Umar to the Patriarch Sophronius),[78] he relies entirely or almost entirely on the collection of Muslim traditions made by 'Uthman b. Salih and transmitted through his son Yahya ibn 'Uthman.[79] He carefully dates the Prophet's death to Rabi I AH 11 (632), noting that he was 63 and had been ill for thirteen days. Fatima's death soon afterwards is also reported. Then, after a final short summary of the *Khwadaynamag*'s account of the fall of Khusro, the short reign of Kavad, and a subsequent period of political instability ending with the accession of Yazdgerd III at the age of 25,[80] he recycles 'Uthman's account of the Muslim conquests. This runs as follows: after a first expedition against Iraq during which Hira surrenders to Khalid ibn Walid (placed before the unification of Arabia under the rule of Abu Bakr), four armies are dispatched against Syria, to be reinforced later by Khalid's after a march across the desert; an important victory is won not far from Gaza, after which Palestine is overrun as far as Jerusalem and Caesarea (the news reaches Medina soon after 'Umar has become caliph in Jumada II AH 13 (634)).[81] Some Christian material is then interpolated, about the flight

[74] Ibid. c. 270, p. 107.
[75] Ibid. c. 271, pp. 107–9.
[76] Ibid. cc. 275–6, p. 110.
[77] Ibid. cc. 276–7, 281, pp. 113–14, 120.
[78] Ibid. c. 280, pp. 118–20.
[79] Breydy, 'La Conquête arabe', 379–83; Breydy, *Études*, 1–3, 13, 23–4.
[80] Eutychius, cc. 275–6, p. 110.
[81] Ibid. c. 276, pp. 110–13.

of the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria and theological conflict in the three eastern patriarchates (in which Cyrus and Sophronius play the central parts).[82] It is followed by an account, taken from ʿUthman, of Heraclius' mobilization of a large new army, including Beduin clients and Armenian troops. The climax comes not with a battle, but a rout of the Roman army, which takes fright at the approach of a supply column at night (mistaken for the enemy) and plunges into a ravine, somewhere between Damascus and Tiberias. The campaign ends with the fall of Damascus after a six-month siege and Heraclius' withdrawal from Syria (dated to ʿUmar's third year, 636–7).[83]

Eutychius then names the military commanders sent by ʿUmar to take charge of Damascus, Jordan, and the region of Hims (Emesa). ʿAmr, the fourth, is detailed to operate with his troops in Palestine, part of which is still in Roman hands (as is Qinnasrin in northern Syria). ʿUmar journeys north to Jabiya, the former Ghassan command centre in the *badiya* by the Hawran, where he meets ʿAmr and the other generals, who have left deputies in their provinces, and sets off with them to besiege Jerusalem. There follows the familiar story of the surrender of the city, the guarantee of safety obtained by Sophronius, and ʿUmar's visit, in the course of which he chooses the Temple Mount as the best site for a mosque and, clearing away earth with his companions, uncovers the rock (over which the Dome of the Rock would be built later, in the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik). ʿUmar then visits Bethlehem and forbids Muslims to worship in the Church of the Nativity. Sophronius dies, and a long vacancy of twenty-nine years ensues.[84] The submission of Qinnasrin is noted separately, in the context of an anecdote about a probably apocryphal border incident.[85]

Eutychius' account of this first phase of the conquests corresponds with that transmitted to other collectors of early Muslim traditions. It will be subjected to close, critical scrutiny in Ch. 11, section 4. But it should be noted now that, in common with some of them, Eutychius seems to conflate

[82] Eutychius, cc. 276–8, pp. 113–14.

[83] Ibid. cc. 278–80, pp. 114–17. The reappearance of Mansur, chief magistrate of Damascus, who had been confirmed in office by Heraclius on his way to Jerusalem in 630 links this passage with Eutychius' Heraclian source. On both occasions Mansur is asked for money. On the first he pays up the modest sum of 1,000 solidi when asked for tax arrears in 630. On the second, he claims that he has no funds available and, later, single-handedly routs the Roman army, through the panic he induces when he comes up at night behind its camp, trumpets playing and torches blazing.

[84] Ibid. cc. 280–1, pp. 117–20. He pays careful attention to patriarchal vacancies, noting their occurrence in Jerusalem after the deaths of Zacharias in exile (fifteen years) and of Modestus after nine months in post (six years), and in Alexandria after the flight of the Melkite George (ninety-seven years).

[85] Ibid. c. 282, pp. 120–1.

the battle of Yarmuk which opened the way into southern Syria (fought in broken country) with the decisive victory won on a plain between Damascus and Emesa (where Vahan was one of two Roman generals). Like them, he also postpones the conquest of Jerusalem until control has been secured over Syria. He gives additional details about the army assembled by Heraclius and the arrangements made by ʿUmar for the administration of the conquered territories after victory in Syria. He also explains, anecdotally, why ʿUmar regarded the Holy Sepulchre as unsuitable as a place of Muslim prayer.

Eutychius concludes with an account of the conquest of Egypt. Two main campaigns are distinguished, the first targeted on Babylon, the second on Alexandria. The lengths of the sieges of al-Farama and Babylon in the course of the first campaign are specified (one month and seven months respectively). Precise information is also given about the number of troops involved (4,000 plus 4,000 reinforcements), and about the terms negotiated with al-Muqawqas, head of the Roman fiscal administration (a poll-tax to be introduced at the rate of two gold coins on six million adult males, a huge sum of retained tax revenue to be paid over, bridges to be built, billets and markets for supplies to be provided). The negotiations are misplaced, however, during the siege of Babylon, and al-Muqawqas is taken to be an anti-Roman Monophysite rather than the Chalcedonian Patriarch Cyrus. Al-Muqawqas plays a double game. He is ready to agree terms on behalf of the Egyptians, despite objections from the Roman defenders. His hope is that the Roman troops will leave, as indeed they do when the city is stormed. He then concludes a formal agreement with ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, stipulating that no such terms shall be offered to the Romans in Egypt. The Muslims then begin a push towards Alexandria, fighting three battles before they lay siege to the city. There is heavy fighting during the siege, in the course of which ʿAmr is captured and manages, by a subterfuge, to be released. The siege ends with the storming of the city. It looks as if the long period of grace (eleven months) negotiated by Cyrus after the second Muslim raiding campaign in the Delta—to allow for an orderly handover of power—has mutated into a fourteen-month siege of Alexandria which is then reoccupied almost immediately by the Roman forces evacuated by sea, only to be stormed for a second time.[86]

Apart from two ninth-century postscripts, that is where Eutychius ends his account of the past. The Christian era, which begins with the Incarnation, ends with the definitive Muslim seizure of Eutychius' homeland. The history retailed is centred on Egypt and the neighbouring provinces of Palestine and Syria, but it is placed, as it should be, within the wider framework of Roman

[86] Ibid. cc. 283–5, pp. 122–7.

imperial history. The confrontation with Iran looms large, as does the figure of Khusro II who so nearly conquered the western world on the eve of the rise of Islam. It is built up, as has been seen, out of material culled from three prime sources, two relatively high grade (the *Khwadaynamag* and the *futuh* of 'Uthman), the third, identified provisionally as of Syrian origin, of more questionable value, save for detailed information given about the Jews of Palestine and Heraclius' change of policy towards them.

Eutychius himself took two important editorial decisions: he chose to narrow his focus towards the end and to exclude Iraq and Iran from his account of the expansion of Islam; he also carefully correlated the new Muslim era with regnal years of the established rulers. However, he made a serious mistake. He equated the *hijra* (622), the start of the Muslim era, with the year of Heraclius' accession (October 610–October 611) and Khusro II's twenty-third regnal year (June 610–June 611 on his chronology). Since he knew that the last war of the old order was sparked off by the overthrow of Maurice in Khusro's fifteenth year (602/3) and ended in Muhammad's lifetime, he was forced to squeeze all three phases into a mere fifteen years, placing Heraclius' final victory in his seventh regnal year (628/9 on his reckoning). This explains why he concertinas successive Persian campaigns against Palestine, Egypt, and Constantinople into a single three-pronged offensive and places them at the beginning of Phocas' reign. He seems to have thought that Khusro must have taken personal charge of the most important of these campaigns and to have supposed that his siege of Constantinople lasted fourteen years (the whole of Phocas' reign and the first six of Heraclius') before a single surgical thrust right through the Sasanian empire.

Two chronological errors, one inherent in 'Uthman's account of the *futuh* (the conquest of Jerusalem is misplaced after that of Syria), the other resulting from a misguided editorial conjecture, have introduced considerable confusion into Eutychius' account of early seventh-century history. He was also at the mercy of his principal Christian source, probably Syrian, which reimagined Heraclius' counterstrikes on a larger, semi-mythical scale, as well as the entertaining but distorting anecdotes which have overlaid some vital aspects of the Arab conquest of Egypt in 'Uthman's account. It was probably 'Uthman who confused a figure for the total population of Egypt (six million, which is of the right order of magnitude)[87] with that for the number of adult males subject to the new poll-tax, and failed to identify al-Muqawqas as the Patriarch Cyrus. But the basic framework of Roman and Sasanian history in late antiquity is sound, as are the fragments of church

[87] A. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1986), 17–19.

history which he includes. As can be shown in the case of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and ʿUthman, Eutychius has not tampered with the materials transmitted by his sources and thus acts as a smooth conduit for some valuable items of information about Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. He alone reports the attempted rebellion of the Jews in Syria under Persian occupation, Heraclius' promise that there would be no reprisals for Jewish collaboration, and its rescinding after his arrival at Jerusalem. He gives one of the best accounts of what transpired during ʿUmar's visit to Jerusalem. Finally he both confirms the figure given by John of Nikiu for Muslim forces on the Egyptian campaign (8,000 after the arrival of reinforcements) and provides useful additional material about measures taken to ensure an orderly advance down the west branch of the Nile in the second campaign.

4. *KHWADAYNAMAG* ('BOOK OF LORDS')

Finally we come to the long lost account of the Iranian past, mythical and historical, which was disseminated down an intricate network of channels to later texts of many sorts produced in many different milieux. The task of tracing the descent of material from the lost work of the caliphal astrologer Theophilus of Edessa down to the texts where it collects (see Ch. 7) is simplicity itself compared to that of venturing into the post-Sasanian history of the *Khwadaynamag*, the 'Book of Lords'. A large number of recipient texts have already been identified, notably the *History of Khosrov*, the *History to 682*, Theophilus' chronicle, the *Chronicle of Seert*, and the *Annals of Eutychius*. Its influence was ubiquitous at the end of antiquity and in the early middle ages, ranging from Agathias in the middle of the sixth century to a very large number of writers and historians at work in the caliphate under the Abbasids.[88]

The earliest identifiable figure among the Muslim authors is Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, a towering figure of early Islamic letters, who, in a short life (he was tortured to death in his thirties in 756 or soon afterwards), held forth in writing on affairs of state, wrote an apologia for Manichaeism, and produced Arabic translations of Pahlavi texts, including Indian fables (*Kalila wa-Dimna*) and the *Khwadaynamag*.[89] By the tenth century other Arabic versions of the *Khwadaynamag* were in circulation—Hamza al-Isfahani had seven (including that of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ). Behind them probably lay a yet

[88] Cameron, 'Agathias on the Sassanians'.
[89] F. Gabrieli, 'Ibn al-Mukaffaʿ', *EI* (2nd edn.), iii. 883–5.

greater number of Pahlavi recensions of the text, with different end-points (depending on the date of the edition) and a variety of additional, infused matter (extended anecdotes, for example, or borrowings from the Avesta). Bahram b. Mardar Shah, the one author writing in Pahlavi cited by Hamza, claimed to have collected twenty copies and versions.[90] Any early medieval Islamic historian with pretensions to writing universal history had to incorporate material from the *Khwadaynamag* into his work. The list of those who did so—al-Dinawari (d. 891), Ibn Qutayba (d. 899), al-Yaʿqubi (d. *c.*900), al-Tabari (d. 923), al-Masʿudi (d. 955), Hamza al-Isfahani (d. 970), al-Balʿami (fl. 963), al-Thaʿalibi (d. 1038), al-Biruni (d. *c.*1050)—is a virtually complete roll-call of noted historians at work in the early medieval heyday of Islam.[91]

The *Khwadaynamag* captured in writing a massive flow of oral traditions about the deep past which sprang originally from eastern Iran. Historical memories of Achaemenid kings and of their near-conquest of the known world were overlaid by myths current in the marginal zone to the east of the Iranian heartland where they were arranged into an epic tale, probably under Parthian sponsorship. The past was divided into three eras, in each of which a great dynasty bestrode the world: the Pishdadis presided over the initial development of civilization and the opening confrontation with Turan (the outer nomadic world); the Kayanis then took charge of the main phase of combat in defence of Iran, their cause being championed by Rustam, greatest of the warrior-heroes of Iran; finally came the historical era, made virtually coterminous with the rule of the Sasanians. Traditions were mauled and reshaped in the course of oral transmission, above all when they were incorporated into grand narratives—first under the Arsacids, then, half a millennium later, under the early Sasanians. The Arsacids were responsible for the ascendancy of traditions generated in the borderlands between the sedentary and nomadic worlds, in which the lineaments of historical figures are but faintly discernible in the principal characters, the Sasanians for the occluding of the Arsacids behind the giant figure of Ardashir, founder of the dynasty, who reunited Iran and restored it to greatness.[92]

This Sasanian version of what was a continuously evolving national epic continued to be conveyed orally from generation to generation and was infused with morally uplifting tales. The Avesta, the corpus of Zoroastrian

90 Z. Rubin, 'Musa ibn ʿIsa al-Kisrawi and the Other Authors on Sasanian History Known to Hamza al-Isfahani', *JSAI* (forthcoming).

91 Z. Rubin, 'The Reforms of Khusro Anushirwan', in Cameron, *States, Resources and Armies*, 227–97, at 234–9; id., 'Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the Account of Sasanian History in the Arabic Codex Sprenger 30', *JSAI* 30 (2005), 52–93; id., 'Musa ibn ʿIsa al-Kisrawi'.

92 E. Yarshater, 'Iranian National History', *Cambridge History of Iran*, iii.1 (1983), 359–477; J. Wiesehöfer, *Iraniens, grecs et romains* (Paris, 2005), 138–47.

doctrines and hymns which was likewise orally transmitted, also exercised a perceptible influence. The bards through whom the *Khwadaynamag* was disseminated were undoubtedly responsible for much of this reshaping.[93] Production of a written version marked a radical break with the past, and brought Iranian culture more in line with that of the highly literate Graeco-Roman world. It was an initiative which seems to have been taken after the over-bold venture of Peroz into the steppes in 484 ended in disaster and resulted in a nearly twenty-year subordination of Iran to Turan. The collection of the traditions may have been initiated beforehand, to judge by the bestowal of a Kayani name (Kavad) on one of Peroz's sons, but the commission to produce a definitive, officially approved version in writing probably came from Kavad's son Khusro I Anushirvan.[94] It should be placed in the context of Khusro's grand reform programme, which was not confined to mundane matters of administration, state finance, and army organization. Khusro it was who was responsible for a final infusion of literature and knowledge from India and the Graeco-Roman west into Persian culture.[95] The *Khwadaynamag* project should probably be viewed as the most important single element in his cultural programme, since it was reinvigorating the idea of Iran and giving renewed ideological impetus to the empire.[96] The resulting text was evidently regarded as the official, authorized account of the Iranian past, and was subsequently extended to encompass the deeds of Khusro and his successors, down to Yazdgerd III, the last Sasanian ruler who was killed in 652 before he could gain asylum with the Turks of central Asia.

Most of the text was devoted to the legendary Pishdadi and Kayani eras, when the central role in the history of mankind was taken by Iran. Khusro's Iran was meant, it may be surmised, to play a similar part as the great power of western Eurasia in the sixth century, reaching out to east, south, and west to take control of additional territory, wealth, and population. The mythic past was probably being brought into the service of the present, to re-empower Khusro and his successors.

The Parthian era was virtually erased from the historical record, being merely mentioned as an interlude following the conquests of Alexander when Iran fragmented into a number of local states. History proper, initially heavily laced with myth, begins with the rise to regional dominance of

[93] M. Boyce, 'The Parthian *gosan* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition', *JRAS* (1957), 10–45.

[94] Wiesehöfer, *Iraniens, grecs et romains*, 139 n. 240, citing Huyse (unpublished manuscript).

[95] Rubin, 'Reforms of Khusro'; J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* (London, 1996), 216–19; P. Gignoux, 'Prolégomènes pour une histoire des idées de l'Iran sassanide: convergences et divergences', in J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse (eds.), *Eran ud Aneran: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt* (Munich, 2006), 71–81.

[96] G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin*, Serie orientale Roma 62 (Rome, 1989).

Ardashir, founder of the dynasty, in Persia proper, a distant recess of the Iranian world, where memories of past world rule continued to flicker through the centuries of comparative weakness, fed by the visible vestiges of Achaemenid greatness—the ruins of Persepolis and Pasargadae, the tombs at Naqsh-i Rustam, and the mysterious tower there known as the Zendan-i Zardosht (Cube of Zoroaster).[97] After taking control of his home region, Ardashir extends his authority step by step over neighbouring regions—Kirman, the Gulf coast, Isfahan, Khuzistan, Mesene—in a series of victorious campaigns against rival rulers, which culminate in the crushing defeat and death of the last Arsacid king in a hard-fought battle. Thereafter there is a perceptible quickening in the spread of his power—over Media (with Atropatene), Mesopotamia, and Khurasan—until it embraces the whole of Iran and its outer fringes to the north (Hyrcania), north-east (Choresmia), east (Bactria), and south-east (Sakastan and Makran).[98]

Coverage of most of Ardashir's successors, apart from the two great victors in western wars, Shapur I and Shapur II, is reduced to little more than a list of names, with a note on the length of their reigns. But the history acquires more body as it approaches the outer limit of collective memory, three generations before the time of writing. Bahram V Gor (421–39) looms large. Much is made of his exploits on the hunting field, which emulate those of legendary kings pictured on Sasanian silver dishes. He is also the very type of the wastrel ruler, whose empire is gravely imperilled while he indulges in pleasure, but who then rouses himself and achieves a startling victory over Turan, before venturing off into distant southern climes and performing more heroic deeds.[99] There is rather less of this fanciful embroidering of history in the following reigns. Peroz is rightly credited with the initial construction of the great wall, 195 km long, which protected the southern, settled section of the plain of Gurgan (Hyrcania), as well as defences at the Caspian Gates (both later improved by Khusro I Anushirvan).[100] Anecdotes still enliven the narrative when it reaches Khusro's reign, but the specific gravity is much higher. History is no longer subordinated to edification and entertainment. There is, for example, an impressively detailed record of his determined drive to restore order to society and efficiency to the machinery of state after the disturbances

[97] Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 223.

[98] Tab., V. 2–20. The content of the lost text of the *Khwadaynamag* may be best grasped via the accessible, because translated, version of al-Tabari, acknowledged as the premier historian of the Abbasid epoch.

[99] Ibid. 82–106.

[100] Ibid. 112–13, 152. Cf. J. Nokandeh et al., 'Linear Barriers of Northern Iran: The Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe', *Iran*, 44 (2006), 121–73, at 158–68; S. O. Khan-Magomedov, *Derbent, gornaja stena, auly Tabasarana* (Moscow, 1979).

occasioned by the deviant Mazdakite movement. His fiscal reforms are described, along with the sequence of measures taken in order to ensure their implementation.[101]

It is tempting to view the account of Khusro's reign as contemporary history which was being compiled at the time under royal patronage. Not so the rather sketchier accounts of the reigns of his son (Hormizd IV—579–90) and grandson (Khusro II Parvez—590–628), which seem to have been written when time provided perspective—probably towards the end of Yazdgerd III's reign (632–52). For a contrast is drawn between the early years of Hormizd's and Khusro's reigns, when they were inspired with good intentions and, in Khusro's case, filled the treasury to overflowing, and later periods when they increasingly antagonized court and nobility. Each reign is given a shape, which points to later composition when a writer could take stock of a whole reign and could bring hindsight to bear. Hormizd is a strict upholder of justice and defender of the weak and poor, who subsequently executes large numbers of refractory nobles and clergy. Iran is attacked from all points of the compass in his reign, but he is unwilling to give due credit and reward to the general who wins the vital victory in the east over the Turks. His son and successor Khusro II is portrayed initially as a paragon king, outstanding for courage, incisive judgement, and strategic vision. He has to fight the great eastern general for the throne (a narrative which takes up considerable space) but goes on to win victories and amass wealth on an unprecedented scale. He is universally recognized as a great king, with a court of matchless magnificence, until, driven by ambition, he strives to achieve yet greater things in the west. The fiscal demands generated by war, the increasingly high-handed treatment of the nobility, the fatigue induced by long periods of service on distant fronts, and the depression of trade together generate increasing resentment and truculence in his subjects. In the end a palace revolution is triggered by Heraclius' bold thrust into the metropolitan region and the greatest of all Sasanian kings is dethroned without a hand raised in his defence.[102]

War and politics are to the fore in the *Khwadaynamag*, as they are in Graeco-Roman historical tradition, but coverage is more focused on the person of the king, his chief ministers, and his generals. There is also an overriding concern with good government and maintenance of the social order, which, in contemporary Roman literary production, was largely

[101] Tab., V. 146–60, 252–65. Cf. O. Klíma, *Mazdak: Geschichte einer sozialen Bewegung im sassanidischen Persien* (Prague, 1957); Rubin, 'Reforms of Khusro'.

[102] Tab., V. 295–305 (Hormizd), 305–23, 377–9 (Khusro II). Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 290–5; Howard-Johnston, 'Khusro II's Regime'.

confined to treatises on political theory and biographies of rulers. Nonetheless it is an important source for the final decades of Sasanian rule, above all because it preserves an indigenous Iranian view of those dramatic times, but also because there is additional information to be culled from it about the reign of Khusro II and it is the prime source for the period of political turbulence which followed his death.

So full are the Armenian and Roman accounts of Khusro's reign that the *Khwadaynamag* can do little more than fill in some details. It cannot even do that for the Roman war which dominated all but the first decade, because of the quality of the material, much of it based on documentary records, which is presented by the non-Persian sources. But bits and pieces of new information are supplied about the opening of the reign. These supplement the impressively detailed narrative of Simocatta, (1) with more information on the circumstances of Khusro's accession in 590, (2) with details which add colour to the story of his flight towards the Roman frontier, and (3) with important material about his seizure of power from his maternal uncles, Bindoe and Bistam, four years after his restoration, and the rebellion of the latter which it took eight years to suppress.[103] The gathering crisis at the end of his reign can also be viewed more clearly with the help of indigenous Persian traditions. Admittedly, Roman sources (the lost Official History commissioned by Heraclius and the dispatch of Heraclius quoted in the *Chronicon Paschale*) give an authoritative account of the mechanics of the coup which deposed him in February 628, but additional material can be culled from the *Khwadaynamag* about his last military effort (the dispatch of a scratch force from Ctesiphon to block Heraclius' advance on Ctesiphon from the Great Zab) as also about his reaction when he realized that a coup was being staged.[104] The most important contribution, though, is a full enumeration of the charges brought against him after his deposition and his own point-by-point rebuttal. This long passage takes us into the high politics of the time and picks out the key issues which led to his fall. We are left in no doubt that it was the strains of war, both human and fiscal, the increasingly autocratic conduct of government forced on the regime by the

[103] Tab., V. 305–10; ps. Sebeos, 74. 29–75. 33, 94. 27–95. 17, 96. 18–30, 97. 15–98. 17, 99. 14–19 (with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 9, 18, 19); *Khuz. Chron.*, 5–6, 8–9; *Seert Chron.*, 443–4, 465–6, 481–2. Cf. S. Tyler-Smith, *The Hoard of Husru's Year 12* (Wiesbaden, forthcoming).

[104] Tab., V. 322–3, 378–9; ps. Sebeos, 126. 21–127. 35 (with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 42, 43); Movses D., 143. 21–145. 2, 145. 18–148. 22 (88–9, 90–2); *Khuz. Chron.*, 29; *Seert Chron.*, 541–2, 551. There are two noticeable slips: the troops sent north from Ctesiphon did not constitute an independent fighting force but were reinforcements for a field army which had been shadowing Heraclius and which had followed him south over the Zagros, under the command of Rahzadh (who was not therefore appointed at the last moment).

war, and the damage done to mercantile interests, which led eventually to a coalescence of the court and army oppositions and his bloodless overthrow.[105]

Outside observers were not unnaturally bewildered by the rapid succession of regimes which followed Khusro's demise. The only detailed record of this time of troubles is that which percolated into later histories from the *Khwadaynamag*. All contenders for power were listed, with a note about the length of their reigns (in two cases, only a matter of days) and any actions of note. A relatively long notice about the chief beneficiary of the coup against Khusro, his son Kavad Shiroe, is largely taken up with an account of the arraignment and death of Khusro, the only reported action of Kavad's being his order for the execution of his brothers. We are told that he was ill for most of his brief, eight-month reign, during which there was a recurrence of plague. The main item in the account of the nominal rule of his 7-year-old son Ardashir which lasted eighteen months, was the seizure of power by Shahrvaraz, commander-in-chief of Persian occupation forces in the Roman west, who, later, had the boy executed and himself acknowledged as *shahanshah*, only to be assassinated during a military parade forty days later. Shahrvaraz's successor was Boran, a daughter of Khusro's who had escaped the fate of her brothers. It was during her reign that the True Cross was given back to the Romans by the Nestorian Catholicos Isho'yahb II.[106]

The chronology which may be pieced together from what is reported in the version transmitted by al-Tabari tallies with that reconstructed from non-Persian sources and with the numismatic evidence. Ardashir III's reign lasts from November 628 to April 630, during which Shahrvaraz seized power with Heraclius' backing after their summit meeting in July 629. It was as de facto ruler but before his own coronation that Shahrvaraz authorized the return of the True Cross (in February or very early March 630). The final peace agreement with the Romans was reached some time later, during Boran's reign of sixteen months, which, as is evident from her coin issues, straddled three Iranian civil years (May 630–September 631). By then a power struggle was under way in Ctesiphon, in which three powerful widows of Khusro (Maria and Shirin, both Christians, and Bahram Chobin's sister Gurdyeh) may perhaps be detected as key players, each in turn installing a child on the throne.[107] All three of their candidates are reported to have come to untimely ends—Boran, daughter of Maria, strangled, Azarmig, daughter of Shirin,

[105] Tab., V. 378, 382–95; Movses D., 145. 3–17 (89–90).

[106] Tab., V. 381–405; ps. Sebeos, 130. 5–25, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 45; *Khuz. Chron.*, 30–2; *Seert Chron.*, 552, 553–4, 555–7; *Chron. 1234*, 142–3.

[107] A. Panaino, 'Women and Kingship: Some Remarks about the Enthronisation of Queen Boran and her Sister Azarmigducht', in Wiesehöfer and Huyse, *Eran ud Aneran*, 221–40 (numismatic evidence summarized at 229–30).

poisoned after six months (so in March 632), and Farroxzad Khusro, son of Gurdyeh, killed after six months or a year (so in September 632 or March 633). It is evident that Sasanian lineage was viewed as essential for legitimate rule and that a woman closely related to Khusro was preferable to a more distant male relative. After the death of Azarmig, the struggle for the throne seems to have pitted different regions against each other. The candidates from Khuzistan (Khusro III) and Mesene (Peroz II), both of whom were killed within a few days of taking power, stood little chance against Farroxzad Khusro from the militarized zone in north Mesopotamia or the ultimate victor, Yazdgerd III from Persia proper.[108]

The stream of material derived from the *Khwadaynamag* can no longer be distinguished from other source material used by al-Tabari, once he reaches the reign of Yazdgerd. It is churned up in a massive, turbulent flow of early Islamic historical traditions about the conquest of Iraq. It is likely, however, that it was the source, possibly the immediate source, of the material, evidently of Persian origin, which is to be found in the *History of Khosrov* and the *History to 682*, about Rustam's bold counterstrike into Mesopotamia from Atropatene (which ended in defeat at Qadisiyya) as also about the battle of Nihawand and Yazdgerd's flight and death in 652. Not only does this material provide the expected continuation of the preceding account of Khusro II's fall which, as has already been seen (Chs. 3 and 4), is derived from the *Khwadaynamag*, but the same basic storyline underlies the much later account in the *Shahname* of Firdawsi, a work known to have been based on a medieval prose version of the *Khwadaynamag*. The invaluable information extracted from seventh-century Armenian sources about the hard-fought battle for Mesopotamia, on which hinged the whole glorious future of Islam, can thus be seen to come from a Sasanian source, probably highly placed and official. That would explain why there is an underlying appreciation of strategic issues, which would have been surprising had the material originated with eyewitness accounts by relatively humble participants.[109]

The *Khwadaynamag* continues to infuse the collective Iranian mind to the present, notwithstanding the supersession of Zoroastrianism, which underlies the epic history of a beleaguered but triumphant Iran, by Islam. The most remarkable work which it inspired, indeed for which it provided most of the raw material, was the *Shahname*, a huge poem of some 50,000 lines written by Firdawsi over three decades and formally presented on 25 February 1010 to

[108] Tab., V. 405–11; ps. Sebeos, 130. 25–34 (with *Hist. Com.*, n. 46); *Khuz. Chron.*, 33; *Seert Chron.*, 579–80; *Chron. 1234*, 143.

[109] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 4–29, 141. 10–22, 163. 29–164. 6 (with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 54, 59, 67); Movses D., 172. 21–176. 14 (109–12); *Shahname*, trans. Mohl, vii. 349–98.

his patron, the Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, the greatest Muslim ruler of the day. It is with Firdawsi that this survey of the rich sources for seventh-century history will close, the first of the great medieval poets of Iran who are so honoured among their own people.[110]

There was an important Persian line of transmission of the seventh-century text, which was quite independent of the set of Arabic translations used by Abbasid historians. As has already been noted, Bahram b. Mardar Shah managed to get hold of twenty Pahlavi versions of the text. Confirmation that there was a proliferation of Persian versions is provided by the earliest prose introduction to the *Shahname*. This describes how a commission was appointed to produce a comprehensive history of the pre-Islamic Iranian past by Abu Mansur Muhammad b. ʿAbd-al-Razzaq, a high-ranking Samanid official from Tus who was governor of Nishapur around 945 and probably again in the 950s before a brief tenure of the governorship of Khurasan. A systematic effort was made to assemble a collection of manuscripts in the possession of *dehqanan*, scholars, and city notables. The manuscripts are described as books of kings (presumably different version of the *Khwadaynamag*), books about their exploits (detailed accounts of feats in battle and on the hunting field?) and biographies. The commission, consisting of experts recruited from the cities of Khurasan and headed by Muhammad's vizier Abu Mansur al-Maʿmari, then pieced together an authoritative and comprehensive prose text, finishing its work in 957. This was the text which provided Firdawsi with his raw material.[111]

Firdawsi was responsible for the embellishment of this material and for giving it a grand epic sweep. Not only did he transmute prose into verse, he raised a narrative of the legendary and historical pasts up on to a plane of high drama. He did so by introducing direct speech at every possible opportunity, so that the protagonists' words more often than not predominate over reports of their deeds. At all stages of the action, issues are thrashed out, advice is given, declarations are made by individual speakers. Dialogues may take place at a distance, in the form of an exchange of letters, although usually the characters face each other—as, for example, in one of Firdawsi's tours de force, when Khusro II goes out to confront Bahram Chobin across the

[110] Khaleghi-Motlagh, 'Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qasem'; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 37–45. Translations: French prose: J. Mohl, *Le Livre des rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1876–8); English verse: A. G. and E. Warner, *The Shahnama of Firdausí*, 9 vols. (London, 1905–25).

[111] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 20–3; Rubin, 'Musa ibn al-Kisrawi'. Contra O. M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 1–94, who prefers to view what she terms Firdawsi's 'colossal' poem as an oral poem, composed in public performance rather than in the course of writing and in private performance before the poet's inner ear.

Nahrawan canal (a scene taken from one of the biographical sources, the *Romance of Bahram Chobin*, but utterly transformed in his hands), or in the touching scene of Shirin's reunion with Khusro (likewise taken from a biographical source, the *Romance of Khusro and Shirin*).[112] Dialogue is punctuated every now and again by monologue. At their accessions, most *shahanshahs* give inaugural addresses to the court, setting out their aims and reiterating fundamental principles of government—justice, generosity, piety, respect for the truth, etc. Like the speeches which classicizing historians in the Graeco-Roman tradition were expected to include in their works, the royal monologues infuse the text with a strong vein of moral exhortation. On other, less formal occasions or in the thick of action, the prime function of direct speech is to impart vitality to the stories told and to stir emotions, rather than to uncover deeper, underlying issues or to explore causation. In this respect a great gulf separates Firdawsi's speeches from those with which George of Pisidia embellished Heraclius' war dispatches. George strove to be faithful to the gist of what was actually said. Firdawsi is out to dramatize and to move his readers. Firdawsi can thus be bracketed, not unexpectedly, with the Syrian purveyors of semi-tabloid history and the less pretentious late Roman historians with a Herodotean mind-set rather than with the highbrow school of historical writing which can ultimately be traced back to Thucydides.

There were many other ways in which Firdawsi improved his material. He was adept at many figures of speech, with a particular penchant for vivid description (what late Roman rhetors called *ekphrasis*), proverbs, parables, and moral exhortation. Naturally he introduced images of his own: the whole world shines like Roman silk once Ardashir has completed the task of reviving Iran; Khusro II falls like a great cypress overgrown with weeds, the vagaries of fortune to which he is subject being likened to a crocodile which chews up whatever it meets; Shahrvaraz's army, which was so numerous that flies and ants had no room to move, scatters like a flock of sheep before a wolf after his assassination.[113] But he is more sparing with similes than George of Pisidia. For his main purpose was to heighten the drama by speech and by lively, detailed description of the action. He undoubtedly mixed a great deal of incidental detail into the extended anecdotes which abounded in his prose source: hence the vividness of all sorts of stories told, involving flight from the court, concealment of a child of royal birth, single combat, the canvassing for support of a leading conspirator, evocation of a building or a place . . .

It follows from this that Firdawsi's *Shahname* must be handled with great care by historians. The poet's imagination plays upon the whole text and

[112] Mohl, *Livre des rois*, vii. 11–32, 239–44.
[113] Ibid. v. 294, vii. 321, 332, 334, 339.

introduces matter which has no connection with historical reality. This can be demonstrated conclusively by comparing his version of the diplomatic exchanges between Khusro and the Emperor Maurice in 590 with that of Simocatta. Apart from an implausibly deferential attitude on the part of the emperor, there was no question of Khusro's turning to the Turks had the Romans refused his request of aid. The prominent part played by astrology in determining Roman policy on that occasion is likewise ahistorical, as it was also on the eve of the battle of Qadisiyya when, as Rustam, the Persian commander-in-chief, explains in a long, melancholy monologue (in the form of a letter to his brother), the position of the stars dooms the Sasanian empire to destruction.[114]

Much more serious, though, is Firdawsi's omission of all mention of the dominating concern of Khusro's reign, his Roman war. This certainly featured in the *Khwadaynamag*, since the shared traits in accounts of the last phase of the war to be found in several texts—the *History of Khosrov*, the *History to 682*, the history of Theophilus of Edessa, the *Chronicle of Seert*, and the *Annals* of al-Tabari—are best explained by use of a common source, namely the *Khwadaynamag*.[115] Firdawsi seems deliberately to have erased all of this, his motive perhaps being a desire to avoid giving offence to his patron, Mahmud of Ghazna, or causing unease in his court. For he was writing at a time of Roman, i.e. Byzantine, resurgence in the Middle East, when Byzantium's heavy cavalry was regarded as virtually unstoppable and Byzantine power was lapping eastwards over Armenia towards the Iranian plateau.[116] Relations between poet and patron being in any case strained, he probably regarded it as impolitic to describe, in his customary graphic style, one of the great triumphs of Roman arms at the expense of Iran. He might have been implying that Mahmud, who dominated eastern Iran, would soon be facing a direct challenge from a rival, western great power and that historical precedent was against him.[117] The hole created by this omission was plugged with tabloid material about court life (the story of Barbed the musician who had difficulty initially in gaining Khusro's favour, the construction of a new palace, the imprisonment of Kavad Shiroe whose destiny had been revealed by a horoscope . . .).[118]

[114] Ibid. vii. 80–98, 350–7.

[115] Contra Rubin, 'Codex Sprenger 30', 81–7. References in nn. 46 and 103 above.

[116] E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 23 (Washington, DC, 1995), 294–327; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996), 374–90.

[117] C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994–1040* (Beirut,1973).

[118] Mohl, *Livre des rois*, vii. 225–7, 247–9, 255–66.

So we can do no more than take note of four intriguing pieces of information in the *Shahname* which may or may not be true. (1) The birth of Kavad Shiroe to one of Khusro's two Christian wives, Maria (made out, by Firdawsi, to be the daughter of the emperor), is dated to 594/5, so that he was 18 in Khusro's twenty-third regnal year (612/13) when he is said to have been confined to a palace well away from the capital.[119] (2) Khusro is reported to have carried out a thorough investigation of Sasanian state finances after reigning for twenty-six years (590/1–615/16), an act which makes sense in the context of the debate (winter 615–16) about whether to prolong the war and to aim for the destruction of the Roman empire.[120] (3) In his farewell letter to his brother, Rustam refers to the terms on offer from the Muslims after he has driven them from the Mesopotamian alluvium and before the battle of Qadisiyya. In retrospect the terms seem quite extraordinary. The future rulers of western Eurasia were ready to return to Persian control the zone of land on the right bank of the Euphrates commanded by Hira. They also offered to pay tribute and to hand over hostages as surety for good behaviour, only asking in return for guaranteed access to an unnamed trading entrepôt.[121] This is, I suspect, a piece of authentic history picked up from the *Khwadaynamag*. If so, it casts an entirely new light on the opening phase of Muslim expansion. For here were God's agents on earth doing no more than furthering the commercial interests of the Quraysh. Finally (4) there is a fleeting reference to a policy debate at the highest level after the battle of Nihawand in 642 had opened Iran up to attack. A certain Farrukhzad recommends that Yazdgerd should acknowledge Muslim superiority in orthodox warfare and should abandon the open terrain of Iran, withdrawing instead to an inaccessible redoubt (the eastern Elburz and the Caspian coastlands which back on to the mountains) from which to launch attacks and to destabilize Muslim rule.[122] It is impossible to say whether hindsight is being brought into play by Firdawsi, well aware of the refractory character of Tabaristan, or Yazdgerd really did reject advice of this sort, when he decided to fall back on Khurasan—with the consequence that a split, ultimately fateful, developed between his forces and those based in Atropatene.[123]

It is, however, with Firdawsi and his literary achievements that we should end this survey of histories of the Middle East in the seventh century which were independent of the historical traditions generated within the Islamic community. Firdawsi was a great poet. He brought to life the last scene in the final act of classical antiquity, in all its human drama, in contrast to his seventh-century Christian counterpart, George of Pisidia, who placed the

[119] Mohl, *Livre des rois*, viii, 225, 249. [120] Ibid. 304. [121] Ibid. 351–2.
[122] Ibid. 366–7. [123] Cf. ps. Sebeos, 163. 29–164. 6.

fleeting phenomena of the world, however striking, beneath the canopy of eternity. So the great set-pieces of the last part of the *Shahname* are head-on confrontations between the main dramatis personae, of which none is better than that setting the battle-hardened general Bahram Chobin against the young ruler in whose veins flows legitimizing Sasanian blood. Khusro II is young and inexperienced (although Firdawsi does not realize that he may have been no more than a teenager or a very young man).[124] In reply to Khusro's warning that a crab does not have an eagle's wings and that an eagle cannot fly above the sun, Bahram claims descent from the Arsacids who ruled Iran before the Sasanians. He will stretch out his arm and dispose of the enfeebled Sasanian line like a lion rendered ferocious by hunger. After the great victory which he has won in the east (over the Turks), his helmet, he says, exhales the scent of the crown and his sword will secure him the ivory throne, while any fly which may attack Khusro will precipitate him from the throne.[125]

Firdawsi allows his own and his readers' awareness of the flow of time to infuse his poem, thus adding a solemn tone to his history and indicating, implicitly, that there was a larger providential story which enveloped that of ancient Iran. His personal interjections include melancholy reflections on death and the passage of time. Like George, he is ready to moralize, warning his readers to take note of the fate which befell Khusro, despite his great power and the tribute which came to him day and night from all over the world, a king without peer to whom 'the winged eagle, royal falcon, hawk, pard, lion and stream-haunting crocodile submitted':

> Be not at home in this world for its bane
> Is greater than its antidote; refrain
> From greed and strife; make not life's stage to be
> Thy home, 'tis but a wayside inn for thee.
> Fare on. Thou agest and the young anon
> Arrive; this cometh, that one passeth on:
> Awhile they strut or batten and are gone,
> For lion's head and elephant's both must,
> The signal given, come alike to dust.[126]

[124] Ibid. 75. 20, 76. 23, 81. 10–11, 82. 30

[125] Mohl, *Livre des rois*, vii. 20, 23–4, 27.

[126] Firdawsi, trans. Warner, viii. 405.

11

Early Islamic Historical Writing

A picture of the seventh century in the Middle East has gradually taken shape before our eyes. Information judged trustworthy has been extracted from the principal extant non-Muslim sources, as each was examined in turn, and has then been etched layer by layer on to a historical plate. No large blank spaces have been left, although the detailing is skimpy in places. The prolonged last spasm of the ancient world, which began with a general Persian offensive, on both Armenian and Mesopotamian fronts, in spring 603 and ended with a solemn celebration of Roman victory in Jerusalem in March 630, is well reported, save for the five years following the Persian rejection of the Senate's grovelling plea for peace in 615. There is reasonably complete coverage of the first phase of Arab expansion, from a crushing victory in February 634 which left Palestine exposed to attack, until the battle of Nihawand in 642 which opened the way on to the Iranian plateau. Despite a dearth of Byzantine material on the reigns of Constans II (641–69) and his son Constantine IV (669–85), when Byzantium was in great peril, key episodes in the battle for control of the east Mediterranean, between the nascent world empire and the truncated remnant of its Roman predecessor, are picked out in the west Syrian historical tradition which can be traced back to the middle of the eighth century.

There are some faintly sketched areas, to be sure, chiefly where distance, both physical and cultural, separated observers on the periphery from events in the interior of Arabia. We have only been given fleeting glimpses of the emergence of Islam, of the formation of a new religious and political community in the Hijaz under Muhammad's guidance, and of its subsequent unification of Arabia. Given the relative paucity of sources written within former Sasanian territory, there is nothing surprising about the spare coverage of the Muslim conquest of the Iranian plateau and its flanking mountains, which took ten years (643–52). Although Arabia no longer lay outside the field of vision of Christian observers by the time of the first crisis to strike the immensely inflated Muslim community in 656, those authors only give titbits of information about the actions of Muʿawiya, a real master of gesture politics, and about the crucial role played by Egypt. No coherent narrative can be pieced together.

It is time then to turn to Muslim sources, to see what they can contribute to knowledge of the Middle East in the seventh century, to see how many of the gaps they can fill in. They cannot, however, be subjected to the same level of critical scrutiny. It is quite impossible for any historian, however fluent in Arabic, to master the whole corpus of historical writing about the seventh century which has survived from the first few centuries of the Islamic era.[1] All that the non-Islamicist outsider can do is to take a census of extant early material, dipping into such texts as have been translated—in particular (1) Ibn Ishaq's biography of Muhammad, dating from the middle of the eighth century (in Ibn Hisham's revised early ninth-century edition), (2) an abridged version of a handbook of administrative history compiled in the late ninth century by al-Baladhuri, probably for the benefit of contemporary officialdom, and (3) a universal history of mankind written in the late ninth and early tenth centuries by al-Tabari, the leading religious and legal scholar of the age.[2] Some insight into the processes involved in the formation of this non-classical historical tradition may then be gained by itemizing its key characteristics. Then and only then can the task of careful examination and evaluation be undertaken. It is a task fraught with difficulty, so many and multifarious are the individual historical traditions which have been transmitted to us and so fierce has been the critique directed at them by some Islamicists over the last thirty years or so.

1. THE QUR'AN

First, though, some words about the Qur'an. It is a sacred text. It embodies the third and final revelation of God (the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim God) to man. It complements and completes the Scriptures, standing guard over them.[3] Unlike the Old and New Testaments, it includes no narrative, it contains no acts of the Prophet. There are only passing references to events. We hear of a phase of persecution and fear followed by a move of the faithful to a place of asylum,[4] of warfare between believers and unbelievers (a victory at Badr, a defeat (not

[1] A. A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs* (Princeton, 1983); C. F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003).

[2] A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's* Sirat Rasul Allah (Oxford, 1978); P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State: A Translation with Notes of the* Kitab futuh al-buldan *of al-Baladhuri*, 2 vols. (New York, 1916–24); E. Yar-Shater (ed.), *The History of al-Tabari*, 39 vols. (Albany, NY, 1985–99).

[3] Q 5: 51.

[4] Q 2: 218, 8: 26, 9: 20, 16: 41 and 110.

located), the repulse of what sounds like a general assault on a settled oasis (identified as Yathrib, i.e. Medina), and a battle at Hunayn),[5] of the victorious homecoming of the believers (backed by some but not all of their Beduin allies) and the submission of the Meccans who had previously barred them from visiting the sacred enclosure.[6] It is not an eyewitness account of what happened and what was said. It is not based on autopsy, individual or collective. It is, in no sense, a historical text, but a document of unique importance. For the Qur'an is a contemporary record made by the faithful of what Muhammad said when he addressed them, in language which already seemed dated and required elucidation in the eighth century.

While the earliest suras, short, disjointed, vivid evocations of the End, were probably lodged in the memories of those who heard them for some time before being written down, it is likely that measures were taken to keep written records of the long, formal addresses which Muhammad gave to the faithful, including detailed legal prescriptions, when the Muslim community was properly organized after its emigration. It is hard to say when such records were first made. Muslim tradition stresses the role of memory (individual and collective, presumably). But if literacy was common in Muhammad's home city, as it must have been if it was the mercantile centre portrayed in the historical sources, memories of Muhammad's sermons and sayings were probably buttressed by private written notes (and, according to Muslim tradition, by material dictated by Muhammad himself). For what could more deserve to be fixed in writing than divine messages received and transmitted by the Prophet? The first systematic effort to gather together everything which could be recollected of his words was made, according to al-Zuhri (d. 742), an early, erudite scholar and historian, in the caliphate of Muhammad's immediate successor, Abu Bakr (632–4). Within twenty years or so an authorized version of the text was issued in the caliphate of 'Uthman (644–56), giving pride of place to the long, late, semi-legislative suras.[7]

The Qur'an preserves hundreds of pages of invaluable material from the seventh century. It is *the* primary source for Islam at its formative stage. Like all words uttered by man, those recorded in the Qur'an not only conveyed information—in this case information of unique importance, given its ultimate provenance—but were in themselves actions with far-reaching effects. Muhammad's preaching took many forms and performed many different sorts of speech act—command, exhortation, remonstration, refutation of

[5] Q 3: 121–7, 152–5, 165–74, 8: 7–10, 42–4, 9: 13, 25–6, 33: 9–27.

[6] Q 48.

[7] H. Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam*, 78 (2001), 1–34.

doubt and criticism, vivid evocation of the imminent End, codification and enactment of law, etc. Instruction in many forms and on many aspects of the Muslim community's life was given. The early Muslim editors of the canonical text grouped the material which they gathered into 114 suras, which range in length from 3 to 286 verses. Rather than looking back at what had happened, their prime concern was to preserve an accurate record of the Prophet's important utterances and addresses for the future. Hence, while they strove (without achieving complete success) to confine individual suras to material of the same date, the suras themselves are not arranged chronologically, but by length and in accordance with their importance for the future guidance of the Muslim community. For the written version of divine revelation would play the main part in propagating the faith, and was so organized as to facilitate proselytization.

Much close textual work had to be undertaken before the suras (or the predominant type of material contained in individual suras) could be rearranged in rough chronological order on the basis of style and content. The earliest (forty-eight all told) are short, poetic, eschatologically charged, vehement in their attacks on polytheism and their rebuttals of criticism. They are followed by a group of twenty-one somewhat more prosaic suras with longer verses, which amplify and justify previous pithy declarations of monotheist faith with numerous examples of God's creative power and with tales of past prophets. A third group of twenty-one is distinguished by increasingly stereotyped rhyming patterns in the prose and involves more extended sermonizing. A final group of twenty-four, which post-date the *hijra* (emigration to Medina) and can be arranged in a reasonably secure sequence, reflects the growing political power of the Prophet and contains a large legislative element. It is these last, more prescriptive suras which head the canonical text, while some of the earliest and most powerful are relegated to the end.[8]

Any historian of the Middle East in the seventh century must pay careful attention to the Qur'an, both qua evidence and qua motor of change. This scarcely needs saying in the early twenty-first century when a western world, thoroughly irradiated by Enlightenment scepticism, has been forcefully reminded of the raw power of faith. Seldom, if ever, has a set of ideas had so great an effect on human societies as Islam has done, above all in the first half of the seventh century. In little more than twenty years, the religious and political configuration of Arabia was changed out of all recognition. Within another twenty all of the rich, highly developed, militarily powerful world enveloping Arabia was conquered, save for Asia Minor and north Africa.

[8] G. Böwering, 'Chronology and the Qur'an', *EQ* i. 316–35, at 322–6.

If explanations are to be found, the Qur'an is the first place to look. By itself, however, the sacred text, allusive as it is, rooted in several distant pasts—that of the Jews as recorded in the Old Testament, that of Christ's earthly mission and its ultimate success, and a legendary Arabian past in which Arab precursors of the Prophet loom large—can do no more than direct narrow beams of light at key contemporary issues confronted by the faithful. Recourse must be had to the voluminous historical traditions received and transmitted by Muslim historians at work between the early eighth and early tenth centuries if the history of Islam's rise is to be reconstructed, from the first gathering of disciples around the Prophet to the armed struggle against his home city and, later, against more distant Arab tribes.

2. EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

The central question which all historians of Islamic historical writing must confront is that of the date at which systematic efforts were first made to record and collect traditions about the Prophet's life, and that at which individual traditions were arranged into some sort of connected narrative. The longer the gap between act and record of act, between event and record of event, the more likely some divergence, deliberate or inadvertent, between the two. There is also the related question of the form of the record and the method of transmission: if it was framed in spoken words, lodged in the memory, and transmitted orally from person to person, it was likely to mutate much more than if it was written down at a relatively early stage, initially perhaps as notes to aid the memory. For individual minds involved in transmission of a tradition could not but reshape it to some extent, at the stages both of storage and of articulation in words, unless individuals were reduced to machines and merely recited what had been learned by rote. The reshaping might take two forms: the manner of expression of a tradition might change from transmitter to transmitter, in terms of choice of words, general style, and length (either greater elaboration or greater conciseness, perhaps with some excisions); or—and this is a perennial danger—the unconscious presuppositions of individuals living in later ages and changed circumstances, steeped in different thought-worlds, might infuse traditions in transit, introducing anachronistic elements.[9]

[9] Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 69–91; A. Noth and L. I. Conrad, *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, 1994), 1–25; F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998), 112–22, 203–8; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 8–17; Leder, 'Literary Use of the *Khabar*'.

These questions are hard to answer, and any answers given will remain to a considerable extent conjectural. Of two phenomena, however, there can be no doubt. First, much of the material transmitted to later writers from the formative phase of Islam in the seventh century was transmuted to a greater or lesser extent in transit. Hence the proliferation of divergent accounts of the same historical episodes in circulation by the ninth century.[10] Second, oral transmission from authority to authority was required if a tradition was to achieve widespread recognition as historically sound. Writing might play a subordinate role, that of supplying *aides-mémoires* to speakers and listeners, masters and pupils, but proper validation of what was reported required auditory speech acts linking individuals of acknowledged authority together. Only traditions which had been audited aurally by a succession of reputable transmitters could be accepted.[11]

Of course, the extent of modification, elaboration, compression, or deformation of traditions in transit depended upon the method of transmission. If writing played a part, say in the form of lecture notes, notes on lectures, or written drafts, all produced for private use, such written memoranda would act as a serious brake on innovation by oral transmitters. The problem, though, is that there is comparatively little evidence about such memoranda, since scholarly attention remained focused on the key, aural links between transmitters.[12] It is clear, though, that chains of authoritative transmitters, termed *isnads*, early analogues to modern academic citations, were introduced before the end of the seventh century, as scholars strove to recover and conserve what could be known of Muhammad's life, his acts, and those sayings of his which had not been incorporated in the Qur'an. The *isnad* was a crucial component in the scholarly apparatus which was collectively

[10] A selection of examples: U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims—A Textual Analysis* (Princeton, 1995); U. Rubin, 'The Life of Muhammad and the Qur'an: The Case of Muhammad's *Hijra*', *JSAI* 28 (2003), 40–64; M. Zwettler, 'The Poet and the Prophet: Towards Understanding the Evolution of a Narrative', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 313–87. A number of other examples are conveniently gathered together by H. Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000): U. Rubin, 'The Life of Muhammad and the Islamic Self-Image: A Comparative Analysis of an Episode in the Campaigns of Badr and al-Hudaybiya', 3–17; M. Schöller, '*Sira* and *Tafsir*: Muhammad al-Kalbi on the Jews of Medina', 18–48; H. Motzki, 'The Murder of Ibn Abil-Huqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of Some *Maghazi*-Reports', 170–239; A. Görke, 'The Historical Tradition about al-Hudaybiya: A Study of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr's Account', 240–75.

[11] G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam* (London, 2006); Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 171–7. Cf. C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (London, 1993), 190–5, with the qualifications of B. Johansen, 'Formes de langage et fonctions publiques: stéréotypes, témoins et offices dans la preuve par l'écrit en droit musulman', *Arabica*, 44 (1997), 333–76.

[12] G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh, 2009), 40–53, 68–84.

developed in the eighth and ninth centuries to authenticate *hadith*, items of authoritative information about the Prophet whose exemplary deeds and sayings laid down further rules for human behaviour.[13] By a natural extension, the same scholarly techniques were used to sift through other, purely historical traditions (termed *akhbar*, 'reports'). If an *isnad* was faulty (with a gap or weak link in the chain), a tradition was not accepted. A mass of such rejects was built up by the tenth century through the cumulative work of religious scholars and jurists.

The introduction of the *isnad* marked a real advance in the writing of history. It attests a determination to sift material in circulation about that critical phase in human history when the Prophet was conveying God's instructions to man, and to evaluate it as evidence. The unfolding of God's providential plan was to be tracked, a task rendered urgent by the swift approach of the Last Days. Sources of traditions were to be identified and their substance (*matn*) reproduced accurately. There can be no doubt about the serious intent of the earliest collectors and compilers of *hadith* and other historical information. Nor can their commitment to uncovering the truth be questioned, given that they were Muslims imbued with the new faith. It is surely inconceivable that any individual scholar sought deliberately to tamper with the material he gathered. Change might, indeed did, occur in the course of transmission, but it was brought about inadvertently.

Apart from the normal processes of mutation inherent in the retailing and reception of traditions, in writing as well as oral transmission—more likely to affect accounts of marginal episodes in the Prophet's life or of the behaviour of those around him[14]—modifications could only be made to traditions, especially those dealing with key events in the history of the Muslim community, if they went with the grain of the faith, if they were introduced into an already receptive collective consciousness. Four important instances of such deliberate deformation of the historical record can be identified. Individual scholars might also try to improve unsatisfactory *isnads* with new, invented links in a chain of witnesses. It does not follow, however, that they were scouring the inherited stock of traditions for those which supported their own interpretation (of law or Scripture) in an unprincipled way, let alone that they were deliberately promoting traditions which they knew to be spurious. It is

[13] H. Motzki (ed.), *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (Aldershot, 2004); H. Motzki, 'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', *Arabica*, 52 (2005), 204–53.

[14] Cf. G. Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996), especially 163–70. Contra P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford, 1987), 225–6 who concludes that accounts of major as well as minor episodes in the Prophet's life were concocted by storytellers and were then fed into a steadily growing common pool of *qass* material, from which later Muslim historians made their own selections.

far more likely that they were simply seeking to enhance the authority of traditions which they judged, whether rightly or wrongly, to be authentic but which were not buttressed by *isnads* of the sort required after the full development of the discipline. Thus some at least of the *isnads* which demonstrably grew backwards towards the lifetime of the Prophet may have replaced earlier general *isnads*, which simply cited unnamed early sources or were based on the judgement of reputable scholars.[15]

The kernel of *hadith* accepted as authentic by the scholarly consensus of the ninth and tenth centuries was used to supplement the Qur'an. The individual pieces were small, but in aggregate they documented many acts and sayings of the Prophet and supplied, albeit fragmentarily, the narrative missing from the Qur'an. Together Qur'an and *hadith* provided a more complete set of rules (*sunna*, 'approved practice') for the conduct of life in the Islamic community. They formed the basic source material upon which jurists and religious scholars drew.[16] Similar working methods and similar high standards were brought into play for the study of the history of Islam undertaken by traditionists with a more catholic interest in the circumstances of the Prophet's life and the subsequent history of the Muslim community. They gathered *akhbar* in the same way as religious scholars gathered *hadith*, and pieced them together to form a continuous, intelligible narrative of the Prophet's life—his birth and upbringing at Mecca, his career as a merchant, his first vision, his shocked reaction, and subsequent role as religious and political leader. They placed the various phases of his life in their Meccan and Medinan settings, giving information about the historical background and contemporary internal politics. Above all they recounted the steady growth in the numbers of the faithful, traced the careers of the most notable among them, and described the various encounters between the Muslim exiles (*muhajirun*) in alliance with their Medinan helpers (*ansar*) and the Meccans which ended in the formal submission of Mecca to Muhammad.[17] They then carried the story on, covering the fighting which resulted in the swift unification of Arabia (the so-called *ridda*, 'apostasy', wars), the subsequent wars of conquest outside Arabia (the *futuh*, 'opening', 'unfolding'), and two rounds of civil war (*fitna*, 'division') which tore apart the nascent Muslim empire in the seventh century.[18]

The earliest histories of the Prophet and of the subsequent successes of the Muslim community are no longer extant. They were subsumed and

[15] Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 234–60.
[16] G. H. A. Juynboll, '*Sunna*', *EI* (2nd edn.), ix. 878–81.
[17] Ibn Ishaq, trans. Guillaume, 69–87, 104–561; W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953) and *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956).
[18] Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 50–98.

superseded by later, more capacious universal histories written in the early medieval heyday of the Islamic world. Their existence, however, is attested by *isnads* in those later works. While some idea of their coverage may be obtained from later citations, it is not possible to determine how their material was organized nor to gauge how much they contained. All that can be said of the first two recorded historians of Islam, ʻUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712) and Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (d. 742), is (1) that they were well placed to gather information from reliable sources, ʻUrwa belonging to the inner governing circle and al-Zuhri being recognized as the leading scholar of his day, (2) that each produced a written record of information gathered—lecture notes, in the case of ʻUrwa, incorporating drafts or copies of written answers to questions put to him by the Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik, and something closer to an orderly draft which he was ready to loan to pupils, in the case of al-Zuhri—and (3) that they covered the life of the Prophet from the very beginning of his prophetic mission and took the story on into the period of conquests. It appears from later references that al-Zuhri carried out systematic research on traditions current in his own day and arranged what he collected within a clear framework of his own devising. That framework was almost certainly chronological. As well as adding to the volume of traditions, he included some information about the pre-Islamic era and extended his coverage of Islamic history to the end of the first civil war (661).[19]

Just as al-Zuhri built on the work of ʻUrwa, so did Ibn Ishaq (d. 767) build on al-Zuhri's. Now at last we set foot on solid ground. For the core of Ibn Ishaq's history, the biography of the Prophet (*sira*), can be reconstructed from the recensions made by the next generation of scholars, above all from that of Ibn Hisham (d. 835). Ibn Hisham added material of his own, occasionally giving fuller or variant versions of traditions already picked up by Ibn Ishaq, adding explanatory philological and genealogical notes, and casting doubt on the authenticity or attribution of some of the verse quoted in the text. For the most part, though, he was more concerned to excise matter, such as, for example, episodes in which Muhammad did not figure, much pre-Islamic history, both Jewish and south Arabian, and verse judged spurious. The core of Ibn Ishaq's work is, however, transmitted by Ibn Hisham, and provides an early connected narrative of the Prophet's life, as well as a considerable amount of information about the history of Mecca in the recent past.[20] While it cannot be

[19] Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing*, 25–30, 76–121; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 23–6; Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 41–4, 47–50.

[20] Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, pp. xvii–xxiv, xli–xliii; Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing*, 33–7; Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*, 48–51, 115–17, 165; Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 61–3, 71–2, 77–8.

proved, it seems likely that he sorted and arranged his material within the chronological framework introduced by al-Zuhri, a framework which was subsequently recognized as authoritative throughout Islam.

Whether or not al-Zuhri's arrangement corresponds to historical reality has been hotly debated by Islamicists over the last century. It can be viewed as a construct of an author (al-Zuhri) belonging to a later generation, to whom traditions had been separately transmitted rather than in chronologically ordered packages. On the assumption that the Muslim community and in particular its intellectual elite was incapable of registering and transmitting basic information about key episodes in the life of the Prophet in the correct chronological order, a later writer, cut off from the real past, would have had to rely on his unaided intellect in arranging the traditions to hand in some sort of intelligible but, to a certain extent, arbitrary order.[21]

The assumption that there was a break in communication between the generation of the Prophet and his Companions on the one hand and, on the other, that of the first scholars who set about narrating the history of Islam's rise, no more than two or three generations later, seems to me to be highly questionable.[22] The small group of disciples who gathered around Muhammad at Mecca may have grown in numbers, as individuals and, later, whole kin-based groups converted, but it was bound tightly together both by shared experience of ordeals (above all, of the difficult struggle against Mecca after the *hijra*) and by the unquestioned leadership of Muhammad in his lifetime and of a small governing elite after his death. These were propitious conditions for the development of a basic, skeletal narrative of the Prophet's mission and of the Muslim community's development. It is surely hard to conceive of the core Meccan and Medinan components of the *umma* (the Muslim religious polity) as being incapable of registering events of critical importance in the order of their occurrence or of retaining memories of them, if only in bare outline, and transmitting them to later generations. There was nothing contrived about the starting point for the narrative. It had to be and was the first divine revelation to Muhammad. There was an equally obvious fixed chronological point from which the history of the *umma* could be measured—namely the first formal, written constitution for the Muslim polity which was drawn up and agreed at the time of the emigration to Medina (in 622). The very existence of a new, Muslim dating system, firmly documented as in use in Egypt as early as 643, testifies to collective Muslim awareness that a new era had opened in human history and that sequential

[21] Cf. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 230–48, 260–3; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 24–6.

[22] Contra Conrad, 'Conquest of Arwad', 386–99.

dating mattered and was useful.[23] It may be concluded with reasonable confidence that key episodes in the collective life of the *umma*—the *hijra* itself, the three main battles with Meccan forces (Badr, Uhud, and the Trench), the negotiations at Hudaybiya which ended the fighting, the formal submission of Mecca, the joint Mecca–Medina expeditions which began the process of unifying Arabia, and, finally, the death of the Prophet—were impressed deeply on the collective memory, in the correct order and labelled with dates calibrated by reference to the *hijra*. This basic, dated narrative provided a solid base from which to reach back into the Meccan phase of the Prophet's life and a framework within which to place items of information about other events, of lesser importance, in the Medinan phase.

It was not as if the Quraysh of Mecca, the Muslim emigrants, and the various clans of Medina belonged to a historically innocent culture, time being required before even the most basic of narratives of the Prophet's mission could be constructed. It is true that it is no mean feat to reduce the four-dimensional experiences of a multitude of individuals, as they impinge on one another within groups and as the groups to which they belong interact with each other, into a single, linear narrative. But such feats were everyday occurrences in the Arabia of Muhammad's time just as they were in the remoter recesses of the peninsula on the eve of the coming of the oil boom (in the 1950s). For news was relayed, stories, longer and shorter, were told whenever Beduin met Beduin.[24] Tales of inter-tribal warfare (*ayyam*) and edifying stories with fabulous elements (*qisas*) formed defined genres of discourse in pre-Islamic Arabia. Official history was also written, encapsulated in concise notices recorded in south Arabian inscriptions of the early sixth century. The inscriptions and *ayyam* tales also leave no doubt that cohesive human groupings with durable collective identities, whether large (the kingdom of Himyar in Yemen) or small (individual tribes), were aware of the past, could isolate events of importance, and present them in chronological sequence. Genealogical accounts (*ansab*) of a tribe's past, whether oral or written, also made it plain that the past was layered and that there were links between layers.[25] The Qur'an itself may be ahistorical, concerned with eternal truths and universal moral values, but, as has been

[23] Sijpesteijn, 'Arab Conquest of Egypt', 446.
[24] Thesiger, *Arabian Sands*, 109, 154.
[25] E. Mittwoch, '*Ayyam al-'Arab*', *EI* (2nd edn), i. 793–4; C. Pellat, '*Kissa* I: The Semantic Range of *Kissa* in Arabic', *EI* (2nd edn.), v. 185–7; F. Rosenthal, '*Nasab*', *EI* (2nd edn.), vii. 967–8; Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing*, 14–20; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 43–5; J. Beaucamp, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, and C. J. Robin, 'La Persécution des chrétiens de Nagran et la chronologie himyarite', *ARAM* 11–12 (1999–2000), 15–83.

seen, it not only plucks many examples from the past but shows awareness of different pasts, at different distances from the present.[26]

There is little reason therefore to reject Ibn Ishaq's (or al-Zuhri's) chronological ordering of the principal recorded events of the Prophet's life as an arbitrary creation of a later, ill-informed author, working at a time when Muslims were groping their way towards the construction of elementary historical narratives. The onus of proof should lie with sceptics to provide evidence of disturbance or displacement in the traditional arrangement and dating of major episodes in the early history of Islam. Certainly the basic narrative presented by Ibn Ishaq was widely adopted by subsequent writers, both the *akhbaris* who collected and collated traditions (notably Abu Mikhnaf (d. 774), Sayf b. ʿUmar (d. 796), and al-Mada'ini (d. 830/50)) in the second half of the eighth and first half of the ninth century and the historians proper of the next century or so who presented their own selections and arrangements of transmitted material about the Prophet and the Islamic conquests in discrete, authored books. The most distinguished of these was al-Tabari (d. 923), whose *Annals* marks the apogee of this religiously focused type of historical writing in the early medieval heyday of the caliphate. The principles of its construction were the same as those used by Ibn Ishaq. Traditions were picked up and written down in plain, unpretentious academic prose. The basic constituent unit was the *khabar* together with verificatory *isnad*. Where there were significant divergences between reliable traditions, they were reproduced side by side. The main difference was one of scale. Al-Tabari's was a universal history, from the beginning of time to the present, which runs to many volumes in modern editions. The life of the Prophet (*sira*) and early Islamic conquests (*futuh*) stand at its centre, but they are backed with a capacious ancient history of Arabia and the wider world and lead on into an increasingly full history of the caliphate from the first civil war to the time of writing. The format is annalistic, events being allocated to individual year-entries.

Al-Tabari's predecessors and contemporaries used the same methods to gather and sift their material, but several chose to conceal the scholarly infrastructure in their finished texts. *Isnads* were dropped from the histories of al-Yaʿqubi (d. *c.*900) and al-Masʿudi (d. 956), presumably for the sake of readability. Another, al-Dinawari (d. 891), reworked his material (again stripped of *isnads*), so as to introduce a consistent narrative voice. Historical material, probably produced to the same high standard, was put out in other genres, in biographies, biographical dictionaries, and local histories (such as those of Syria and Egypt (both extant) and Khurasan (lost)). Like

[26] Cf. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 80–5.

them, al-Baladhuri (d. 892) drew on the accumulated results of *akhbaris*' research for his potted history of the conquests, but he pared the narrative material down to bare notices and rearranged them by locality. All of these authors, however, whatever the character of their works, observed high standards of scholarship, above all when they were retailing the extraordinary story of Muhammad and of the feats of the *umma* which he founded.[27]

Such, at least, is the conclusion of the somewhat abstract argument which has been advanced so far. It is, I hope, logically coherent and in itself cogent. But it is not, as yet, rooted in close critical scrutiny of any specific extant Muslim historical text. Confirmation or refutation of this relatively optimistic attitude must therefore be sought where it is attainable, where there is useful comparative material independent of the Muslim historical tradition against which it may be tested. This is feasible for some important episodes in pre-Islamic history, as also for the early campaigns of conquest against both Romans and Persians, the first bout of civil war, and the caliphate of Mu'awiya. If the outline narratives of this set of episodes presented in Muslim sources can be shown to be fundamentally sound through careful comparison with the corresponding narratives built up, bit by bit, from the non-Muslim sources, it will be possible to venture without too much risk into the earliest, Hijazi phase of Islam's history, which was largely concealed from observers in the wider world.

3. AL-TABARI'S ACCOUNT OF THE LAST ROMAN–PERSIAN WAR

Al-Tabari (839–923) provides the fullest and most scholarly Muslim account of the last war between Romans and Persians, fought at a time when the Prophet was broadcasting God's message to mankind in the Hijaz. Al-Tabari has long been recognized as a towering intellectual figure, a polymath in religious tradition and law, best known for his *tafsir* (commentaries on the Qur'an) and his *ta'rikh* (universal history of mankind in annalistic form). Throughout his life he enjoyed the relative freedom provided by a steady private income which came from family estates near Amul in the principal plain on the southern shore of the Caspian. Encouraged by his father, he was able to pursue his studies in the principal scholarly centres of the caliphate,

[27] Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing*, 41–75; Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 127–38; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 28–38.

first in Rayy, the chief city of north-west Iran, for five years from the age of 12 under the tutelage of a disciple (at one remove) of Ibn Ishaq, then in Iraq with noted scholars in Baghdad, Wasit, Basra, and Kufa. Later (in the 860s), after a period tutoring the son of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil's vizier, he undertook research trips to Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, at a time of serious political crisis in the metropolitan region. With order restored he returned to Baghdad around 870. There he lived for the rest of his life. He was able to maintain greater independence of patrons than most established scholars and, at the same time, to use his position and court contacts to gain access to caliphal archives and to highly placed informants. His *Annals* is rightly recognized as a remarkable work of scholarship, which makes use of an impressive array of documents and literary sources (far outstripping the modest library accumulated by Theophanes).

Al-Tabari pieced his text together out of antecedent materials. His role was primarily that of compiler and editor. As such, he chose his sources, selected extracts for inclusion, and arranged them so as to form a connected, chronologically ordered narrative. The editorial process required judgement at all stages. Its exercise is discreet, unstated, save for rare occasions when he openly gives an opinion. He produced what was in effect a huge historical database, which rendered obsolete much earlier writing (thereby contributing to its neglect and disappearance in time) and which was regarded by subsequent authors as presenting a canonical account of the early history of Islam. The quality of his history, universally acknowledged and easily demonstrated from the later books dealing with the Abbasid period, testifies to his scholarly acumen and the soundness of his historical judgement.[28]

The core of al-Tabari's account of the Roman–Persian war of 603–30, which runs to some eighty pages in English translation, was based on the official Persian history, the *Khwadaynamag*. This he supplemented with some forty discrete blocks of Arab material, each block being tagged with an *isnad*. His coverage is extensive, although uneven. He dates and explains the outbreak of fighting, summarizes Persian successes in the second phase (the successive conquests of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt), and homes in on Heraclius' final counteroffensive (627–8), placing the decisive battle in north Mesopotamia and naming the Persian general (Rahzadh). Subsequent operations force Khusro to flee headlong from his palace at Dastagerd to Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir. Before the final dénouement, a mass of supplementary material (running to some fifty

[28] C. E. Bosworth, 'Al-Tabari', *EI* (2nd edn.), x. 11–15; Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 362, 364–5; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 35–6, 137, 162, 181. Cf. F. Rosenthal, *The History of al-Tabari*, i: *General Introduction* and (trans.) *From the Creation to the Flood* (Albany, NY, 1989), 5–134.

pages) is presented, by way of embellishing and amplifying the bare narrative given so far. The religious scholar in al-Tabari steps out, as he comments on a Qur'anic reference to the war. He then tells two anecdotes about Khusro's senior general in the west, one short, the other a remoulded version of the story of the interception of Khusro's letter of dismissal, known from Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle and the *Chronicle of Seert*. This he follows with portents presaging Khusro's untimely end and a long narrative about the estrangement of Khusro from Nu'man, his Lakhm client-king, and the resulting rebellion by a coalition of Beduin tribes, in the course of which they won a victory at Dhu Qar. Finally, after listing the last client-kings of Hira and the Persian governors of Yemen, he picks up the main storyline and describes the fall of Khusro II. The main grievances of his subjects are aired at length. The *putsch* is described in a flowing narrative, which culminates in a long confrontation with his chief accuser and in his execution.[29]

Al-Tabari catches the general shape of events but much specific incident is indistinct—like a cluster of trees or a caravansaray seen from a great distance and shimmering in the heat. His dating, where it is precise and can be checked, is nearly but not quite accurate: Phocas' seizure of power, rightly viewed as the immediate trigger for war, is placed one year too late, in Khusro's fourteenth rather than thirteenth regnal year (a mistake which perhaps had its origin in the *Khwadaynamag* since it also occurs in the *History of Khosrov*);[30] Khusro's deposition and execution have slipped forward a day, from 24 and 28 February respectively to 25 and 29.[31] A single figure, Khusro's senior general in the west, Shahrvaraz, has divided into two brothers, Rumiyuzan, conqueror of Syria and Palestine, and Farrukhan who attacked Constantinople in 626. Both manifestations of Shahrvaraz are involved in what is a mutant version of the episode of the intercepted letter: it is Farrukhan who angers Khusro by a derogatory remark and whose execution is ordered; when Rumiyuzan, here called by his honorific title Shahrvaraz, twice refuses to obey the order, Khusro replaces him with Farrukhan and now orders him to execute Shahrvaraz; Shahrvaraz produces his two letters,

[29] *The History of al-Tabari*, v: *The Sasanids, the Byzantines, the Lakmids, and Yemen*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany, NY, 1999), 317–98. Commentary: Howard-Johnston, 'Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity'.

[30] Tab., V. 317. Unequivocal proof that Khusro came to the throne in the year beginning 27 June 590 is provided by his coinage (see S. Tyler-Smith, 'Calendars and Coronations: The Literary and Numismatic Evidence for the Accession of Khusrau II', *BMGS* 28 (2004), 33–65). The *Khwadaynamag* perhaps deliberately measured his reign not from his accession but from the moment Bahram Chobin launched a direct political challenge to his father Hormizd IV in the previous year.

[31] Tab., V. 379, 398.

Farrukhan stands down and Shahrvaraz offers to meet the emperor; the meeting then takes place in a brocade tent, the participants seated on carpets and attended by interpreters, who are executed at its close to keep the proceedings secret.[32] These final touches are additions, evidently fictional, added in transmission. The most detailed and accurate section of al-Tabari's account is the last on the *putsch*. The only mistakes are minor: the original impulse is attributed to court magnates instead of Kavad-Shiroe; the leading conspirator Gurdanaspa, retired commander-in-chief, has mutated into Asfadh Jushnas (Aspadh-Gushnasp), general in command of the cavalry, who visits Khusro in prison and enumerates the charges against him; and his executioner takes revenge for the mutilation and execution of his father.[33]

These slips should not be blamed on al-Tabari, who was simply transmitting a selection of the traditions which had reached him from a variety of sources. Equally he should not be held responsible for the embellishment given to certain episodes—notably the meeting between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz and the long scene of forensic debate between Aspadh-Gushnasp and Khusro, in the course of which a basic set of charges against the shah (corresponding to that in other extant sources) receives much rhetorical elaboration. But he was, of course, responsible for the selection of material which he included, and this makes plain that his view was informed by hindsight. He was primarily concerned with the impact of the last Roman–Persian war on the Arabs. Hence what may seem to be the disproportionate space given to a sideshow of slight importance at the time—the rebellion of Arab clients of the Persians, which was dealt with swiftly in spite of one reverse (at Dhu Qar).[34] Hence too his skimpy coverage of the first two phases of the war (to 622) and his neglect thereafter of operations north of the Taurus and Zagros and silence about the intervention of the Turks. He was anchoring the story of Islam's genesis in wider world history, by picking out the one sura which makes an overt reference to the war and by establishing a few chronological coordinates. Insofar as his dates can be checked, they hit their marks: the rousing of the Prophet is placed in Khusro's twentieth regnal year (609–10) and is followed an indeterminate time later by the battle of Dhu Qar; the *hijra* is dated correctly to Khusro's thirty-third regnal year (622–3); and the news of his death (28 February 628) reaches Muhammad when he is negotiating with the Meccans at Hudaybiya.[35] This is a not unimpressive performance.

[32] Ibid. 318–19, 326–30.
[33] Ibid. 378–9, 382–6, 395–8.
[34] Ibid. 338–70.
[35] Ibid. 330, 361, 381.

4. MUSLIM ACCOUNTS OF THE CONQUESTS (*FUTUH*)

Since one of al-Tabari's principal sources for the life of the Prophet and contemporary Arabian history, the *sira* of Ibn Ishaq, survives largely intact in the recension of Ibn Hisham and has been subjected to minute examination in conjunction with the full range of other preserved traditions, especially as regards the initial Meccan phase, al-Tabari must step back into the general body of early Islamic transmitters and collectors of traditions when historians strive to reconstruct something of the history of Islam in its formative Hijazi phase (as is done in Ch. 12 below). The same holds true for the following dramatic period of dynamic expansion into the neighbouring highly developed provinces of the Roman and Sasanian empires. For accounts of their conquest, some preserved *in extenso*, most only in fragmentary form in later compilations, have been carefully scrutinized and compared by modern historians in the course of efforts to devise narratives of their own, or to demonstrate the impossibility of doing so.

The primary aim of Muslim chroniclers of the conquests was to document the working out of God's will on earth. The conquests were termed *futuh*. This is a noun derived from the verb *fath*, which means 'to open, loosen' and by extension 'to render judgement'. It was probably first used in connection with the agreement reached at Hudaybiya in 628, which, after a year's delay, opened the sanctuary at Mecca to pilgrimage by the Prophet, but was soon associated instead with the conquest of Mecca (630), which was plainly brought about by the judgement of Allah rather than the sword of man.[36] The whole extraordinary series of conquests which followed was viewed as a set of superhuman feats, resulting from direct intervention by a single, omnipotent deity. The members of the Muslim *umma*, from the very top—Muhammad's successors as its leaders and the generals assigned tasks in the field—to the mass of soldiers fighting on foot and horseback, were Allah's earthly agents, carrying out his will, taking his message directly to the rest of mankind. Attention was naturally paid to communications within the *umma* between caliphs and generals, to the identities of the commanders who carried out caliphal instructions in the field, and to the cities and territories which they acquired for the *umma*. The prime concern was with actual occurrences, with outcomes rather than the documentable processes of human deliberation and organization which help mundane historians explain the past. A high priority

[36] G. R. Hawting, 'Al-Hudaybiyya and the Conquest of Mecca: A Reconsideration of the Tradition about the Muslim Takeover of the Sanctuary', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 1–23; C. F. Robinson, 'Conquest', *EQ* i. 397–401.

was put on chronological precision and accuracy. For the record of Muslim successes was the record of the unfolding of Allah's providential plan, as it was carried out by his earthly agents. The *futuh* were carefully arranged in chronological order, individual events being placed in specific years in the new Islamic era initiated at the *hijra*. The problem encountered by later historians was not that of placing an undated or vaguely located event in a particular year-entry (quite insoluble, as the case of Theophanes shows), but that of choosing between alternative precise dates where traditions differed (as they often did).

Muslim historians writing in the ninth and tenth centuries were agreed on the general pattern of the *futuh*. The decisive battle which loosened the Romans' hold over their Middle Eastern provinces, the battle of Yarmuk, fought in broken country below the Golan Heights, preceded the defeat of the main Sasanian army at Qadisiyya on the edge of the Sawad, the Mesopotamian alluvium. The subsequent advances by Muslim forces over Palestine and Syria in the west, over the Sasanian metropolitan region in the east, opened the way for a second outward thrust, into Egypt, northern Mesopotamia (Arab Jazira or 'Island'), and Khuzistan, the extensive and fertile plain on the east bank of the lower Tigris overlooked by the Zagros mountains. There followed (642–52) a longer war for the Iranian highlands, the military and cultural heartland of the Sasanian empire, opening with a second victory over a large Sasanian army which was barring the principal pass across the northern Zagros at Nihawand, and closing with the successful invasion of Khurasan and the killing of the fugitive *shahanshah* Yazdgerd III not far from Merv. Towards the end of this period, the first steps were taken in the west towards challenging Roman maritime hegemony, attacks being mounted on Cyprus and Aradus. After the final victory in Iran, major expeditions could be launched on other fronts: the command centre of what remained of the Roman empire was targeted by a large naval force, while an effort was made to interdict the development of a new steppe power north of the Caucasus by a pre-emptive strike. There was some disguising but no complete concealment of the reverses suffered on both these last offensives (serious storm damage to the fleet and rout of the expeditionary force sent across the Caucasus, either in the course of a failed siege or as it was withdrawing through the Caspian Gates).

The attentive reader will have seen that the ordering of events in Muslim sources accords in general with that which has been reconstructed, stage by stage, from the works of non-Muslim authors. There are minor discrepancies and some major differences, which must be investigated and, if possible, explained. But there is no question of any collective amnesia on the part of the Muslim governing elite and intelligentsia. Al-Tabari and his

contemporaries present a basically sound picture of the development of Muslim strategy over time. This cannot possibly be squared with the notion, which has been widely canvassed among Islamicists in the recent past, that there was an almost unbridgeable gap of fifty years or so between events and their first systematic recording, that only scraps of authentic memory fluttered down from the recollections of thousands of combatants to the scholars of a later generation, who set about collecting and arranging transmitted traditions into some sort of coherent narrative. It is evident that the amount of authentic information transmitted was considerable and that the arrangement was far from arbitrary.[37]

Around the ordered list of key events which forms the skeletal structure of their narratives of the conquests, Muslim historians gathered a great deal of incidental material of many sorts—parables, bits and pieces of information about the exotic and luxurious world of the Sasanian court on the eve of disaster (contrasted with the ragged simplicity of the Beduin), unusual events which presaged the future victory of Islam, heroic, indeed superhuman feats of individual Muslim soldiers in battle, above all anecdotes which gave life and colour to their narratives. There might be a new, serious purpose to the writing of history, but this did not prevent historians from striving to entertain their listeners or readers in the traditional manner of tellers of battle-narratives (*ayyam*). These accretions, which cover all manner of minor episodes and feature a multitude of individuals, were subject to all the processes which can transform traditions in transit—reshaping in the course of retelling, elaboration and embellishment, reinterpretation with the advantage of hindsight, etc. Islamicists are fully justified in casting doubt on the accuracy of much of this material, light entertainment which illustrated the contributions made by Muslims, humble as well as grand, to the propagation of the faith.[38]

While the bare outline of the conquests can be accepted as authoritative, in the light of their sequence, which can be corroborated, it does not follow that

[37] J. B. Glubb, *The Great Arab Conquests* (London, 1980), 123–307; Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 57–69; Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, pp. xxvi–xxix, 240–9, 251–3, 257–62, 264–81.

[38] *The History of al-Tabari*, xii: *The Battle of al-Qadisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*, trans. Y. Friedmann (Albany, NY, 1992), pp. xiv–xvii; R. S. Humphreys, 'The Narrative Art of Sayf b. 'Umar', unpublished paper delivered at a conference on The Life and Works of Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, held in St Andrews (30 August–2 September 1995). Humphreys did a happy turn on the confusion likely to result from a gap of fifty years between the registering of first-hand experiences of the *futuh* by thousands of men, in confusing circumstances, dispersed across huge distances, and their systematic collection from the 690s. He characterized the resulting body of material from which *akhbaris* and historians had to work as a hopelessly jumbled pile of partisan invective with some shards of authentic memory.

the episodes which comprise regional conquest narratives occurred in the form or in the order in which they are recounted. Nor does it follow that the dating given is accurate. There may have been some slippage forwards or backwards, not to speak of confusion introduced by disagreement between different recognized authorities. We need to examine these narratives somewhat more closely. The first campaign, dated to the second year of the caliphate of Abu Bakr (AH 12, 18 March 633–6 March 634), looks like an extension to the north-east of the *umma*'s aggressive military action designed to impose its authority on refractory or potentially refractory Beduin tribes. Once the Hijaz, large parts of the south, and Yamama in the centre of the Arabian peninsula had been coerced into submission, Khalid b. al-Walid, already recognized as a fine commander, was dispatched to subject tribes traditionally loyal to the Sasanians in the swathe of desert fronting Mesopotamia, from the Gulf coast to Dumat al-Jandal in the north.[39] The second campaign, dated to AH 13 (7 March 634–24 February 635), targeted Roman Palestine. Two armies were involved, one advancing via Ayla and across the Negev to the Mediterranean and then up the coastal plain (under the command of ʻAmr b. al-ʻAs, future conqueror of Egypt) and a second detailed to take the Tabuk road on the edge of the desert towards the Balqa' in southern Syria (under three commanders, one of whom, Abu ʻUbayda, was later to be assigned the supreme command).[40] Both won victories over Roman forces, in battles located near Gaza (reported in Muslim sources, as well as *Chron. 724*, but as a minor engagement) and east of the Dead Sea (reported in *History of Khosrov*, with an allusive reference in al-Baladhuri).[41]

At this point there has been some deformation of history. Instead of a steady push north, punctuated by two major victories, at Yarmuk (clearing the way into Syria) and in open country between Damascus and Emesa (destroying the last effective fighting force fielded by the Romans), Muslim sources present the same episodes in different sequences. Three battles are singled out, Yarmuk near the border between Palestine and Syria, Marj al-Rum not far from Damascus, and Ajnadayn in southern Palestine (to be equated probably with the first large engagement near Gaza). The battle of Yarmuk features either early (as in the version transmitted through Sayf b. ʻUmar, where it opens up Palestine as well as Syria to attack) or late (as in the versions of Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi, where a Roman counterattack,

[39] *The History of al-Tabari*, xi: *The Challenge to the Empires*, trans. K. Y. Blankinship (Albany, NY, 1993), 1–68; Bal., I. 387–400; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 176–90; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 103–5.

[40] Tab., XI. 73–4; Bal., I. 165–7; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 112–19.

[41] *Chron. 724*, trans. Palmer, 18–19; ps. Sebeos, 135; Bal., I. 167–8, 173.

after driving the Muslims from Damascus, comes to a bloody end). In all versions, the decisive thrust into Palestine, after the initial attacks, *comes from the north*, from southern Syria, either from Bostra in the Hawran or from Yarmuk, and operations culminate in the siege and capture of Jerusalem.[42]

A key ingredient in these mangled versions of events is a bold march across the desert from Hira to Damascus, undertaken by Khalid, who thus arrives directly from the fringe of Mesopotamia in time to take part in the conquest of southern Syria. This march may well be a fiction (which would explain the serious disagreement about the route taken).[43] For the urgency which dictated it stems from an assumption that the operations being conducted by Khalid in north-east Arabia represented the opening phase of the conquest of the Sasanian empire, which coincided with the campaign in Palestine and Syria. In such circumstances, Khalid had to be spirited as quickly as possible from one major theatre of war in the north-east, where he was known to have been at the tail-end of the *ridda* wars, to southern Syria, where he was known to have taken part in the battle of Yarmuk. In reality, the campaign which took Khalid close to Hira pre-dated the attack on Syria (by a year or so). We also know, from the chronology previously extracted from *Chron. 724* and *Chron. 682*, that the Arabs deferred their attack on Mesopotamia to 636, when the battle for Syria had been all but won. There was then no need either to interleave episodes of the Mesopotamian campaign between phases of fighting in Syria and Palestine since the key engagement at Qadisiyya was fought on 6 January 638, a year and a half or so after the Romans had been driven from Syria, or to compress operations, which in reality were spread over the greater part of five years (636–40), into a much shorter period, thereby almost eliminating an initial swift advance and first blockade of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir (Arab al-Mada'in).[44]

If allowance is made for this chronological slippage, the narratives of later, Mesopotamian campaigns in al-Tabari's *Annals* and other authoritative Muslim sources can be corroborated, at least in outline, from non-Muslim sources. Thus there is no denial of the success of a first large-scale Sasanian counteroffensive in Mesopotamia, under the command of Rustam. We are told (a new and not implausible piece of information) that he organized an insurgency campaign before moving against the Muslims and engaging their

[42] Tab., XI. 73–109, 159–73, XII. 132–4, 174–97; Bal., I. 173–9, 182–93, 198–202, 207–15, 223–7, 230–2; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 128–42, 146–55; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 77–93.

[43] Tab., XI. 109–17, 122–9; Bal., I. 167, 169–72; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 119–27; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 74–7.

[44] Tab., XI. 116–20 gives a brief account of this first offensive thrust, commanded by al-Muthanna, who defeated a Persian army at Babil (Babylon) and then advanced on the capital, capturing Sasanian garrisons on the way. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 190–1.

main force in battle.[45] The Muslims were routed, at what they called the battle of the Bridge, and retreated in disorder to the desert. The only detectable error, as expected, lies in the dating (a mere forty days after the battle of Yarmuk, in summer 634, rather than autumn 637).[46] While a new army was being raised from throughout Arabia, a minor success (which is blown up into a significant victory) was won at Buwayb by al-Muthanna, who had escaped in the rout, unlike his fellow commander Abu ʻUbayd.[47] Then came the decisive battle of the war, at Qadisiyya, a short distance to the south of Hira, where Saʻd, the new Muslim general, defeated a large Sasanian field army in open, orthodox combat.[48] There followed a second advance across the irrigated alluvium and a second attack on al-Mada'in ('the cities'), the Sasanian capital. Mention is made of the evacuation of Yazdgerd and the court from Ctesiphon on the left bank of the Tigris, shortly after the fall of Veh Ardashir on the opposite bank. The account of the subsequent swift capture of Ctesiphon is dominated by anecdotal matter about the crossing of the Tigris on horseback and about various valuable items from the royal treasure which fell into Muslim hands.[49] There is considerable disagreement about the date of Qadisiyya (March 635 for Sayf, October–November 636 for Ibn Ishaq and al-Mada'ini, or AH 16 (2 February 637–22 January 638), which happens to be correct, for al-Waqidi) and about the length of the siege (ranging from two to twenty-eight months).[50]

While the chronology of the main campaign in Mesopotamia may have gone awry, that given for subsidiary operations seems to be reasonably sound. Northern Mesopotamia, still held by Roman forces, with the great curve of the Euphrates acting as a natural outer defence, was taken in an efficiently executed campaign, dated either to 638 (Sayf) or 640 (Ibn Ishaq), involving coordinated attacks from the west and south. It was a crushing response to a failed Roman pincer attack on northern Syria, from the north-west as well as from beyond the Euphrates.[51] A successful campaign also took place in lower Mesopotamia (reported under AH 17 (638)), which penned the regional governor, Hormizdan, back into Khuzistan and forced him to agree

[45] Tab., XI. 179.

[46] Ibid. 188–95; Bal., I. 403–6; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 191–2, 211–12.

[47] Tab., XI. 196–215; Bal., I. 405–8; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 195–202.

[48] Tab., XI. 221–4, XII. 5–132, 134–42; Bal., I. 409–16; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 202–9.

[49] Tab. XII. 142–4; *The History of al-Tabari*, xiii: *The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*, trans. G. H. A. Juynboll (Albany, NY, 1989), 1–36; Bal., I. 417–19; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 209–11.

[50] Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 212.

[51] Tab., XII. 179–80, XIII. 79–89; Bal., I. 269–77, 279–80; C. F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge, 2000), 20–32.

a non-aggression pact. Once the main operations in central Mesopotamia had been successfully completed and Yazdgerd had withdrawn into Iran, the Khuzistan armistice was broken and the whole region was quickly overrun, except for the fortified city of Shustar (Tustar) where Hormizdan and his men held out for several months.[52] The first thrust into Armenia is also reported, under the correct year (AH 19 (640)), although the scale of operations is not appreciated. Attention is focused on the south where, it is noted, Muslim authority was formally recognized through payment of tribute.[53]

Traditions about later campaigns, which were accepted as authoritative by the historians of the ninth and tenth centuries, can, in general, be corroborated. There is a reference in the *History of Khosrov* to the dispatch of an expedition across the Gulf, which raided a considerable distance inland. Al-Tabari places his detailed notice where it should go, after the fall of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir in 640 (and the subsequent defeat of Persian forces which had rallied at Jalula) and before the battle of Nihawand in 642.[54] A brief account is given of the two well-conducted campaigns, correctly dated to 641–2 and targeted respectively on Babylon and Alexandria, which wrested Egypt from Roman control.[55] For the next ten years, as we know from the *History of Khosrov*, Muslim forces concentrated their efforts on the conquest of Iran and its outlying territories in the north-west (Atropatene and Transcaucasia) and north-east (Khurasan). The opening battle, at Nihawand, is correctly dated to AH 21 (10 December 641–29 November 642). So too is the conquest of Khurasan and death of Yazdgerd III which completed the destruction of the Sasanian empire (correctly dated to AH 31, 24 August 651–11 August 652). There is nothing implausible in the account of the gradual advance of Muslim forces as they seized one by one the principal administrative centres in the intervening decade—(1) the paired cities of Jayy and Isfahan at the gateway to the central Zagros, (2) Hamadan in Media, (3) Rayy and Qumis on the northern edge of the plateau, (4) Istakhr and other cities of Persia proper, (5) Kirman from which a successful attack was launched on (6) Nishapur, commanding the approach to Khurasan from the west (thereby preventing any possibility of reinforcements reaching Yazdgerd from the army of Atropatene). Unique information is also provided about Yazdgerd's final, forlorn efforts to engage the interest of Turan in the defence of the old order in Iran,

[52] Tab., XIII. 114–19, 121–6, 132–50; Bal., II. 112–20; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 215–17; Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan', 14–39.

[53] Tab., XIII. 86–7. Ps. Sebeos, 138. 8–139. 3, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 55, names the territories which submitted as Taron, Bznunik', and Ałiovit, lying west and north of Lake Van.

[54] Ps. Sebeos, 139. 13–20, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 56; Tab., XIII. 127–31; Bal., II. 127; M. Hinds, 'The First Arab Conquests in Fars', *Iran*, 22 (1984), 39–53.

[55] Tab., XIII. 162–75; Bal., I. 335–42, 346–7. Cf. Sijpesteijn, 'Arab Conquest of Egypt', 439–44.

which went disastrously wrong and resulted in his flight and murder, as also about the subsequent advance of Muslim forces into the steppes and the submission of Merv-ar-Rud and Balkh. We also hear of an earlier thrust from Kirman into the wild lands of the south-east.[56]

Coverage of events elsewhere is patchy. Nothing is said about operations in Transcaucasia in 643, when Nakhchawan on the Araxes was besieged and diversionary operations were conducted to north (a sweeping raid through Armenia, Iberia, and Albania) and south (in the mountainous country of Vaspurakan, immediately to the east of Lake Van). It was a formidable display of Muslim military might, which was probably passed over because the principal objective, Nakhchawan, held out, and a reverse was suffered by the southern foray.[57] Al-Tabari gives a bare minimum of information, taken mainly from al-Waqidi, about the opening of the Mediterranean war: the rebellion of Alexandria (after the return of Roman forces) is reported, with a date in AH 25 (28 October 645–16 October 646) which is generally accepted;[58] the Muslims counter with an attack on north Africa and secure a huge tribute payment from the Roman governor; the governor's name is given correctly as Gregory, and the dating, to AH 27 (7 October 647–24 September 648), may well also be correct.[59] There is a fuller account of Muʿawiya's naval offensive, which began with an attack (diversionary probably) on Cyprus (correctly dated to AH 28, 25 September 648–13 September 649) and culminated in a grand expedition to the Bosporus. The serious reverse suffered off Constantinople is masked but not completely concealed by an extended account of the battle of the Masts, the rout of the main Roman fleet, commanded by the emperor in person, off the Lycian coast, which opened the way to the capital. Two alternative dates are supplied, AH 31 (24 August 651–11 August 652) according to al-Waqidi and AH 34 (22 July 654–10 July 655, correct)

[56] Tab., XIII. 179–217; *The History of al-Tabari*, xiv: *The Conquest of Iran*, trans. C. R. Smith (Albany, NY, 1994), 1–13, 17–35, 51–78; *The History of al-Tabari*, xv: *The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*, trans. R. S. Humphreys (Albany, NY, 1990), 8–9, 42–5, 69, 78–93, 102–10; Bal., I. 471–5, 481, 485–7, 490–3, II. 3–5, 129–33, 136–7, 159–68. Cf. B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952), 13–21.

[57] Ps. Sebeos, 145. 6–147. 2, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 62. Tab., XIV. 35–7 simply notes, under AH 22 (30 November 642–19 November 643), that the Armenians withdrew to their refuges in the mountains and that they were offered favourable terms (security and freedom of worship in return for submission and service, chiefly military).

[58] Tab., XV. 12. Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 465–75; *PMBZ*, I. 3, 133 (no. 4697, Manuel). An alternative date, one year later, has been suggested in Ch. 5 above (n. 55).

[59] Tab., XV. 18–19, 23–4; cf. Dionysius, trans. Palmer, 167. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 56–7; V. Christides, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa*, BAR Int. Ser. 851 (Oxford, 2000), 39–43, who notes that Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam and al-Kindi give the same date.

according to Abu Maʿshar.[60] The Bosporus is mentioned as the objective but in a notice which is kept separate and placed under AH 32 (12 August 652–1 August 653).[61]

The outward movement of Muslim forces, seemingly irresistible at first, is shown to have slowed in the early 650s. The province of Gurgan (classical Hyrcania) to the east of the Caspian, which was forced to submit earlier, rebelled and succeeded in closing off the route to Khurasan along the northern edge of the Iranian plateau. A force tracking Yazdgerd as he fled from Kirman to Khurasan was lost in a blizzard in Bimand. An expedition into the steppes north of the Caucasus went wrong: despite deploying a full array of siege engines, the Muslims were unable to take their objective, Balanjar, and suffered a serious defeat when caught between the defenders and a relieving force of Turks. The two generals sent to stabilize the situation in Transcaucasia quarrelled.[62] Finally there was the naval reverse outside Constantinople, which Muslims, no less than Christians, could take to be an act of God. Some elements in the gathering crisis are not registered—the frustrating (again by the weather) of a winter campaign into Iberia, a rebellion in Media, and a Roman attempt to exacerbate the crisis by intervening in force in Armenia.[63] But there is no disguising of the change in military fortune, which stoked opposition to ʿUthman's rule.

With ʿUthman's assassination in 656, the expansion of Islam came to a halt as the armies which had been propagating the faith turned to face each other. Five years of civil war followed, somewhat tempered by the shared faith of the participants. The only two neighbouring powers of any significance gained an invaluable breathing space. The Romans used it to reorganize their defences and to put the whole government on a war footing, while the Khazars were able to consolidate their position as the dominant power in the steppes north of the Caucasus. Muslim sources naturally looked inward, homing in on the political and religious differences between nascent factions in the *umma* which now came out into the open.[64] They have little to offer on events in Transcaucasia (where the Emperor Constans II set about projecting Byzantine power with

[60] Tab., XV. 25–7, 28–9, 30–1, 71–2, 74–7, 111–12, 131. Cf. ps. Sebeos, 147. 3–8, 169. 18–171. 24, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 63, 75 and *Chron. 1234*, 173–8, 179–80, whose account of the naval battle resembles in general al-Tabari's but is specific about the site (off the Lycian coast).

[61] Tab., XV. 94.

[62] Ibid. 44–5, 69, 94–9.

[63] Ps. Sebeos, 171. 28–37, 172. 19–173. 5, 174. 4–10, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 73, 77, 79, 80.

[64] Tab., XV. 131–223, 246–51; *The History of al-Tabari*, xvi: *The Community Divided*, trans. A. Brockett (Albany, NY, 1997); *The History of al-Tabari*, xvii: *The First Civil War*, trans. G. R. Hawting (Albany, NY, 1996); *The History of al-Tabari*, xviii: *Between the Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muʿawiya*, trans. M. G. Morony (Albany, NY, 1987), 2–12. Cf. W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997).

considerable success) or the steppe world or the Mediterranean where we would expect some weakening in the Muslim position. Nor do they indicate whether or not Constans II, surely still conscious of his imperial status, made any attempt to destabilize Muslim rule in former Roman provinces, whether by propaganda, naval raiding, or military action, covert or overt.

Both in terms of the substance and the chronology of individual conquest narratives, early Islamic sources can be shown to have performed more than competently. The wholesale criticism to which they have been subjected in the last generation is demonstrably unfair. Their rejection as for the most part a tissue of largely fictitious material, woven together by historians who had lost touch with contemporary witnesses, is unjustified. For most of the material in the set of historical notices which constitute the core of the history retailed is corroborated and may therefore be taken as reliable and ultimately derived from participants. This being so, valuable supplementary information may be extracted from the Islamic sources, not only on matters of detail—such as the two directions of attack on southern Palestine at the beginning of 634 or the pincer movement on northern Mesopotamia around 640—but also on a whole decade of hard campaigning in Iran which finally resulted in the destruction of any vestige of Sasanian power.

There is but one damaged section in this generally sound Islamic version of events. Something has gone seriously awry with the start of the *futuh*: historical reality has been mangled in the account of the conquest of Palestine and Syria while operations in Mesopotamia have been concertinaed into those taking place earlier in the west. Sceptics may quite legitimately argue that this provides strong prima facie evidence for their doubts about the validity of early Islamic historical traditions. It cannot simply be dismissed as an exception, because it is no minor set of events which is in question. An explanation is needed—a reason why material about the opening campaigns has been corrupted in transmission and why corruption seems to be confined to this material.

5. DISRUPTIONS IN THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM AND THE FIRST CIVIL WAR (*FITNA*)

We must remember at all times that Islamic history is religious history, that religion played, as it still plays, an unusually large part in the everyday life and politics of the Muslim community. Historical truth had to compete with

religious truth.[65] If there were a head-on collision, historical truth might well suffer serious damage. Religious truth, though, had to be universally accepted within the Muslim community. If it were sectarian, if it could be contested, it might prevail among some Muslim sub-sets but it would not be able to impose itself as the received version of events, overlaying and suppressing the historical truth throughout the widely dispersed and, in time, fractious peoples of the new Muslim empire.

There are four instances, but only four, in which religious truth has overcome and completely ousted historical truth about crucial episodes in the formative phase of Islam. All four new truths were introduced early on, before the Muslim community grew too large and too diverse for the successful dissemination of a doctored version of events. The first of these religious truths concerns the *hajj*. The incorporation of the polytheistic sanctuary at Mecca and its associated rites into the new monotheist faith can be shown (see Ch. 12, section 4 below) to be a late compromise, forced on the Prophet when it became plain, in 628, that the *umma* was isolated and in danger of defeat at Medina. In the *sira*, however, it is retrojected to a point very soon after the *hijra*, so that it becomes a positive initiative rather than a forced response to crisis. It is virtually certain that this modification to the historical record was introduced by the Prophet himself. The third religious truth concerns the assassination of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law ʿAli, which has been pushed later, to the very end of the first civil war. It is discussed below, as is the fourth, the death of ʿAli's younger son Husayn at the battle of Karbala. The second concerns the opening campaigns of conquest and is rooted in the special place occupied by the Holy Land and Jerusalem in the thought-world of early Islam.

Islam was a universal religion. The message conveyed by the Prophet was addressed to all mankind. It was inclusive. Every effort was made to win over Jews and Christians.[66] Hence the acceptance of their Scriptures as Muslim Scriptures. Hence too the special importance ascribed to Palestine, which was presented as the ancestral land of Arabs as well as Jews.[67] If any single, circumscribed place on God's earth was viewed as sacred, that place was Jerusalem. That it was indeed revered is made evident by the *History of Khosrov* and by many early traditions, above all those describing Muhammad's Night Journey there and back. The scale of investment by Sufyanid and Marwanid caliphs in the development of the Temple Mount and associated infrastructure work in and around Jerusalem leaves no doubt as to the city's

[65] A stark distinction, which I owe to candidate 33197 in History Finals at Oxford in 2006.
[66] Donner, 'From Believers to Muslims', 9–53.
[67] Ps. Sebeos, 135. 30–136. 6.

status as a sacred place, second only to Mecca.[68] It was natural then for Muslims to view the capture of Jerusalem as the culmination of the successes gained in the first phase of conquests. In reality this high point occurred early on, after a single season's successful campaigning by the Muslims in the course of which they won three crushing victories. By Christmas 634 Muslim forces were effectively in control of Palestine, leaving the city authorities, including those at Jerusalem, with little option but to submit before many months passed.[69] Over three years were to pass before the Caliph 'Umar came on a progress, ostentatiously clothed in plain Beduin garb, to the holy city.[70] Jerusalem was undoubtedly the most important gain in religious terms. Its capture was the climactic moment of the campaign. So it is not difficult to explain why the date was adjusted, climactic episode turning into concluding episode, submission being transformed into capture and closely associated with the caliph's visit.[71]

This projection forward of the fall of Jerusalem caused havoc to the narrative of the first conquests. A relatively straightforward tale of northward advance over Roman territory was rendered complicated and confusing, forcing later historians to devise various reconstructions of their own to make sense of the transmitted material and to fit it into the rejigged chronological framework. The decisive victory over the Persians at Qadisiyya, in the course of a distinct second set of campaigns, was pushed back in time, so that it too could be capped by the acquisition of Jerusalem, causing collateral damage to earlier operations in Mesopotamia. Any inclination of Iraqi historians to maintain a clear chronological separation between the western and the eastern campaigns was probably weakened by an incidental benefit of the revised version of events which was to place Qadisiyya ahead of the main operations in Syria, thus giving priority to the conquest of Iraq over that of Syria.[72]

There was a similar rewriting of the history of first *fitna*. It is revealed when early Islamic traditions, as collected, sorted, and arranged in later histories, are compared with the skimpy information supplied by non-Muslim sources.

[68] Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, i; J. Johns (ed.), *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii: *Jerusalem and Early Islam* (Oxford, 1999).

[69] Ps. Sebeos, 136. 29–35, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 53; H. Busse, ''Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 73–119, at 111–14 (proffering a precise date, 2 April 635, for the capitulation of the city).

[70] Theophanes, 339. 18–29; *Chron. 1234*, 161–2; Tab., XII. 189–99. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 151–2; Busse, ''Omar . . . in Jerusalem'; P. M. Cobb, 'A Note on 'Umar's Visit to Ayla in 17/638', *Der Islam*, 71 (1994), 283–8.

[71] H. Busse, ' 'Omar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 149–68.

[72] Qadisiyya: Tab., XII. 49–132, 134–41 (under AH 14, 25 February 635–13 February 636). Syria: Tab., XII. 174–80 (under AH 15, 14 February 636–1 February 637).

It is, of course, only to be expected that outside authors should not show much interest in the particularities of political infighting within the *umma*. The apparent exception—a relatively full account in Dionysius of Tel-Mahre—probably consists largely of Islamic material.[73] Only a bare outline can be pieced together from the few scraps of independent information supplied by two other Christian sources, the *History of Khosrov* and the *Maronite Chronicle*, together with one item (discussed below) from the west Syrian historical tradition which can be shown to go back to Theophilus. It is enough, though, to corroborate the main features of the Muslim narrative with one striking exception (the third religious truth). The two principals in the long and divisive civil war were ʿAli, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and Muʿawiya, governor of Syria. There was large-scale fighting, involving four regional armies. An important contingent in Egypt kept its distance from both sides for a while. ʿAli was assassinated. Finally Muʿawiya was publicly acknowledged as God's earthly agent and leader of the Muslim community at a formal investiture ceremony.

That is the thin record of events provided by external sources. The only chronological indications are to be found in the *Maronite Chronicle*, which groups its notices in dated year-entries (running from the beginning of October to the end of September). There is a substantial fragment on first *fitna* which picks up the story from the assassination of ʿAli (placed at Hira, rather than at nearby Kufa) and a visit by Muʿawiya to receive the submission (plainly temporary) of the Arab forces there. These are the last two notices before the beginning of the year-entry for 658–9 which, besides an item (the last) on the execution of Constans II's brother Theodosius, contains reports on a violent earthquake in Palestine (dated to a Friday in June 659), a religious disputation at Damascus in the presence of Muʿawiya between Jacobite and Maronite bishops (dated to the same month), and a second earthquake on Sunday 9 June (which dates did indeed coincide in 659). It follows that ʿAli's death must have occurred before the end of September 658. The fragment ends with (1) the proclamation of Muʿawiya as caliph, after his ceremonial endorsement in July 660, (2) an issue of coins to mark his accession, (3) the transfer of the capital from Medina to Damascus, (4) a note about an unseasonal frost on Wednesday 13 April 662 which ruined white grapevines, and (5) Muʿawiya's decision to renew the war with the Romans (taken presumably in 662).[74]

[73] *Chron. 1234*, 181–7. Cf. R. Hoyland, 'Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century: An Inquiry into Inter-Cultural Traffic', *ARAM* 3 (1991), 211–33, at 224–6.

[74] Ps. Sebeos, 175. 32–176. 21, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 83; *Chron. Maron.*, 29–32.

General corroboration is thus to hand for the Muslim sources' dating of the civil war to 656–61, but not for their placing of 'Ali's death in AH 40 (17 May 660–6 May 661). *In Islamic historical traditions, 'Ali's death has been pushed three years forward, from 658, before the worst of the fighting, to 661 at the very end of the civil war.* This dating may be questioned, in any case, since neither of the alternative dates given, 11 or 17 Ramadan, fell on the specified day of the week, Friday, in AH 40.[75] It had the effect of connecting Mu'awiya's final victory and reunification of the caliphate with the death of 'Ali. 'Ali dies and resistance collapses. This was a message which suited both sides. For the 'Alids, it established the vital link between the Prophet's kin and the successful conduct of policy, thus strengthening their claims to rule. For Mu'awiya, it helped to obliterate memories, individual and collective, of a long, hard-fought war to impose his authority on the caliphate.

For the constitutional issue at the heart of the crisis—whether supreme religious and political authority within the *umma* belonged as of right to the Prophet's kin or the caliph should be elected in a small forum (*shura*) of acknowledged leaders of the community—was much more than an abstract question of hereditary monarchy versus oligarchy, but one which set two interest groups within the *umma* against each other. The fundamental difference (which is at the heart of the story told in the *sira*, examined in the next chapter) was that between early and late converts, between Quraysh who emigrated with the Prophet and their Medinan helpers, on the one hand, and the great majority of the Quraysh, on the other, who stayed put and fought to preserve Mecca's political and economic hegemony in the Hijaz.[76] Mu'awiya himself was the son of Abu Sufyan, who directed the Meccan war of reprisal after the battle of Badr and took a tough line in the negotiations at Hudaybiya. Father and son only accepted Islam when the whole city submitted to the Prophet in 630. No wonder then that there was resistance from many quarters to Mu'awiya, *for several years* after 'Ali's death. No wonder that he had to claw his way to power by main force, that there was widespread resistance to the imposition of Sufyanid authority on the *umma*. Success for Mu'awiya would signal a Meccan political victory in counterpoint to the religious victory won by Medina in the Prophet's lifetime.

Given this mangling of history, it is hard to know how to evaluate Muslim accounts of the civil war. There is nothing to arouse suspicion in what is reported about the origins of the crisis—growing opposition to 'Uthman's rule (and the leading role of Egyptians in voicing discontent), the killing of 'Uthman by a lynch-mob in Medina, and 'Ali's seizure of power without

[75] Tab., XVII. 212–22. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 308–10.

[76] Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 28–77, 141–51.

reference to a *shura*.[77] Nor is there any reason to reject the narrative of subsequent events in which ʿAli plays a central part, especially as it is in effect a record of the discord which he provoked. It is likely, however, that the various challenges he faced, confined in reality to the two years preceding his death, have been spread out over the five years of civil war and may have ousted material about the manoeuvring, political and military, of regional leaders which ended when Muʿawiya secured general recognition.

Listed in the order in which they are described, the challenges came (1) from the Prophet's widow ʿA'isha and two respected Companions, al-Zubayr and Talha, who raised a force from Basra but were defeated without difficulty (at the battle of the Camel, which is dated to December 656),[78] (2) from Muʿawiya who ignored his dismissal by ʿAli and declared his opposition, using his kinship to ʿUthman to demand that his murderers be brought to justice,[79] (3) from radicals who seceded when ʿAli proved willing to negotiate with Muʿawiya (called Kharijites because they had gone out (*kharaja*) from ʿAli's army) and were surrounded and annihilated at the battle of the Canal,[80] (4) from a dangerous military force in Egypt, camped at Kharbita in the Delta, not far from Alexandria, which refused to accept the authority of the governor appointed by ʿAli,[81] (5) from the region of Basra where an emissary of Muʿawiya's, sheltered by the Banu Tamim, led a campaign of subversion,[82] and (6) from Khuzistan where a group of Kharijites from Kufa, led by al-Khirrit b. Rashid, gained support from a heterogeneous collection of non-Muslims—provincials, Kurds, Beduin, and converts who apostasized back to Christianity.[83] The first three episodes may confidently be dated to 656–8, since they form integral parts of the central narrative. This has ʿAli, who drew his initial support from the Hijaz and Kufa, quickly dispose of the first challenge, only to face serious opposition from Muʿawiya who commanded the powerful army of Syria. The climactic moment came when two armies confronted each other at Siffin on the Euphrates. Fighting, apart from some preliminary skirmishes, was averted by an appeal, from the Sufyanid side, to their shared faith and membership of a single religious community. At this, with some dissent on the ʿAlid side (leading to the secession of a first group of Kharijites, who rejected worldly politics and insisted that it

[77] Tab., XV. 131–223. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 113–46.

[78] Tab., XVI. 52–80, 95–172. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 147, 155–83.

[79] Tab., XVI. 180–97, XVII. 16–18, 21–9. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 184–204.

[80] Tab., XVII. 90, 100–4, 110–40. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 238–62.

[81] Tab., XVI. 183–4, XVII. 142–4, 150–2. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 153, 191–2, 222, 264–5.

[82] Tab., XVII. 165–71. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 278–83.

[83] Tab., XVII. 171–96. Cf. J. Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall* (Calcutta, 1927), 86–8.

was for Allah to determine the outcome), they agreed to have recourse to arbitration.[84]

The arbitration, which eventually took place in the course of AH 37 (19 June 657–8 June 658) either at Dumat al-Jandal or at Adhruh, implicitly decided in favour of election by *shura*.[85] This severely damaged ʿAli's standing, damage which would have been compounded if, as is more than possible, news of serious disaffection in Egypt was already circulating. His assassination should probably be dated to the first few months of AH 38 (9 June 658–28 May 659). That is the year-entry which also contains an account of the dénouement in Egypt—victory for the army sent by Muʿawiya and commanded by his close ally ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, the original conqueror of Egypt, who joined forces with the disaffected troops at Kharbita.[86] This success, which placed the massive resources of Egypt under Muʿawiya's control, immeasurably improved his position. The main phase of the civil war probably opened now. The fighting and bloodshed reported by the *History of Khosrov* is registered in Islamic sources, but it takes the form of opportunistic attacks launched by Muʿawiya from Syria, which, in combination with propaganda and subversion, are presented as weakening the ʿAlid cause in Iraq and Arabia. Conflict is also reported in Iran, where rebel governors were brought to heel by ʿAlid forces led by Ziyad, who then established himself in a new stronghold outside Istakhr, the capital of the Fars region (Persia proper). There was fighting later between Ziyad and Kurds.[87]

Muslim sources provide a full account of the negotiations which brought the civil war to an end. Muʿawiya is shown bringing intense pressure, military and political, to bear on ʿAlid leaders and forces in their Iraqi heartlands. Hasan, the senior of ʿAli's sons, was left with little choice but to negotiate a surrender. The same was true of Ziyad in Iran. In his case the invitation to submit was backed by the arrest of one of his sons who was initially threatened with execution. Hasan agreed to relinquish his claim to the caliphate and to retire to the Hijaz in return for a substantial annual pension (in the form of the tax revenue of Darabjird) and for an undertaking that there would be no public attack on ʿAli's memory. Ziyad followed suit some time later in AH 42 (26 April 662–14 April 663) after lengthy negotiations which are described in detail and which were remarkably successful, transforming Ziyad before long into a key figure in Muʿawiya's regime.[88]

[84] Tab., XVII. 1–90. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 204–47.
[85] Tab., XVII. 90–2, 103–110. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 250, 254–7, 283–7.
[86] Tab., XVII. 142–65. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 264–9.
[87] Tab., XVII. 198–209, XVIII. 14. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 287–95, 297–308.
[88] Tab., XVIII. 2–12, 14–18, 26–31, 73–4, 76–87. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 311–39.

Husayn remains a shadowy figure in the background, at his elder brother's side. He plays no part in these events, save for one tradition which has him object to the deal negotiated by Hasan.[89] It may be conjectured, however, that he was not content with merely voicing his dissent but, in the manner of a true Kharijite, unwilling to compromise, was ready to resort to arms, however apparently hopeless the cause. The famous episode in which he and a small band of committed followers were trapped at Karbala as they tried to make their way to Kufa, a pro-'Alid bastion, and then died martyrs' deaths in battle against overwhelming odds has, however, been peeled off first *fitna* and attached to the beginning of second *fitna* in all Muslim sources. Once 'Ali's death was pushed to the very end of first *fitna*, Husayn's brave but forlorn enterprise was shunted yet further into the future. It ended up in a context where it made no sense: Husayn at first merely replicates the movements of Ibn al-Zubayr, the real leader of anti-Umayyad dissidents in the 680s, who evades arrest at Medina and escapes to Mecca; he then responds to an unexplained appeal from Kufa by setting off across the desert, but is intercepted.[90]

The battle of Karbala, which is commemorated every year throughout the Shi'i world, with graphic retellings and re-enactments, with ceremonies of public mourning and rhythmic, ritual self-flagellation, has, so it seems, been misdated some twenty years too late, being placed at the very beginning of AH 61 (October 680) rather than in AH 40 or 41 (beginning on 17 May 660 and 7 May 661 respectively).[91] This is the fourth religious truth mentioned above. Positive evidence for this conjecture is to be found in Theophilus of Edessa. He was, as we have seen, well aware of the evolving Islamic view of the past, but, in this instance, took issue with the official line. He stated firmly that first *fitna* did not end with the assassination of 'Ali. Fighting continued, in the course of which 'Mu'awiya did battle with al-Husayn in the east', Husayn and most of his army being slaughtered 'at a place called Karbala'. Reference is also made to the thirst which tortured Husayn before he died.[92]

[89] Tab., XVIII. 5.

[90] Ibid. XIX. 2–10, 16–17, 22–8, 65–179. Cf. G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750* (2nd edn., London, 2000), 50–1.

[91] A battle in high summer in AH 41 would explain the thirst which tortured Husayn's men better than one which cannot have taken place earlier than October in AH 61.

[92] The fullest version of Theophilus' anecdotal account of first *fitna* is given in an excerpt from the Greek translation and continuation of Theophilus' chronicle included in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *DAI*, c. 21. 65–110. It ends with a reference to the continued resistance of both 'Ali's sons, their defeat, and the bloodbath which followed (c. 21. 106–10). The quoted phrases are taken from *Chron. 1234*, 185–6, which gives more detail, naming Husayn and locating the battle.

It was almost certainly supersession of historical reality by the third religious truth—the positing of a close link, chronological and causal, between the assassination of ʿAli and the end of first *fitna*—which dislodged the battle of Karbala from its proper place in the narrative of early Islamic history. Thus relocated it became an integral part of this consciously adopted and, in due course, universally accepted version of a fraught phase in the early history of Islam. As in the case of the second religious truth, there was some collateral damage: the narrative of the last three years of civil strife was thinned out as well as misplaced relative to ʿAli's death. In particular, events taking place in the outer reaches of the caliphate are relatively neglected. In the case of Transcaucasia, there is a compensating flow of information from the *History to 682*, but we are left almost entirely in the dark for Khurasan, Transoxiana, Kirman, and Sistan, apart from a fleeting, vague reference in the *History of Khosrov.*

6. HISTORY OF EVENTS FROM THE END OF THE FIRST CIVIL WAR (661) TO THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE (717–718)

There is no further deliberate reworking of history on this scale after the conclusion of the first civil war. The gap between events and the first recorders and arrangers of historical material has narrowed to little more than a generation. More information seems to have been transmitted and picked up, to judge by a discernible increase in the average number of notices per year-entry about military and naval activity, domestic politics, appointments, and deaths which ultimately made their way into the *Annals* of al-Tabari. Such news items, which constitute the core of the *Annals*, are, as before, embellished with varied anecdotal matter and extensive accounts of the activities of religious radicals. It is possible that al-Tabari showed an unusual level of interest in the manifestations of religious dissent in the formative political period of Islam—he was, after all, first and foremost a religious scholar—but there can be little doubt about the political significance of radical conspiracies and, in particular, of plots which resulted in revolutionary action, however small the numbers involved. For those involved were challenging the whole basis of the emerging Islamic state. They were rejecting the many accommodations required for the ordering of civil society in an imperfect world so recently governed by non-Muslim authorities.

Al-Tabari was therefore probably reflecting the balance of material received by his generation in the disproportionate attention which he gave to religious dissidents during first *fitna*. He fleshed out a relatively meagre record of the central political and military conflict with extraneous detail on such matters as (1) the valour of especially devout Muslims (the *qurra*ʿ) on ʿAli's side in the skirmishing at Siffin, (2) the actions of Kharijites who objected to the arbitration agreement, renounced the finery of the world, and hoped to set up a godly society in the former Sasanian capital, and (3) the mixed rebel movement (including Kharijites) led by al-Khirrit in Khuzistan at a relatively late stage in first *fitna*.[93] He continued to track the behaviour of radical groups after the consolidation of Muʿawiya's rule. Thus he presented a blow-by-blow account of what appears at first sight to have been a minor episode, a police operation which went wrong. On receipt of intelligence that a plot was being hatched by radicals in Kufa, a house was raided at night and arrests made, despite protestations from those caught that they were there learning to recite the Qur'an. The group then moved to Hira, but again their meeting place was discovered. To catch as many as possible, tribal chiefs were asked to produce names of troublemakers, but before a new swoop could be organized, the Kharijite leader, al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllifah, gave orders for his followers to slip out of Hira in small groups. There follows a detailed account about the movements of the radicals, armed, ready to fight, eager to die for their faith, who hoped to seize al-Madaʿin and to proclaim their cause from the old Sasanian capital. Various sources, including a Kharijite one, contributed to the narrative, which covers their attempts to evade two pursuing forces, the fierce resistance which they put up, and their last stand at Sabat after al-Mustawrid called on them to dismount and to earn Paradise.[94]

Other large blocks of material similarly enliven the bare record of major events which forms the spine of al-Tabari's history. The theme of the Fugitive, hunted by the authorities, repeatedly escaping from tight corners, recurs in stories of the poet al-Farazdaq (beginning with his arrest in Basra for selling his clothes and leaving himself naked) and of Hujr b. ʿAdi, an outspoken ʿAlid, and his companions after Ziyad cracked down on free speech on taking over the governorship of Kufa.[95] Political intrigue is the theme of several anecdotes: Muʿawiya sets two leading figures in Medina against each other; advice is given on how to secure the succession of Muʿawiya's son Yazid; another Yazid, b. Mufarigh, is arrested in Basra for allegedly defaming the sons of Ziyad, is sent first for trial in Sistan (Sakastan), then to Syria when

[93] Tab., XVII. 39–78, 110–40, 171–96.
[94] Ibid. XVIII. 33–68 (under AH 43 (15 April 663–3 April 664)).
[95] Ibid. 103–19, 123–62.

Muʿawiya takes over the case, is allowed to settle in Mosul where he marries and whence later, with permission from one of Ziyad's sons, ʿUbaydallah, he moves to Kirman.[96]

Such colourful material about the internal life of the caliphate cannot be checked against independent, non-Muslim testimony. Some of it has clearly been embellished in the telling, but the kernel of each episode can probably be trusted. It adds greatly to understanding of the early caliphate, and makes all too much sense to the modern observer. For the thought-world of Muslim radicals at the beginning of the twenty-first century is in general that of their forebears in the middle of the seventh century, save that Osama b. Laden and his followers are, for the moment, concentrating their fire on non-Muslims.

The material which filtered through to al-Tabari on Muslim activity in the Mediterranean and on the land frontier with the Romans between the two civil wars can be tested against the record of non-Muslim sources, especially those belonging to the main west Syrian tradition. In the generally rich Armenian historical tradition information about secular affairs dries up after the end of first *fitna*, save for accounts of two visits, by invitation, of Juansher, leading prince of Caucasian Albania, to Muʿawiya's court in Damascus, and brief notices in a late seventh-century chronicle about first *fitna* and a Khazar invasion of Transcaucasia in 685.[97] Byzantine sources too are sparing with information until the start of the first reign of Justinian II in 685. So the main burden of corroboration falls on what can be reconstructed of the lost history of Theophilus of Edessa.

Attacks on the east Roman empire are recorded in every single year of Muʿawiya's reign, once he decided to resume the war in the west in 662. The notices are brief. The only details normally given are about the season of the year (if it was winter), the name of the commander (but not always), and that it took place by sea, if it did so. The principal objective is seldom specified, unless it was taken (as was the Tunisian island of Djerba, in 669, and Rhodes in 673).[98] The exceptions are a winter attack on Antioch, presumably Antioch-in-Pisidia (667–8), an attack on Constantinople (in 669/70), temporary occupation of part of north Africa (revealed by an incidental reference to the laying out of Qayrawan under AH 50 (29 January 670–17 January 671)), and a raid into Isauria (680).[99] It is a spare record which can be corroborated in general from material preserved in extant derivatives of Theophilus of

[96] Ibid. 172–5, 183–7, 201–6.

[97] References at Ch. 4, 119 (Movses D) and Ch. 13 n. 11 (Pʿilon).

[98] Tab., XVIII. 94, 166. Cf. W. E. Kaegi, 'The Interrelationship of Seventh-Century Muslim Raids into Anatolia with the Struggle for North Africa', *BF* 28 (2004), 21–43 at 27–8.

[99] Tab., XVIII. 91, 93, 94, 102–3.

Edessa. There may have been chronological slippage in places, but the only certain case involves a garbled notice about Yazid's expedition in 668 to Chalcedon (misdated to 669/70 and supposed to have culminated in an attack on Constantinople itself). There is little, then, of the shimmer, akin to a heat-haze, detected in al-Tabari's version of the last Roman–Persian war. In particular, the climax of Mu'awiya's western offensive, in 669–71, which we know to have been targeted on north Africa and Constantinople, is picked up by a flurry of notices about expeditions by land and sea in the entries for AH 49 (9 February 669–28 January 670)–AH 51 (18 January 671–7 January 672).[100]

The narrative is satisfactory insofar as it goes, but it is incomplete. The destruction of a naval and military task force sent against Lycia in 674, a victory which helped ensure the survival of a truncated but independent Christian Roman state (Byzantium) into the middle ages, is passed over in silence in the most authoritative Muslim narrative, that of al-Tabari.[101] Nor is there any mention in that text of a Roman counterattack, made possible by that victory, which saw Roman special forces, the Mardaites, land on the coast of northern Syria within a few years, seize the mountains of Lebanon, and set off a Christian insurgency which eventually affected much of the Muslim-held Middle East, from the Amanus mountains (beyond Antioch) in the north to the environs of Jerusalem in the south. A sketchy history of the Mardaite venture has to be pieced together out of a few notices in Theophilus of Edessa, supplemented by information on the local insurgents, the Djaradjima, supplied by al-Baladhuri.[102]

The remarkable discretion of al-Tabari almost certainly reflects the efficacy of contemporary efforts to play down the significance of these reverses in the west, perhaps by trumpeting successes which were being achieved at the same time in central Asia (duly picked up and noted by al-Tabari, under AH 54 (16 December 673–5 December 674) and 56 (25 November 675–13 November 676))[103]and by carefully enumerating the land raids on Asia Minor carried out every winter through the 670s.[104] Umayyad official sources may also have laid down a successful smokescreen to hide the extent of their failures in the

[100] Tab., XVIII. 93, 96, 102–3, 122. The commanders of the 670–1 attacks on Byzantium are named correctly as Fadalah b. 'Ubayd al-Ansari (who led the advance force in 668) and Busr b. Abi Artat (ibid. 96, 122)—to judge by the independent notices in Theoph., 353. 6–7, 9–10 (probably taken from Theophilus but not picked up by the other derivatives). A third figure, Sufyan b. Awf al-Azdi, who is reported to have campaigned in 670, is not mentioned by Theophanes—perhaps because his was a subsidiary role, say that of conducting a diversionary raid.

[101] Theoph., 354. 11–17; Agap., 492; Mich. Syr., II. 455.

[102] Theoph., 355. 6–10; Agap., 492–3; *Chron. 1234*, 195; Mich. Syr., II. 455; Bal., I. 246–8.

[103] Tab., XVIII. 179, 190.

[104] Ibid. 103, 122, 165, 166, 172, 180, 183, 191, 192, 199, 208.

Mediterranean, magnifying one naval success (temporary seizure of Rhodes as a useful forward base for the advance into the Aegean planned for 674) and turning it into a seven-year occupation (brought to an end when Muʿawiya died).[105]

There was little need of gloss or spin for a generation after ʿAbd al-Malik gained control of Iraq in 691. Victory followed victory in all theatres of war. Muslim authority was reasserted in Transcaucasia (692–4) and steady inroads were made into the Roman borderlands of Cilicia and Armenia IV (701–11). Wealthy regions were annexed after a few years' campaigning: the whole of north Africa in the decade following the capture of Carthage in 697–8; almost all Sogdia between 705 and 715. However, there was a need for obfuscation over the great assault by land and sea on Constantinople (717–18) which ended in abject failure—not that the scale of the effort made is disguised. The opening operations in 716–17 are reported. There is some embellishment about the subtle game played by the leading Roman general, Leo, who, we know from Theophanes, fobbed off Maslama, the Muslim commander-in-chief, with false hopes while he prepared to seize the throne. The problems encountered by the main land force are also noted—a desperate shortage of supplies in winter and harassing attacks by Bulgars. But this crisis is misplaced one year early, in winter 716–17 rather than 717–18, and perfect silence reigns about the main reason for the crisis, a small naval action at an early stage of the siege which gave Roman forces command of the sea and cut the besiegers' supply lines. The abandonment of the siege and the further losses suffered during the withdrawal are also passed over, the year-entry for AH 99 (14 August 717–2 August 718) being take up by the death of Sulayman and the accession of ʿUmar II.[106]

Al-Tabari and his predecessors back to al-Zuhri and ʿUrwa were therefore as prone to pick up material put into circulation by the authorities as late Roman or Sasanian historians. As before much of this probably derived from government communiqués. We should expect a fair amount of embellishment, filleting of damaging reports, exaggeration of success, and (as has been

[105] It is likely but not proven that Rhodes was captured in AH 53 (27 December 672–15 December 673) (ibid. 166). Alternatively, the story may be pure fiction, a concoction gradually put together by successive *akhbaris*, as is argued by Conrad, 'Conquest of Arwad', 364–86. He presents it as a projection forward by twenty years of a complex *khabar* in which the capture of Aradus in 650 has been conflated with that of Rhodes in 653, the composite island being relocated near Constantinople, and a seven-year occupation has been conjured up out of the period separating the start of Muʿawiya's naval offensive (649) from the outbreak of first *fitna* (656).

[106] *History of al-Tabari*, xxiv: *The Empire in Transition*, trans. D. S. Powers (Albany, NY, 1989), 30, 39–42, 74.

detected in sources covering the last Roman–Persian war) disinformation. Critical faculties should be on a high state of alert to pick up evidence of glossing and deliberate distortion. There is no reason to distinguish the behaviour of the caliphate with respect to news-management from that of the great powers of late antiquity. As will be argued in Chapter 14, an Islamic state can be said to have existed from the *hijra*. It had a constitution from the start. It was autocratic and tightly organized. Central control inevitably loosened as it expanded at breakneck speed, but remained effective save during two long bouts of civil war. The authorities at the centre were more than capable of gathering and disseminating news across the whole caliphate. As in the two preceding empires, news-management was facilitated both by the size of the *Dar al-Islam* (thus advances in one region could mask reverses in another, as in the 670s) and by the resources available at the centre of the massive new religio-political state for the dissemination of propaganda. Seldom has the deployment of a state's resources for the purpose of influencing public perceptions of events been more effective than in the case of the Umayyad caliphate in 718, when the reality of defeat before Constantinople was masked by a blast of propaganda about 'Umar II as exemplary Islamic ruler, pious and determined to improve the religious and social ordering of the world he governed.[107]

7. CONCLUSION

Early Islamic historical writing should not be viewed as something strange, prey to unusual forces. All ancient historians made extensive use of orally transmitted information. There is no reason to suppose that material incidental to the main politico-religious storyline of early Islamic historians was liable to mutate more swiftly as it passed from informant to informant than that picked up by historians writing in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic. What is unusual is the volume of such material, which makes it possible to watch the evolution of such anecdotal matter over time. Nor can the assumptions of historians at work in a later age be shown to have exercised more influence than ever before over their perception and presentation of the past. It is true that they conjure up a picture of an early Islamic state, effectively governed from the centre, with regular communication between caliph and chief officers in the provinces. But such is the volume of evidence from within

[107] A. Borrut, 'Entre tradition et histoire: genèse et diffusion de l'image de 'Umar II', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 58 (2005), 329–78.

Islamic traditions and the degree of corroboration from without that the notion of a centralized state should not be rejected as an anachronistic imposition of authors at work in the ninth and tenth centuries.[108] Finally it is very unlikely that there was more deliberate manipulation of news by the authorities at the time and more consequent deception of historians subsequently than in the precursor Roman and Sasanian empires. The set of concise, information-rich notices which comprises the core of the material assembled and edited by al-Tabari and his fellow historians on the early Marwanid caliphate is easily corroborated, like that on Mu'awiya's reign, by a swift comparison with Byzantine and Syrian sources where their coverage overlaps. There was, as has already been noted, little occasion for gloss or spin in an era of victorious expansion, the only identifiable cases being concealment of the scale of the reverses suffered in the Mediterranean in the 670s and the successful effort to portray 'Umar II as a paragon religious ruler.

Early Muslim historians were, however, unusual in one respect. For them religion loomed larger than it had done in other developed cultures. Islam was a religious more than a political movement. The *umma* was merely the vehicle for the dissemination and practice of the true faith on earth. Naturally historians' attention was drawn towards religious disagreement, and to the political conflict which it might generate. There is nothing disproportionate, taking account of this cultural context, in the amount of space devoted by al-Tabari to sectarian dissent and action in the course of first *fitna*. Nor in his yet more attentive documentation of similar phenomena during second *fitna*. So it is that he writes much more about social and sectarian conflict in the anti-Umayyad sphere centred on Iraq and Mecca than about two vital Umayyad gains in 684, the battle of Marj Rahit near Damascus which brought factional conflict within Syria to a bloody end and the successful seizure of Egypt from the representative of the anti-Umayyad claimant, Ibn al-Zubayr.[109] Political infighting in Kufa, from which Mukhtar (son of Abu 'Ubayd, the general killed at the battle of the Bridge) emerged victorious late in 685, is described at length, as are subsequent Kufan operations which resulted in the defeat of an invading Syrian army in summer 686 and the final Zubayrid campaign a year later which suppressed the rebellion and killed Mukhtar.[110] The spotlight also falls on a Kharijite group which challenged Ibn al-Zubayr's authority in eastern Arabia, Khuzistan, and Fars and distracted him from the ever-growing Umayyad threat in the west.[111]

[108] Contra Noth and Conrad, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 55–7.
[109] Tab., XX. 56–64.
[110] Ibid. 80–97, 105–22, 124–60, 182–225, XXI. 1–62, 69–73, 85–118.
[111] Ibid. XX, 97–105, 164–75, XXI. 122–34.

A great deal of usable material was thus transmitted to the classical exponents of early Islamic history in the ninth and tenth centuries. This makes it highly unlikely that there was a general breakdown in communication at an early stage, between the generation of Companions who oversaw the *futuh* and that of the first scholars who recorded the life of the Prophet and the feats of the *umma* which he founded. Traditions were transmuted in transit, but those affected were mainly entertaining narratives which supplemented and illustrated a core of pithy political notices. Such of these notices as can be checked against reliable non-Muslim sources have been shown to preserve authentic historical data, and their dating has been corroborated, with three notable exceptions (where religious truth supervened). The scholarly bent, made manifest in citations of sources, can thus be seen to have borne fruit. Not that Muslim historians were immune to error, especially as regards chronology. Far from it. Numerals were all too easily corrupted and they faced a perennial problem in placing events in specific years, given that, under the Muslim calendar, the religious year slipped remorselessly ten days backwards relative to each seasonal year.

In aggregate the traditions conserved by medieval Muslim historians provide a substantial body of additional information for exploitation in modern reconstructions of the history of the Middle East in the seventh century. Christian sources, whether composed in Byzantium, Armenia, Syria, or Iraq, were parochial by comparison with Muslim historical works which picked up information from every corner of the caliphate. So it is primarily to Muslim sources that we must look for information on the progress of Islam and the reactions of neighbouring peoples north of the Caucasus, in central Asia, and in north Africa, as well as for infill on Middle Eastern and Mediterranean warfare. They also convey the atmosphere of the time as effectively as the most evocative of Christian sources, whether saints' lives, the dialogue in the *Doctrina Iacobi*, or the poetry of George of Pisidia. For the early Islamic world was viewed from below as well as from above. Indeed the whole balance shifted from court-centred political history to the history of the individual believer who marched and fought, conquered and settled, adapted to circumstance and acquired wealth, argued and rebelled, looked forward to Paradise and embraced death . . . Traditional political history was confined to curt, sober notices of deaths, appointments, and important events, while the lives and exploits of great men and small spread like rampant vegetation through historical texts. Above all, tales of sectarian life, culminating in armed uprisings, to which al-Tabari and his peers allocated so much space, give insight into the inner, ideological life of the Islamic community.

12

The Life of the Prophet

It is with a fair measure of confidence that we may turn back to the late sixth and early seventh centuries and start delving into the mass of surviving historical traditions about the Prophet's life (the *sira*) and about conditions in the Hijaz and Mecca at the time. While much of the anecdotal detail may have mutated in the course of transmission to later generations, the general picture painted of the world in which Muhammad grew up should be accepted: of the Hijaz as a land of settled and nomadic peoples, among whom status and relationships were expressed in genealogical terms, where leaders acquired authority as much by achievement as by birth; of segmentary tensions showing at many levels, generating rivalries which were worked out within a framework of nomad–sedentary symbiosis and according to a Beduin social and moral code governing behaviour and relations both in oases and in the desert; and, finally, of Mecca's regional hegemony which was firmly established by the middle of the sixth century. It is also feasible to enter Mecca itself and to examine the institutions which underpinned its dominant position—the development of the *haram*, the sacred enclosure around the Ka'ba, as a pilgrimage centre for the whole region, and the *ilaf* agreements reached with nomad tribes, which secured safe passage for long-distance trading caravans in return for a share of the profits.

Many of the doubts generated by a very different, much more suspicious attitude to Muslim sources on the part of Islamicists in the course of the last thirty years should have been allayed by the extensive investigation undertaken in the preceding chapter. Early twenty-first-century historians should not be too nervous of returning to the more positive outlook of Montgomery Watt or Maxime Rodinson, who, a generation and a half ago, sought to tease real history out of the traditions picked up and preserved in ninth- and tenth-century Muslim texts. They should be ready to reconstruct the outlines of Muhammad's career, before and after the first revelation which he received, and to place it in its immediate Meccan and Medinan settings and against the wider Hijaz and Arabian background.

1. ISLAMIC TRADITIONS ABOUT SIXTH-CENTURY ARABIA

Given the remoteness of the Hijaz, Yemen, and eastern Arabia from our chief non-Muslim sources of written documentation in the east Roman empire, we cannot expect much independent contemporary testimony about the political configuration of Arabia in the sixth century or of events, however dramatic their impact might have been within Arabia. But there is some and it reveals that later Muslim traditions were firmly rooted in the pre-Islamic past. Surprising as it may seem, there is corroboration for the three principal episodes picked out in medieval Islamic sources from the history of Arabia in the sixth century—the transformation of the kingdom of Himyar (Yemen), which had long dominated south Arabia, into a protectorate of Axum (Ethiopia) early in the century, the last large-scale expedition north from Yemen which reached the Hijaz in 552, and the imposition of Sasanian direct rule on Yemen some two decades later.

The most widely broadcast episode of the early sixth century, an attack in 523 by Yusuf (Joseph), Jewish ruler of Himyar, on Najran, an important Christian centre in northern Yemen, and the many civilian deaths which it occasioned, is well reported. Propaganda disseminated throughout the Middle East, to arouse Christian ire and to prepare Roman public opinion for aggressive action against Yemen, seems to have percolated south, deep into Arabia, without suffering much corruption. The civilian deaths have multiplied and amount to a massacre. The motive has become primarily religious. But these improvements on reality, along with other graphic details, have been taken over from Syriac and Greek hagiographical texts.[1] Muslim scholarship, best represented in al-Tabari, faithfully reproduces this polemical Christian version, both as regards the background to the crisis and as regards its international ramifications—namely the seizure of power in Yemen by Yusuf (called Dhu Nuwas), his determination to impose Judaism on the inhabitants of Najran, the reaction of the Christian powers (military intervention by Axum with Roman aid in the form of naval transport), a subsequent rebellion of the occupation forces, and the eventual submission, under duress, of Abraha, the leader whom they had installed, to the authority of the king of Axum.[2] Apart from a slight slippage of the date of the Axumite intervention from not long before February 531 into the reign of Khusro I Anushirvan (which began in September 531), the account is sound.[3]

[1] Beaucamp et al., 'La Persécution', 15–83.
[2] Tab., V. 202–16.
[3] Ibid. 204; Beaucamp et al., 'La Persécution', 61–4, 68–70, 77.

The same is not true of the next episode, Abraha's expedition in 552, of which a summary account is given in an inscription. The objective was to reassert his authority over northern Yemen and beyond in the Hijaz. Operations were carried out by three forces, one under his own command (presumably made up of Axumite troops) which won a victory over the Ma'add (at Haliban not far from Najran) and extracted hostages from them, and two others raised from client peoples which were likewise victorious and suppressed a rebellion of the Banu 'Amir. The power of Axumite Himyar was evidently felt far to the north, since the Ghassan king provided hostages through the intermediary of his son, governor of the Ma'add. Hostages were also obtained, according to tribal traditions picked up by al-Baladhuri, from Mecca and Ta'if. Two supplementary pieces of information, extracted from pre-Islamic poetry, mention one of the subordinate generals (a Kinda prince, Abu Jabr) and the crucial part played by the Banu Sa'd of Tamim serving under the other. Given its date, its direction, and the distance covered, but above all its diplomatic effects, it has been convincingly argued that the expedition came close to Mecca, posing a real threat to the city, and that it figures in the *sira*, transformed, almost but not quite out of recognition, into a revenge attack on the Ka'ba after a Meccan defecated in the new cathedral built by Abraha in San'a'. The attack is then thwarted through supernatural intervention. It may be pure coincidence but the date established by al-Zuhri, working back from the *hijra*, for the year, known in Muslim sources as the Year of the Elephant (the elephant brought by Abraha had supposedly refused to enter the sacred enclosure), is the same as that given by the inscription (552).[4]

Axumite rule in south Arabia was brought to an end by a Persian expeditionary force sent off in response to an appeal from dissidents. A short notice to this effect was recycled by al-Tabari from the *Khwadaynamag*.[5] A date (*c*.571) may be obtained from the position of a notice about it in the contemporary history of Theophanes of Byzantium (to be distinguished from the ninth-century historian with the same name), who showed particular interest in international relations at a time of growing crisis in the late 560s and early 570s. He presented it as an anti-Roman act, a Sasanian riposte in the far south to the Romans' new alliance with the Turkish empire in the north. He also reported that the Axumite ruler of Himyar was captured and that his capital was sacked.[6]

[4] Ibn Ishaq, 21–30; Tab., V. 217–36; M. J. Kister, 'The Campaign of Huluban: A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha', *Le Muséon*, 78 (1965), 425–36.

[5] Tab., V. 160.

[6] Theophanes' history has not survived, but was summarized by Photius in the ninth century: Photius, *Bibliotheca, cod.* 64, ed. and trans. R. Henry, i (Paris, 1959), 78. 15–20.

The account in Arab sources is much fuller. The dissident leader, a powerful local prince, Abu Murrah Sayf b. Dhi Yazan al-Himyari, who appeals to Khusro in person, has been greatly romanticized. Freed prisoners rather than regular soldiers are dispatched, under the command of Wahriz, the prisoner with the best lineage and record. Two of the eight ships transporting them sink on the voyage. Wahriz's will is steeled when his son is killed in a skirmish and it is by his marksmanship (he kills (rather than capturing) the Axumite ruler, Masruq son of Abraha, with a single shot) that his men (600 in all) and their local Arab allies prevail in battle against a much larger Axumite army. Two versions (one from Ibn Ishaq, minus the poetry he included) are reproduced by al-Tabari in his long south Arabian digression, immediately after the passage about the Axumite conquest. The same basic story is picked up by al-Dinawari, al-Yaʿqubi, and al-Masʿudi among others. It concludes with the installation of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan as client-ruler of Yemen, his death in the course of further fighting with Axumite troops, the dispatch of a second, much larger expeditionary force with instructions to purge Yemen of all black Africans, and the appointment of Wahriz as governor, together with a list of his successors down to the time of Muhammad.[7]

There is no reason to question the main Arab storyline, since a great deal of reliable genealogical and narrative material made its way into Muslim texts from the pre-Islamic period, certainly from the late sixth century (making it possible to determine the alignment of tribes in north-eastern Arabia before and after the dissolution of Lakhm kingship and to discern the principles of Sasanian client-management), perhaps even from as far back as the third and fourth centuries (if a recent analysis of events in northern Arabia may be trusted).[8]

2. RISE OF MECCA

Whereas Mecca lay on the very edge of the field of vision of outside observers, concerned as they were with the sixth-century competition for control of Yemen between the great powers, for Muslim historians it stood at the very centre of the sublunary world. For the Kaʿba together with its immediate

[7] Ibn Ishaq, 30–4; Tab., V. 23–52; C. E. Bosworth, 'Wahriz', *EI* (2nd edn.), xi. 52. For a full comparison of Muslim traditions and pre-Islamic evidence, epigraphic and literary, see Z. Rubin, 'Islamic Traditions on the Sasanian Conquest of the Himyarite Realm', *Der Islam*, 84 (2008), 185–99.

[8] F. M. Donner, 'The Bakr b. Wa'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam', *Studia Islamica*, 51 (1980), 5–38; J. Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London, 2003), 466–85.

surroundings was a uniquely privileged place on earth, sanctified by God and closely watched over by him. So for them pre-Islamic history centred on the Ka'ba—its original construction by Abraham and Ishmael as a place of worship of Allah, the subsequent proliferation of similar sanctuaries in Arabia as the sons of Ishmael multiplied and spread, a concomitant multiplication of the gods worshipped by them and a growth of idolatry. The competition which preoccupied them was that between rival tribes vying for control over the Ka'ba, evidently regarded as a lucrative as well as a prestigious resource now that it was a cult centre for many different tribes, studded with the idols of their gods. Its development, or, as they put it, its redevelopment, after the Quraysh gained control, is carefully documented: trees cut down even within the sacred enclosure, to provide building material for a hostel for pilgrims; a well, Zamzam, dug inside the enclosure; free food for destitute pilgrims, funded by taxation; elaboration of pilgrims' rites (circumambulation, ritual clothing, etc.); reconstruction of the Ka'ba itself when Muhammad was a young man.[9] Not much is said about Mecca's commercial rise, especially by Ibn Ishaq. The crucial part played by *ilaf* agreements (buying protection with a share of the profits) in co-opting nomad tribes into an extensive trading system has to be inferred from scattered pieces of evidence. But the volume and range of trading activity can be seen to have increased steadily with the growing importance of the religious sanctuary (made manifest in the number of tribes formally associated with it in what was called the *Hums*). As more and more tribes came there to venerate their gods, the market associated with the sanctuary grew in size and the Quraysh began to engage in long-distance commercial ventures. Muhammad's grandfather Hashim is credited with the institution of the annual winter and summer caravans to Syria.[10]

There can be little doubt about the position of hegemony which Mecca had achieved in the Hijaz by the time of the birth of the Prophet. In the *sira* it is presented as a city-state which, in wealth and power, had far outstripped all potential rivals in the Hijaz, such as Yathrib (Medina), Khaybar, and Ta'if, and controlled a large network of client nomad tribes. Located in a desolate but numinous landscape of frozen lava flows (*harras*), relatively denuded of agricultural land, it was a city which lived off religion and trade. Its regional hegemony rested on the prestige of its sanctuary and on commercially generated wealth.[11] Much may have been recorded about the sanctuary, but commerce appears to have been taken for granted in the *sira*, only remarked upon in incidental asides and in the account of Muhammad's early career as a

[9] Ibn Ishaq, 35–41, 45–66, 84–9.
[10] M. J. Kister, 'Mecca and Tamim', *JESHO* 8 (1965), 113–63; Ibn Ishaq, 58–9.
[11] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1–4.

merchant after his marriage to a wealthy wife, Khadijah.[12] The best explicit testimony is to be found in the Qur'an and in some of the poetry quoted at length in Ibn Ishaq's *sira*.

As was amply documented at the end of the nineteenth century, the Qur'an exhales the atmosphere of the marketplace. Notions of reckoning and calculating, of earning and paying out wages, of selling and bargaining, of loans and pledges for debts, of loss and fraud, of weighing and balancing, figure prominently, transferred to the moral sphere. The terminology used of the Last Judgement is derived as much from the counting-house as from the law-court. Commodities of various sorts are mentioned in passing—notably dates, gold, silver, leather, and wool.[13] Imagery is, as always, a good guide to the familiar, to the fixtures of everyday life. In the Qur'an, leather features in a fraught vision of the End of Time, when heaven will split asunder and turn crimson like red leather, while, in a poem about the battle of Uhud (625), Hassan b. Thabit observes that fighting the Muslims is not like selling red leather sacks at Mecca, as he gazes on the amputated hands of the last of the Meccan standard-bearers, hands which, he notes, were reddened but not with dye.[14] Wool and cloth likewise provide useful material for similes: for the poet Ka'b b. Malik as he thinks of the immense waterless wastes separating Medina from Ghassan territory, where mountains look black in the distance, like pillars of dust, and strong camels grow feeble and die, leaving skeletons which 'look like merchants' linen dotted with figures'; and in an early sura of the Qur'an about the Last Day when men will be like scattered moths and mountains like carded wool.[15]

Such images, backed by odd references in other texts, suggest that woollen cloth and leather, which were important generators of mercantile profit in the Mediterranean in antiquity and in Europe in the middle ages, were central to long-distance exchange between Mecca and distant markets, chiefly in the north, in the sixth and early seventh centuries. There is no need to search for special money-spinners, such as frankincense and myrrh from south Arabia, to explain Mecca's commercial prosperity. Such exotic substances may have

[12] Ibn Ishaq, 79–82.

[13] C. C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran* (Leiden, 1892). Torrey concludes (48): 'The mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Allah is the ideal merchant. He includes all the universe in his reckoning. All is counted, everything is measured . . . Life is a business, for gain or loss . . . Some debts are forgiven, for Allah is not a hard creditor . . . Every soul is held as security for the debt it has contracted . . . At the resurrection, Allah holds a final reckoning with all men. Their actions are read from the account-book . . . ' Cf. A. Rippin, 'Trade and Commerce', *EQ* v. 311–16.

[14] Q 55: 37; Ibn Ishaq, 379.

[15] Ibn Ishaq, 405; Q 101: 4–5.

played no more than a minor part, coming probably in the form of special preparations of unguents and aromatics, manufactured in Yemen and designed for the Mediterranean market.[16] For healthy profits could be made from the export of woollen cloth and leather to the east Roman empire, and probably even more from the importation and resale of Roman manufactured and natural products.[17] The exceptional prosperity, archaeologically attested, of towns and villages in the *badiya*, the desert frontage of Palestine and Syria, points to the benefits of this developing trading axis at its northern, Roman end as well as in the Hijaz.[18]

Meccan commercial interests also extended south to Axum and probably beyond. It is hard otherwise to explain the choice of Axum as place of refuge by a group of early converts who left Mecca several years before the *hijra*.[19] No less telling is the relative prominence of sea voyages in Qur'anic passages about Allah's beneficence to travellers: he watches over the maritime ventures of his human creatures, tracing out routes for their ships as well as their beasts of burden; he propels ships, 'lofty as mountains', over the ocean; he provides stars to guide them in the dark over the bottomless deep . . .[20] It seems likely that Meccan merchants took advantage of the decline of Yemen to exploit the commercial opportunities available in southern seas, that they strove to gain a significant share in commercial exchange between the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean economic zones by developing an overland route through Arabia which bypassed Egypt and went directly to the centres of production and demand in Palestine and Syria.

There is, therefore, no reason to question the traditional view that Mecca was as much a commercial entrepôt as a sacred centre or to refrain from

[16] P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford, 1987) engages in a vigorous polemic against those who attach commercial significance to Meccan exports, dismissing the two main commodities, leather and woollen cloth, as crude, coarse, unrefined, and therefore unlikely to make much money in the competitive east Roman market. In the course of her argument, she assembles the main pieces of evidence to be found in Muslim historical traditions for trade in leather (98–101), woollen cloth (101–3), and what she terms 'perfume', i.e. unguents and aromatics (51–4, 95–7).

[17] Crone, ibid. 149–54, accords considerable importance to the goods imported from the Roman empire and distributed in Arabia by the Meccans, concluding (151) that theirs was a trade 'generated by Arab needs, not by the commercial appetites of the surrounding empires'.

[18] J. Johns, 'The *Longue Durée*: State and Settlement Strategies in Southern Transjordan across the Islamic Centuries', in E. L. Rogan and T. Tell (eds.), *Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan* (London, 1994), 1–31, at 3–8; C. Foss, 'Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: An Archaeological Approach', *DOP* 51 (1997), 189–269; B. de Vries, *Umm el-Jimal: A Frontier Town and its Landscape in Northern Jordan*, i: *Fieldwork 1972–1981*, JRA Suppl. Ser. 26 (Portsmouth, RI, 1998), 232–41.

[19] Ibn Ishaq, 146–55, with Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 109–17.

[20] Q 6: 97, 16: 5–7, 17: 66, 22: 66, 24: 40, 43: 10–13, 55: 24.

historical analysis of a conventional sort. It is true that its politics and social relations are rendered unfamiliar by the genealogical terms in which they are expressed, and that modern historians are thereby discouraged from drawing parallels with the better-known cities of the classical Mediterranean or medieval European worlds. It is also true that cities and settlements in Arabia were islands set in a sea of nomad tribes. But there was a clearly discernible governing elite at Mecca, which is susceptible to analysis as is its exercise of power, whether conducted formally through the city's council or informally in everyday transactions. Shifts in the balance of wealth and power between clans can be observed with the passing of time. The leading families can be seen to have been conscious of their shared interests vis-à-vis other settlements (some perhaps classifiable as city-states or embryo city-states) and nomad tribes in the Hijaz, and to have acted jointly and effectively in extending the city's authority and influence over the surrounding world.[21] They are also portrayed, in long extracts of poetry quoted by Ibn Ishaq, as firmly attached to the traditional Beduin code of honour, prizing heroism in battle and unstinting generosity to guests above all other virtues.[22] Theirs was an aristocratic ethos in which trade, far from being culturally devalued, was highly regarded, and in which the activities of the successful merchant—risk-taking, ingenuity, exploitation of opportunity, forceful negotiation—were natural elements of a noble's life. The Meccan elite, like those of contemporary Sogdian cities in the heart of Eurasia, was at once mercantile and aristocratic.[23]

3. HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET (*SIRA*)

Such at any rate is the picture of Meccan society which may be extracted from the Qur'an, the *sira*, and the extensive verse quotations to be found in Ibn Ishaq's version of the *sira*. Whereas the value of the first two of these sources has already been demonstrated, aspersions have been cast on the authenticity of the verse. Attributions can be questioned, as they were early on by Ibn

[21] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 4–11.

[22] Pride in lineage as well as in the traditional virtues is very evident in Quraysh laments for notable casualties and evocations of heroism before and during battle—Ibn Ishaq, 345 ('Abdullah b. al-Ziba'ra al-Sahmi), 351–2 (Dirar b. al-Khattab al-Fihri), 353–5 (Umayy b. Abu'l Salt), 404–5 (Hubayra), 413–14 (Dirar), and 471–2 ('Abdullah).

[23] De la Vaissière, *Marchands sogdiens*, 154–65, 187–9; B. Marshak, *Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana* (New York, 2002), 3–22.

Hisham. There are also later interpolations, particularly obvious in poems composed on the Muslim side when, rather than grieving over their own dead or crowing over the defeated Quraysh at the early battle of Badr (624), the poets stress the religious motivations of those who fought the Meccans: in doing so, they are said to have testified to the unity of God (344, 351, 471) and to have been hoping to enter the gardens of heaven peopled by beautiful *houris* (349, 350, 479). Verse attributed to Hassan b. Thabith, portrayed as Muhammad's chief propagandist, has been subjected to an especially severe critique, but, even in his case, there is no reason to reject all the extracts included by Ibn Ishaq, especially if they include the nostalgic references to former camping sites (412, 418, 472) or to delectable girls (345–6, 415–16, 472), which were conventional in pre-Islamic poetry.[24] The case for doubting the authenticity of verse put into the mouths of poets and a few notable figures on the Meccan side seems rather weaker. Derogatory remarks about Muhammad and attacks on his religious views may well have been purged, but relatively little fabricated matter seems to have been inserted. A clear allusion to the battle of Karbala in a lament on the Quraysh dead at Badr composed by Umayya b. Abu'l-Salt (354) is a rare example of a readily identifiable later interpolation.

It is impossible for an outsider to reach a firm conclusion, especially as much of the detailed stylistic analysis (of similes, metaphors, topoi, conventional themes, vocabulary, etc.) has not yet been undertaken. It is worth noting, however, that literary scholars are, on the whole, inclined to accept as authentic most of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry which has survived, including much of the verse which Ibn Ishaq introduced into his history.[25] Insofar as one can judge from translation, much of it serves to embellish the narrative presented by the compilation of prose reports. Many of the laments for the dead are moving. There is much inventive and apposite imagery in the evocation of armed men riding to battle and in the snapshots of hand-to-hand combat. There is a fair amount of the polemic against the opposing side to be expected in partisan accounts written soon after the engagements described. I find it hard therefore to accept the judgement of a number of historians that much of the verse is little better than doggerel, banal, uninspired, trivial, and written in wretched language. Yes, there are

[24] See the probing articles of W. 'Arafat (titles in bibliography): *BSOAS* 17 (1955), 197–205, 416–25; 21 (1958), 15–30, 453–63; 28 (1965), 477–82; 29 (1966), 1–11, 221–32; 33 (1970), 276–82.

[25] F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, ii: *Poesie bis ca.430 H.* (Leiden, 1975), 14–33, 249–302; E. Wagner, *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, i: *Die altarabische Dichtung* (Darmstadt, 1987), 12–29; J. E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the* Qasidah: *The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge, 1997), 1–9, 209–59; Alan Jones, oral communication.

spurious passages and whole spurious compositions in the various mini-anthologies assembled by Ibn Ishaq, and these are poor both in style and content. Yes, poetry can mutate in the course of oral transmission, more easily perhaps than prose, given the abrupt transitions between themes characteristic of pre-Islamic verse.[26] Yes, the tenth-century bibliophile Ibn al-Nadim accused Ibn Ishaq of including fraudulent material proffered by interested parties—and this is a reasonable explanation for the presence of a fair amount of obviously spurious verse. But sceptical historians surely go too far in rejecting most of the corpus of verse he put together as concocted long after the purported date.[27] The *sira* leaves us in no doubt about the high status enjoyed by poets, and many *qasidas* originating in the pre-Islamic past, with subject matter, structure, and language conforming to well-established conventions, made their way into collections of verse edited by Abbasid *littérateurs*. Poetry was, it is virtually certain, the principal medium for Arab self-expression in late antiquity and was highly prized after the transformation wrought by Islam.[28] There is no reason therefore to doubt that many poems were occasioned by the dramatic events of the Prophet's lifetime and that they were transmitted with relatively little alteration to later generations.

In aggregate, after the exclusion of the patently spurious, the verse extracts, long and short, incorporated in the *sira* of Ibn Ishaq may therefore be prized no less than the prose traditions which constitute the core of the text. They should be viewed as an important supplementary source, although not on a par with two important documents, one quoted, the other summarized in the *sira*.[29] While these documents provide precise information of solid worth about the initial constitution of the *umma* and the terms of the 628 settlement with Mecca, the poetry gives valuable insights into the ethos and attitudes of the time, as well as some unique nuggets of information (for example, about Ghassan support for the *umma* in its confrontation with Mecca).[30] Together with the most important source of all, the Qur'an, the assemblage of *akhbar*, the selection of verse, and the documentary material in the *sira* make it possible to build up a relatively rounded picture of Muhammad's life, beginning with his birth and upbringing at Mecca.

[26] A sharp distinction should be drawn between oral poetry composed in performance out of formulae (e.g. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) and poems composed by named individuals, which may include topoi but are subsequently learned and recited (with occasional variation/improvement) by bards. Early Arabic poetry belongs to the second category (Schoeler, *Oral and Written*, 87–110).

[27] Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, pp. xxv–xxx. I am grateful to Lawrence Conrad for a full oral exposition of the sceptical case.

[28] Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 211–19; Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 113–15.

[29] Ibn Ishaq, 231–3, 504.

[30] Ibid. 342, 350, 415.

The bare facts of Muhammad's parentage and clan affiliation are reported, along with the principal events of his childhood—the death of his father probably just before, possibly just after, his birth around 570, his first two years spent in the desert with a wet-nurse as was customary for well-born Quraysh, the death of his mother when he was 6 and of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib two years later. His clan, the Banu Hashim, was one of the fourteen Quraysh clans which, between them, ran Mecca, but it had lost the pre-eminence it had once enjoyed to two others, the Makhzum and 'Abd Shams. His uncle Abu Talib, as head of the Banu Hashim, took charge of him from the age of 8 and was to prove a staunch protector until his death three years before the *hijra*.[31]

Abu Talib is said to have taken Muhammad as a boy on a trading expedition to Syria, but the whole episode may well be apocryphal, since the journey provides the occasion for a Christian holy man to detect the sign of prophethood in him.[32] This is one of many episodes which are represented as key stages in the unfolding of his prophetic mission. There is considerable embellishment in the *sira* just as there is in accounts of the triumphs and crises of the *umma* after his death. But in the Meccan phase, it is not material about individuals on the margins of the main providential story which fleshes out what little was remembered of Muhammad's early life but a reinterpretation of what was remembered in the light of his future prophetic career. The providential theme was infused into a conventional tale of birth, upbringing, marriage (to Khadijah, rich and reportedly some years older than Muhammad), and trading activity.[33] There was considerable remodelling of the details of Muhammad's biography (but probably not of the key events) so as to make it conform better to prophetic paradigms drawn from the Bible. The effect was to transform commonplace events in the everyday life of a boy and young man of noble descent into divine rites of passage.[34]

Thus reinterpreted, Muhammad's life consists of a series of significant episodes. Two take place in his childhood and presage his special role in the future: there is first the rite of purification which takes place when he is a small child and asleep—a figure clad in white approaches, scoops out his innards, carefully washes them, and puts them back; second comes the encounter (referred to above) which results in the detection of the mark of prophethood on him.[35] The episodes crowd in once, aged 40, he embarks on his prophetic

[31] Ibid. 69–79, 159–67, 169–75, 191–2, with Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 4–16, 119–22.
[32] Ibn Ishaq, 79–81.
[33] Ibid. 82–3.
[34] Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 217–25.
[35] Ibn Ishaq, 71–2, 79–81, with Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 49–52, 59–75.

career: (1) *withdrawal into the wilderness*, to a cave in the volcanic *harras* outside Mecca, for periods of retreat and solitary devotion; (2) the formal *call to prophesy* which comes during one such retreat when a figure, later identified as Gabriel, tells him to recite and forces him to do so; (3) immediate reactions of *fear and self-doubt* on the part of the newly designated Prophet, fearful of the encounter he has just had and doubting his sanity; (4) later, *despair* when the revelations temporarily cease; (5) *persecution* (mild and mainly verbal), once Muhammad begins to preach openly (three years after the first revelation); (6) *appeasement* of the polytheist opposition (three highly venerated goddesses are allocated an intercessory role in the monotheist cosmos) and the subsequent abrogation of the appeasing verses, rejected as satanic interpolations; (7) *growing pressure* on the Banu Hashim, who stand by Muhammad despite being subjected, along with their allies the Banu Muttalib, to an economic and marriage boycott; (8) *increasing danger* after Abu Talib's death and the withdrawal of protection by another uncle, Abu Lahab, who succeeds Abu Talib as head of the clan; (9) *exile* of the faithful in Medina, after their emigration (*hijra*).[36]

It is much more likely that biblical themes have been adapted to fit the basic facts of Muhammad's life than that there has been wholesale concoction of episodes to accord with Jewish or Christian expectations of a prophet. For the earliest suras of the Qur'an were not addressed to any particular audience. Muhammad was plainly in the grip of terrifying revelations about the end of time, the destruction of the whole visible world, and the Last Judgement which would follow, when every individual human being would be plucked out of family, clan, and tribe, brought alone face to face with the awesome divinity who governed everything, and made to account for every thought, word, and deed. He was simply saying what he had to say, what he had been commanded to say to his fellow-men whatever their religious affiliations. When, in time, he was able to look around, he was naturally concerned primarily to rebut the criticisms which came from pagan Meccans. Hence the preoccupation evident in the pre-*hijra* suras with idolatry and with the issue of delegation of spiritual powers, whether to subordinate divinities or to prophets (vehemently denied by Muhammad, who claimed to be no more than a spokesman and certainly not a worker of miracles). It was only after the *hijra* that he began to pay close attention to earlier Scripture and began to seek Jewish and Christian converts.

Islam was in certain fundamental respects at odds with the two existing manifestations of monotheism, as they had evolved by late antiquity. It

[36] Ibn Ishaq, 104–12, 117–21, 136–7, 143–5, 159–67, 169–81, 187–231. Cf. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 39–52, 100–9, 117–51; Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 103–85.

cannot therefore be typecast as an outgrowth of them. There was a bleakness to its cosmology which accorded with the experience of Arabs, so much at the mercy of a harsh environment. God was an autocrat who could impose his will instantly where and when he chose. He was remoter, more detached, more awe-inspiring than the Jewish and Christian God. There was no question of his being prey to emotions, of his involvement in the lives of his creatures. He was a distant, impersonal power with infinite reach. There were no intermediate spiritual powers to whom men could appeal for intercession, whether subordinate gods or angels or holy men. All power was Allah's. Even Satan and ordinary *djinn* (demons) could do no more than listen and speak, insinuating, in the case of Satan, false ideas into the mind of the Prophet, eavesdropping in heaven and on earth, in the case of *djinn*, and then gossiping about what they heard. Believers were required not merely to observe certain rites and conduct their lives according to the moral precepts conveyed to them through Muhammad. They were to *submit*, to allow their faith to *suffuse* their beings, to *strive* always to serve Allah by righteous living and spreading the true faith. Men were creatures who had been granted minds and wills of their own, unlike angels. They were now being asked to relinquish voluntarily much of their freedom and to transform themselves into pliant agents of Allah's will.

It is plain then that the Old Testament paradigms were not primary elements of the Prophetic biography, but were introduced into a collection of traditions transmitted about Muhammad's life at Mecca at a later stage when Islam was consciously rooting itself in a biblical past. The same is true of the Qur'anic references. There is no question of the *sira*'s growing out of a kernel of Qur'anic exegesis. The references and explanations of the scriptural text were folded into the *sira* at a relatively late stage.[37] Connections were thus established between Qur'anic passages, their meaning often opaque, and independently transmitted reports about the externals of Muhammad's life after the revelations began. There was doubtless some mutation of core elements of the *sira* in the course of transmission to the traditionists who first fixed it in writing, but, as has been argued above, alterations were almost certainly kept to a minimum by the earnest concern of the scholars who transmitted and collected traditions to seek out the truth and to refrain from tampering with the reports they received. There is therefore no reason to reject the *sira*'s account of the principal developments in the Meccan phase of the Prophet's mission—(1) his gradual accumulation of disciples (members of his immediate family, young men from the two leading clans, some older as

[37] Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 226–33, contra Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 203–16.

well as young members of other less important clans, and others classified as dispossessed), (2) the departure some five years after the first revelation of a group of disciples, some eighty strong, for Axum where they obtained asylum, (3) the three-year boycott of the Banu Hashim together with their close ally, the Banu Muttalib, by the other clans (616–19), (4) the deaths of Khadijah and Abu Talib (619), and (5) the search for a place of sanctuary which ended, after two rounds of negotiation with delegations from Medina, with the emigration (*hijra*) of Muhammad and some seventy disciples from Mecca to Medina around the beginning of September 622.[38]

4. THE SETTLEMENT OF HUDAYBIYA

Information flows much more freely after the *hijra* to Medina. Again the basic data can probably be accepted as corresponding to historical reality. There are three main themes in the coverage of the *sira*: (1) the open challenge to Mecca issued by the Quraysh exiles (the *muhajirun*) and their Medinan helpers (the *ansar*) through the dispatch almost immediately of small armed forays to patrol the trade routes leading north and the resort from the end of 623 to the use of force; (2) diplomatic efforts to break up Mecca's system of alliances, which increased in frequency and range with time; and (3) political developments inside Medina during the six years of confrontation with Mecca and its allies (622–8). Three battles are singled out for full treatment: the battle of Badr (624), in which a large Muslim foray commanded by Muhammad intercepted and defeated a relief force sent from Mecca to aid a returning caravan; the battle of Uhud (625) in which the Meccans and their allies attacked Medina in force and won a victory on the edge of the oasis; and the battle of the Trench (627), a token siege of Medina which demonstrated the overwhelming military superiority of Mecca and the continuing loyalty of its nomad clients and allies.[39] The prose reports collated by Ibn Ishaq on each of these battles are accompanied and amplified by extensive anthologies of verse, which confirm much of the detail about the feats and fates of individuals. The diplomatic material cannot be supplemented or controlled in this way, but there is nothing to rouse scepticism, since the failure of many of the

[38] Ibn Ishaq, 111–231, with Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 86–151, Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 98–147, and A. Görke and G. Schoeler, 'Reconstructing the Earliest *sira* Texts: The Hiğra in the Corpus of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr', *Der Islam*, 82 (2005), 209–20.

[39] Ibn Ishaq, 281–499, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 1–46 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 161–249.

Prophet's initiatives is not disguised and the Meccan system of alliances is shown to have been remarkably resilient. As for the internal politics of Medina, corroboration is to hand in a document reproduced in the *sira*, which lays down the basic organizing principles of the Muslim community (*umma*) as they took shape in the years following its constitution at the time of the *hijra*.

The *Constitution of Medina* appears to be a composite document, incorporating clauses added to the original agreement reached between Muhammad and a second, larger, more representative Medinan delegation at ʿAqaba which prepared the way for the *hijra*. At the outset the Quraysh exiles were deemed to form a clan of their own for legal purposes (compensation for injury, ransoming of prisoners, etc.), on a par with the existing clans of Medina, which are listed. Believers and non-believers formed a single community, but the leading role clearly belonged to the believers, with the Jews of Medina viewed as ancillaries. Among later additions are clauses (1) covering in detail relations between believers and Jewish affiliates of the main Medinan clans, (2) requiring all clans to act together in defence of Medina, and (3) referring disputes between clans to Muhammad for arbitration.[40] There is no explicit mention of the three main, purely Jewish clans, presumably because their names were removed from the text after they proved singularly unreceptive to the Prophet's conciliatory message and were either expelled from Medina (in the case of the Qaynuqaʿ and an-Nadir) or liquidated on suspicion of collaboration with the Meccans (the Qurayzah).[41]

Hindsight plays benignly on the *sira*'s account of the long confrontation between the nascent *umma* and polytheist Mecca. Within eight years of the *hijra*, Abu Sufyan and the other leaders of Makhzum and ʿAbd Shams would make their peace with Muhammad, would accept Islam and submit to his authority. Muhammad himself would make a triumphal progress, backed by a massive array of tribesmen, and would enter his native city as its acknowledged leader at the beginning of 630.[42] This ancient *Anschluss* was plainly the climax of a successful period of struggle. So emphasis was put on the feats of

[40] Ibn Ishaq, 231–3, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 221–8, Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 152–5, and R. B. Serjeant, 'The "Constitution of Medina"', *Islamic Quarterly*, 8 (1964), 3–16, repr. in Serjeant, *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation*, v. For a different interpretation of the text as a unified document, with a narrow scope (excluding the three main Jewish clans and the majority of pagans among the other clans), see M. Lecker, *The 'Constitution of Medina': Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton, 2004).

[41] Ibn Ishaq, 363–4, 437–45, 461–9, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 208–19, Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 170–4, 191–4, 211–14, and Schöller, '*Sira* and *Tafsir*', 18–48. Lecker, '*Constitution of Medina*', 40–6, 53–60, 80–7 for a very different scenario.

[42] Ibn Ishaq, 540–61, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 65–70 and Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 256–62.

individual Muslims and the limited success achieved by the Quraysh in their two victories, on the contacts made with numerous nomad tribes rather than their initial responses, on the imposition of Muhammad's authority on all elements of the population of Medina rather than on the recalcitrance of the principal Jewish clans. The failures were reported but were glossed as part of a difficult but ultimately victorious struggle. The tipping point came in 628 when Muhammad made his way with a small escort towards the Ka'ba with the intention of going on the '*umra* (Little Pilgrimage). A Meccan force barred his way. He halted on the edge of the sacred enclosure, at Hudaybiya, and began to talk face to face with the Quraysh leaders. Negotiations were evidently difficult—there was serious disagreement at a very late stage, over the precise wording of the text of the treaty. But an accommodating attitude on Muhammad's part removed the final obstacles, and he is presented as obtaining the terms he wanted—namely a ten-year ceasefire, the lifting of the ban on any association of Mecca's nomad clients and allies with the *umma*, and permission to go on the '*umra* in a year's time. The way was now open for active prosecution of the *umma*'s religious and political cause among the nomad tribes of the Hijaz, which resulted in a dramatic shift in the balance of power between Medina and Mecca in less than two years.[43]

This optimistic interpretation of the six years of confrontation is clearly at odds with the substantive history retailed by the *sira*. The outcome of the Hudaybiya negotiations, as it is presented, makes no sense against this background. The *umma* was plainly in a weak position. Muhammad could not expect to have all his demands accepted. Without compromise on his part, an agreement putting an end to the fighting was inconceivable. The weakness of his position was made all too plain in the final tussle over two key phrases in the treaty: naturally the Prophet invoked the name of Allah in his draft of the preamble—'In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful'. This was rejected by Suhayl b. 'Amr, the chief Quraysh negotiator. He insisted on the alternative 'In thy name, O Allah', which was acceptable to polytheists, since they recognized Allah as one of the senior gods venerated at the Ka'ba. Muhammad also had to back down over the next phrase, in which he referred to himself as the apostle of God. Suhayl made him strike it out and replace it with his patronymic, thus pulling him back into the Quraysh clan system. Muhammad's position was evidently parlous, since he was, in effect,

[43] Ibn Ishaq, 499–507, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 46–52, Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 249–52, Görke, 'The Historical Tradition about al-Hudaybiya' and M. Lecker, 'The Hudaybiyya-Treaty and the Expedition against Khaybar', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 1–11, repr. in Lecker, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia* (Aldershot, 1998), xi.

denying his divine mission in order to bring the war to an end and to gain access to Mecca's nomad clients and allies.[44]

How then did Muhammad secure his two vital objectives? What could he offer which, for the Meccans, would counterbalance the grave risk that their system of tribal alliances might unravel once the nomads were free to decide whether or not to associate themselves with the *umma*? It must have been a substantive inducement of real significance, of much more value than a few face-saving formulae in the agreed document. It cannot have been a minor concession, such as the clause guaranteeing freedom of movement between Medina and Mecca, but insisting on the repatriation of any Meccan who left without first obtaining his guardian's permission. Nor can it have been merely the reopening of the routes to Syria which would result from a cessation of violence, since there were other trading opportunities open to the Quraysh. Improved conditions of trade could not possibly justify the risk to the system of alliances which made it possible in the first place. The inducement offered by Muhammad must lurk somewhere in the *sira*, which may gloss but does not conceal unpalatable phenomena. It must surely feature in the summary of the Hudaybiya agreement, although it may have been so glossed as to appear to have been a Meccan concession to Muhammad.

Once we are alerted to the possibility of tendentious interpretation of the outcome of the negotiations, Muhammad's concession stares us in the face. Once we bring it into focus, we can only marvel at Muhammad's boldness. His offer marked an astonishing about-turn, not simply in policy towards his native city but also in the orientation of the true faith which he was propagating. It was a concession on the part of a religious or political leader which is quite without parallel, but which produced a dividend also quite without parallel. Its disguise as a substantive gain for the *umma* in the *sira* is an extraordinary example of historiographical sleight of hand, so successful that it has convinced generation after generation of Muslim faithful and non-Muslim observers alike.

We need to go back to the very beginning of the Hudaybiya episode to see what it was that Muhammad was offering. Ibn Ishaq writes as follows: 'Then the apostle stayed in Medina during the months of Ramadan and Shawwal [in AH 6] *and went out on the little pilgrimage in Dhu'l-Qa'da with no intention of making war.* He called together the Arabs and neighbouring Beduin to march with him, fearing that Quraysh would oppose him with arms or *prevent him from visiting the temple*, as they actually did. Many of the Arabs held back from him, and he went out with the emigrants and Ansar and such of the Arabs as stuck to him. *He took the sacrificial victims with him and donned the pilgrim garb so that all would*

[44] Ibn Ishaq, 504.

know that he did not intend war and that his purpose was to visit the temple and to venerate it' (pp. 499–500, my italics).

The *hajj* (pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at Mecca) has been so central a feature of Islam, has played so vital a part in holding together the worldwide Muslim community, irrespective of confessional or ethnic differences, that, in hindsight, it is virtually impossible to conceive of Islam without the Ka'ba as a central focal point. But if we discard hindsight for a moment, if we project ourselves back to the third or fourth or fifth year after the *hijra*, when the *umma* was engaged in an increasingly violent and difficult struggle with Mecca, it would surely beggar the imagination to suggest that the Prophet might reorient the worship of the sole, omniscient, all-powerful, *ubiquitous* God and focus it on the *polytheistic sanctuary just outside the enemy city*. The imagination would fail completely at the wild thought that he might not only visit the pagan temple but would also take part in the traditional rites, putting on the customary pilgrim's garb and *sacrificing an animal in the pagan manner*. That was the huge concession offered by Muhammad. By announcing his intention of going on the little pilgrimage, he was abandoning the armed struggle (which had failed) and was declaring his willingness to incorporate the pagan temple, the surrounding sacred area, the annual pilgrimage, and all the associated pagan rites into Islam, with one proviso (as yet unannounced)—that all gods save Allah and all idols be expelled from the sanctuary, that it should be cleansed of these contaminants and thus become the central arena for the worship of the one true God.

This key concession was made before negotiations began, indeed made negotiations possible. The reciprocal concessions extracted from the Quraysh in the course of negotiations ensured the survival of the *umma* in the short term, but, much more important, opened up the possibility of propagating Islam across the Hijaz and Arabia, outside the immediate circle of tribes associated with Medina. Muhammad expected, quite rightly, that the words of God would by themselves instil the faith into individual minds once the divine message was allowed to percolate outwards from Medina and that even the great pagan redoubt of Mecca would be undermined (although he probably did not envisage the speed of its collapse). Any doubts on the part of the faithful were allayed by revelations which cast new light on the deep past. Abraham is often mentioned in the Qur'an (in 245 verses spread across 25 suras). He is visited by divine messengers. He makes ready to sacrifice Isaac. He smashes idols. But it is only in three late suras (2: 124–9 (*The Cow*), 22: 25–7 (*Pilgrimage*), 3: 96–7 (*The Imrans*))[45] that a connection is established

[45] The Ka'ba is also mentioned in sura 14: 37 (*Abraham*), but there is no reference to its building. Abraham settles some of his offspring in a barren valley nearby, where he hopes that they will observe true worship.

between him and the original construction of the Kaʿba. These suras which provide divine sanction for the reorientation of Islam reveal that it was Allah who had originally designated the sacred site and had prescribed the rites of pilgrimage, and that Abraham and his son Ishmael, ancestor of the Arabs, built the original temple at his command. There was no gainsaying this divine revelation, nor the detailed instructions (given in sura 22: 27–37 (*Pilgrimage*) and another late sura, 5: 2–3 (*The Table*)) on the observance of all the traditional pagan rites, save that sacrifices were not to be made to idols. The faithful were merely to remember that it was not the blood and meat which went to Allah but their piety.

These divine revelations can be placed unequivocally towards the end of Muhammad's prophetic career, because there is no clear reference or allusion either to the *hajj* and its rites or to the story of the Kaʿba's foundation in any earlier sura. It is highly likely too that the *qibla* (direction of prayer) was changed and pointed towards the Kaʿba at the same time, especially as the divine command to do so is transmitted in the sura which gives the main account of its construction (sura 2: 142–5 (*The Cow*)). The change was controversial (as that sura shows) and had to be justified as a test of the believers' faith. This implies that the faithful had been praying in another direction (almost certainly towards Jerusalem) for several years when the Prophet finally faced brute reality and recognized that he would have to reach an accommodation with the Quraysh. The announcement of the new *qibla* was probably made not long before the public statement that the Prophet intended to go on the little pilgrimage.

In the *sira*, the change of *qibla* is retrojected to a date very soon after the *hijra*.[46] Once the true history of the Kaʿba's origin as a place of monotheist worship was revealed, it was accepted without demur by the traditionists who gathered and transmitted information about the Prophet and the world in which he grew up. Naturally it was given a prominent position in the *sira* as it took shape, acting as the central theme in the pre-Islamic history of Mecca. An explanation then had to be devised for the polytheistic and idolatrous worship familiar to Muhammad's contemporaries. This, as we have seen, postulated a steady degeneration of worship and contamination of the sanctuary through succeeding generations, as the Arabs multiplied and dispersed. Muhammad's mission was not simply to propagate the true faith but to cleanse the Kaʿba of all polluting elements and to restore it to its original monotheist function. It was inconceivable therefore that the Prophet would have allowed several years to pass after his departure from Mecca before

[46] Ibn Ishaq, 258–9, 289, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 202.

requiring believers to train their prayers on the Ka'ba which Abraham and Ishmael had built on God's instructions.[47]

The rediscovered history of the Ka'ba, from its original foundation to its contemporary debased state, could not be questioned. It had divine authority and was broadcast by the Prophet himself. It was the first and greatest of the religious truths which were superimposed upon historical actuality in the formative phase of Islam. It not only justified the incorporation of the pagan sanctuary into the new religion, but it also gave the Arabs, through their descent from Ishmael, a very early role in the providential history of mankind, matching that of the descendants of Isaac, the Jews. Its acceptance, together with the consequential focusing of the *umma*'s prayers on the Ka'ba from very soon after the *hijra*, transformed a story of an armed struggle which ended in failure to one in which the *umma* steadily strengthened its position until Muhammad was able virtually to dictate terms to his Meccan antagonists.

5. TRIUMPH AND TRIUMPHALISM

There was no need for any further burnishing of history in the *sira*. The *umma* built up its power and prestige with remarkable speed after the Hudaybiya agreement. The principal Jewish centres in the Hijaz were forced to submit—Khaybar after a blockade, followed by Tayma', Wadi l-Qura and Fadak of their own accord. An expedition towards the Roman frontier was probably intended both to secure an important trade route and to impress a wide swathe of nomad tribes in the north. Mecca itself was pressurized into relaxing the provision requiring the extradition of illicit Quraysh migrants to Medina. Despite a reverse suffered when the northern expedition encountered a Roman frontier force at Mut'a, Muhammad's prestige rose among the nomad tribes of the Hijaz, until, at the very beginning of 630, he was able to move towards Mecca with a large, ever-growing host, leaving the Quraysh notables, led by Abu Sufyan, with little choice but to submit and accept his authority.[48] Elsewhere in Arabia, tribal leaders evidently took note of the dénouement of the dramatic struggle between Mecca, the greatest power in the peninsula after the decline of Himyar, and the small group of rebels who

[47] The transformation of the Ka'ba, previously a pagan sanctuary (comprising 'fire-temples and altars'), into a place of Muslim worship and its redesignation as 'the Dome of Abraham' is picked up by Movses Daskhurants'i in his account of Muhammad's life and teaching (289. 1–8 (187)).

[48] Ibn Ishaq, 507–61, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 52–70 and Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 252–63.

had sought sanctuary in Medina. Now that the two parties had combined, under the leadership of Muhammad whose claim to be a Prophet was probably well known by this date, they must either act swiftly to halt the rise of this new, potentially invincible religious-political entity (the option chosen by the mountain city of Ta'if and its allies, the nomad Hawazin, who were narrowly defeated at Hunayn) or hasten to pay their respects.[49]

It took a mere five years (630–4) for the coalition of Quraysh, emigrants, and Medinans forged by Muhammad to extend its political and diplomatic reach over most of the Arabian peninsula. After the submission successively of the Hawazin (after the battle of Hunayn) and of Ta'if a few months later, the whole Hijaz was under its effective control. A second northern expedition, led by Muhammad himself, which set off ten months after the Meccan *Anschluss* and reached Tabuk, gained the submission of settlements and tribes bordering the Roman empire. It must also have raised his prestige yet higher in Arabia at large, although not apparently in war-weary Medina.[50] Deputations arrived at Medina from all over central and southern Arabia, offering the allegiance of the tribes or sections of tribes which they represented and conversion (nominal) to Islam. The greatest coup came in the south where the Persian authorities proved particularly amenable. The least progress was made in the centre, in Yamama where Muhammad faced the challenge of a rival prophet (Musaylima). Much of Arabia was thus nominally unified by the Prophet, in the sense that his influence was projected throughout the peninsula by his local clients and that he exercised effective control over a large, strategically placed region, the Hijaz.[51] Its effective unification only came after his death (early in June 632), when the first caliph, his close colleague Abu Bakr, dispatched armies to impose the *umma*'s authority in the north, the centre (including Yamama), and the south. These campaigns, termed the *ridda* (apostasy) wars, which demonstrated the formidable military capability of Medina and Mecca in combination and the fine generalship of Muslim commanders, are covered in considerable detail in early Muslim sources. Only the general outcome, the unification of Arabia, is reported by non-Muslim sources. It augured ill for the outer, non-Arab world.[52]

[49] Ibn Ishaq, 561–97, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 70–7 and Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 263–4.

[50] Ibn Ishaq, 602–14, with Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 273–9.

[51] Ibn Ishaq, 614–17, 627–48, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 78–150, Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 267–73, D. F. Eickelman, 'Musaylima: An Approach to the Social Anthropology of Seventh Century Arabia', *JESHO* 10 (1967), 17–52, and M. J. Kister, 'The Struggle against Musaylima, and the Conquest of Yamama', *JSAI* 27 (2002), 1–56.

[52] See Ch. 14 below.

The *sira* was not wrong in presenting the mission of God's messenger to man as remarkably successful. For in the last three years of his life, the *umma* triumphed in the Hijaz and established itself as the pre-eminent power of Arabia. But the *sira* did not and could not present the sort of dispassionate, analytical history at which a very great classical historian, a writer in the mould of Thucydides or Tacitus, might have aimed. Inevitably it was impregnated by ideas current at the time when it took shape. One might indeed expect an agglomeration of traditions to have been yet more absorbent of the thoughts and attitudes of the generations of scholars responsible for their collection, transmission, and recording in writing than a work composed by a single author. It is no surprise then to find that the early life of the Prophet was refashioned around a number of biblical themes or that the late revelation about the Kaʿba's origin as a monotheist sanctuary provided the account of Mecca's history in the deep past with its leitmotif. It would be quite unreasonable to expect pious Muslim scholars to question such obvious, religiously sanctioned truths.

They were scholars, though. They did not smooth out the story by systematic weeding of every discordant tradition. They did not intentionally interfere with the content of traditions. Hence the presence in the *sira* of so much material which does not conform to the overarching interpretation. There was no disguising of the difficulties faced by Muhammad and the reverses he suffered before and after the *hijra*—strenuous opposition from many quarters in Mecca, a concerted effort to make the Banu Hashim renounce him, rebuffs from Ta'if and nomad tribes when he was looking for a new home for the nascent *umma*, rejection, despite his conciliatory stance, by the three main Jewish clans of Medina, a war with Mecca which, after some initial successes, went badly. This is a striking record of failure. However much the minutiae of individual behaviour or the details of specific incidents may have changed insensibly in the course of transmission, there has been no tampering of significance with the main substance of history, to bring it more into line with the accepted interpretation. It is this discrepancy between recorded data and overarching theme which provides the best testimony to the basic soundness of the *sira*.

Corroboration on key points can be obtained from other sources. The Qur'an could not be tampered with, being the word of God. So the history of the final phase of conciliation and negotiation in the confrontation with Mecca, which can be pieced together from information lodged in the *sira*, finds clear confirmation in the bunching together of (1) descriptions of the Abrahamic origin of the Kaʿba, (2) instructions about Muslim conduct on the *hajj*, and (3) the justification of the change of *qibla*, in a handful of late suras. Similarly the archaeologically attested prosperity of those outer regions of the

Roman Middle East which could best communicate with the Hijaz provides indirect testimony to the commercial success of Mecca in the sixth century. Further support is to hand in Qur'anic passages about finance and trade, and odd references to key commodities in the preserved poetry. Finally the remarkable tensile strength of the *umma*, which, despite its disparate component parts, withstood intense pressure from without, can best be explained by the provisions of the *Constitution of Mecca.* This makes it plain that the basic units were clans, held together by kinship (the Qurayshi emigrants being designated a single clan in their new environment), and that they were bonded together by Muhammad's leadership, by commitment to mutual support, and increasingly by the new faith as it spread through the different, mainly non-Jewish clans of Medina.

The genesis and rise of Islam are impressively well documented. The revelations received by the Prophet are there to be read by Muslims and non-Muslims alike nearly fourteen centuries later. They have lost little of their force, little of the grip which they gained over the lives of those who heard Muhammad speak. The missing story of what Muhammad said and did in his human capacity is supplied by the mass of prose traditions assembled in the *sira.* A narrative of Islamic origins can be put together which is far longer and far richer than those of Zoroastrian, Buddhist, or Christian origins. It is possible to gain real understanding of this global ideological force in its crucial formative phase through close study of the Qur'an, documentary material in the *sira*, the *sira* proper (the assemblage of prose traditions), and the anthologies of verse appended by Ibn Ishaq to his version of the *sira.* Of this array of primary evidence, it is the verse which is most susceptible to criticism, but, even if fault is found with the arguments deployed above in favour of its general authenticity, the narrative of origins will remain intact, losses being confined to a few tantalizing references to some sort of alliance between the Ghassan and the *umma*, a few references to trade, and some good evidence about the Beduin code of behaviour.

A few deliberate changes were made. Muhammad's early life and the Meccan phase of his mission were viewed through a biblical lens, as the most recent and best-known example of a paradigmatic prophetic career. This coloured but arguably did not maul the basic elements of that first part of his biography. Real damage, however, was done by the first and most important of the three religious truths which have been identified. Transformation of the quintessentially pagan sanctuary around the Ka'ba into one which was monotheist in origin and had been corrupted with time not only rewrote the ancient history of Mecca (and Arabia), but gave a misleading impression of the *umma*'s fortunes at Medina. Yet more important, it masked the key moment in the Prophet's career, clearly signalled in the Qur'an, his

divinely prompted decision to seek an accommodation with the Quraysh, and undervalued the contribution of Meccan statecraft and organizational capability to the future success of the *umma*.

The basic narrative thrust of the *sira* was thus rendered triumphalist. The victory of Islam was programmed in from the *hijra*. A fraught period in the collective life of the *umma*, when there was a serious danger that it would be isolated during the Prophet's lifetime and squeezed out of existence after his death, was written out of the story. The complications of actuality were plucked out. Faith was victorious and faith would drive the *umma* to future victories. It was a simpler, more glorious tale which was conveyed to future generations, but it was one which went through a further, rather more dramatic transformation, when the third and fourth religious truths were brought into play.

The spotlight shifted from the Prophet to his son-in-law and cousin 'Ali and his grandson Husayn. Both came to tragic ends, which loomed large in the mental worlds of their partisans at the time and later, the Shi'is, who believed that kinship to the Prophet should have determined the succession. For them the glorious tale of Islam's rise turned into a tale of woe, culminating in the murder of one hero and the noble death in battle against overwhelming odds of the other. Triumphalism was replaced by mourning, above all for the heroic death of Husayn at Karbala. It was in their emotional response to the same basically sound narrative of Islamic origins that Shi'is differed (and still differ) fundamentally from Sunnis. Both responses were evoked by ideologically motivated manipulations of historical truth.

Islamicists in modern times have been right therefore to argue that ideas and attitudes current at the time of writing influenced the general patterning of early Muslim historical compendia, in the sense that religious truths could not but prevail. It would be dangerous, though, to extrapolate from this and to suppose that the general picture presented of the *umma*'s organizational capability and statecraft is anachronistic, a retrojection into the past of state structures first brought into being under the Marwanids. Equally important has been Islamicists' insistence on the mutability of orally transmitted traditions. But one all-important caveat must be introduced: religious and scholarly commitment to the retailing of the truth acted as a brake on the inventiveness of traditionists, so that core elements of the providential story of the Prophet's mission and the history of the nascent *umma* were much less susceptible to change than incidental material illustrating the full range of human behaviour in extraordinary times. The Muslim narrative of origins can, then, be used, in conjunction with a wide range of non-Muslim sources of proven value, to piece together the history of the Middle East in the seventh century.

13

Historians of the Middle East in the Seventh Century

All manner of events have been glimpsed as we have followed the gaze of historians as they looked at the Middle East in the seventh century. Bloodshed in large-scale clashes of arms, heroic feats of valour or what could be construed as such, long marches through difficult terrain, surprise encounters with confident forces in the field, systematic devastation of wide swathes of fertile agricultural land—these and other military activities, together with the accompanying diplomacy and the propaganda spewed out, were picked out by contemporary and later observers of the last great war between Persians and Romans. A coherent narrative has not yet been put together. A sequence of scenes has been conjured up, without regard to the unities of time and place or to the remorseless drive of causation. They have simply been juxtaposed, as if they were being presented in the vivid, epigrammatic, paratactic *qasidas*, dating from the pre-Islamic era, which were much in vogue in early Abbasid Baghdad,[1] or in the opening sequences of an artful modern thriller.

Once we move on, into the era of Islamic expansion, the bewilderment induced by our array of sources grows. The geographical framework of events expands, to embrace north Africa and the outer reaches of the Iranian world in the north and east. To the multifarious writings of observers in eastern Christendom, writing in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic, which cast a fitful light on different facets of the expansion of Islam and the responses of established powers in the world around Arabia, should be added the far larger volume of material transmitted through several generations of Muslim scholars and gathered together in huge works compiled in the ninth and tenth centuries. As each set of sources has been examined, accounts have been extracted of bold Muslim thrusts into highly developed regions of the Roman and Persian worlds, of ceremonies of high symbolic importance, of apprehension rising to panic in threatened cities, of menacing diplomatic

[1] Montgomery, *Vagaries of the* Qasidah; D. Riedel, 'The Sum of the Parts: A Pre-Islamic *Qasida* by Bishr b. Abi Hazim al-Asadi', *Der Islam*, 79 (2002), 274–315.

messages and remarkable accommodations, of gathering crises within Islam, of fleeting hopes among Christians that the nightmare might be ending, of the remarkable resilience of the *umma*—but the historical materials have been shaken up as in a kaleidoscope, since individual sources, each of which covers limited ground from a particular perspective, have to be placed in their proper cultural contexts, arranged in chronological and geographical clusters, if their texts are to be understood and exploited properly.

It is the task of these concluding chapters to lay out and arrange the pieces of information which have been retrieved from the more forthcoming texts dating from the seventh and later centuries. If, as I hope I have shown, the individual pieces represent historical realities with reasonable faithfulness, it will be worthwhile to try to fit them together until they form a more or less coherent picture of what has been reported of the Middle East in the seventh century. There are blank areas, and others for which only the sketchiest of information is supplied. But the general shape of events can be seen and some provisional explanations can be offered for the swift transition from a binary to a unitary world order in western Eurasia.

1. MODEST AIMS AND RESPECT FOR EVIDENCE

Before embarking on this foray into history, we should stand back and survey the results of the historiographical enquiries. For there was a revolution in the approach of contemporary observers to the writing of history in the seventh century, which deserves proper consideration. History became too serious to be treated as a mere branch of literature. Accuracy, both as regards what was reported and its chronological calibration, was prized above mere elegance of expression. The diminishing band of traditionist historians who had hitherto striven to write up the results of their research in classicizing prose, embellishing narratives of events with flights of rhetoric and entertaining turns on antiquarian and other curiosities, vanished in the course of the seventh century. Already some of the primary evidence, underlying the smooth patina of well-written history, had been revealed in a number of full-blown ecclesiastical histories written in the heyday of theological controversy (fourth to sixth centuries), notwithstanding a continuing effort to meet the literary expectations of readers. Evidence, selectively displayed, was required if such works were to serve their forensic purpose. Universal histories, combining secular and religious subject matter, with lower literary pretensions, also began coming to the fore. But there was a remarkable acceleration in this trend in the course of the seventh century.

Historians effaced themselves from their works more than ever before. Their tastes and interests still affected their selection of material, but their prime activity was editorial, involving transcription, abridgement, and arrangement of chosen passages. The author of the *Chronicon Paschale* came closest to the ideal of complete invisibility. It is only his concern with the chronological aspect of universal history and his reliance on the patriarchal archives for recent material which enable the reader to locate him in the patriarchal administration. His contemporary history consists almost entirely of transcribed documentary material, carefully arranged in individual year-entries. He introduced very little material of his own composition—one chronological computation and two short notices. He ranks very high among the historians of the seventh century. He has only two serious rivals.

The Armenian bishop who wrote the *History of Khosrov* a generation later likewise reduced his own editorial role to a minimum. He reproduced three documents whole, one very long. For the most part, though, he had to condense his sources if he was to keep his wide-ranging history within manageable bounds. Such abridgement entailed much rewriting. Inevitably then his contribution to his history was larger than that of the anonymous patriarchal official to his. His own style and thinking could not but suffuse his paraphrases. Biblical references and language reminiscent of the Old Testament slipped into his writing. Important episodes were viewed against a background of key events in a distant past and placed in the context of God's providential scheme for mankind. There was probably nothing contrived about this. For Old Testament parallels came quite naturally to a churchman writing in the Armenian historical tradition. But it is clear that he was not quite as modest as the author of the *Chronicon Paschale.* He allowed himself one cameo appearance in his history, thereby indicating to the reader that it was based on autopsy. He also had strong views which he did not wish to conceal entirely. While he succeeded in restraining himself from denouncing catholicoi who deviated from true doctrine, he could not keep silent on the subject of the Last Days, which he believed to be close at hand, or on the role of Khusro II's pursuit of foolhardy, grandiose ambitions in activating the eschatological mechanism. He did take care, though, to confine his views to a few, discrete passages of editorial comment, and thus prevented them from seeping into the body of the history which he put together.

The other rival to the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* was a fellow official, rather more senior, in the patriarchate of Constantinople. George of Pisidia was, without doubt, the finest writer at work in the last decades of Roman imperial history. He too was fully conscious that great events were being played out on earth beneath the sweep of heaven. His finest poetry was devoted to religious themes, to glorifying the work of the Creator—possibly for the very

reason that he, like his contemporaries Theodore of Syceon, George of Choziba, and, of course, Muhammad, was expecting the Hour of Doom when the cosmos and everything in it would be destroyed. Military and political realities were transmuted in the poems with which he celebrated Heraclius' achievements on behalf of Christendom. Able to call on extraordinary linguistic virtuosity, a sharp wit, and a Shakespearian imagination, he lifted mundane military affairs on to a higher, superordinate plane, where monotheist good confronted Zoroastrian evil and prevailed. But when he was commissioned to write an official history of the war, he too submitted to the fundamental requirement of history, that what he wrote should be firmly grounded in the evidence. So he made no effort to rewrite the existing authoritative and detailed account, let alone to tamper with its substance. He simply recycled the emperor's dispatches, and added his own embellishment (and implicit commentary) in the form of a number of short poems, which highlighted key episodes and stressed the important contribution made by the emperor's words and deeds. He was thus able to hive off encomium from the historical narrative and to introduce some of the direct speech expected in a work of history. The poems were, in effect, editorial passages, carefully demarcated by their form from the body of the history culled from documents.

Documents could, of course, be used for other, non-historical purposes, and might be trimmed or altered to serve those purposes. This was plainly the case with two dossiers brought together for propaganda purposes. Strategius' account of the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614, of the circumstances which led to it, and of the consequences for the city and its inhabitants consists largely of documents, but, apart from two sermons of the Patriarch Zacharias, they were carefully concocted with a view to shocking Christian readers, with much exaggeration of physical damage, inflation of casualty figures, and graphic illustrations of the sufferings of the deportees. There was probably less massaging of material in the second dossier, that promoting opposition to the officially backed Monothelete doctrine in the second half of the seventh century, but the selection of documents and covering letters included in it rammed home the message that the leading dissidents had been harshly treated by the imperial authorities.

So documentary material should not be used uncritically. It could be fabricated, as in the case of Strategius and of the letter which Heraclius claimed to have received from Khusro II on the eve of the 624 campaign. The temptation to gloss reality, skating over the awkward, minimizing reverses, exaggerating successes, was perennial and doubtless the authorities often yielded to it when issuing bulletins. Nonetheless, governments had a strong interest in keeping the educated and official classes informed of current events, if only to prevent rumours of misfortune from bubbling up and

subverting their authority. Communiqués could not diverge too much from the truth without losing the credibility vital to government. So the filleting of fact had to be discreet and modest.

The documentary base of history, assuredly as ubiquitous in classical antiquity as in any subsequent period, became more visible in the seventh century. The last of the true classicizing historians, Theophylact Simocatta, was as determined as any of his predecessors to deck out history in elegant literary dress, but even he was ready to reproduce documents verbatim (there are six all told, including two dedicatory inscriptions and a diplomatic note of Khusro II) and to quote the short, halting speech in which Justin II announced the appointment of Tiberius as co-emperor in 574. Other documents can be seen lurking in his text, in particular revised versions of the dispatches of two of Maurice's leading generals, Priscus and Heraclius the elder, which were presumably put into circulation to boost their reputations and to forward the political careers of their relatives.[2] Once the reader's eyes are alert to these submerged documentary sources, their shapes can be seen flitting below the surface of other extant historical works—more often than not government communiqués, which conveyed precise information in neat packages to a wide audience. It was surely from Persian official sources that the *History of Khosrov* quarried its neat, well-ordered accounts of military operations in Armenia in the first decade of the century and the *History to 682* its unique collection of material on Turkish–Persian diplomatic contacts in the third decade. If conciseness, high specific gravity, precision, and lucidity may be taken to be the distinctive features of dispatches and dispatch-based bulletins, other texts, such as the *Maronite Chronicle*, the second book of the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, John of Nikiu's Egyptian chronicle, the lost histories of the Patrician Trajan and Theophilus of Edessa can be identified as drawing considerable amounts of material directly or indirectly from documentary sources.

2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-ISLAMIC HISTORICAL WRITING

Fine writing ceased to be required of the respectable historian. In an age of evident divine intervention in human affairs, truth mattered more than literary display. Nonetheless, the rephrasing of primary material necessary

[2] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 94–105, 230–3.

to reduce its volume and to fit it together provided opportunities for some to show something of their talent. The author of the *History to 682* was concerned to give a homogeneous stylistic gloss to the materials he gathered, and probably chose them partly with an eye to their literary qualities. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre was a good wordsmith, to judge by his account of the second Arab invasion of Cyprus, while the young Nicephorus was engaged on a primarily literary rather than historical enterprise when he wrote his *Short History*. It was above all extended anecdotes, giving specific examples of human ingenuity and courage, which were introduced as adornments to plain historical texts. Human interest stories, of which they were a subcategory, were already an established feature of hagiographical texts. The increasing prominence of similar material in historical texts, notably the *Khuzistan Chronicle* and the work of Theophilus of Edessa, should cause little surprise, in an age when barriers between genres were breaking down and the autonomy of secular history was lost, when divine government of earthly affairs was increasingly acknowledged. In the case of Theophilus, it may well be that the providential history larded with *akhbar* (tales of all sorts) as it was being developed by Muslim scholars exercised some influence.

The sense that God was more closely involved in human affairs was widespread, with a concomitant concern to take the long view of recent and contemporary history. We have already seen how this sense of a higher plane, above the earthly arena where men performed, permeated the poetry of George of Pisidia, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and the *History of Khosrov*. It may well have influenced the emergence of universal history as the prime form of history. Historians strove to understand things from the very beginning and to track the working out of God's grand plan. Several universal histories have been discussed: John of Antioch's as well as the *Chronicon Paschale*, John of Nikiu's, the *Maronite Chronicle* and the *Chronicle to 724*, the joint project of George Syncellus and Theophanes, Eutychius' far from reliable *Annals*, Movses Daskhurants'i's history of Caucasian Albania, and, of course, the great, chronologically ordered historical compendia compiled in the Abbasid caliphate. The Old Testament past was equally relevant to the present of Christians (hence Theodore Syncellus could narrate the two great crises in Roman–Avar relations in terms of the biblical past) and of Muslims (hence the prominence of the Chosen People's story in Islamic histories). Both Christians and Muslims were all too aware that time was finite and both carefully documented its passing, doing their best to place individual events accurately (under specific, numbered years) within providential history. Even if, like Theophilus of Edessa and Nicephorus, they were inclined to excise dates from their final texts, they relied on them to place events in the right order.

The barriers between genres broke down. History flowed into hagiography, hagiography into history. Holy men and their biographers, even a monk as determined to withdraw from the world as George of Choziba, could not disengage themselves from public events, when those events had consequences for large populations on the ground. The second book of the *Miracula S. Demetrii* contains several substantial historical narratives, dealing with the four main crises affecting the city in the seventh century. It is history made up as hagiography. The heroic phase of Maximus' life is fully documented with contemporary records (presumably after some judicious editing). The *Chronicle of Seert* is an amalgam of potted hagiographies and history, secular and ecclesiastical. There was no such thing as purely secular history: Theophylact Simocatta allowed churchmen to play their proper part in the history of Maurice's reign; his distant continuator, Nicephorus, who set out to classicize his sources, did not and could not compartmentalize history. The church had been playing a central part in the life of the state for too long for this to be conceivable.

3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORICAL WRITING

Several features detected in Christian historical texts, from the seventh and the following centuries—the importance of universal history, the meticulous calibration of time, and the embellishment of providential history with anecdotes of individual behaviour—are paralleled in the emerging Islamic historical tradition. That tradition did not, however, grow out of existing late antique historical forms. Insofar as there were distinct genres for recording the past, they were forms which had evolved in Beduin milieux quite independently of the developed cultures of the empires enveloping Arabia. The main genres current in the Hijaz and elsewhere in Muhammad's lifetime were (i) stories of tribal warfare (*ayyam*), (ii) stylized poems extolling life in the desert, involving love, nostalgia, long journeys on swift, sturdy camels, deeds of heroism (*qasidas*), (iii) fanciful and (iv) everyday tales (*qisas* and *akhbar*), and (v) genealogically oriented narratives.[3] The sacred text of the Qur'an, once it had been assembled and edited in canonical form (before the outbreak of the first civil war in 656), marked a complete break with anything recited or

[3] Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing*; Leder, 'Literary Use of the *Khabar*', 277–81, 307–13; Hoyland, *Arabia*, 211–19, 224–7.

written in the past. The divine revelation conveyed by the Prophet delivered an immense shock to the culture as well as the belief-systems and politics of Arabia. It was only to be expected that it would in due course generate its own new type of politico-religious history.

The duration of the gestation period is a contentious matter. There is evidence that some sort of ordered draft about the rise of Islam was written down by al-Zuhri (*c.*670–742), but it is hard to prove that any narrative account of the Prophet's life or of the conquest of different regions was put together earlier than the early eighth century. The general consensus has it that information was transmitted orally from the time of occurrence of events to the time of their recording. Since, however, it is hard to see why so useful a device as writing should have been disregarded for so long in what was evidently a literate society, it is surely more likely that writing was used in an ancillary capacity, taking the form of lecture notes, notes on lectures, or ordered drafts, intended to back memory of what was to be said or what had been heard.[4] Be that as it may, it is plain that the historical tradition was classified in novel ways as it evolved, in terms of subject matter rather than form. The main categories were *sira* (covering the Prophet's life and the rise of the *umma*, the Muslim community), *futuh* (the conquests, brought about by Allah's will), *fitna* (the division of the *umma* and the resulting civil wars of 656–61 and 682–92), and the imperial phase of history inaugurated by ʿAbd al-Malik (692–705). History was also compendious, receptive to all types of antecedent transmitted material, irrespective of its form, and ready to incorporate several divergent versions of the same episode. Wherever possible, events were given exact dates. When reports were captured in writing, there was much less stylistic upgrading of what had been received than in the Graeco-Roman tradition. Historical texts were dossiers of evidence of prima facie value, to be transcribed carefully and arranged in chronological order. What were being recorded were the words and deeds of the Prophet and the steady expansion of the *umma* which was charged by God with bringing his final revelation to all of mankind. It was far too serious an enterprise for literary concerns to prevail, or indeed for systematic weeding or neat conflation of variant, credit-worthy traditions.

The fundamental difference between Islamic and earlier classical or Christian historiography is that the former was grounded from the first in religious scholarship. Scholars at work in the Hijaz and Iraq, in loose intercommunicating groups rather than organized schools, set about the systematic collection of information, from reputable sources, about the origins and

[4] Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 1–67.

development of the *umma*. It was a religious enterprise. It is quite inconceivable that any of them deliberately remoulded the material which came into their hands. Such reworking may, of course, have happened inadvertently, unconsciously, either in the course of transmission to them or in the process of writing up their own accounts. But it may be taken as a fixed datum that they were striving for the truth, above all when they were writing about the Prophet and his deeds, about the extraordinary transformation of Arabia and its relations with the outer world which he brought about. The proof that theirs was a serious scholarly endeavour is readily to hand. It was they who introduced the scholarly citation into historical writing, the *isnad*, which, ideally, would list every link in a chain of informants à propos of each discrete item of transmitted information.

The second main innovation was an early democratization of history, the introduction of characters of relatively humble status into historical narratives. History wells up from below. Specific incidents are described and embellished in the telling. Men (and they are mostly men) are shown striving to forward or to thwart the cause of the Muslim community, by cunning devices, bold initiatives, acts of courage . . . The local and the particular loom large. Colourful episodes abound. History has been atomized. It has become the aggregated experience of a multitude of jostling individuals and small groups. Not that religious and political leaders have been written out of the story. Far from it. Roman and Persian generals can be seen attempting to contain and, if possible, reverse Muslim success. The leaders of the Muslim community are clearly identified and their actions are enumerated. Successive campaigns in different arenas transform the political configuration of the Middle East and its hinterlands in a remarkably short time. But this grand narrative is skimpily told. The achievements of the *umma* are baldly noted. The principal object seems to have been to fix them precisely in time, as milestones on the final stage of providential history which began at the *hijra*. It is a bare record of what happened, of what was brought about by God's will, stripped of mundane explanations. The complex processes involved in the formulation and implementation of policy are passed over largely in silence, whether debates in leaders' entourages or changes to inherited systems of government or military dispositions and the organization of logistics. A crucial component of history has been largely wiped away—the working out of the human will, the striving by organized bodies of human beings towards defined ends—because it was of little significance in the new Islamic era when Allah's orders were being executed by his vice-gerents on earth.

There may be a large tabloid element in early Islamic historical traditions. What may seem to the traditional historian to be trivializing anecdotal matter, in the form of collected tales (*akhbar*) illustrating all aspects of human

behaviour, may predominate, but the Muslim intellectuals, who gathered and collated materials about the history of the *umma* with unusual scholarly rigour in Iraq and the Hijaz within two generations of the Prophet's death, did not fail in their task. They did not tamper with the skeletal narrative carried in the collective memory of the original core of the *umma*, the emigrants from Mecca. The order of events in that dramatic story of divine revelation, of the travails and triumph of the *umma* which received it, was deeply imprinted on the minds of the faithful, and no Muslim of a later generation could have set about deliberately tampering with the record of the key events in the Prophet's life, as it had been defined both by reality and by his interpretation of reality. Whatever massaging of fact may have occurred may, almost certainly, be attributed to the Prophet himself.

4. COVERAGE OF EXTANT HISTORICAL SOURCES

It is therefore possible to trace the stream of ideas which led ultimately to the destruction of the ancient world order in western Eurasia back to their human source, Muhammad, and to observe the extraordinary impact which they made on Arabia in his lifetime. We cannot, of course, penetrate behind the Prophet's utterances, but it is an immense boon to be able to read his words for ourselves as they were collected and arranged in the Qur'an in the generation following his death. It is possible to watch the development of his preaching from his first urgent warning about the imminent Day of Judgement to his late codification of rules for social and ritual behaviour. Equipped with a bald but independent record of his actions at Mecca and Medina and of the principal episodes in the early history of the *umma* (the spare main narrative line of the *sira*), as well as an authentic document, the *Constitution of Medina*, and contemporary poetry picked up and incorporated in the *sira*, we can for once watch a world religion grow from inception and delve deep into the ideological forces at work. The evolution of the new faith in changing circumstances can be followed in detail. Several significant developments can be identified, apart from the well-known episode of the Satanic Verses. An initial pacifist stance gave way, at the *hijra*, to reluctant endorsement of the use of force for self-defence, and this subsequently hardened into a fully sanctioned armed struggle to propagate the faith. An extraordinarily conciliatory stance vis-à-vis Jews and Christians turned into open hostility and persecution of the former, when the Jews of Medina not only refused to accept Muhammad as the latest of God's prophets but collaborated with Meccan forces. Perhaps most striking of all were the

concessions offered in Muhammad's effort, ultimately successful, to bring about a reunion of the Muslim exiles with the Meccans, which resulted in the institution of the *hajj* and the assumption by Mecca's pagan sanctuary of a central place in the religious life of the *umma*.

So there is no dearth of useful information about the ultimate origins of the extraordinarily dynamic religio-political entity which changed the face of the Middle East, north Africa, Spain, Transcaucasia, central Asia, and, in due course, south and south-east Asia. There are gaps in coverage, but they stem mainly from temporary historiographical failures in the non-Muslim world. Both of the best-developed Christian historical traditions of the Middle East, the Greek, which had its origins a millennium earlier in Athens, and the Armenian, which flowered following the conversion of the ruling Arsacid dynasty at the beginning of the fourth century, were badly frayed at times in the seventh century.

Later Byzantine historians found no indigenous Greek source covering the lacuna between the end of the second continuation of John of Antioch (in the early 640s) and the first scattered notices about the reign of Constantine IV which prefaced the Patrician Trajan's history of the period 685–720. The only historically useful texts composed in the period which cast light on metropolitan affairs were hagiographical—the dossier of anti-Monothelete material assembled by disciples of Maximus Confessor, and a collection, put together between 658 and 669, of accounts of the miraculous cures (of hernias and male genital ailments) performed by the relics of St Artemius in the church of St John the Baptist in the Oxeia quarter of Constantinople.[5] The latter text supplies a fair amount of incidental information about the city in the first half of the seventh century, still abustle with commercial life and in contact with the east Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the west, with a socially and economically diverse population. But the text has nothing to say about government policies and foreign relations. It certainly cannot fill the gap left by other sources about domestic affairs under Constans II (641–69).

The resulting silence has proved immensely frustrating to historians of Byzantium. For the twenty or so years preceding Constans' assassination were undoubtedly a crucial period of adaptation and reorganization. Reforms introduced both at the centre and in the provinces, investment in military infrastructure, development of a navy, together with the slower processes of social and ideological change inaugurated then, ultimately

[5] *Miracula S. Artemii*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Varia Graeca sacra*, Zapiski Ist.-Phil. Fakulteta Imp. S. Petersburgskavo Universiteta 95 (St Petersburg, 1909), 1–75, trans. V. S. Crisafulli, J. W. Nesbitt, and J. F. Haldon, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, 1997).

endowed Byzantium with unprecedented powers of resistance and extraordinary cultural resilience. They helped ensure its survival as an independent, albeit beleaguered, bastion of Christendom on the north-west margin of the central lands of the new Islamic empire. Apart from odd pieces of tantalizing evidence about institutional change which may be extracted from short inscriptions on lead seals, the only information about Byzantium in the middle of the seventh century comes from the periphery (the *Miracula S. Demetrii* and the biographies of popes which make up the *Liber pontificalis*) and beyond (isolated notices in the *History of Khosrov* and Theophilus of Edessa). It is pretty meagre fare.

This Byzantine historiographical failure had antecedents in the Roman past. There is but exiguous coverage of the third-century crisis in extant sources,[6] and the classicizing historians of the fifth century only survive, in very fragmentary form, mainly thanks to the activities of compilers put to work by a bookish tenth-century emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913–59).[7] Coverage of the second phase of the last Persian–Roman war is also thin, after Shahen's advance to Chalcedon and the peace offer by the Senate in 615. It should not therefore occasion much surprise that there was a later, longer break at a time when Byzantium was under serious threat and the energies of its governing and educated elites were devoted to the restructuring of inherited institutions and to preparations for a long struggle against an immensely powerful adversary. It is not as if the Graeco-Roman historical mentality, highly evolved after a millennium, could degenerate suddenly, suffering the collective equivalent of Alzheimer's disease.[8] For historical skills were needed in the present. The surrounding world had to be scanned, developments noted and interpreted. Evidence of all sorts had to be gathered, sifted, sorted, and archived, if the analyses of recent and current affairs which were a prerequisite for effective policy planning were to be solidly based. A great deal of history was probably written during the reign of Constans II—appraisals of Arab strength and weakness, surveys of past policy, intelligence summaries about other threatened regions (above all Transcaucasia), and, in preparation for Constans' move to the west, evaluations of the political and military situation in Italy and north Africa. Such position papers were

[6] J. Drinkwater, 'Maximinus to Diocletian and the "Crisis"', *CAH* (2nd edn.), xii: *The Crisis of Empire A.D. 193–337* (Cambridge, 2005), 28–66, at 65–6.

[7] Lemerle, *Premier Humanisme*, 280–8; R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, i (Liverpool, 1981).

[8] Cf. Michael Whitby, 'Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality', in Cameron and Conrad, *Literary Source Material*, 25–80, at 66–74.

essential tools of government, but, in an age of crisis, they were not translated into more or less literary works for the edification of subsequent generations.

Armenian coverage diminishes drastically both in quantity and quality once the *History to 682* gives out. A short pro-Chalcedonian summary of church history, written around 700, has nothing to say about the Arab conquests or international relations in the late seventh century.[9] Rather more useful is an anti-Chalcedonian history of church councils put together (largely from translated Greek material) by P'ilon Tirakats'i in 686/7 or very soon afterwards.[10] He concludes by charting the ecclesiastical turmoil within the east Roman empire from the Lateran Council of 649 down to the repudiation of Monotheletism at the sixth ecumenical council of 680–1, targeting Pope Martin and Maximus Confessor as the two chief troublemakers. The last two notices deal with secular events: the non-payment of tax by Armenians, Iberians, and Albanians to the Muslims during second *fitna*, after thirty years of submission; and an invasion of Transcaucasia by the Khazars, in the course of which they won a major victory on 15 August 685, killing many Armenian, Iberian, and Albanian princes.[11] The Khazar attack, which opened a new chapter in Caucasian history, also figures in the short, disjointed history of the seventh century put together by Łewond in the late ninth century.[12] Łewond, however, cannot plug satisfactorily the hole left between 682 and a serious Armenian rebellion against Muslim rule which broke out in 703. It was not that Armenians ceased to observe what was going on around them or abandoned the enterprise of documenting their own history. It was but a short historiographical hiatus, induced almost certainly by the confusion and trouble following the repression of the 703 rebellion. Some of the finest works of literature produced in Armenia's medieval heyday in the tenth and eleventh centuries were histories.[13]

What, the reader may ask at this late stage, can early medieval sources from the west contribute to knowledge of seventh-century Middle Eastern affairs? Can they do anything to fill the gaps left by Byzantine and Armenian

[9] G. Garitte, *La Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, CSCO 132, Subsidia 4 (Louvain, 1952), with conclusions at 357–400.

[10] This forms the last part of a hybrid work, translated from Greek and slightly amplified by P'ilon, which combines summary universal history with ecclesiastical history—see Greenwood, '"New Light from the East"'.

[11] P'ilon: ed. A. G. Abrahamyan, *Anania Širakats'u matenagrut'yune* (Erevan, 1944), 399. 22–9; cf. Greenwood, '"New Light from the East"', 244–7.

[12] Łewond, *Patmut'iwn*, ed. K. Ezean (St Petersburg, 1887), trans. Z. Arzoumanian, *History of Łewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians* (Philadelphia, 1982), 54–5. Discussion: Greenwood, *Armenia*, 170–228.

[13] A. J. Hacikyan, G. Basmajian, E. S. Franchuk, and N. Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*, ii (Detroit, 2002), 198–206, 210–13, 229–31, 316–17, 332–4.

histories? So far reference has only been made to texts written within the confines of the Roman empire—the *Miracula S. Demetrii* from Thessalonica, the *Liber pontificalis* from Rome,[14] and the *Doctrina Jacobi* from north Africa. They supply valuable nuggets of information, which have been noted in previous chapters. More such nuggets might be expected from historians writing in the lands colonized by Germanic peoples in late antiquity. It is not as if there was a thoroughgoing cultural breakdown. Roman norms and institutions proved of great use in cementing the loyalty of provincials to the new regimes—Lombard in Italy (outside the Byzantine exarchate), Frankish in Gaul, and Visigothic in Spain. The classical concern for recording history in writing received a temporary boost, from new ruling dynasties anxious to enhance their legitimacy by rooting themselves in the past familiar to the classical world. So history continued to be written in all three kingdoms, in Latin, the language of administration and high culture. For the seventh century we can turn to three important works: (1) the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, a collection of material reaching back to Adam, which was assembled by two learned Burgundians and which included their own accounts of contemporary affairs, the first covering the years 604–13, the second 625–42;[15] (2) Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards* (to 744), composed in the monastery of Monte Cassino, during his last decade (787–97);[16] and (3) the continuation of John of Biclar's chronicle written in Spain around 741.[17] They all included notices about what was going on in the Middle East. For all three Germanic powers remained in contact with the eastern empire, if only through the medium of the church and Mediterranean-wide doctrinal debate. All three could not but acknowledge the primacy of the Christian Roman empire among other earthly powers. So westerners watched from a distance as great dramas were played out in the east, and the historians sought to capture the chief events observed in their writings.

The problem for them was that the news which reached them came through various channels over long distances, much of it probably in oral

[14] The *Liber pontificalis* was, as noted above (Ch. 4 n. 46), an official collection of papal biographies completed in the late ninth century. New potted lives of popes were added as they died from the second quarter of the seventh century (Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, pp. i–vii and xxxvii–xxxviii).

[15] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (ed. and trans.), *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960).

[16] *Pauli historia Langobardorum*, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, *MGH, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX* (Hanover, 1878), 12–187, trans. W. D. Foulke, *Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia, 1907), and F. Bougard, *Paul Diacre, Histoire des Lombards* (Turnhout, 1994).

[17] *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica*, ed. J. Gil, *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, i (Madrid, 1973), 7–14.

form. It originated ultimately in the empire and the caliphate, but what they picked up deviated from what was recorded in authoritative eastern sources at the time and later. Rumours circulating in the Middle East, and carefully slanted news, including black propaganda, affected what was transmitted to the west. Hence Phocas is saddled with the blame for almost all the disasters in the war against the Persians and Heraclius becomes a heroic figure on the battlefield who does not hesitate to fight an enemy champion single-handedly. So a fair amount of embellishment and embroidery of the truth was already present in the information before transmission, and whatever was transmitted was subject to further corruption as it travelled west. As a result, there is much legendary material, much garbling of chronology in the notices of all three historians. None of them can, at any stage, be viewed as authoritative.

There are family resemblances between some of the notices written by the western historians and information retailed by eastern sources (notably Theophilus of Edessa, Nicephorus, and Theophanes). The explanation is probably to be sought in a common ultimate rooting in reality or the management of news about reality, rather than use of a common written source. This, it seems to me, is demonstrably true in the case of the fullest of the western sources, the *Chronicle to 741*, written in Spain. The author followed the format of John of Biclar and extended his coverage from 602 to around 741. He made use of the last part of Isidore of Seville's *History of the Goths*, combining it with eastern material, most of which was probably relayed by an intermediary source or sources in north Africa. The core of the eastern material consists of lists of Roman/Byzantine and Arab rulers, whose dates of accession and decease are recorded accurately, with a few exceptions. The lists are fleshed out mainly with material about Heraclius (some of it very garbled), notices about successive stages in the expansion of the Arabs (Muhammad dies after, rather than before, the initial conquests), and a little Arab domestic history.[18]

There is too much distorted material in all three western historians' accounts of the seventh-century Middle East for us to have confidence in any specific item of information which they convey, unless it is independently corroborated. It follows that it would be unsafe to make use of information unique to them for the work of historical reconstruction undertaken in the next three chapters. There is, however, one important exception—Paul the Deacon's account of the Emperor Constans' activities in Italy and Sicily, his assassination, and the rebellion of Mecetius (Mžež) which followed. Paul

[18] R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710–797* (Oxford, 1989), 52–7. Contra Brandes, *BZ* 91 (1998), 554–5, who has the chronicler draw his eastern material from a source which predated Theophilus of Edessa's history and which was used directly by Theophanes.

relied mainly on summary accounts of the pontificates of Vitalian (657–72) and his successor Adeodatus (672–6) in the *Liber pontificalis*, but he also turned to a local Beneventan source. It is probably not foolhardy to make use of the additional information given in his two clusters of notices.[19] As for his and the other two western historians' coverage of Middle Eastern affairs, the only conclusions which may be drawn safely from them concern attitudes. They make it plain that the sub-Roman kingdoms of the west kept a wary eye on what was happening in the east, not least because the expansion of Islam seemed unstoppable both by land and by sea and, before long, might pose a direct threat. The historian of the Visigoths, who did indeed face attacks by two Arab armies in 711 and swiftly succumbed, reveals himself to be an Umayyad loyalist by erasing the memory of ʿAli's caliphate from his history.

Early Islamic historical traditions, voluminous though they be, also thin out in places. Relatively little is said, for example, about the struggle with the Khazars for control of Transcaucasia before the eighth century. But an outline history of Islam, from the first hesitant utterances of the Prophet to the resumption of campaigns of conquest under ʿAbd al-Malik, can be pieced together from the notices transmitted about important events. Paradoxically, it seems that reliability increased with distance from the time of writing. The stablest traditions were the earliest, those dealing with the history of the *umma* in the Prophet's lifetime. Vested interests, whether politico-religious (Sunni, Shiʿi, and Khariji), familial, or local, were increasingly engaged thereafter and clearly did succeed in influencing traditions. This probably accounts for some garbling and serious disagreement in narratives of conquest, as also for a remarkable narrowing of coverage from 656. The first civil war is reduced to a politico-ideological duel between the two main protagonists and between one of them (ʿAli) and the Kharijis, without much context. It is fortunate that some Christians responded to the sudden transformation of the familiar world by resorting to history. Without the two principal Armenian historians of the seventh century, without John of Nikiu and the author of the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, we would be hard put to describe Islam's success, let alone to hazard any explanation. Similarly, without a notice about first *fitna* added as an afterthought to the *History of Khosrov* and the *Maronite Chronicle*'s description of the solemn ceremonies which marked Muʿawiya's accession in 660, we would be left prisoners of Islamic historical traditions in which the struggle between Muʿawiya and ʿAli is detached from events in the wider world.

[19] *Lib. pont.*, nos. 78 and 79, ed. Duchesne, 343–7, trans. Davis, 71–3; *Hist. Lang.*, V. 6–8, 11–13.

5. SUBSTANTIVE HISTORY

It is now time to pull some substantive history together out of the full set of relatively fruitful sources analysed and evaluated in the preceding chapters. The first thirty years of the century were dominated by warfare between the east Roman and Sasanian empires. Military operations and associated diplomatic activity can be documented for most years, the ideological driving forces behind the conflict can be identified, and the extraordinary reversal in the fortunes of the two sides in the 620s can be explained. That is the subject of the next chapter, which also tackles the difficult task of tracing Islam back to its origin in the Prophet's preachings. It goes on to sketch the history of the Muslim community (*umma*) which formed around the Prophet before and after the *hijra* (emigration) from Mecca to Medina, and to describe the circumstances in which the Muslims of Medina and the Quraysh of Mecca joined forces in 630. The following chapter casts an eye over the middle years of the century, outlining the main stages in the Muslim conquest of the Middle East (634–52) before documenting the gathering crisis which eventually led to the outbreak of civil war (first *fitna*) in 656. The final chapter takes the story on through the caliphate of Muʿawiya (660–80) and second *fitna* (682–92) to the consolidation of the Islamic state and the proclamation of Islam as an imperial religion by ʿAbd al-Malik in the years 692–705. While the principal subject is the history of international relations in an era of dramatic changes, some attention is also given to structures, chiefly those of the emerging Islamic state. For this, recourse must also be had to non-literary sources—buildings, coin issues, and, most valuable of all, early Arabic papyri from Egypt.

14

The Middle East in the Seventh Century

The Great Powers, Arabia, and the Prophet

1. THE LAST ROMAN–PERSIAN WAR, 603–630

The overthrow and execution of the Emperor Maurice by Phocas, a Balkan army commander, in November 602, provided the *shahanshah* Khusro II Parvez with an obvious pretext and moral justification for going to war.[1] For Maurice's regime had responded to his appeal for aid when he sought asylum across the Roman frontier twelve years earlier and had restored him to his ancestral throne in a well-executed campaign in 591.[2] There was also the possibility that he might be able to vary the terms of the settlement which he had reached with Maurice. While the political parity of the Sasanian empire had been acknowledged, large cessions of territory had weakened the Persians' strategic position in the west. The Romans had gained approximately half of Persarmenia and Iberia, together with the Armenian Taurus which runs from the tangled mountains of Vaspurakan (beyond Lake Van) to the Euphrates in the west. This gave them the advantage of inner lines. Whereas they could move troops swiftly between the two main potential theatres of war in western Armenia and northern Mesopotamia, over one of three fortified passes under their control, Persian forces would have to make a long detour to the east, circumventing the impassable mountains to the east of Lake Van.[3] So Khusro had much to gain, if he could, in his turn, impose a peace of his choosing on the Romans. Conditions in the steppe world were also propitious. The attention of the khagan Tardu was directed east, at northern China, until, late in 602, a dangerous revolt broke out in Mongolia, forcing him to break off

[1] Ioannes Ant., fr. 318, 548–9; Simocatta, VIII. 6. 2–12. 13; *Chron. Pasch.*, 693. 9–694. 7; ps. Sebeos, 106. 8–13, with Thomas A., 88 and *Hist. Com.*, n. 25; *Khuz. Chron.*, 15–16; *Chron. 1234*, 119–20, 121; Mich. Syr., II. 374–5, 377; *Seert Chron.*, 498–9, 517–18, 519–20; *Georgian Chronicles*, 223. Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 24–7.

[2] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 292–304.

[3] Ps. Sebeos, 76. 8–35, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 10.

his eastern campaigns and inaugurating a decade of political turbulence in the Turkish empire.[4]

The Persians attacked north and south of the Taurus in spring 603. Operations in Armenia seem to have been designed to occupy the Roman forces stationed there, while the main offensive blow was struck in the south, taking advantage of the rebellion of the regional army commander, Narses, who had remained loyal to Maurice. Maurice's eldest son Theodosius who had managed to escape (or an impostor who made a very convincing show as pretender) was publicly presented as legitimate heir, in an effort to soften Roman opinion. Roman resistance, however, did not falter. The Persians suffered a reverse in the north. The rebellion south of the Taurus was eventually put down and Narses himself was killed. It took a siege lasting a year and a half before Dara, the main Roman forward base in northern Mesopotamia, finally succumbed, and two years' campaigning (604–5) before the Romans were driven out of Persarmenia.[5] This first phase was a war of attrition. It required a second, more general mobilization in 606 before Persian forces were able to push forward step by step into Roman territory, reaching the Euphrates, north and south of the Armenian Taurus, by the winter of 609–10. The Persians had a clear advantage, despite Phocas' government's disengagement from the Balkans and large-scale troop transfers to the east.[6]

Khusro himself was confident of the outcome, probably from the end of 605. For he can be seen to have made preparations for taking over a new segment of the *badiya*, the zone of rich grazing and irrigable land fronting the north Arabian desert. At some point in the first phase of fighting before 610, possibly during the lull in fighting on the western front in 606, he abolished the Lakhm monarchy.[7] This was an extraordinary act of state. For the Lakhm had been the principal agents for managing the Beduin of north-east Arabia from the third century, and had stood by the Sasanian dynasty at times of domestic crisis. The Romans had been forced, early in Justinian's reign, to acknowledge that a single supra-tribal authority, on the Persian model, was more effective than their own system of multilateral client-management.[8]

[4] Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, 136–8.

[5] Ps. Sebeos, 107. 1–110. 11, with Thomas A., 88 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 27–9; *Chron. 724*, 17; *Khuz. Chron.*, 16–17; Theoph., 291. 27–293. 5; *Chron. 1234*, 120–2; Mich. Syr., II. 378; *Seert Chron.*, 500–1, 520. Cf. G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II* AD *363–630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London, 2002), 183–7.

[6] Ps. Sebeos, 110. 22–111. 31, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 30; *Chron. Pasch.*, 699. 7; *Chron. 724*, 17; *Khuz. Chron.*, 24; *Chron. 1234*, 122–4; Mich. Syr., II. 378; *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, cc. 109, 112–13, with commentary (257, 261–5).

[7] *Seert Chron.*, 468–9, 478–81, 539–40, 546. Cf. Tab., V. 339–59.

[8] M. Whittow, 'Rome and the Jafnids: Writing the History of a Sixth-Century Tribal Dynasty', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, ii: *Some Recent Archaeological*

Even so, the Lakhm had ensured that Persian influence predominated in northern Arabia for the rest of the sixth century, and had made it possible on several occasions for the Persians to outflank Roman defences on the Euphrates and to launch attacks across the desert. When the Romans' rival client dynasty, the Ghassan, was successfully suborned by Khusro's grandfather and left the way open for a surprise attack on Dara from the south in 573, the Roman experiment with unitary rule was abandoned.[9]

Why then did Khusro dismantle a Beduin client-management system which had proved its worth time and time again? Assuredly not for the reasons suggested in the *Seert Chronicle* and al-Tabari's history, which seem to have picked up stories generated at the time as the news circulated in Mesopotamia. The breakdown in personal relations between Khusro and Nuʿman, the Lakhm king, which they describe at length, was almost certainly a consequence, not a cause, of the new policy. Another predictable consequence was the resistance which it engendered among tribes loyal to the Lakhm. They came together and challenged the new regime installed by the Sasanians at Hira, the Lakhm capital, which was headed by a new Persian client-ruler from the Banu ʿIjl. They were unable to dislodge it, but managed to win a victory at Dhu Qar, around the time of the first revelations to Muhammad. The battle of Dhu Qar gained symbolic importance in retrospect, as the first battle in which Arabs had defeated one of the great powers.[10]

What induced Khusro to risk serious disturbances on the desert frontier of Mesopotamia at a time of heavy fighting against the Romans? The explanation has to lie in the future which he foresaw and for which he was planning. A new system would be needed to manage part or all of the Romans' desert frontier, as Persian armies pushed west and then south. There was no question of managing Arab tribes along the whole inner sweep of the Fertile Crescent through a single royal client and from a single base fronting lower Mesopotamia. The Lakhm could not retain a leading role, given generations of antagonism between them and the Romans' Arab clients. Khusro, it may be postulated, realized, from an early stage, that he would have to adopt a system akin to that of the Romans in the past, that he must establish close ties of patronage over a number of Arab tribes, each fronting a distinct segment of

Research, JRA Suppl. Ser. 37 (1999), 215–33; Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War*, 25–30, 56; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 78–83.

[9] Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 256–8.

[10] Tab., V. 338–9, 359–70. Donner, 'The Bakr b. Wa'il Tribes'; Howard-Johnston, 'Al-Tabari', 7, 20–2.

the frontier, and that the best way to project Persian influence beyond the frontier zone was through a whole series of such clients.

Persian forces were able to break through the innermost line of Roman defence on the Euphrates in the course of 610, primarily because of a second round of civil warfare in the Roman empire. A rebellion led by the governor of Roman Africa, the elder Heraclius, had gathered way in the course of 608 and 609. Egypt was seized and the loyalist forces sent in by Phocas were repulsed. Cyprus, also taken by the rebels, acted as a forward base. Propaganda promoted disaffection in the Roman Middle East and prepared the way for a successful seaborne attack on Constantinople at the beginning of October 610.[11] The following year the Persians took advantage of continuing Roman divisions to push on to the Mediterranean coast beyond Antioch and to seize a bridgehead in Anatolia. When the new emperor, Heraclius, son of the rebel leader, presented his credentials, Khusro had the ambassadors executed—a brutal demonstration of his renunciation of the old, binary world order. Heraclius' position worsened markedly when the Roman forces which counterattacked in Anatolia and trapped the Persians in Caesarea in 611 failed to prevent their escape in 612 and when his own campaign into northern Syria in 613 ended in failure. The Persians then extended their north Syrian enclave to the south, taking Damascus and Caesarea.[12] They now had a clear advantage of inner lines, able to strike at will north-west into Anatolia or south into Palestine, while the Romans would have to rely on slower sea communications to move troops from one front to the other. Palestine was theirs for the taking, as was made plain in 614 when they responded to a Jewish appeal for help against a pogrom and were able, after a short siege, to capture Jerusalem. The metropolitan region was also within range. A bold raiding expedition reached the Asian shore of the Bosporus in 615.[13]

[11] Ps. Sebeos, 112. 30–113. 2, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 26 and 31; *Chron. Pasch.*, 699. 3, 699. 19–701. 13; Geo. Pis., *In Heracleum*; Ioannes Ant., fr. 321 (552–5); Nic., c. 1; Theoph., 295. 27–296. 5, 296. 17–297. 10, 298. 15–299. 14; *Chron. 1234*, 125, 126–7; Mich. Syr., II. 378; *Seert Chron.*, 526–7.

[12] Ps. Sebeos, 113. 3–22, 114. 27–115. 4, with Thomas A., 88–9 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 31 and 34; *V. Theodori*, cc. 153. 1–154. 13, 166. 1–35; Nic., c. 2.9–22; Theoph., 299. 14–18 and 31–2, 300. 20–5; *Chron. 1234*, 127–8; Mich. Syr., II. 400; *Seert Chron.*, 527. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 187–90.

[13] Ps. Sebeos, 115. 5–116. 12, 122. 9–11, with Thomas A., 89–91 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 34 and 37; *Chron. Pasch.*, 704. 13–705. 2, 706. 11–13; *V. Georgii*, cc. 29–30 (127. 6–128. 1), 31 (129. 14–17); *V. Anastasii*, c. 8, with Flusin's commentary, 83–6, 88–93; Strategius, cc. 2–8; *Khuz. Chron.*, 24–5; Sophronius, *Anacreontica*, 14; Nic., c. 6. 7–10; *V. Georgii*, 128. 1–2, 129. 14–130. 11; Theoph., 300. 30–301. 5; *Chron. 1234*, 128; Mich. Syr., II. 400. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 190–3.

The appearance of a Persian general within sight of Constantinople forced the Romans to sue for peace on almost any terms. The Senate had to do so, since Khusro did not recognize Heraclius. The Senators laid down no conditions. They pleaded for decent treatment of their ambassadors. They were ready to accept a client-ruler chosen by Khusro, merely voicing their support for Heraclius. It was evident that they were ready to make massive territorial concessions and to accept tributary status. Khusro had gained far more than he could have dreamed of when he attacked in 603. He had reduced the Roman empire to the status of abject petitioner. But still he was not satisfied. The Senate's offer was firmly rejected before the end of winter 615–16. The ambassadors were interned (qua agents of a rebel leader) and preparations were made to take over Palestine.[14] Presumably after extensive deliberation with his leading ministers and generals, Khusro had decided that the Roman empire must be liquidated. No insight into his reasoning is given by any of the extant sources, even those which drew on the lost *Khwadaynamag*. But it was surely the menacing presence of a great power in the north and the east which shaped his thinking. A rump Roman state could pose no serious threat on its own, but it would be a continuing distraction to the Sasanian empire as it confronted its steppe rival. The sedentary peoples of western Eurasia would have to be united under a single political authority, if they were to hold their own in a confrontation with steppe empire of the Turks. The defeat of a scratch force commanded by an elderly Armenian general in Khurasan in 615 and the subsequent raids west which reached Rayy and Isfahan acted as timely reminders of nomad military capability.[15]

Good use was made of the advantage of inner lines over the following few years. Palestine was occupied without fighting in 616, while in the north-east a successful punitive expedition across the frontier restored the position in central Asia. Coordinated raids by two armies devastated Anatolia in 617. Finally, after a year of preparation, two armies invaded Egypt in 619, captured Alexandria, and pushed south up the Nile valley.[16] By 621 the whole of Egypt and the rest of the Roman Middle East were firmly controlled by the Sasanians. Existing systems of administration were left in place, staffed as before by Roman officials. They were simply serving new Sasanian masters. In the Egyptian papyrological record the occupation showed itself primarily

[14] *Chron. Pasch.*, 706. 13–709. 23; ps. Sebeos, 122. 12–123. 9, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 37; Nic., cc. 6. 10–7. 22. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 193–5.

[15] Ps. Sebeos, 101. 26–102. 20, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 21.

[16] Ps. Sebeos, 102. 25–103. 13, 113. 27–8, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 21, 32, 35; *Chron. 724*, 17–18; Antiochus, *Epistula ad Eustathium*, with commentary of Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 172–80; *Khuz. Chron.*, 25–6; Nic., c. 6. 1–5; Theoph., 301. 9–11; *Chron. 1234*, 128; Mich. Syr., II. 401. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 195–7.

in the greater prominence of military officers and in military demands for supplies. At the inauguration of a new world order it was in the Persians' interest to minimize changes to the status quo and to avoid antagonizing their new subjects. Fiscal structures, provincial boundaries, the justice system were left as they were found. Zoroastrian rites were conducted as discreetly as possible. The traditional strict regulation of Jewish settlement in Jerusalem was reinstated, after a brief relaxation in 614–15. For troops needed to be husbanded for the final campaigns against what remained of the Roman empire and for the assertion of Persian authority over the Beduin tribes fronting Roman territory.[17]

Perhaps the most frustrating of the silences of the sources about the second phase of the Persian–Roman war concerns the system for managing the Beduin introduced after the conquest of the northern and western Fertile Crescent. Only one feature is well attested: the Ghassan were reinstated as an important component of the new system; they figure in the poetry embedded in the *sira* as a lurking, powerful presence in the north, watching from a distance the war between the Quraysh and the Muslim exiles in the 620s; a decade or so later, they are reported in Muslim sources to have formed the main allied component of the Roman forces defeated at the battle of Yarmuk.[18] We may suspect that the Persians went for a compromise between their traditional unitary system and the Roman preference for one client per frontier province. A small number of supra-tribal clients would be easier to manage than a multitude of tribal chiefs. There were perhaps no more than three or four all told, each commanding a large segment of desert frontage—the Ghassan in the south-west, the Banu ʻIjl in the south-east, and one or two others covering northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Whatever the number and identities of the favoured tribes, the new system worked. There is no record of trouble on the desert margin of Middle East in the last phase of the war when the Persians, from their peripheral positions in the south (direct rule having been imposed on Himyar *c.*571),[19] east, and north were able to project their power over much of Arabia. Fighting was, of course, going on in the Hijaz, where the *umma* led by Muhammad embarked on a war against their home city, but the Hijaz lay outside the sphere of effective Sasanian influence.

The Persians turned their attention to Anatolia in 622. Being the prisoners of the Roman sources which focus on the feats of the Emperor Heraclius, we

[17] Ps. Sebeos, 117. 2–20, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 35 (Jerusalem); *V. Anastasii*, cc. 16–20, 29–30, with Flusin's commentary (231–5, 241–3) (Caesarea); C. Foss, 'The Persians in the Roman Near East (602–630 AD)', *JRAS*, ser. 3, 13 (2003), 149–70 (Egypt and general).

[18] Bal., I. 207–10.

[19] See Ch. 12, section 1 above.

are ill informed about Persian preparations and plans. Nothing is reported about any diplomatic contacts which they may have had with the great power of eastern Europe, the Avar khaganate (centred on the Carpathian basin), before 626, when they coordinated their operations against Constantinople. Earlier Avar actions were very timely from the Persian point of view—their promotion of widespread Slav raiding, including an attack on Thessalonica, in 620, and their own intervention in force two years later, when Thessalonica was the prime target. The Avars may have acted on their own initiative, and sought to strengthen their position at a time of evident Roman weakness, but it is equally likely that they were encouraged by the Persians, the main inducement being the prospect of eliminating their dangerous Roman adversary and gaining control of the whole of the Balkans. There are signs too that the Persians were waiting on events in Europe. They took offensive action in 622 and 623, but it was modest. A thrust into northern Anatolia, which was successfully parried in 622, may have been intended to detain Heraclius and his main fighting force in the east, when a major assault was being prepared against Thessalonica. If they were privy to the Avar plan to seize Heraclius under cover of a summit meeting in 623, they could have hoped for a quick end to Roman resistance with little further exertion on their part. This would help explain the limited scope of Persian operations in 623—little more than raiding by sea and land, the targets being Ancyra, Rhodes, and some other unnamed islands.[20]

The climax of the war came in the years 624–8, when Heraclius led a well-trained expeditionary force on two bold but forlorn counteroffensive campaigns and, in the interlude between them, three armies (two Persian and one vast Avar host) converged on the Bosporus, in a concerted attempt to take Constantinople and to destroy the fighting capability of the Romans. The much enlarged Sasanian empire would then be able to annex Asia Minor as a northern bastion in the west, balancing the southern bastion of Egypt. The only regional rival, the Avar khaganate, would be safely cut off by the Bosporus and Dardanelles, and Sasanian influence could be projected west over the Mediterranean and its surrounding lands. Bold, almost foolhardy gambles by Heraclius frustrated these hopes. He took extraordinary risks but by doing so succeeded in disconcerting and worsting his adversary. Persian mobilization in spring 624 for a grand invasion of Asia Minor, probably to be commanded by Khusro in person, came to an abrupt and chaotic end when

[20] Avars: *Mir. Dem.*, ii. 2; *Chron. Pasch.*, 712. 12–713. 14; Nic., c. 10; Theoph., 301. 26–302. 21. Persians: Geo. Pis., *Expeditio Persica*; *Chron. 724*, 18 (Rhodes); Theoph., 302. 22–3 (Ancyra); *Chron. 1234*, 133 (Ancyra and islands); Mich. Syr., II. 408 (Ancyra and Rhodes). Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 198–200.

Heraclius appeared unexpectedly in Atropatene. In the following year he stayed on in Transcaucasia, despite the presence of three hostile armies, hoping perhaps for a reply to the appeal for help which he had sent to the Turks. In 626 he did not rush back to take command of the defences of Constantinople, but remained in the field to constrain operations by the two invading Persian armies, thereby running the risk of being caught by one or both of them. Victory against one of the those armies, Avar failure against Constantinople, and Turkish intervention in Transcaucasia left the initiative in his hands at the start of 627.[21]

The main operations of 627 were Turkish. They tightened their grip on Albania, which they had invaded in 626, taking control of the administration and receiving the formal submission of a delegation of local notables led by the catholicos. They marched into Iberia and met the Romans at a pre-arranged rendezvous outside Tiflis in the autumn. Plans for the future were agreed at a summit meeting. The Turks continued the siege of the city, ultimately successful, while Heraclius led the Roman army south on the boldest gamble of all.[22] All his actions—religious propaganda directed at Christians under Sasanian rule, systematic devastation of the countryside, and this invasion of Mesopotamia—were targeting the Sasanian political class and the officer corps. He was striving to convince them that Khusro's foreign policy was leading to disaster. What better way to do so than to leave the Turks to extend their rule in Transcaucasia, all too close to Atropatene and Media, and himself to attack the economic heartland of the Sasanian empire? Considerable risks were entailed. A Persian army followed him across the Zagros. There were forces in the capital which could be deployed against him, not to mention the army of occupation in the west. But a decisive victory on 12 December outside Nineveh opened the way for an advance on the capital. Halted by the Nahrawan canal, which formed an impregnable outer line of defence, Heraclius kept up the pressure by ravaging the Diyala plains (breadbasket of the metropolitan area) through January and February, until he knew that a *putsch* was under way (on the night of 27–28 February). Then and only

[21] Heraclius' campaigns: Geo. Pis., *Heraclias*; *Chron. Pasch.*, 713. 19–714. 8; Theoph., 306. 19–314. 26; ps. Sebeos, 123. 15–126. 10, with Thomas A., 91–3 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 38–41; Movses D., 130. 8–133. 11, 140. 17–142. 7 (78–81, 86–7). Siege of Constantinople: *Chron. Pasch.*, 716. 9–726. 10; Geo. Pis., *Bellum Avaricum*; Theod.Sync., *Or.* 1; Nic., c. 13; Theoph., 315. 2–14, 16–26, 316. 16–27; *Chron. 1234*, 135–7; Mich. Syr., II. 408–9. Cf. Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns' and 'Siege of Constantinople'; Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 200–9.

[22] Movses D., 133. 16–140. 14, 142. 8–143. 20 (81–6, 87–8); Nic., c. 12.7–41; Theoph., 315. 26–316. 15; *Georgian Chronicles*, 223–6; *Chron. 1234*, 137; Mich. Syr., II. 409. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 209–12.

then did he withdraw north, back across the Zagros, just before heavy snowfalls blocked the passes.[23]

Negotiations to secure a durable peace involved three successive Sasanian regimes, those of Khusro's son Kavad Shiroe, of his great general Shahrvaraz who seized power in 629 with Roman backing, and finally of Khusro's daughter Boran after the assassination of Shahrvaraz. By 630 when agreement was reached, with the frontier back where it had been in 591, the old binary world order was restored.[24] For defeat of the Turks in the Far East in 629 at the hands of the T'ang, rulers of a united China, led to a swift withdrawal of Turkish forces from Transcaucasia and to a prolonged period of civil war. A generation was to pass before a new stable nomad state, the Khazar khaganate, emerged in the steppes to the north of the Caucasus.[25]

The thirty years war between Persians and Romans caused considerable damage, both material and psychological, to both sides. But the damage should not be exaggerated. The Sasanian political class was shaken by defeat. Defeat engendered political instability. But, once Yazdgerd III secured the throne in 632, he was able to give the heterogeneous peoples of the empire effective leadership.[26] The armies which had conquered the Roman empire and underpinned Sasanian authority in the occupied territories remained undefeated when they withdrew in 629, under the terms of Shahrvaraz's agreement with Heraclius. The Roman army, by contrast, had been much depleted but what remained emerged with its morale high after the astonishing reversal of fortunes which it had helped bring about. There was no dissension within the Roman governing elite. Nor was there any serious difficulty in re-establishing Roman control over the administration in the recovered provinces, since there had probably been little or no Persian interference either with organization or with personnel. There were, of

[23] Theoph., 317. 11–327. 10; *Chron. Pasch.*, 727. 7–732. 18; ps. Sebeos, 126. 11–127. 35, with Thomas A., 93–5 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 42–3; Movses D., 143. 21–148. 22 (88–92); *Georgian Chronicles*, 225, 227; *V. Anastasii*, c. 43; Nic., cc. 12. 41–9, 14. 1–15. 10; Strategius, cc. 5. 17–18 and 24. 1–2; *Khuz. Chron.*, 28–30; *Chron. 1234*, 137–8; Mich. Syr., II. 409; *Seert Chron.*, 541–2, 551; Tab., V. 320–4, 375–98. Cf. Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns' and 'Pride and Fall'. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 212–14.

[24] Ps. Sebeos, 127. 36–128. 26, 129. 22–130. 25, with Thomas A., 95–7 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 44–5; *Chron. Pasch.*, 732. 18–737. 21; *Chron. 724*, 13, 18; *Khuz. Chron.*, 30–3; *Seert Chron.*, 540–1, 551–2, 555–8. Cf. Nic., cc. 15. 10–17. 21; Movses D., 148. 22–149. 14 (92); Tab., V. 400–5; Strategius, 24. 1–7; Theoph., 327. 10, 329. 1–8; *Chron. 1234*, 138–9, 142–3; Mich. Syr., II. 409–10. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier*, 225–8.

[25] Movses D., 169. 16–170. 15 (106); Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, 142–5; Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium', 417–31.

[26] Ps. Sebeos, 130. 25–34, with Thomas A., 97–8 and *Hist. Com.*, n. 46; Movses D., 172. 21–173. 1 (109); *Khuz. Chron.*, 33; *Seert Chron.*, 579–80; *Chron. 1234*, 138, 142–3; Mich. Syr., II. 410, 417–18; Tab., V. 405–10.

course, problems. Monophysite loyalties had been loosened under benign Sasanian rule. City notables may have grown in self-confidence. While war damage was limited, the cost of a war economy and controls on commerce may well have depressed the economy.

The principal effects of the war were on minds (eschatological apprehension) and on political conditions in the desert frontage of the Fertile Crescent, from Palestine to Mesopotamia. Changes in the political configuration of the sown lands inevitably had a direct effect on systems of client-management. The new system instituted by Khusro was not yet properly embedded when he was deposed. It continued to face a serious challenge in the south-east from a coalition of tribes loyal to the Lakhm, while the change back to Roman authority in the west could not but have had a destabilizing effect on tribes and their leaders who had benefited from Persian patronage.

2. THE PROPHET AND HIS FOLLOWERS

News travelled far and fast in Arabia without the benefit of modern telecommunications. If trivial items could pass from one side to the other of the Empty Quarter in a matter of weeks, reports of a great war in the north are likely to have spread swiftly throughout Arabia, bringing with them awareness that time was running out for mankind.[27] The fears articulated by Theodore of Syceon and George of Choziba, engendered in a war of unprecedented and escalating violence, surfaced in contemporary and near-contemporary texts written in different parts of the Middle East. Syrian and Jewish apocalypses detailed the sequence of events, long programmed by God, which would usher in the Last Days. Both Armenian historians were equally convinced, each round of *fitna* providing obvious further evidence that the final phase had begun.[28] It should cause no surprise then that Muhammad was prey to similar thoughts at that period of his life when he was retreating from society and going off by himself into the broken country around Mecca (datable roughly around 610). What was unexpected, what changed the lives of those who heard him speak, was his preaching, what he said when he was able to express himself, and how he said it. He was a speaker of rare power, who through the

[27] Thesiger, *Arabian Sands*, 124, 169–70.

[28] *V. Theodori*, cc. 127. 14–20, 134. 20–34; *V. Georgii*, c. 18 (117. 12–118. 6); ps. Sebeos, 141. 23–142. 15; Movses D., 127. 11–18, 192. 8–193. 8 (75–6, 124); G. J. Reinink, 'Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 81–94; van Bekkum, 'Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius'.

vivid imagery, the incantatory repetitions, and the jagged sentences of the earliest suras, all the more effective for being disjointed, gripped his listeners and injected them with his fears.[29]

There is not much evidence of tangible connections between the clash of empires in the north and developments in the Hijaz. Whether it was deliberate or involuntary is unclear, but early Muslim traditionists isolated the Hijaz from the wider Middle East in the sixth and early seventh centuries. The history of the *umma* in its formative phase was placed in an exclusively Arabian setting, the only outside influences being neighbouring nomad tribes and the sedentary peoples of Yemen. When it came into contact with the outer world, as with remote recesses of Arabia, it would be on its own terms, as the nucleus of a conquering power. What can be picked up, though, is suggestive.

There is one explicit reference to the war in the Qur'an, in sura 30: 2–5 (*The Greeks*), which openly sympathizes with the Roman side in defeat, and prophesies future victory with Allah's help. Given the position of the Hijaz and its long-standing trading connections with Syria, it is inconceivable that the Sasanian authorities and their chief regional Arab clients, the Ghassan, were unaware of the dramatic confrontation between Mecca and the Qurayshi exiles led by Muhammad in the 620s. Poets on both sides envisaged news of the hard-fought engagements at Badr and Uhud crossing the desert with its mountains looking like black pillars of dust, past the carcases of dead camels, and reaching the Ghassan. They were portrayed as allies of the Muslims, even as sending a contingent with instructions to fight if the Meccans were to advance beyond Uhud and attack Medina itself in 625.[30] It seems then that the Ghassan were ready to intervene in the Hijaz against the dominant regional power, Mecca. They were probably acting on instructions or, at any rate, with the knowledge of the occupation authorities. The Hijaz had not always lain outside the Persian sphere of influence. If certain allusive pieces of information may be trusted, the Sasanians had exercised nominal authority over Medina, perhaps even receiving some tribute, in the second half of the sixth century.[31] Muhammad, for his part, needed to drum up support from all possible sources, even from the clients of the non-Christian Persians, if the *umma* and its Medinan hosts were to survive attack by Mecca and its nexus of nomad allies.

[29] Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 69–96.

[30] Ibn Ishaq, 342 (al-Harith b. Hisham b. al-Mughira on Badr), 350 (Ka'b b. Malik on Badr), 405, and 415 (Ka'b on Uhud).

[31] Cf. M. Lecker, 'The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)', *JSAI* 27 (2002), 109–26, repr. in Lecker, *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muhammad* (Aldershot, 2005), i.

It is surely stretching credulity to suppose that there was any direct communication between Muhammad and the Romans when the latter were at their nadir in the 620s. But it is unlikely to have been mere coincidence that Heraclius and Muhammad encouraged their troops with the prospect that those who were killed in action would earn the crown of martyrdom and gain direct entry to Paradise, *in the same year*. Heraclius first publicly announced the new doctrine (which had presumably been agreed earlier with the church authorities) in spring 624, as his army crossed the old frontier into Persia. Muhammad did likewise at the time of the battle of Badr, which is conventionally dated to March 624.[32] He had already conjured up an alluring, rather Persian picture of Paradise in his first halting utterances. The Muslim dead could now look forward with confidence to a languid existence in grand houses surrounded with orchards and well-watered gardens: dressed in robes of silk, wearing pearls and gold bracelets, they would recline on soft couches covered in brocade, in the shade of fruit-trees by running streams, and would be served with silver dishes and silver goblets by boys graced with eternal youth or waited on by shy virgins (see, for example, suras 76: 11–22 (*Man*), 55: 46–78 (*The Merciful*), as well as later suras such as 9: 72 (*Repentance*) and 22: 23–4 (*Pilgrimage*)).

Further evidence that Muhammad took a close interest in what was happening in the north is provided by his actions in 629 and 630, before and after his Meccan *Anschluss*. He dispatched two expeditions to the fringes of Palestine and Syria. It is hard to escape the conclusion that he was aiming as much to take advantage of the Persian withdrawal from Roman territory as to continue to build up the *umma*'s prestige in the Hijaz. It is also possible that, on one occasion at least, he was responding to a call from the Ghassan, apprehensive at the prospect of the Romans' return. The Mu'ta raid, which is presented as a spontaneous action of the Muslims, may also be viewed as a demonstration by the Ghassan that they could call on military assistance from the rising power of the Hijaz. In the event the Muslims shied away from a full engagement with the larger Roman force which they encountered in the Balqa'.[33] But the point was made. The Romans had to acknowledge brute reality. They could not rely on the Lakhm and the other tribes which had sent contingents to Syria to police the desert frontier and to manage the tribes of the interior. They would have to designate the Ghassan as their principal

[32] Theoph., 307. 1–19; Ibn Ishaq, 300, 305, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 10–13 and Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 164–7.

[33] Ibn Ishaq, 531–40. Another version has Muhammad dispatch the expedition after hearing of the death of a messenger he had sent to Bostra at the hands of a Ghassan tribesman. This seems improbable, since it was not they who were targeted. Cf. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 53–5.

clients in the region, notwithstanding their fraught relations in the past. Once they attained recognition, the attitude of the Ghassan inevitably changed, since the Muslims and their allies were their principal rivals in western Arabia and posed a potential threat to Roman territory. In the short term, though, they sent reciprocal aid to the Muslims for their campaign against the Hawazin.[34]

The rise of Islam cannot be understood properly if it is detached from contemporary events in the wider world. It should not be imagined that the monotheism preached by Muhammad was entirely uninfluenced by the two monotheist faiths already deeply implanted in the Middle East. Ideas had been seeping into Arabia from the developed world to the north for many generations. Jewish and Christian communities had grown up in different parts of the peninsula. The rulers of Himyar had acknowledged the overarching power of a supreme, possibly sole divinity in official inscriptions. There was, according to Muslim tradition, something akin to a movement of deist ascetics in the Hijaz in the Prophet's lifetime. Hence the close critical attention shown to the two antecedent faiths in the Qur'an and the Prophet's declaration that the revelation conveyed through him was the third and final one vouchsafed to mankind. Hence too the notions of an End of Time, of Resurrection of individuals, of Judgement, of Heaven and Hell.[35]

But Islam was much more than a new mixture of imported ideas swilling around in the collective consciousness of Arabia. The Prophet was much more than the purveyor of alien wisdom at a time of international crisis. The power of the new religion, its unprecedentedly strong grasp over men's minds, the near-miraculous speed of its expansion cannot possibly be explained in terms of ordinary historical processes. A propitious moment in international relations was a fortuitous circumstance which favoured Muhammad's religious and political mission. So too was the circulation of monotheist ideas in a predominantly polytheistic Beduin world. For there were other, immeasurably more important factors in play—first and foremost the force of the message conveyed by Muhammad, of a monotheism stripped bare and suited to the bleak environment of Arabia, second the platform provided by Mecca's regional hegemony from which the religio-political entity he created could launch itself on the surrounding world.

[34] Ibn Ishaq, 568 (quoting 'Abbas b. Mirdas al-Sulami).

[35] Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 146–50; C. Robin (ed.), *L'Arabie antique de Karib'îl à Mahomet: nouvelles données sur l'histoire des Arabes grâce aux inscriptions*, Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée 61 (1991–3), 144–50; Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 60–8. See also G. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge, 1999) who, *inter alia*, associates the gestation of Islam with debate and conflict within the shared tradition of rabbinical Judaism and Christianity.

Muhammad's first utterances, his half-coherent words in suras such as 81 *The Cessation*, 82 *The Cataclysm*, 99 *The Earthquake* about the earth's last convulsion, about the sky rent asunder, stars scattering and falling, oceans rolling together, graves hurled about, mountains blown away, seas set alight, etc., and his urgent warnings about the Last Judgement to follow shook his listeners and frayed the ties which connected them to the familiar, mundane world of practical affairs and to their kin-groups. His was a stark, frightening message. It became clearer with time. Man was fashioned out of inanimate clay, turned by Allah successively into a living germ, a clot of blood, and a vertebrate with flesh (e.g. sura 23: 12–14 (*Believers*)). He was infused with Allah's spirit and endowed with moral autonomy and agency on earth, but he remained Allah's creature (sura 2: 21–9 (*The Cow*)). For Allah's power governed everything, shaping the material world and all vegetal and animate life. He could create whatever he would simply by saying 'Be!' (suras 2: 117 (*The Cow*), 3: 47 (*The Imrans*), 16: 40 (*The Bee*)). He fashioned the heavens and the earth and kept them from falling. He bestowed continual blessings on mankind, sending forth the winds which set the clouds in motion, allowing men to catch fish and gather coral from the sea, causing night to follow day and day night. He was responsible for fruit of many colours, for ravines with various shades of red and white and jet-black rocks, for men and wild animals and cattle with their different colours (sura 35: 1–3, 9–13, 27–8, 41 (*The Creator*)). He created the animals (and insects) which served mankind, providing warm clothing and skins for tents, carrying goods to distant places, yielding milk and honey (sura 16: 3–16, 65–70, 78–81 (*The Bee*)). He was responsible for the rain which fed springs beneath the earth, for the plants brought forth. Equally he could cause whatever he wished to cease to exist. He made the plants which he had had sprout wither and crumble to dust (sura 39: 21 (*The Hordes*)). Strange basalt rock formations, catching the eye from a distance in a bleak, waterless landscape, or ruined buildings, visible vestiges of past settlements, provided other irrefutable evidence of his power to destroy (see, for example, suras 30: 9 (*The Greeks*), 29: 28–40 (*The Spider*), 22: 42–8 (*Pilgrimage*)). There was no gainsaying the vulnerability of living creatures, including man, in the desert.

The omnipotence of Allah, together with the omniscience necessary for its exercise throughout Creation, was one leitmotif of the revelation. A second was not simply the weakness of human beings, but the responsibility of individuals for every thought, word, and deed in their lives, each of which was recorded in writing and could be used in evidence at their trials (e.g. suras 82 (*The Cataclysm*), 10: 61 (*Jonah*), 67: 13–14 (*Sovereignty*)). The kindreds which formed the basic, stable units of life among nomads and sedentaries in Arabia would be powerless to protect their members at the Last Judgement,

which was plainly close at hand. All kin ties would be severed. Individuals, plucked from family and clan, would have to stand alone and answer for themselves (e.g. suras 53: 36–41 (*The Star*), 44: 40–2 (*Smoke*), 35: 18 (*The Creator*)). This was a theme not calculated to appeal to the traditional Beduin social order, given structure and cohesion by genealogy. Clan and tribe were discarded as of no moral weight in the new, divine dispensation. When the message began to have a corrosive effect, when individuals cut themselves loose from their kin and became disciples of the Prophet, there was understandable resentment and growing anger among the majority of the Quraysh.[36]

There is one further feature of the initial message preached by Muhammad which should be stressed. His God was a remote and awesome divinity. There was nothing human about him. He was susceptible to none of the emotions of the Old Testament God. There was no question of empathy with mankind, let alone of suffering for the salvation of his human creatures. No, he was an uncircumscribed, ahuman, infinitely powerful, distant divinity. A vast, almost empty space separated him from his creatures. Not entirely void, because it had a structure—seven tiers of heavens—and because angels and *djinn* flitted about, angels being pliant servants with no independence whatsoever, *djinn*, demons deprived of power, simply capable of eavesdropping on what was said in heaven or on earth and passing on the news. All power was Allah's and it was directly exercised by him. There were no intermediaries or intercessors, whether holy men on earth or saints in heaven or subordinate divinities. Supernatural power, whether miracle-working on earth or influence in heaven, was not delegated. The monotheism of Islam was gaunt, austere, stripped of all those saints and deities, with local shrines, which provided human beings in most societies with easy access to the divine.

Paradoxically, the greatest appeal of Muhammad's monotheist message lay in its bleakness, in his clear-eyed view of a universe governed by a single divine autocrat. This made far better sense of the world in which his listeners lived than a polytheistic belief system. For local deities, even those associated with astral bodies, could not protect their votaries from nature's brute force in the desert. The affairs of men were evidently governed by some higher, impersonal, irresistible force, hitherto vaguely defined as time or fate (*darh*). They would live through years of plenty and years of dearth. The best among them would be distinguished by courage, powers of endurance, open-handed hospitality, generosity. But death awaited all, rich and poor alike, its coming unpredictable. There was a heroic hopelessness about life in the midst of

[36] Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 96–8.

threatening, invincible nature. Fate held sway, fleeting human lives its sport.[37] It was as if the Arabs had long been dimly aware of the overarching presence of God, but had never been able to bring him into focus before and it was Muhammad who first instilled a proper understanding of his role, no longer remote and detached, but taking a close judicial interest in the behaviour of his creatures. Muhammad's God was not so much a senior pagan god elevated to supreme power and then stripped of his court, as Fate brought closer to the material world and engaged with mundane human affairs. There was no humanizing of Fate. God was as forbidding as ever, but was now concerned with the moral status of his mortal creations.

The raw power of the Prophet's basic revelation—that the immeasurable gulf separating humanity from God, all-powerful, all-seeing, with the awesome ahumanity of Fate, would be bridged before long and that individuals, alone and weak, isolated from their kin, would then be brought face to face with him and tried—should never be underestimated. The traditional passive fatalism of the Beduin, conducting life according to a tribal code of man's creation, was transformed by faith, which required complete submission to Allah. Each human being became one of God's designated vice-gerents on earth, his prime duty being to strive for the faith. This engendered an *active fatalism* in genuine converts, a commitment to serve God with their persons and their worldly goods together with indifference to the personal cost (for example, suras 22: 78 (*Pilgrimage*) and 3: 16–20 (*The Imrans*)). It may be termed a *whole faith*, one which permeated the whole being of the believer. This in turn endowed Muslim troops with extraordinary élan. They were committed unto death. The armies which invaded the Roman and Persian empires were in essence ordered arrays of suicide fighters, endowed with extraordinary courage and daring.

It was first and foremost the message from God to man delivered by Muhammad which gave impetus to the new religion, transforming the attitudes of believers and infusing the community formed by them, the *umma*, with an ideological drive of unprecedented force. But the venue for the revelation also mattered. It meant that the first converts belonged to the Quraysh, the tribe which had established a dominant position in the Hijaz in the sixth century and had supplanted the kingdom of Himyar in the south as the leading power in the interior of Arabia. Lying well to the west of the direct routes running north–south through the Hijaz and connecting Yemen with Palestine, in a setting of grim basalt hills, without arable land, Mecca was ill placed to be a trading entrepôt and did not have the resources to support a

[37] Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 16–18; A. Neuwirth, 'Cosmology', *EQ* i. 440–58; A. T. Karamustafa, 'Fate', *EQ* ii. 185–8.

sizeable settlement, let alone to establish itself as a regional centre. Its only resources were a plentiful supply of water, from its wells, and a wild, otherworldly setting. They made it a numinous place, where it was natural for Beduin to venerate their gods. The extraordinary prosperity which the Quraysh had achieved by Muhammad's lifetime rested ultimately on Mecca's role as a regional religious sanctuary, where different tribes worshipped many different protective deities.[38]

Mecca's commercial rise was ultimately parasitic on its religious role. Trading and religious networks were developed in tandem. It was probably from modest beginnings, at an annual fair held in the sanctuary around the Ka'ba, during a sacred month when fighting was prohibited, that the Quraysh developed their far-flung commercial connections.[39] Formal contractual agreements secured safe passage for their caravans, tribes commanding the routes providing protection in return for a percentage of the profits. The sanctuary grew in importance, as it drew to itself the gods of more distant tribes and developed close ties with an inner privileged group of nomads. By the beginning of the seventh century, as we have seen, the Quraysh exercised hegemony over the Hijaz. Their wealth was unrivalled, derived probably from long-distance maritime trade as well as the exchange of Arab products (above all woollen cloth, leather, and coral) for the exports, principally manufactured goods, of the east Roman empire. They had a ramified nexus of client and allied tribes to whom they could look for support. Yet more important probably was their faithful adherence to the *muruwa* ethos of the Beduin. They were without doubt the most successful Beduin of all, priding themselves on their sense of collective responsibility, their generosity to guests and to the poor, especially at times of dearth, their ability to travel far and fast, their unhesitating advance on lean, swift-striding horses to confront enemies in battle.[40]

The Prophet's revelation threatened to destroy Mecca's commanding position. Once the kindred lost its basic function of protecting the lives and property of its members, once traditional Beduin values were superseded by duties placed on individual believers, the solidarities of clan and tribe, indeed

[38] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1–4; Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 38–41. Patricia Crone has begun to beat a retreat from the highly sceptical position adopted in *Meccan Trade*—see her article 'Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade', *BSOAS* 70 (2007), 63–88.

[39] R. B. Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', in *Mélanges Taha Husain* (Cairo, 1962), 41–58, repr. in Serjeant, *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation* (London, 1981), iii.

[40] See Ch. 12, section 2 above.

the whole social order, would be weakened. How then could the Quraysh continue to be the leaders of the surrounding Beduin world, if they cast off the *muruwa* ethos? Worse still, the central tenet of the new faith, that there was but one God, attacked the very foundation of Mecca's greatness, the polytheistic sanctuary around the Ka'ba. The conflict between the established order and the new dispensation could not have been starker. It should cause no surprise then that, in the course of some ten years of preaching, Muhammad was only able to build up a small following, composed mainly of young men (some well connected) and members of minor clans. The kin-based social system showed great tensile strength, not only by its resistance to the message but also by the effective protection offered by a sympathetic uncle (Abu Talib) to Muhammad. When he died, the pressure on the disruptive sect and its leader intensified. Muhammad was forced to look for sanctuary elsewhere.[41]

He began urgently striving to win converts outside Mecca. He journeyed alone to the nearby town of Ta'if, but was rebuffed by three leading figures. He took to preaching to tribesmen he met at fairs, inviting them to believe in God and to protect him. He sent similar messages to the leaders of important tribes, including the Kinda and Banu Hanifa, but was refused asylum. Success finally came just in time, when the protection arranged after Abu Talib's death was beginning to fail and his life was in increasing danger. A group of Medinans attending a fair proved amenable. There were deep social divisions in the population of that large, fertile oasis. Rival groups, headed by the al-Khasraj and the al-Aus, had fought openly not long before and feelings still ran high. They needed an outsider of status to act as arbitrator. More important, the evident breakdown of the traditional social order made them receptive to a message which was regarded as so subversive by the Quraysh. Muhammad could also hope to build upon the advances already made by Judaism in all the clans. His message was inclusive, not opposed to the Old and New Testaments but intended to stand guard over previous Scriptures (see, for example, sura 5: 47–51 (*The Table*)). There was therefore a real prospect of the new faith suffusing a whole society in the Hijaz, at a relatively safe distance from Mecca.

Two further rounds of talks took place, the first a year after the initial meeting, at which the Medinans agreed to accept the basic precepts of Islam (the first pledge of 'Aqaba) and later formally gave their allegiance to Muhammad (the second pledge of 'Aqaba). In between, Muhammad dispatched an emissary to read the Qur'an to the Medinans and to give

[41] Ibn Ishaq, 111–92, with Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 86–136 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 98–136.

instruction. Once the new faith had rooted itself and guarantees of effective protection had been given, probably some two years after the initial contacts, Muhammad was ready to leave Mecca. The *hijra* (emigration) of 622, when the Muslims collectively cut loose from the Quraysh, abandoned their houses, property, and kin, and moved as a body (initially some seventy strong) to Medina, marked the beginning of the independent history of the Muslim community. It opened a new era and provided the base point for its dating. It also marked the opening of a phase of gradually escalating conflict between the Quraysh and the voluntary Qurayshi exiles, a drama played out before a large tribal audience in the Hijaz and in the rest of Arabia.[42]

The exiles could have reasonable hopes of holding their own, because they could count on military support from all the fractious clans of Medina, if they were attacked. A formal agreement detailed the constitutional arrangements for the new amalgam of Quraysh emigrants and Medinans, both Jews and non-Jews. The basic constituent of Beduin society, the protection/vengeance unit formed by a clan, continued in being, the emigrants themselves being treated as one such unit, but it was subsumed within a larger, overarching entity, political and religious in character, the *umma* led by the Prophet. Members of each clan retained their traditional obligations to each other, namely to ransom any fellow-member taken prisoner and to compose internal disputes by payment rather than violence, but they were to act together vis-à-vis outsiders, fighting as one if Medina were attacked, sharing the cost, and only making peace if it were authorized by the Prophet. They could also turn to Muhammad for arbitration in cases of dispute. Thus the Prophet exercised a light authority over the whole *umma* as well as the artificial clan formed by the Quraysh emigrants.[43]

The *Constitution of Medina*, which was reproduced in the *sira* (the original agreement with later additions and revisions), seems to have assumed that polytheism (only mentioned once, in passing) would vanish from Medina. It attested the Prophet's unbounded confidence that God's words would, of their own accord, win over all those who heard them. He was not wrong as regards Medina. Islam did prevail. Only the Jews held out, to his dismay. But outside Medina and an inner circle of associated tribes, who followed the Medinan lead, he encountered great difficulty in propagating his message. Meccan influence, disseminated through a network of allied tribes, lapped around Medina. The known hostility of the Quraysh acted as a strong disincentive to conversion.

[42] Ibn Ishaq, 192–231 with Watt, *Muhammed at Mecca*, 137–51 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 137–47.

[43] See Ch. 12, section 4.

3. CONFRONTATION AND CONCILIATION

From their arrival in Medina, the Quraysh emigrants seem to have done their best to attract attention. Small armed parties were sent out, ostensibly on the prowl for Meccan caravans, but probably more with a view to advertising the presence of the Prophet and his disciples in their new secure settlement. All the signs are that Muhammad's prime aim, in the years of confrontation with Mecca (622–7), remained the same as it had been before the *hijra*—to cultivate the nomad tribes in the hope of bringing them under his guiding authority. When they proved unexpectedly obdurate, the *umma* was forced to resort to armed struggle. It began with an attack, very small in scale, on a Meccan caravan, at a time (the tail-end of the sacred month of Rajab) and at a place (Nakhlah, between Ta'if and Mecca) where it would be completely unexpected and would also startle the watching Beduin. The resulting success compelled the Meccans to institute a convoy system. This led to an escalation in the fighting by spring 624. A large, valuable caravan formed an obvious tempting target as it travelled south towards Mecca. Muhammad took charge of the Muslim force which set out, apparently with the aim of intercepting and seizing the rich prize, and succeeded in surprising the Meccans a second time, when he attacked the reinforcements sent out from Mecca rather than the caravan and its escort. A decisive victory was won in this engagement at Badr. Many leading Meccans fell. The Muslims had displayed their military power in dramatic fashion.[44]

Even with this remarkable victory and the capture a little later of a caravan which had been sent on a circuitous route to the east of Medina, the Muslims made little overt impression on the nomads. Mecca's damaged prestige was swiftly restored by a reprisal raid which penetrated into Medina (ten weeks after the battle of Badr), and by a direct attack in force in 625, when the Muslims were defeated at Uhud on the edge of the oasis.[45] Although the Quraysh did not follow up their victory (deterred perhaps by the presence of a Ghassan contingent), this display of military might reaffirmed their hegemony in the Hijaz. Their network of allies held firm over the following two years, in spite of strenuous diplomatic efforts on Muhammad's part to draw a number of nomadic tribes into the *umma*. This was made plain in the most striking fashion possible in 627, when the Quraysh mobilized a massive

[44] Ibn Ishaq, 281–360, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 2–13 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 161–70.

[45] Ibn Ishaq, 364, 370–426, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 14–29 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 174–82.

army, from Mecca and its chief nomad allies, which marched north and laid siege to Medina. While their standing in Arabia at large may have been lowered, while they may have had to forgo the profits of trade with the north by land, they were showing that they were more than capable of crushing the *umma*, Medina having but flimsy, hastily constructed defences. In the event they refrained from doing so and withdrew after a fortnight, thereby indicating that they would prefer a diplomatic to a military solution. It was an offer which Muhammad could not refuse. His position, though, was weak. The Quraysh retained their commanding position in the Hijaz and it was likely that, without a deal, the new faith, however great its appeal to the Beduin, would be penned back inside a single oasis and its immediate desert environs.[46]

Hard thinking was required of Muhammad and his senior Companions. If their mission was to succeed, they would have to compromise, but not, of course, on the central tenets of the faith. There was but one omnipotent, omniscient God. The many gods venerated at the Kaʿba would have to be disowned by the Quraysh. There could be no more idol worship, no more sacrificing to powerless pagan divinities. The new moral code, rooted in the religious duties of the individual rather than inherited social *mores*, would have to prevail. Muhammad's religious authority as intermediary between God and man would have to be acknowledged, together with an implicit claim to concomitant political authority. The Muslims, for their part, might be able to change their attitude to the premier pagan sanctuary of the interior of Arabia, if it were purged of polytheistic paraphernalia. It was true that Allah was everywhere, that east and west belonged to him, as did the heavens. So in whatever direction believers might look, there would be the face of Allah (sura 2: 115, 142–6 (*The Cow*)). There was no doctrinal requirement for a fixed direction of prayer (*qibla*). But it was needed for practical reasons—how else could the faithful coordinate their prostrations or listen to the Prophet's addresses? Hitherto Muhammad had almost certainly decreed that it should point at Jerusalem, not least because that might encourage the Jews of Medina to convert. But it could theoretically be realigned on the Meccan sanctuary. Redesignation of the Kaʿba as the central holy place in the sublunary world for the Muslim faithful should prove attractive to the Quraysh, and might induce them to accept the doctrinal demands of the new faith.[47]

This appears to have been the negotiating position adopted by Muhammad in 628. For he decided to go on the *ʿumra*, the Little Pilgrimage, with a large

[46] Ibn Ishaq, 426–36, 445–82, 485–99. Cf. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 29–39, 42–6; Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 188–91, 195–6, 208–11, 247–9.

[47] Cf. U. Rubin, 'The Kaʿba: Aspects of its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 97–131.

party of the faithful from Medina. He donned the customary pilgrim garb and took the customary animals for sacrifice. He was publicly declaring his readiness to incorporate the pagan sanctuary into the *umma*. It was a remarkable act, an extraordinary concession, which was, before long, to transform the position of the *umma*. The Quraysh barred the way. Muhammad took a side route through a pass to the small depression of Hudaybiya, to the north of Mecca, on the edge of the sacred area. There he and his party halted, ready for face-to-face talks with the Quraysh leaders. The Quraysh drove a hard bargain. They would only allow Muhammad to go on pilgrimage in the following year. They did not accept Islam. They refused to accept Muhammad's status as apostle of God. The agreement simply referred to Allah, who could be taken to be one among several gods as well as the Muslims' God. Muhammad was identified by his patronymic. While there was no bar on conversion to Islam, any Quraysh who wished to join Muhammad in Medina must first obtain permission from their guardian, or they would be returned to Mecca. On the other hand, anyone at Medina who chose to move to Mecca was free to do so. But two concessions were offered. First a long armistice was agreed, to last for ten years. Second, non-Qurayshis were authorized to make formal agreements with Muhammad, just as they could with the Quraysh. It was this second concession which made the settlement acceptable to the Muslims. For the Quraysh were abandoning their formal opposition to Islam and were giving the Beduin tribes freedom to adopt the new faith. At last, after six years of fruitless effort, the *umma* could set about proselytizing with real hope of success.[48]

Muhammad's position around the time of the negotiations at Hudaybiya is declared, as it had to be, in the Qur'an. He announced the change in the *qibla*, and explained that the previous orientation had been decreed so as to test the faith of believers (sura 2: 142–3 (*The Cow*)). In the same late sura, a previously unrevealed episode in Abraham's life was reported—his construction, with Ishmael, of the Ka'ba (2: 125, cf. 14: 37 (*Abraham*)). Detailed prescriptions for the conduct of pilgrims were laid down in two other late suras: no game was to be caught or eaten; the sacred month was to be observed; pilgrims were to spruce themselves up, make their vows, and circle round the Ka'ba; animals, decorated in the traditional fashion, would be sacrificed but pilgrims must pronounce the name of Allah as they did so, it being their piety rather than the flesh and blood of the sacrifice which reached him (suras 5: 2–3 (*The Table*) and 22: 27–37 (*Pilgrimage*)). Most of the pagan *hajj* rituals were thus to be taken over by Islam, but given new meaning and justified by the tradition

[48] Ibn Ishaq, 499–507. See Ch. 12 n. 43 for modern studies.

that Abraham had instituted it. Other gods might have infiltrated the holy place subsequently, pagan practices might have polluted it, but the annual pilgrimage and the Ka'ba were central to the religion of Abraham which was being propounded by the Prophet for whom Abraham had prayed.[49]

Over the next year and a half the new faith was able to spread relatively unimpeded. The agreement was observed by both sides. A potentially dangerous incident, involving the unauthorized departure of a small band of Muslim converts from Mecca and their subsequent blockade of the city, was resolved peacefully by the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan.[50] It was not just the force of the message itself which won converts. The process was accelerated by human action. Military operations, of which the most striking were a successful and profitable attack on the Jewish oasis of Khaybar in 628 and the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Syria in 629, boosted the prestige of the *umma*. Quraysh began to convert in some numbers, and were welcomed into the *umma*. This was the stage at which men destined to play leading roles came over—among them the generals 'Amr b. al-'As and Khalid b. al-Walid, and the future Caliph 'Uthman b. 'Affan. Beduin resistance to the revelation crumbled, once pressure from the Quraysh eased and they were at liberty to make agreements with Muhammad. He duly went on the Little Pilgrimage, as agreed, in 629. It passed off without incident. Accompanied by a large party of Muslims, he performed the traditional rites, thereby declaring his recognition of the special position of the sanctuary in the most public manner possible and marking the formal end of the feud, unprecedented in scale, which had divided the emigrants from their fellow Quraysh.[51]

By the beginning of 630, the balance of power had shifted decisively in favour of the *umma*. Muhammad was able to garner support from large numbers of Beduin and to advance towards Mecca with them. Their numbers, probably much exaggerated in the *sira*, were of the same order of magnitude as the troops mobilized by the Quraysh against Medina three years earlier.

[49] The Qur'anic evidence for belated discovery of the Abrahamic tradition about the Ka'ba and for late acceptance of the *hajj* ritual is quite conclusive. The past could not be rewritten in sacred Scripture. The *sira*, however, incorporates a revised view of the Prophet's mission, in which hindsight, almost certainly on his part, was allowed to play on the past. The pagan sanctuary became the focal point of the new faith from the first. So the *qibla* was changed within months of the *hijra*. The reverses suffered by the *umma* in 625 and 627, the concessions forced out of Muhammad in 628, were not concealed, but the whole post-*hijra* story was reinterpreted as one in which increasing pressure was brought to bear on the Quraysh, until they finally submitted in 630.

[50] U. Rubin, 'Muhammad's Curse of Mudar and the Blockade of Mecca', *JESHO* 31 (1988), 249–64.

[51] Ibn Ishaq, 510–26, 531–40, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 52–60 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 252–9.

There were political divisions among the Quraysh, but Abu Sufyan decided the outcome by going out to meet Muhammad and formally acknowledging his authority. The Muslims then took over Mecca without encountering resistance. Muhammad proceeded to the sacred enclosure around the Ka'ba, and removed the idols standing outside the Ka'ba (and, according to late traditions, the images kept inside). This was the *al-fath*, 'the opening', in which the sanctuary was opened to true believers and cleansed of its polluting elements. A key component of the old faith was thus integrated into the new, giving Islam great tensile strength. The annual pilgrimage back to the holy place in the heart of Arabia would play a vital part in holding the widely dispersed Muslim community together in the imperial phase of its history.[52]

Six years of confrontation between Muslims and Quraysh (not allowed to drift into unrestrained warfare at any time by either side) had been followed by a period of uneasy coexistence and strenuous competition for Beduin support. This was cut short by the speed and scale of the *umma*'s success. Now, early in 630, the emigrants, already closely bound to their Medinan helpers after the years of common endeavour and shared danger, were able to re-establish connections with their home town from a position of strength and to begin the process of absorbing all the Quraysh into the *umma*. Fusion was not achievable in the short term, within one or two generations. There would be latent tensions between the old Quraysh elite and the emigrant core of the *umma*, but the two groups were combined together within a single political framework, pursuing common goals under a single acknowledged leader, with religion as a strong bonding agent. They were serving the same God and promoting the same small area of desolate volcanic country as the focal point of the universal faith. They were engaged in a common venture for bringing that faith to all mankind. The *umma* would thenceforth be able to draw on the accumulated experience and capital of the Meccan elite, commercial, diplomatic, political. Quraysh statecraft, their skill in managing the nomads, their ramified connections in the tribal world, their wealth, their organizational capability would greatly enhance the power and the expansive potential of the *umma*.

From the Meccan *Anschluss* early in 630, the nomad tribes and settled communities of Arabia could be under no illusions about the dangers they would face if they were to cross Muhammad or those who succeeded him as leaders of the Muslim community. Several demonstrations of force—notably against the Hawazin and Ta'if and to the north—reinforced the point. The drama played out before them in the Hijaz since 622 cannot but have made a

[52] Ibn Ishaq, 540–61, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 62–70, Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 259–63 and Hawting, 'Hudaybiyya and the Conquest of Mecca'.

considerable impression, and prepared the way for some sort of formal acknowledgement of Muhammad's status as Prophet. The audience which had witnessed Muhammad's mission from afar had been brought into his sphere of influence, had been readied for incorporation in due course into his following. Deputations duly arrived from all over Arabia to pay their respects to Muhammad in the years between the conquest of Mecca and his death.[53] More important, though, as has been stressed above, was the innate force of his message. It was hard for Arabs elsewhere in Arabia, whatever their traditional beliefs, to resist a view of life and the cosmos which made such sense of the familiar world. As in the case of Medina at the time of the *hijra* and Mecca from 630, conversion introduced a new, higher-order principle of human organization, the God-guided religious community, now immeasurably enlarged and committed to the further propagation of the faith. Old genealogically based divisions between social groups might continue to exist but they were overlaid and gradually weakened. Hence the growth of the *umma* would far surpass that of mere political entities, however large. Religion acted as a supercharger. Pre-existing clans, tribes, and peoples were not simply aggregated together, their mutual antagonisms redirected outwards, and their resources, both human and material, drawn upon to sustain the expansion of the rising power. Islam had the ideological power to weaken existing identities, to transform relations between different social groups, even perhaps to bring about fusion if there was a basic cultural bond between them. The *umma* thus became more cohesive, more ideologically charged, and generated more energy, as it grew in size. In the longer run the velocity and scale of that expansion were quite unprecedented.

[53] Ibn Ishaq, 561–648, with Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 70–150 and Rodinson, *Mahommed*, 263–79.

15

The Middle East in the Seventh Century

Arab Conquests

The articulation in words of an austere monotheist belief-system, which fitted so well the landscape of Arabia and the material conditions of life of the Beduin, and its firm implantation in the Hijaz were extraordinary achievements in their own right. But yet more extraordinary events were to follow the death of the Prophet. The developed world enveloping Arabia to the north was to be changed out of all recognition in a mere two decades.[1] The east Roman empire was dismembered, its richest provinces in the Middle East being seized swiftly by the Muslim *umma*. Its long-standing eastern rival, the Sasanian empire, which could pride itself on a commanding military presence on the edge of the central Asian steppes, succumbed in the face of sustained assault from the south and was erased from the political map of western Eurasia. The *umma* went on to display unequalled powers of resilience twice before the end of the century, first when the sequence of victories on distant frontiers, far from its Arabian heartland, was interrupted by a flurry of reverses in the middle 650s and the latent tension between late Quraysh converts to Islam and the original core of *muhajirun* and *ansar* burst out in open conflict (first *fitna*), and twenty years on when it became plain that the policy of Mediterranean expansion pursued by the victor in the civil war, Muʿawiya, had failed.

When the second, no less hard-fought bout of civil war (682–92) ended with the victory of the first Marwanid caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik, the *umma* resumed its outward drive on a yet more spectacular scale. In the following twenty-five years, Muslim political authority was extended west over the whole north African littoral and across the Straits of Gibraltar into Spain, while, in the east, most of Sogdia, the commercial hub of Eurasia, was

[1] For more information about the full range of early Islamic historical traditions about the forty-year period between the *hijra* (622) and the end of the first civil war (661), the reader may turn to L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, 10 vols. (Milan, 1905–26), a massive, lavishly produced modern compilation, laced with Caetani's own reflections and organized by *hijra* years.

conquered in the course of an advance along a broad front beyond the Oxus between 705 and 715. Stubborn resistance from Byzantium may have limited Muslim gains on the central arena of war north and west of Syria, but the Muslim authorities succeeded in consolidating their grip on Transcaucasia, above all because of their willingness to take extreme measures at a moment of great crisis (703), and positioned themselves so as to take on the Khazar khaganate, the new hegemonic power beyond the Caucasus, in frontal combat. Failure before Constantinople in 717–18 did little more than cause some stuttering in the Muslim war machine. A pre-emptive blast of propaganda portraying the Caliph ʻUmar (717–20) as first and foremost a religious ruler, an exemplar of pious Muslim practice, succeeded in diverting attention from defeat and minimizing the resulting political damage.[2] Before long the attacks on Byzantium resumed, although less ambitious in their short-term aims, and the conquest of Sogdia and its string of eastern colonies was completed. At the same time Islam was able to begin the long process of rooting itself in the lands which had been brought so swiftly within the *Dar al-Islam* (the Abode of Islam).

The Muslim conquests amount, in aggregate, to a unique military and political achievement, ranking ahead of Alexander the Great's unification of western Eurasia in antiquity, the feats of the small Dutch Republic in its golden age, and the British conquests of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is not just the geographical scale of the empire that was created, dwarfing as it did its Roman and Sasanian predecessors, which impresses the modern observer, given the limitations imposed by land communications in the pre-modern age. Nor the resistance which had to be overcome—of well-organized, long-established imperial powers, the one buoyed up by victory, the other with its main fighting force intact, not to forget the Berbers who had never been properly pacified by the Romans.[3] It is the pace of expansion which is most astonishing. History was speeded up as if the Last Days really were coming with long strides upon humanity. There is also the cultural dynamism shown, which is in such marked contrast to that of Turkic peoples in China and Iran or of Germanic peoples in western Europe—the ability of Islam, qua both religion and Arabian cultural system, to resist absorption in its initial inclusive phase and then to impose itself gradually, generation by generation, on so large a proportion of the world's population.

Familiar phenomena—human appetite for gain in the form of booty, individual and group ambition, the tensions inherent in a segmentary social

[2] Borrut, 'Genèse et diffusion de l'image de ʻUmar II'.
[3] M. Brett and E. Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford, 1996), 1–92.

and political system, the dynamism imparted to the growth of power once one component in such a system has succeeded in breaking free of its rivals, the build-up of resources (immaterial, in the form of prestige, material in the form of supporters and wealth) which, in a virtuous circle, both results from victory and helps bring about victory, the concomitant intensification of authority in core territories and extension of authority to peripheral regions . . . these may explain the rise to hegemony of particular steppe peoples or the reunification of Iran by Ardashir I or the success of certain Germanic war-leaders (for example, Theoderic the Amal in the Balkans, Clovis in Gaul).[4] But the dynamism of Islam's expansion defies explanation in ordinary human terms, whether sociological and ideological (as above) or with respect to human competence (generalship, political direction, logistics). In scale, in speed, in cultural aggressiveness it has no parallel in the pre-modern world. The normal constraints of time and space (enforced by slow communications), the normal limitations on human ambition (imposed by historical memory and inherited ideology), were simply thrust aside.

The main dynamic force behind its expansion and its rooting in different habitats must surely be religious, must surely have had its origin in the preaching of the Prophet. Islam, like Christianity, was a religion which demanded moral commitment from believers. There was much more to it than a set of negotiations between human and divine parties, taking the form of propitiatory rites. The gulf between man and God was vast and for Muslims, unlike Christians, it had not been bridged. The believer was required to *submit*, to immerse himself in the faith, to abase himself before an awesome, ahuman God. There was no mediating priesthood to act as shield and guide. Islam was (and still can be) a faith which pervades the lives of believers, a *whole faith*. It was also a faith to be propagated to all mankind. It was the duty of individual Muslims to strive earnestly in the path of God. Such striving, *jihad*, included armed struggle for the faith, whether to defend the *umma* or to enlarge its territorial base.[5]

The *umma* was, in essence, carrying out God's will on earth, taking on a role analogous to that attributed to Roman emperors by Christian intellectuals after the conversion of Constantine but much more actively

[4] P. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332–489* (Oxford, 1991), 240–308; I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London, 1994), 33–54; A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944), 84–96.

[5] C. F. Robinson, 'Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences', in H. Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 101–34; D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005), 1–31.

and aggressively.[6] Time was short. The Last Days were approaching. There was therefore great urgency behind the drive to bring the true faith to all men. The outburst of supernatural power on earth brought about through the agency of the *umma* was quite unprecedented. To outsiders it resembled a human tsunami speeding outwards from its epicentre in the Hijaz, sweeping aside obstacles, engulfing whole swathes of the earth's surface. The Muslim fighters, bonded together by faith, striving individually and collectively for salvation as much as for material rewards, were surfing a tidal wave which was destroying the old world order. The zeal inculcated by faith, the eager straining for the rewards of Paradise to which death in battle gave direct access (still evident in the early twenty-first century), imparted immense moral strength to Muslim forces in battle and more than compensated for any deficiencies in numbers or equipment.

Faith was the driving force behind the Muslim conquests, and faith gave Muslim armed forces and the *umma* as a whole great tensile strength. This is a conclusion which may seem quite obvious. But the obvious sometimes needs restating and emphasizing, if only to dissuade historians from striving vainly to explain the almost inexplicable in normal human terms. It is nonetheless worth tracing the sequence of conquests in some detail, now that the independent and the Muslim sources have been appraised and a reasonably sound narrative can be constructed. The purely human contributions of men to the achievements of early Islam can and should be documented, as should those circumstances and geographical factors which favoured the advance of the Arabs as they bore the new religion out into the surrounding developed world.

1. CONQUEST OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Muhammad died a mere two years after the occupation of Mecca, on 8 June 632. 'Umar b. al-Khattab curtailed a fraught debate about the succession by the simple expedient of swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr, one of the earliest Companions to accept the word of God and a confidant of the Prophet to the last. The three principal components of the *umma—muhajirun, ansar*, and Quraysh—followed suit, Abu Bakr being respected both as an impartial leader and as a skilled tribal politician.[7] They were also doubtless aware that the

[6] Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 85–99.

[7] *The History of al-Tabari*, x: *The Conquest of Arabia*, trans. F. M. Donner (Albany, NY, 1993), 1–18. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 82–5; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 54–5.

umma's authority was likely to be challenged, once the news of its founder's death spread through the Arabian peninsula.

There was no alteration of policy and plans approved by the Prophet. Abu Bakr did not delay the departure of an expeditionary force which was to march north against the outer reaches of the east Roman empire. The *umma* would not be deflected from performing its divinely sanctioned role as God's agent on earth. God had spoken to all mankind. The duty of Muhammad's successor was to make sure that the message was conveyed as rapidly as possible to as many people as possible.

Within Arabia, the *umma* was firmly in control of the Hijaz. It could count on the support of an inner ring of tribes long loyal to Medina as well as that of Mecca's nexus of nomad allies and of the recently subjected cities of Khaybar and Ta'if. Such tribal sections as did prove refractory—some of the Sulaym and Hawazin, many of the Ghatafan—were picked off one by one, the Sulaym in particular paying heavily for their rebellion. Further afield the *umma*'s authority had been lightly cast over Arabia, and was now challenged from many sides. With the return of the army from the north, Abu Bakr seized the initiative, sent forces east and south, and, in little more than a year (632–3), succeeded in uniting much of Arabia under Muslim rule. To the north-east the Tamim, the most powerful nomad tribe in the peninsula, were defeated and forced into submission. To the east, the ideological challenge of a rival prophet, Musaylima, leader of the sedentary Hanifa in Yamama, was crushed, Musaylima himself being killed. In the far south, the Muslims, able to count on the support of the Persian settlers as well as some tribal sections, began the slow process of gaining effective control of the highlands of Yemen, Hadramawt, Mahra, and Oman.[8] Finally, after operating in the interior of Arabia, the most flamboyant of the Muslim commanders, Khalid b. al-Walid, marched north towards Mesopotamia and forced the Beduin who fronted Sasanian territory to acknowledge the authority of the *umma*.[9]

The pressure on the outer fringes of Palestine eased while these operations were taking place, but only temporarily. At the beginning of 634, two Muslim columns marched north, one crossing the Negev from Ayla to attack the rich coastal plain from the south, the other taking the direct route through Tabuk to the east side of the Jordan rift valley, with the aim of taking control of the basalt uplands of the Balqa' immediately to the south of the fertile

[8] Tab., X. 18–189. Cf. M. Lecker, 'The Ridda', *EI* (2nd edn.), Supplement xii. 692–5, repr. in Lecker, *People, Tribes and Society*, xi, 'Tribes in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia', 3–15; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 85–90.

[9] Tab., XI. 1–68; Bal., I. 387–400. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 176–90; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 103–5.

Hawran plain.[10] It is impossible to say to what extent the operations were coordinated with each other, since they are either reported separately (in two Christian sources) or simply noted briefly (in Islamic tradition). It is plain, though, that the initial breakthrough into the interior of Palestine was achieved by the western column, after a battle fought twelve miles inland from Gaza on Friday 4 February 634.[11] The eastern column's initial role may have been to act as a decoy, to draw part of the Roman forces stationed in Palestine east, while the main blow was struck in the south. Be that as it may, the campaign was remarkably successful. The Muslims were able to raid extensive tracts of Palestine after their victory in the south. Two Roman attacks on the eastern force failed disastrously. Without any immediate prospect of effective military support from a field army, the cities of Palestine formally submitted to Muslim rule, perhaps before the end of 634, more probably early in 635.[12] The Muslims thus took the Holy Land and Jerusalem, focal point of both antecedent monotheist faiths, in a single campaign. Operations were not disrupted by the death of Abu Bakr on 23 August 634. Power passed smoothly to his designated successor, 'Umar b. al-Khattab.[13]

This was an earnest of what was to follow. The battle for Syria lasted somewhat longer but went the same way and was over by the early months of 636 at the latest. First the Muslims had to break through the natural defences with which it was endowed on the south—the ravines cut by the Yarmuk river through the southern flanks of the Golan Heights as it makes its way west to the Jordan, the bleak lava flows spewed out to the north of the Hawran plain (ancient Trachonitis), and the volcanic mass of the Jebel Hawran which, with its skirting of basalt desert, forms a virtually impassable eastern bastion.[14] Khalid b. al-Walid was now to be brought into action. There is again no clear evidence demonstrating the degree to which operations were coordinated, but from what is reported—in early Islamic tradition—it looks as if Muslim forces converged on the Hawran plain from Palestine and from Dumat al-Jandal, an important settlement in northern Arabia, subjected to the Muslims by Khalid in late 633.[15] On the northern edge of the plain, by the Yarmuk they encountered and defeated a large Roman army commanded by Heraclius' brother Theodore, opening the way north across the Trachonitis

[10] Tab., XI. 73–4, 83, 107–8; Bal., I. 166–7.

[11] *Chron. 724*, 18–19; Theoph., 336. 14–20; Agap., 468–9; *Chron. 1234*, 146–7; Mich. Syr., II. 413; Tab., XI. 108; Bal., I. 167–8.

[12] Ps. Sebeos, 135. 18–136. 35, with Thomas A., 101–2 and *Hist. Com.*, n. 53; *Chron. 724*, 19; Bal., I. 168.

[13] Tab., XI. 121–2, 128, 129–32, 145–53. Cf. Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 57–8.

[14] M. Sartre, *Bostra: des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985), 37–42.

[15] Tab., XI. 69, 109–17, 122–9; Bal., I. 167, 169–72. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 119–27.

into Syria.[16] Their initial advance took them north as far as Emesa. Two Roman armies hastily assembled by Heraclius provided effective opposition while they operated together, driving the Muslims south, back towards Damascus. Then came the final battle. It was fought in open ground between Emesa and Damascus. Division in the Roman high command was attributed by the second continuator of John of Antioch to the imperial ambitions of the junior commander Baanes, which put him at odds with his superior, the *sacellarius* Theodore. Theodore was left to face the Muslims on his own. His army was comprehensively defeated. After which Heraclius had little choice but to order a strategic withdrawal.[17]

Thereafter, in 636, the Muslims were able to turn their attention to Mesopotamia, as is reported in the *Chronicle to 636*. Their position was secure in Syria, the Romans having fallen back on Cilicia, south-west Armenia, and northern Mesopotamia. The only action taken in that theatre by the Muslims, probably to be dated after the decisive battle, was the dispatch of raiding forays across the Euphrates, one of which reached the Tur Abdin. This may be interpreted best as a show of force intended to deter the Romans from disturbing the new status quo and to help secure a formal armistice.[18]

The relatively full and lucid Armenian sources makes it easier to follow the course of Muslim–Persian fighting than Muslim–Roman. The initial Muslim thrust in 636 was remarkably successful, as it had been both in Palestine and in Syria. The Muslims broke through the outer layer of Sasanian defences fronting the Euphrates, crossed the river, overran the irrigated alluvium (Sawad), and advanced on the binary capital, Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir, which they besieged (something not attempted by the Romans since Julian's ill-starred expedition in 363).[19] The Persians counterattacked in 637, with a large army, which had been mobilized in Media, safe behind the Zagros mountains, and included large Transcaucasian contingents. The Muslims were forced to abandon the siege of Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir, were driven back across the Sawad and beyond the Euphrates, and, in the course of the retreat, suffered at least one notable defeat, known subsequently as the battle of the Bridge.[20]

[16] Theoph., 336. 29–337. 3, 338. 6–10; *Chron. 1234*, 147–9, 157; Mich. Syr., II. 418, 420; Tab., XI. 83–104; Bal., I. 207–10.

[17] Theoph., 337. 3–338. 6, 338. 10–11; Agap., 471; *Chron. 1234*, 149, 154–8; Mich. Syr., II. 420–1, 424–5; *Khuz. Chron.*, 33–4, 45; Tab., XI. 80–2, 107, 108–9, 160–1, 165–9; XII. 174–5.

[18] *Chron. 724*, 19; Agap., 476; *Chron. 1234*, 150, 162–3; Mich. Syr., II. 419, 426.

[19] J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1989), 130–79.

[20] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 4–12, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 54; Movses D., 173. 1–174. 10 (109–10); Tab., XI. 179–95; Bal., I. 401–4. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 190–5; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 105–7.

Now came the decisive phase of the war for the Middle East. Defeated, thrust back into the desert, the dramatic successes of the three previous years might have been but a second brief flaring of Arab military power, on a par with that of Palmyra in 270–2.[21] Medinans, Meccans, and their local Beduin allies might have retreated to the Hijaz, like a snake folding back into its hole.[22] Instead they rallied in a remarkable manner. Reinforcements came from all over Arabia, probably in response to a general call to fight for God's cause. The Muslims were able to confront the victorious Sasanian army on equal terms within a few months. Much is made in Muslim sources of the contrast between the two armies on the eve of battle, the ragged Arabs and the ultra-civilized Persians, conscious of their imperial status. The battle itself is overshadowed by the account of the preliminaries, the narrative consisting in the main of heroic exploits of individual combatants. It was fought at Qadisiyya, not far from Hira, on 6 January 638, and ended with the rout of the Persians and the annihilation of their field forces. The commander-in-chief, Rustam, was killed. Juansher, leader of the Albanian contingent, was badly wounded. Mesopotamia was once again open to attack.[23] Soon Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir was again under siege and would remain so for a year and a half. There would be no relief this time. Instead its fall was hastened when a Persian operation to evacuate key personnel and the royal treasure went badly wrong. The column taking the evacuees to safety was intercepted. Most of the royal insignia were captured. The capital was stormed. The Muslims pressed home the pursuit as far as Jalula', at the foot of the Zagros, where the Persians attempted in vain to rally.[24]

Meanwhile the Romans had exploited the Muslims' discomfiture in Sasanian Mesopotamia in 637 to launch (probably early in 638) a pincer attack on northern Syria from Cilicia in the west and northern Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates. To the south the garrison of Caesarea, resupplied from the sea, was holding out after the submission of the rest of Palestine.[25] The threat posed by the Romans did not, however, distract the Muslims from their prime objective, the conquest of the Sasanians' metropolitan region. It was dealt

[21] M. Sartre, 'The Arabs and the Desert Peoples', in A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and Averil Cameron (eds.), *CAH* xii (Cambridge, 2005), 498–520, at 511–15.

[22] Cf. S. Bashear, 'Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim–Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources', *JRAS* ser. 3, 1 (1991), 173–207, at 187–8.

[23] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 12–20, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 54; Movses D., 174. 10–175. 1 (110–11); Agap., 470; *Chron. 1234*, 151–3; Mich. Syr., II. 421–2; Tab., XII. 3–132, 135–41; Bal., I. 409–16. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 195–209; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 107–15.

[24] Ps. Sebeos, 137. 20–9, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 54; Movses D., 176. 1–14 (112); Agap., 470–1; *Chron. 1234*, 153–4; Mich. Syr., II. 423–4; Tab., XII. 142–4, XIII. 12–53; Bal., I. 417–21. Cf. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 209–12; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 116–24.

[25] Tab., XIII. 57–8, 79–86; *Chron. 1234*, 164–5; Mich. Syr., II. 443–4.

with swiftly, possibly as early as 639, before the fall of Ctesiphon and the advance to Jalula'. Roman northern Mesopotamia was picked off by coordinated attacks from west and south, to be followed soon by south-west Armenia (raided and subjected in 640). The Muslim position in Mesopotamia was then consolidated by an expedition across the lower Tigris into Khuzistan (where only Shustar (Tustar) put up stern resistance). These operations were preparing the way for the next phase of the anti-Sasanian war, a push up on to the Iranian plateau.[26]

Meanwhile, in the west, Caesarea, the last centre of Roman resistance in the Middle East outside Egypt, finally capitulated under intensifying pressure.[27] Then, probably late in 640, a small army, commanded by ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, set off on what seems to have been a freelance venture into Egypt, the richest of all Roman provinces. The striking success achieved by his bold advance across the desert and successful siege of Oxyrhynchus on the Nile, well to the south of the head of the Delta, opened the way for an advance on the two principal military and administrative centres, Babylon and Alexandria, from the south. So alluring was the prospect that the caliph could not refuse his appeal for reinforcements, despite the priority put on operations in the east. There followed two short campaigns, punctuated by the annual Nile flood, in the course of which Babylon was taken (641) and an expeditionary force was sent down the western branch of the Nile, to raid the Delta and besiege Alexandria (642). The provincial authorities, after consultation with the imperial government, had little choice but to seek terms. Within eleven months of the beginning of an armistice in November 642, Roman troops and officialdom had been evacuated and power was handed over to the Muslims.[28] The Muslim high command took charge immediately of the ramified apparatus of local government and began exploiting the resources of Egypt, without halting military operations. The Canal of Trajan which linked the eastern branch of the Nile with the head of the Red Sea was dredged and rendered navigable within two years of the end of hostilities in Egypt. In the same period ʿAmr marched along the coast, with a seaborne supply train, and

[26] Jazira: Agap., 477; *Chron. 1234*, 163; Mich. Syr., II. 426; Tab., XIII. 86–9; Bal., I. 269–77; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 28–32. S. Armenia: ps. Sebeos, 138. 8–139. 3, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 55; Tab., XIII. 86–7. Khuzistan: *Khuz. Chron.*, 41–4; Tab., XIII. 114–26, 132–7, 145–50; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 215–17; Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan'; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 126–30.

[27] Theoph., 341. 21–3; Agap., 478; *Chron. 1234*, 165–6; Mich. Syr., II. 430–1; Tab., XII. 183–6; Bal., I. 216–19.

[28] John of Nikiu, cc. 111–20. 28; Tab., XIII. 162–75; Bal., I. 335–40, 341–2, 346–7; Agap., 471–4; *Chron. 1234*, 158–60; Mich. Syr., II. 425, 432–3. Cf. Butler, *Arab Conquest*, 207–37, 249–98, 310–67; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 146–60, 165–8, 206–7.

secured the western approaches to the Nile delta, by taking control of the Pentapolis. The Caliph ʿUmar witnessed the arrival of the first fruits of this great triumph when, in autumn 644, not long before his death, he went down to Jar, the port of Medina, and watched the arrival of the first fleet bringing grain from Egypt to feed the new imperial centre in the Hijaz.[29]

Finally, in this first phase of dynamic expansion, before the Egyptian campaign was over, the Muslims renewed large-scale warfare against the Persians. Their control over Mesopotamia would never be assured while the traditionally militaristic highlands of Iran remained subject to a hostile, vengeful dynasty, with a strong, antithetical ideology. The first attack, a raid in force deep into Persia proper, was made from across the Persian Gulf in 641 and was probably intended to divert forces from the main Zagros front.[30] Then in 642, as operations in Egypt were approaching a climax, a large Muslim army marched north from central Mesopotamia through the Zagros towards Media. The Persian army barring their way was defeated at Nihawand, and, over the following ten years, Muslim forces advanced first northwest, then east and south-east over the main component parts of the Sasanian empire, taking out the regional administrative centres one by one. Diplomacy, carefully coordinated with military action, brought the series of campaigns to a triumphant conclusion in 652, when one of two Persian field armies, that of Media and Atropatene, was neutralized and the other, commanded by Yazdgerd III and isolated in Khurasan, melted away under threat of imminent attack. Yazdgerd was killed as he tried to escape into the steppes. With his death, the Sasanian empire was effectively expunged and the whole of Iran was incorporated into the Islamic state. The new religion was able gradually, over many generations, to spread among the many different peoples of Iran, eventually percolating into its remotest recesses.[31]

2. REASONS FOR MUSLIM SUCCESS

Twenty years after the death of the Prophet, the political configuration of western Eurasia had been changed out of all recognition, with the Romans penned back into the natural redoubt formed by Asia Minor and the Sasanian

[29] John of Nikiu, c. 120. 31; Bal., I. 355. Butler, *Arab Conquest*, 345 n. 1.

[30] Tab., XIII. 127–31. Cf. Hinds, 'The First Arab Conquests in Fars'.

[31] Ps. Sebeos, 141. 10–22, 163. 29–164. 6, with Thomas A., 104 and *Hist. Com.*, nn. 59 and 67; Movses D., 176. 15–20, 180. 13–16 (112–13, 115); Agap., 471, 481; *Chron. 1234*, 154; Mich. Syr., II. 424, 429–30; Tab., XIII. 179–217, XIV. 1–13, 17–42, 51–78, XV. 8–9, 68–9, 78–93; Bal., I. 469–93. Cf. Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 170–80, 182–92.

empire destroyed. It was an extraordinary military and political feat, which testifies to effective exercise of authority by each of the three Rashidun ('Rightly Guided') caliphs. There can be no doubt from the record of events, as pieced together from sources of proven worth, that Muslim field forces were subjected to direction by a higher, central authority. Their operations were well coordinated. Troops were mobilized in large numbers—most strikingly in the months of crisis following the battle of the Bridge—and were deployed in designated theatres of war, processes which required considerable organizational skill. There is also clear evidence of strategic direction on a grand scale, manifest in the concentration of forces against a succession of prime targets in the early phase of expansion (632–52)—first the principal refractory regions of Arabia, then Roman Palestine and Syria, Sasanian Mesopotamia, and, finally, Iran. Most impressive of all was the ability of the Caliph 'Uthman to institute a general reorientation of the outward offensive thrust after the death of Yazdgerd had sealed Muslim hegemony in Iran. In not much more than a year Muslim forces were transferred from the outer reaches of Iran in the east to the western, Mediterranean arena of war, and the caliph could issue an order for the dispatch of four expeditionary forces, two by land and two by sea, against the rump Roman empire in 654.[32]

The responsiveness of Muslim forces and their commanders in the field to central direction is largely to be explained by their common commitment to the propagation of the faith and by the immense enhancement of the caliph's political power which resulted from unquestioning acceptance of his religious authority as successor of the Prophet. The *umma* was united by a shared faith and by collective engagement in a divinely sanctioned enterprise. Commands from Medina came with a supernatural charge. But the organizational capability manifest from an early stage and especially in the run-up to the battle of Qadisiyya—cavalry and infantry being mobilized, moved long distances, and concentrated in large enough numbers to enable Muslims to engage the Sasanian field army on something approaching equal terms—was not developed from scratch in a few years of crisis and conquest. It was, without doubt, a competence bestowed upon the *umma* by the Quraysh after they had been invited to join it at Hudaybiya. Meccan statecraft played a vital part in holding the expanding *umma* together and in ensuring that it acted as a single corporate entity. It should also not be forgotten that something akin to an Arab national consciousness had already taken shape in the pre-Islamic era, under the influence above all of the Lakhm court at Hira, the acknowledged cultural centre of the peninsula. Pre-Islamic poets, operating in the

[32] Ps. Sebeos, 164. 7–12, 169. 18–23, 170. 5–23, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 75.

well-established format of the *qasida*, handling traditional themes with extraordinary subtlety and inventiveness, helped secure a commanding position in the peninsula for north Arabian Arabic, and contributed to the development of a common Beduin identity.[33] The *umma* did not have to work hard to press a multitude of fractious, culturally distinct tribes into some sort of union. The unification of Arabia and redirection of tribal energies outward against the surrounding world was a process which went with the grain of Beduin history in the sixth and early seventh centuries, the leading role of the Hijaz being assured by Mecca's antecedent hegemony and by the Hijaz's recent record as the only region of Arabia to have remained outside the reach of the Sasanian government at the apogee of its power during the last great war of antiquity.

Once Arabia had been united in the so-called wars of apostasy (*ridda*), large Beduin forces could be assembled and targeted on the outer territories of the great powers to the north. The Romans faced a more difficult defensive task than the Persians, because of the greater length of their desert frontier and its weakness in two sectors. There was no natural line of defence on the southern edge of Palestine to match the deep fissure in the earth's crust, filled by the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley, which shielded it from attack in the east. So there was no alternative to reliance on human fighting power, that of regular Roman forces and client Arab tribes, in the south. An invasion force would have to be met in open battle, with all the concomitant risks, as happened at the beginning of 634, when, it appears, the Romans were unable to call up effective Arab assistance—presumably because of Muslim inroads into the client system taken over from the Sasanians. The second sector where man-made defences gained little help from topography was the desert frontage of Syria, to the north of the Jebel Hawran, although, in the event, the Muslims did not have to make use of the advantage of inner lines which this gave them, their victory at Yarmuk having opened up a direct route north across the Trachonitis. In any case, there is no evidence of breakdown in the client system introduced during the Sasanian occupation to secure the desert frontage of Syria. The Ghassan, who had probably been recognized, as in the reign of Justinian, as the leading tribe of the region, formed a large and loyal component of the Roman army at the battle of Yarmuk, the loyalty of some being so strong that they were ready to abandon the desert and withdraw with the Romans to Cilicia when Syria was lost.[34]

[33] M. C. A. Macdonald, 'Reflections on the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia', *AAE* 11 (2000), 28–79, at 57–60; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 212–19, 241–3.

[34] Bal., I. 207–10 and 254.

The battle for Mesopotamia was harder fought than that for Palestine or Syria, both because of the geographical obstacles which had to be overcome—the two great rivers and intervening alluvium criss-crossed by irrigation canals—and because of the size and undiminished fighting capability of the Sasanian army. These more than offset the advantage gained from the comparative weakness of the client-management system introduced a generation earlier by Khusro II, a weakness exposed and exacerbated by the raiding activity of Khalid ibn al-Walid in 633. As had happened in Syria, Muslim forces had to fight set-piece battles and had to recover from a serious reverse before they broke Persian resistance. There is no evidence that they were aided by fundamental weaknesses of organization on the part of the Persians. Their success came from striking feats of arms on the battlefield and bold strategic thrusts which exploited victories to the full.

These initial successes against Romans and Persians set in motion a dynamic process of growth of power and territorial expansion, which, as has been seen, was quite without precedent. It was facilitated by a belief-system to which both victors and vanquished adhered. Each successive victory reaffirmed the Muslims' conviction that they were assigned a special role in God's providential plan. Each successive defeat likewise impressed on Christians the plain truth that the Muslims were indeed agents of the Lord and that the End of Time was approaching. No wonder then that the morale of an army might suddenly plummet or that a whole province might submit once there was no prospect of help from field forces. There was also no point in continuing resistance from the cities, doomed as it was to failure and likely to cost their ruling elites all their suburban villas, gardens, and orchards. Similar spiralling doubts and worldly considerations doubtless affected the notables of Mesopotamian cities, when Muslim forces were masters of the field. Persian soldiers too were no less susceptible to sudden, vertiginous drops in morale.[35]

By giving their opponents no time to recover and by launching fierce attacks, first into Egypt with an incisive thrust which disconcerted the defence, then into highland Iran in a series of measured offensives, Muslim commanders in the field kept the strategic initiative, sustained the momentum of their advance, and continued to depress the fighting spirits and erode the ideological confidence of their opponents. The young Roman emperor, Constans II, together with his close advisers and the Senate which had helped secure the throne for him, could not but be filled with apprehension at what lay ahead in 652 when news came of the death of Yazdgerd and the destruction of the Sasanian empire.

[35] Ps. Sebeos, 136. 29–35, 137. 25–9, 141. 16–22.

3. BATTLE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN: PHASE I

Pressure was maintained on the Romans in the decade (643–52) following their defeat in Egypt. A higher priority was put, as we have seen, on the conquest of the military and cultural heartland of the Sasanian empire than on a northern and western push from Syria into territory retained by the Romans. For the Romans had been gravely weakened by the loss of Egypt, their most important resource-base, and the Muslims had established a strong position along the whole east Mediterranean littoral. The conquered lands in Mesopotamia and Khuzistan, on the other hand, remained exposed to attack from the adjoining highlands. Muslim authority had to be extended across the Zagros mountains and over the Iranian plateau, if control of lowlands even more productive than Egypt was to be guaranteed. Equally important, the Persian army had to be broken or ground down until it ceased to be an effective fighting force if there was to be long-term security anywhere on former Sasanian territory.

But the territory wrested from the Romans could not be neglected. For it included the Holy Land, rightfully seized by the protagonists of God's third and final revelation. Jerusalem and the most holy place of all, the Temple Mount, had been formally appropriated by the Caliph ʿUmar on behalf of the *umma* in 638, when he made a progress to the city and was received by the Patriarch Sophronius.[36] So Muslim forces in Syria did not remain inactive while the larger forces in the east advanced step by step towards Khurasan and central Asia. It would have been dangerous to do so. For the Romans commanded the seas and could, in theory, strike at any point in what was a long Muslim maritime frontier. The advantage they enjoyed was considerably greater than that enjoyed by the Beduin vis-à-vis the Romans' desert frontier a decade earlier. The level of anxiety engendered in the Syrian administration about possible naval attack can be gauged from the impression it made on early Muslim apocalyptic writing.[37]

A leading representative of the Quraysh elite, Muʿawiya son of Abu Sufyan, became governor of Syria almost by default after the deaths in quick succession of the senior commander in the region, Abu ʿUbayda, and of Yazid, Muʿawiya's elder brother, in a virulent outbreak of plague in 639. He took care to garrison strongholds on the coast (to deter the Romans from counterattacking), and pursued a policy of aggressive defence.[38] A show of force was made in

[36] Theoph., 339. 18–29; Agap., 475; *Chron. 1234*, 160–2; Mich. Syr., II. 425–6; Tab., XII. 144, 189–99; Bal., I. 213–4. Cf. Busse, 'Omar in Jerusalem'.

[37] Bashear, 'Apocalyptic'.

[38] Bal., I. 194–5, 196, 204, 205, 217, 219, 227–8; Humphreys, *Muʿawiya*, 45–53.

Transcaucasia in 643. Nakhchawan, key to the upper Araxes, was besieged and raiding sweeps were conducted by forays to north and south. This was followed up, in autumn 644, by a raid deep into Anatolia as far as Euchaita on the northern edge of the plateau.[39] The Romans were being reminded of Muslim military capability and warned of the likely consequences of offensive action on their part. Behind these headline-catching events, efforts were being made to improve Muslim fighting capability in the west, by a programme of naval construction.[40] Whether it should be construed as a defensive move in the face of a rival Roman shipbuilding programme or was a Muslim initiative to which the government of the young Constans II responded in kind is hard to determine for lack of evidence. It is highly likely, though, that the Romans took the lead, since they were used to controlling the Mediterranean and since the sea offered them the inviting prospect of being able to strike at will against the upstart power.[41]

It was the hawks in Constantinople and its immediate environs, headed by Valentinus, a well-connected army officer, who had backed the claims of Constans II in the succession crisis following the untimely death of his father, Heraclius the New Constantine, less than three months into his reign (23 April 641). The rival peace party, which included Cyrus, the influential patriarch of Alexandria, had rallied behind Heraclius' widow Martina and her son Heraclonas. They had advocated negotiation rather than war with the Arabs, believing that an accommodation could be reached at a manageable cost. They had prevailed for some six months, but had then lost the political battle to the hawks, when the Senate, temporarily able to exercise political influence, had recognized the young Constans as sole emperor on 5 November 641. Although Valentinus later overreached himself and came to an unpleasant end in St Sophia in 644/5, there was no backing away from his hawkish stance.[42] The settlement reached in Egypt evidently came into question. The deal agreed with ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, for the evacuation of the province, was regarded as nothing more than a temporary expedient, to salvage personnel, equipment, and capital. It was inconceivable that centuries of imperial rule over Egypt could be brought to so abrupt an end. Roman forces would obviously return before long, as they had done in 629 after ten years of Persian occupation.

[39] Ps. Sebeos, 145. 6–147. 2, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 62; *Chron. 1234*, 166; Mich. Syr.. II, 431.

[40] Ps. Sebeos, 170. 8–14; Humphreys, *Muʿawiya*, 53–6.

[41] Contra C. Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy and More: Studies in "Dark Centuries" Byzantium', *Millennium*, 2 (2005), 79–135, at 108, 114–17, who has the Arabs take the lead.

[42] Nic., cc. 29–32; Theoph., 341. 13–17, 24–8, 342. 9–20, 343. 3–5; *Chron. 1234*, 166–7; John of Nikiu, cc. 119. 18–120. 21, 120. 39–55 and 61–9; ps. Sebeos, 140. 35–141. 9, 142. 16–143. 10, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 58 and 60. Cf. Treadgold, 'Byzantium's Year of the Four Emperors'.

Political infighting did not cease with the fall of Valentinus. A fleeting glimpse of a later crisis, involving the army high command in Thrace, is provided by the *History of Khosrov*.[43] It is impossible to be sure of the underlying causes of dissension at the apex of Roman government in this age of crisis, for lack of indigenous sources of information. It may be conjectured, though, that the Romans and their governing elite found it hard to come to terms with the demanding fiscal regime required by the war effort, now that so many provinces had been lost. But at no stage, after the evacuation of Egypt in 643, was there any deviation from the belligerent policy adopted at the outset of Constans' reign.

Roman hegemony at sea had only been challenged twice since Pompey's laborious but ultimately successful campaign to eradicate piracy from the east Mediterranean in the first century BC—by the Vandals in the middle of the fifth century and by the Ostrogoths at the end of Theoderic's reign in the 520s. There were only a few scattered flotillas, no Roman navy proper, at the end of antiquity. At a time of war, merchant ships could be and were requisitioned, to transport troops and to evacuate civilians. The only purpose-built warships were patrol boats on the Danube, probably of little use at sea and no longer in existence in the 640s, and relatively small seagoing vessels, *dromones*, attached to ground forces and used for patrolling and guarding convoys.[44] A fundamental reappraisal was forced on the Romans once they had been driven from their rich Middle Eastern provinces. Their principal assets—the western coastlands of Asia Minor, Bithynia, the islands of the Aegean, and the Greek mainland—were all vulnerable to attack by sea. Communications between the Aegean core of the empire and the distant western territories—the Adriatic coast of the Balkans and offshore islands, Venetia, central and southern Italy, and, above all, the rich provinces of north Africa—would be threatened if ever the Muslims were to gain the upper hand by sea. If the Roman empire were to survive, if it were to have any chance of reasserting control over provinces seized by the Muslims, a navy proper would have to be built up as rapidly as possible. The record of Roman action by sea shows clearly that a first strike naval capability was developed in the reign of Constans II. It was his government which was responsible for giving a new naval cast to the defeated Roman empire. The army never lost its pre-eminence in the rump Roman state of the early middle ages, which we customarily call Byzantium, but for the first time it was rivalled, in terms of fighting manpower, allocated resources, and prestige, by the navy.

[43] Ps. Sebeos, 162. 22–163. 19, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 66.

[44] H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: la marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), 7–9, 11–14; Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy', 109–13, 117.

Roman naval power showed itself first when a task force was dispatched, probably at the opening of the sailing season in spring 646, to Egypt.[45] There was, it appears, considerable discontent among the Muslim forces stationed there after the recall of ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs in 645 by the new Caliph ʿUthman. This offered the Romans an early opportunity to strike back and try to recover the wealthiest of their lost provinces. The operation went smoothly. Alexandria was reoccupied without difficulty. Detachments were then sent out to announce the Roman presence and reassert control over the Delta. Faced with this crisis, ʿUthman had little choice but to reinstate ʿAmr in the hope that he would be able to halt the Roman advance and drive them a second time from Egypt. It was a hope soon realized. ʿAmr once again made Babylon his base at the head of the Delta. When he had secured his position there, barring the way south into middle and upper Egypt, he marched north and met the Roman army as it advanced south. Victory in a hard-fought battle near Nikiu opened the route to Alexandria, which, with help from within, was taken by force after a short siege. This brought the first Roman counterstrike to an ignominious end.[46] ʿAmr himself then gave the Romans a forceful reminder of the offensive capability of the Muslim army in Egypt by a successful attack on Roman Africa in 647. The regional military commander, the Exarch Gregory, who was reportedly at odds with the metropolitan authorities, was defeated and killed. The Muslims made no attempt to hold any of the ground over which they had campaigned, but withdrew to the Pentapolis, the western outlier of Egypt, which had been in their hands since 643.[47]

The Muslims first challenged Roman maritime hegemony in 649. Surprise attacks on Armenia and Cappadocia in autumn 648 served to distract attention from the east Mediterranean. In 649 a large fleet, under Muʿawiya's command, sailed to Cyprus and, merely by its appearance offshore, broke the morale of the inhabitants. There was no organized resistance. Muslim troops roamed at will over the island and gathered a great deal of booty, before withdrawing. It looks as if their purpose was to demonstrate their newfound naval power and to impress on the Roman authorities how vulnerable Cyprus was. The Roman response was predictable: reinforcements were shipped in and preparations were made to meet a second attack, which duly came in 650. The defenders again lost their nerve. The troops re-embarked on their ships and sailed away. Rich citizens who owned vessels did likewise.

[45] *Mir. Dem.*, ii. 4. 232. For the date (646 rather than 645), see Ch. 5 n. 55.

[46] Agap., 479; Tab., XV. 12. Cf. Butler, *Arab Conquest*, 465–75; Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 162.

[47] Theoph., 343. 15–16, 24–8; Agap., 479; *Chron. 1234*, 167; Mich. Syr., II. 440–1; Tab., XV. 18–24; Bal., I. 356–7. Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 207–8.

Again the island was overrun.[48] This time, though, Muʿawiya was not to be seen. For his real objective lay elsewhere. Both Cyprus expeditions were, it appears, diversionary exercises, clearing the way for an attack in force on a Roman naval base on the small island of Aradus (ʿArwad) just off the north Syrian coast. This forward observation post, which was heavily fortified, was to be besieged and taken. Resistance was stalwart at first, but, when it became clear that the attack would be renewed in yet greater force in 651 and that there was no prospect of relief, with Cyprus recovering from a second devastating invasion, the garrison agreed terms and surrendered.[49]

These first operations by sea were in essence defensive, designed to improve the security of the maritime frontage of Muslim-held territories in the Middle East. Thus the defences of Aradus were razed to the ground and its population was removed (offered the choice of emigration to Roman territory or resettlement in Syria). Intelligence as well as force had been used. Muʿawiya had been able to outwit his opponents with two successive feints. A raid on Isauria in 651 then reminded the Romans that they were vulnerable to attack by land as well as by sea, and prompted them to send an ambassador to Damascus and to negotiate a three-year truce (651–3).[50] They were, presumably, planning to reorganize and strengthen their defences. It was the Muslims, however, who were the chief beneficiaries of the truce. For they were able to mobilize troops from all over their empire, from Iran, Khuzistan, south Arabia, northern Mesopotamia, and Egypt, to reinforce the Syrian army under Muʿawiya's command, without any risk of Roman intervention. Then, when the strategic reorientation was nearly completed, in late summer 653, Muʿawiya staged a spectacular diplomatic coup. He won over the Armenian prince, T'eodoros Rshtuni, whom the Romans had appointed commander of their forces in Armenia. Shocked at the news, Constans hurried east, to rally support and to isolate T'eodoros. His expedition was successful. Indeed he encountered suspiciously little resistance. No Muslim forces appeared. T'eodoros did not put up a fight, but simply withdrew to the island of Ałtamar in Lake Van. Constans was able to advance first to Theodosiopolis, capital of the Roman sector of Armenia, where his local clients gathered with their armed followings and a plan of campaign was agreed, and then on to Dvin, capital of what had been Persarmenia, where he succeeded temporarily in restoring

[48] Feissel, 'Inscriptions'; *Vita S. Spyridonis*, c. 20, ed. van den Ven, *Légende*, 90–1; Theoph., 343. 30–344. 1; Agap., 480; *Chron. 1234*, 173–7; Mich. Syr., II. 441–2; Tab., XV. 25–31, 111–12, 130. Cf. Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 325–6.

[49] Theoph., 344. 1–15; Agap., 480–1; *Chron. 1234*, 177–8; Mich. Syr., II. 442. Cf. Conrad, 'Conquest of ʿArwad'.

[50] Ps. Sebeos, 147. 11–20, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 63; Agap., 481–2; *Chron. 1234*, 178; Mich. Syr., II. 446.

communion between the Armenian episcopate and the Chalcedonian church. Back in Constantinople, the trial of Pope Martin was delayed pending his return.[51]

Too late Constans realized that the real danger lay elsewhere, that the Muslims were preparing to attack much further west. Muʿawiya's diplomatic coup turned out to be a brilliant piece of strategic deception. It cannot have failed to dislocate Roman defensive preparations by land and sea. He followed it up with a diplomatic note, demanding the submission of the Romans and offering them client status within the Muslim empire.[52] Then, once authorization had been received from the Caliph ʿUthman, he gave orders for operations to begin. A large fleet sailed from Tripoli, where a Roman sabotage operation had failed to disrupt preparations. Constans took personal command of the Roman battle fleet—an extraordinary step for an emperor to take and unequivocal evidence of Roman recognition that survival rested ultimately on naval strength. The two fleets met off the south coast of Asia Minor, in the bay of Phoenix immediately to the west of Cape Chelidonia. The Muslims won a decisive victory, narrowly failing to capture the emperor himself. They then took Rhodes, Cos, and Crete and turned north.[53] Their objective was Constantinople. A second fleet from Alexandria, including larger transport vessels, followed behind.[54]

Two armies entered Asia Minor. One took up a position in Cappadocia, from where it could command the interior plateau and secure communications with Syria. The other, led by Muʿawiya, advanced north-west to the Bosporus, receiving the formal submission of all the inhabitants of the heartland of the rump Roman empire, 'those on the coast and in the mountains and on the plains' (*History of Khosrov*). News of Muslim success in Persia, of troops massing beyond the frontier, and, finally, of the crushing defeat of the Roman battle fleet vaporized the will to resist. It was hard to deny that God was intervening decisively in earthly affairs. There is no evidence about attitudes in the other, outer regions of the empire, but it is highly improbable that they would have fought on had the imperial government in Constantinople followed suit and accepted Muʿawiya's terms. That did not happen, in spite of the menacing presence of both enemy fleets in the waters

[51] Ps. Sebeos, 164. 7–168. 32, 169. 18–23, 170. 5–9, with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 69 and 71; Agap., 482. The pope's trial began finally on 20 December 653 (Peeters, 'Vie grecque', 258; cf. Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 159–60).

[52] Ps. Sebeos, 168. 33–5, 169. 30–170. 4, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 72.

[53] Theoph., 345. 16–346. 18; Agap., 483–4; *Chron. 1234*, 179–80; Mich. Syr., II. 445–6; Tab., XV. 71–2, 74–7, 131. Cf. Kennedy, *Arab Conquests*, 327–9; Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy', 114–17.

[54] Ps. Sebeos, 170. 8–14 and 20–2, 171. 1–6; *Chron. 1234*, 179; Mich. Syr., II. 445.

before the city and that of Mu'awiya's army on the Asian shore of the Bosporus.[55]

If only we had some eyewitness information like that for the 626 siege, we might be able to gauge the strength of the defenders' determination. Doubtless the escape and safe return of the young emperor had boosted morale. At any rate, it held up and the Muslims suffered a serious naval defeat. The contemporary Armenian churchman who was keeping a record of current events wrote it up as a spectacular example of divine intervention, taking the form of a violent storm which destroyed the Muslim fleets as fighting forces. The Lord was showing at last his long withheld regard for his people. The role of man may have been rather more significant than he allows. It should cause no surprise if the Muslim fleets, so recently constructed and manned, were outmanoeuvred and outfought by the Romans who could draw on a natural nursery of seamen in the Aegean. It was, in any case, late in the campaigning and navigating season. What was left of the Muslim armada withdrew, as did the army by land. The organizing centre of the Roman empire had survived a first massive assault. The empire itself lived on.[56]

The failure of the grand expedition against Constantinople was the gravest of a series of setbacks suffered by the *umma* in the 650s. A rebellion in Gurgan (classical Hyrcania) had cut the direct line of communications with Khurasan along the northern edge of the Iranian plateau at a critical moment in 650 or 651. A force pursuing Yazdgerd as he fled to Khurasan had been lost in a blizzard in eastern Iran (probably in winter 651–2). The army left by Mu'awiya in Cappadocia in 654 was routed. A second, more serious rebellion broke out in the highlands of north-west Media in 654–5. A punitive expedition into Iberia was thwarted by harsh winter weather. Roman forces counterattacked in Armenia in spring 655. They may have been defeated and driven out, but the Median rebellion proved impossible to suppress. A bold thrust north beyond the Caspian Gates (in 655) ended in disaster when the Muslim army was caught by a pincer movement. Finally, the two generals sent to stabilize the position in Transcaucasia quarrelled.[57]

News of these reverses, including some which were serious, contributed to a growing political crisis at the centre. Accusations of nepotism had weakened the position of the Caliph 'Uthman. There was growing opposition to the power of leading Qurayshis from the *muhajirun* and *ansar*. Delegations from

[55] Ps. Sebeos, 170. 14–17 and 18–20, 171. 24–6, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 75; Theoph., 345. 26–7; Tab., XV. 94.

[56] Ps. Sebeos, 171. 8–24, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 75.

[57] Ps. Sebeos, 171. 24–37 (Cappadocia and Iberia), 172. 19–173. 17 (Media and Caucasus), 174. 4–24 (Armenia), with *Hist. Com.*, nn. 76–9; Tab., XV. 69 (blizzard), 95–9 (Khazars).

Iraq and Egypt voiced discontent during the *hajj* in 655. A large body of Egyptians returned in April 656 for the *'umra*. 'Uthman was forced to defend himself publicly to their leaders. Feelings continued to run high. Before long, a crowd, angered by rumours that orders had been sent to the governor of Egypt for a crackdown on the dissident leadership, stormed the caliph's compound and killed him. In the political crisis which ensued, a deep division (*fitna*) appeared in the *umma*, between those who believed that supreme religious and political authority belonged by right to the family of the Prophet, represented at the time by his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, and those who believed that the caliph should be chosen by a council (*shura*) of the acknowledged leaders of the community. The proclamation of 'Ali by his partisans, very soon after the murder, was viewed by the latter, who included 'A'isha, daughter of Abu Bakr and widow of the Prophet, al-Zubayr, son-in-law of Abu Bakr, and other early Qurayshi converts to Islam, as tantamount to a *coup d'état*. 'Ali's caliphate, short and troubled, inaugurated a prolonged crisis which was to deteriorate eventually into full-scale, bloody civil war.[58]

4. FIRST CIVIL WAR, 656–661

'Ali lacked the political acumen and astuteness of Mu'awiya, who was to emerge, within a few months, as his chief adversary. He seems to have provoked dissent from the first, beginning with those who gathered around al-Zubayr and 'A'isha at Basra. He had to resort to arms to impose his authority. Next Mu'awiya came out in open opposition, refusing to lay down the governorship of Syria and publicly demanding that the killers of 'Uthman, to whom he was related, be handed over for punishment. This 'Ali could not or would not do, thereby adding credence to the rumour that he had been implicated. Instead he prepared to oust Mu'awiya by force. The third and most lethal challenge came from the radicals among his supporters, Kharijites (*khawarij*, 'those who go forth to serve God's cause'). They were ready to fight, even against overwhelming odds, for a truly godly society, and would not countenance any compromise, even if it would avert Muslim bloodshed. They split from 'Ali's army (hence the change in the meaning of *khawarij* to 'seceders') after he had agreed, under pressure from the majority of his troops in the face of the massed Syrian forces at Siffin on the Euphrates, to refer his and Mu'awiya's competing claims to arbitration. They fought to

[58] Tab., XV. 131–223; Agap., 484; *Chron. 1234*, 181–2; Mich. Syr., II. 449–50. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 113–40; Humphreys, *Mu'awiya*, 65–76.

the death when they were finally trapped by the Nahrawan canal. His troubles were only exacerbated when the hereditary principle on which he based his claim to the caliphate was questioned by both arbitrators and when Muʿawiya sent a number of raiding forays into Arabia and Iraq. His assassination, within two years of the outbreak of first *fitna*, attributed, in what was probably the official version at the time, to a Kharijite, should occasion little surprise.[59]

His death, though, did not end the conflict within the *umma*, but rather inaugurated a prolonged bout of large-scale warfare between Muslim forces in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, and Iran. His two sons Hasan and Husayn carried on the fight against Muʿawiya, who could rely on solid backing from within Syria and, qua son of Abu Sufyan, on the support of the old Meccan elite. Taking advantage of the central position of Syria, he was able, by hard fighting, to dispose of the two most dangerous armies one by one, those close at hand in Iraq and Egypt. The war with the Iraqis had been effectively won when he turned south to deal with a force, said to number 15,000 men, in Egypt which had allied with the Romans and had abandoned Islam for Christianity. One authoritative contemporary source, the *History of Khosrov*, stresses, with some obvious exaggeration, the scale of the fighting and casualties in what was a full-blown civil war: 'the blood of the slaughter of immense multitudes flowed thickly among the armies of Ismael. Warfare afflicted them as they engaged in mutual carnage. They were unable to refrain for the least moment from the sword and captivity and fierce battles by sea and by land, until Muʿawiya prevailed and conquered.'[60] By July 660 Muʿawiya's military position was unassailable and he assumed supreme religious and political authority in a carefully staged accession ceremony at Jerusalem. The familiar paraphernalia of kingship were eschewed, Muʿawiya being presented rather in Qur'anic terms as God's deputy on earth who was responsible for ensuring compliance with God's covenant. Pledges of loyalty took the form of the ritual handclasp traditionally used to seal agreements among the Beduin.[61]

The most powerful living member of the old Qurayshi governing elite had succeeded in imposing his authority by brute force on the Muslim community. What part, if any, the Muslims of Yemen played in the civil war is not reported, but some information is preserved in Muslim historical tradition about those in Iran. They and their commander, Ziyad, were detained in Fars (Persia proper) by a war, ultimately victorious, against Kurds, who thus made

[59] *The History of al-Tabari*, xvi: *The Community Divided*, trans. A. Brockett (Albany, NY, 1997), xvii: *The First Civil War*, trans. G. R. Hawting (Albany, NY, 1996); Theoph., 346. 20–347. 4; Agap., 485; *Chron. 1234*, 183–5; Mich. Syr., II, 450. Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 141–310; Humphreys, *Muʿawiya*, 76–83, 85.

[60] Ps. Sebeos, 175. 32–176. 21, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 83. Cf. Agap., 485–6.

[61] *Chron. Maron.*, 32; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, ch. 4.

an early appearance as formidable resistance fighters. Once Mu'awiya had secured formal recognition of his de facto position as ruler of the Islamic world and had persuaded 'Ali's elder son Hasan to give up the futile struggle, Ziyad was induced by a judicious mixture of pressure (two sons were arrested) and conciliation (he was declared to be Mu'awiya's half-brother) to follow suit.[62] First *fitna* ended with a final, brief flaring of violence, when Husayn, 'Ali's younger son, refused to lay down his arms and died, with a small band of loyal followers, when he was trapped by a superior force at Karbala.[63]

For Constans and his government, the political upheaval inaugurated by the assassination of 'Uthman was a godsend. As the crisis deepened and the two principal factions within the *umma* squared up to each other, the outward drive of Muslim armies came to a halt and there began a de facto armistice. At last Christians could begin to hope that God had not abandoned them. Recuperation could begin, both on the material plane and on that of ideology and morale. Without this intermission in the fighting, it would have been hard to conceive of Romans fighting on for generation after generation against the greatly superior forces of Islam, in the face of plain evidence of God's disapprobation of themselves and their cause. There were now several years in which to stir up the collective will to resist, so conspicuous for its absence in Asia Minor in 654. With evidence of restored divine favour, Romans could take up the fight for their long-established empire with some confidence, aware that Asia Minor was relatively safe from attack, especially from the south-east, behind the formidable natural barrier of the Taurus and Anti-Taurus mountains, aware too that they still had the reach of an imperial power, with a set of interconnected territories extending from the Crimea and the western Caucasus in the north-east to north Africa and Sardinia in the far west.

Practical measures could also be taken to improve Roman defences. It was probably during these five years of Muslim introversion that the difficult task of reanimating and reorganizing Roman field forces was brought to completion. It seems to have begun, after the shattering defeats in Palestine and Syria in 634–6, with a concerted effort to revive morale, manifest to us in a rebranding of the field armies. They were designated themes (*themata*), a term deliberately taken over from the finest fighting force known to Roman commanders, the swift, flexible, resilient army of the nomad Avars.[64] But full reorganization and redeployment required a lull in the fighting. The remnants

[62] Cf. Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, 311–26; Humphreys, *Mu'awiya*, 89–90.

[63] *The History of al-Tabari*, xix: *The Caliphate of Yazid b. Mu'awiyah*, trans. I. K. A. Howard (Albany, NY, 1990), 91–179 (displaced to Muharram 10, AH 61 (10 October 680)).

[64] J. D. Howard-Johnston, 'Thema', in A. Moffatt (ed.), *MAISTOR: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5 (Canberra, 1984), 189–97. Since the word *themata* is used of Roman forces in two passages of Theophanes (300. 4–6, 303.

of the two eastern field armies were reinforced with troops transferred from Thrace, and out of them four regional commands were created in Asia Minor. When Roman sources come on stream again at the end of Constans' reign, the *magistri militum* of Oriens, Armenia, and Thrace reappear in Greek guise, as *strategoi* commanding the Anatolikoi, Armeniakoi, and Thrakesioi. Their armies, together with the Obsequium, an amalgam of metropolitan units dating from Heraclius' reign, were much better prepared for the long struggle ahead. The interlude in the fighting also provided a first opportunity to strengthen the fixed defences of Asia Minor. A programme of refortification was instituted, beginning with coastal defences. Funding from the centre was channelled towards the main cities of the plains fronting the Aegean—Pergamum, Ephesus, and Sardis—which were transformed into hardpoint fortresses, their circuit walls reduced in length and realigned to incorporate existing large civic structures as massive bastions. The heavily defended zone was then extended into their hinterlands, to smaller cities with the potential to command a large swathe of surrounding country from their citadels, such as Priene on the northern edge of the lower Maeander plain and Cotiaeum commanding a strategically important route linking plateau to coastlands. At the same time cities endowed with good natural harbours on the south coast had their defences strengthened, so as to serve as secure forward bases for the navy.[65]

Three years into the civil war, Constans was able to seize the initiative. In 660 he led a large army on a grand progress into Transcaucasia, in the course of which he received the formal submission of the princes of Armenia, led by Hamazasp Mamikonean, the princes of Siwnik', and Juansher, leading prince of Albania, and responded with honours for the princes and largesse for their soldiers. Hamazasp, whose relative Musheł had been coerced into remaining loyal to the Muslims, may already have been granted the title of Curopalate

10–12) which were almost certainly taken from the second continuator of John of Antioch, the rebranding should probably be dated to the early 640s.

[65] K. Rheidt, *Die Stadtgrabung*, ii: *Die byzantinische Wohnstadt*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Altertümer von Pergamon 15.2 (Berlin, 1991), 171–2, with review by U. Peschlow in *BZ* 86/7 (1993/4), 151–4, at 152–3; C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979), 103–7, 111–13; C. Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 53–61; M. Whittow, 'Social and Political Structures in the Maeander Region of Western Asia Minor on the Eve of the Turkish Invasion' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1987), 51–69 (Sardis), 128–30 (Priene); C. Foss, *Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia*, i: *Kütahya*, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph 7, BAR Int. Ser. 261 (Oxford, 1985), 25–85, with review by R. T. Edwards in *Speculum*, 62 (1987), 675–80, at 679; C. Foss, 'The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age', *DOP* 48 (1994), 1–52, at 5 (Telmessus), 11 (Xanthus), 42 (Phoenix), 44–5 (Phaselis); C. Foss, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot, 1996), iv, 'The Cities of Pamphylia in the Byzantine Age', 4–8 (Attaleia), 43–6 (Side).

and designated thereby Roman client-ruler in Armenia, but it was now that the liaison became a reality and that the Catholicos Nerses could return to his see (after six years of exile) and complete the construction of the church of Zvartnotsʿ, an impressive rotunda not far from Valaršapat. Juansher too had already been designated a Roman client and addressed as first patrician and governor of the east. It was now, though, that he was invited twice to audiences with Constans, first in 660 in Media, when he was invested with royal robes and was given a fragment of the True Cross, second in spring 661 at Vałaršapat, where he was designated ruler of 'all the eastern people' and was given land, gold and silver plate, a belt which had belonged to Heraclius, Constans' cloak, two banners, and titles of patrician for his younger sons.[66] Constans thus succeeded in projecting Roman power over Transcaucasia and transforming such affinities as there were between Christians with different confessional allegiances into a formal anti-Muslim coalition. Christendom, united under his leadership, now arched over the lightly held lands of the caliphate to the south, extending as far east as the Caspian and the foothills of the Elburz mountains. If he could consolidate the Roman position in the central Mediterranean, the chances would improve of a successful outcome to the war against the upstart, deviant monotheism of the Muslims.

That is exactly what he did, after spending a year back in Constantinople. The core territories of the empire were left under the nominal control of his eldest son Constantine and in the hands of a government in which he clearly had confidence, since he was ready, in the event, to stay away for several years. He probably did not leave Constantinople until the trial of Maximus Confessor was over in spring or early summer 662, ending with a verdict and sentence likely further to soften God's anger against his people. The mutilated dissident had probably been dispatched to the western Caucasus, where he was to die of his injuries within two months, when Constans set off on the long journey west, accompanied by the Obsequium.[67] He marched through Thrace and northern Greece to Athens, where he spent a short time, before embarking his men on ships and sailing to Tarentum in Apulia in September–October 662. His aim was to reassert Roman authority in Italy in the course of an extended stay and to reach some accommodation with the leading local Lombard prince, Romuald son of Duke Grimoald. He seems to have succeeded: one of Romuald's sisters was handed over as a hostage and he spent the winter and spring, apparently undisturbed, at Naples, from where he paid a ceremonial visit to Rome, arriving on 5 July 663 and staying for twelve days.

[66] Ps. Sebeos, 175. 4–31, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 82; Movses D., 183. 16–185. 19 (118–19). Cf. Zuckerman, 'Jerusalem as the Center of the Earth', 259–61.

[67] Brandes, 'Die Prozesse', 207–10.

That autumn he sailed to Sicily and established his headquarters at Syracuse, where he was to remain for six years.[68]

Constans' motives are not hard to divine. Syracuse was a convenient forward base from which to command the sea-lanes between Sicily and north Africa and thus to shield the sub-Roman west, from Spain to the rich western coastlands of Italy, from Muslim attack. Constans would also be able to tighten the Roman grip on north Africa, which had traditionally ranked second only to Egypt as a producer of agricultural surpluses, principally grain and olive oil, and was also an important source of manpower. There is no clear evidence as to his immediate plans, whether he was simply concerned to shore up the defences of north Africa and Sicily against attack from Egypt and the Pentapolis or had hopes of destabilizing the Muslim regime in Egypt. However, there are reliable reports that he strove to extract more resources for the war effort from the whole region, by instituting a poll-tax (almost certainly modelled on that recently introduced by the Muslims) and by creating a second, central Mediterranean fleet, using conscripted dockyard workers and sailors.[69] A large programme of ship construction, naval recruitment, and training, which undoubtedly would have taken several years to complete, provides the best explanation for the length of Constans' stay at Syracuse, which was a major sea-port and relatively safe from attack. It can thus be argued that he was seeking to establish a decisive naval superiority over the Muslims and to acquire a naval first strike capability—in which case his ultimate aim was probably to mount a second attack in force, by land from north Africa and by sea from Sicily, on Muslim-held Egypt.

Intelligence that an attack was being planned seems to have reached Muʿawiya far away in Damascus in good time. It was taken very seriously. The response was carefully thought out, involving first a bold counter-thrust west, then a major expedition into Roman home waters. The strategy devised was a brilliant piece of operational planning, turning a moment fraught with danger into an attacking opportunity and making use of deception on the grandest possible scale. A whole sequence of moves and counter-moves was prepared, to take place over several consecutive years. The objective was to disembowel Byzantium of its core Aegean territories and then to take out its organizing centre in Constantinople. The complexity of the plan should

[68] *Lib. pont.*, 343; Theoph., 348. 4–8; *Chron. 1234*, 187–8; Mich. Syr., II. 446; Movses D., 193. 9–12 (124–5). Cf. Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy', 80–1, and the full account of P. Corsi, *La spedizione italiana di Costante II* (Bologna, 1983), 117–66.

[69] *Lib. pont.*, 344, with commentary by Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy', 81–4, 107–8; Agap., 490.

occasion little surprise in the light of the mastery of strategy which Muʿawiya had shown from 649 as governor of Syria and in the civil war.

The story of what happened (already outlined in Chapter 9 above) may be unfamiliar and may strain credulity, but it is based on the unambiguous testimony of Theophilus of Edessa, who was well placed to pick up reliable information some three generations later. It has been overlooked because it lurks embedded in a source, the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, where it has become entangled with unreliable material picked up both by Theophanes and by Nicephorus from the lost history of the Patrician Trajan. Trajan's history may be an invaluable contemporary record of high politics in his own time, in the first two decades of the eighth century. But he was flailing about as he reached back into the first reign of Justinian II (685–95), the central malign figure in his personal history. For the preceding reign of Justinian's father Constantine IV (669–85) he was quite at sea, as has been seen, and invented a seven-year Arab blockade of Constantinople. This is pure conjecture, based probably on two isolated pieces of information about a naval attack on Constantinople and, seven years later, negotiation of a treaty with Muʿawiya.

Once this strand of fanciful information is carefully removed from the Syrian material taken from Theophilus of Edessa, Theophanes, together with the other extant texts deriving from Theophilus of Edessa's history, allows a remarkable drama to unfold before our eyes. It opens the last phase in the early history of Roman–Muslim confrontation in the Middle East.

16

The Middle East in the Seventh Century

A New World Order

Mu'awiya owed his success above all to the strength of the Syrian army, which remained solidly loyal to him as he fought 'Ali and his sons. In his period as governor under 'Umar and 'Uthman, he had evidently won the active support both of the Muslims who had come north with the armies of conquest and of the long-established and powerful Beduin tribes of the adjoining north-west segment of the desert. During first *fitna*, he showed himself to be a bold leader and a consummate political operator. The latter quality was most evident at the end, when he managed to reduce the hard-core opposition to a small group around Husayn. His shrewdness as a judge of character and his diplomatic skill in handling potential rivals and important interest groups came even more to the fore during the following period of internal peace. He was remarkably successful in restoring unity to the *umma*, above all thanks to emollient behaviour once his position was assured. His great coup was the winning over of 'Ali's most powerful ally, Ziyad. Ziyad soon became a pillar of the new Sufyanid regime, to whom was entrusted the difficult task of managing the fractious Muslims of Iraq, first at Basra (from *c.*665), then as viceroy of the east (from *c.*670).[1]

Mu'awiya's own principal concern seems to have been the war against the Romans. They posed the greatest ideological challenge to the caliphate and they had worsted him in a first round of warfare. By initiating a new round of offensive action, he would foster a new image of himself as leader of the armed struggle to propagate the faith, in the hope that it might gradually overlay older memories of him as Sufyanid champion of Meccan interests in the *umma*. There was the added advantage of his being able stay put in the province which he had governed previously and where he was most secure. So from 661 Damascus doubled as forward base for the conduct of military and naval operations in the Mediterranean arena and as political centre of the new

[1] Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 40–1.

world empire. It was to 'the universal court' at Damascus that distant rulers, like Juansher in Caucasian Albania, had to go to secure recognition as client-rulers from the 'conqueror of the world' and 'king of the south'.

1. BATTLE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN: PHASE II

Like Constans, Muʿawiya probably busied himself in the 660s with shipbuilding. It would take several years to recreate a navy capable of taking on the central Roman battle-fleet, and maritime supremacy was essential if the Roman heartlands were ever to be conquered. In the meantime, he renewed the military pressure on land, taking advantage of Constans' departure for the west. A first attack in force in 662 caused extensive devastation and netted a large number of prisoners, including several of patrician rank. Muslim forces also raided the Alans of the west Caucasus, thereby reminding the settled peoples of the north of the military reach of the *umma* and countering a Khazar raid that year which reached the Kura river. A general who was to turn into a specialist raiding commander, Busr b. Abi Artat, led the 663 campaign into Asia Minor. In 664, not long after Constans' arrival in Syracuse, it was Sicily's turn to be attacked. The prisoners were resettled in Damascus at their request. Meanwhile there were regular attacks on Asia Minor, with an ominous development in winter 664–5, when a raiding army showed that it could safely winter in Asia Minor and induced several thousand Slavs to defect.[2]

By late 667 or early 668 the pressure was beginning to tell on the Romans. The commander of the Armeniac theme army, a Persian émigré to judge by his name (Shapur), sent an emissary to Damascus to indicate that he was ready to collaborate.[3] His proposal was accepted despite vehement protests from the ambassador sent by Constantine IV, and an Arab force was dispatched to support him when he came out in open rebellion. Although Shapur was killed in a riding accident, there was no loss of momentum. Substantial reinforcements were sent to join the advance force at Melitene, where it had halted on hearing the news of Shapur's death. A great deal of prestige was invested in the expedition. Muʿawiya's son Yazid was appointed the commander, and he was accompanied by some of the most notable figures in the *umma*—the Prophet's cousin ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas (a leading doctrinal

[2] Theoph., 348. 10–19; Tab., XVIII. 20, 32, 71, 87; Bal., I. 375.

[3] Shapur seems to have accompanied Constans to the west in 662–3. A general called Sabburus is reported to have suffered a reverse at the hands of Romuald, son of the Lombard ruler Grimoald, between Benevento and Naples (Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Lang.*, V. 10).

authority), ʻAbdallah son of the Caliph ʻUmar, ʻAbdallah b. al-Zubayr who would challenge the Umayyads in second *fitna*, and the Prophet's host in Medina, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. The combined army marched, apparently without encountering resistance, across Asia Minor to Chalcedon on the Bosporus, captured Amorium as it withdrew, and left a 5,000-strong garrison there. The peril was growing, with so important and well-defended a city in the north-west sector of the Anatolian plateau in Muslim hands in winter 668–9. Amorium was, it is true, recaptured in a surprise assault under the cover of darkness after heavy snowfalls, but the danger remained acute, as the Muslims renewed their attacks, in winter and in summer, by land and by sea, over the following two years.[4]

In Constantinople a peace party had been formed and a plot hatched to assassinate Constans, who was plainly regarded as the driving force behind the policy of engaging Islam in a full-blooded war and hence as the chief obstacle to reaching some sort of accommodation. A delegation of senior figures came to Damascus and informed Muʻawiya of what was afoot. He brought them together with Juansher, formerly Roman, now Muslim client-ruler of eastern Transcaucasia, who had been invited to pay a second visit to the court of the 'king of the south' in 667/8.[5] He had previously come to do obeisance in 665, when he realized that the only effective protection against the nomads of the north Caucasus and beyond (the Khazar raid of 662 had been followed by one by Huns in December 664, which it had proved impossible to counter in the field).[6] He was called in presumably because he could make a significant contribution to the project of overthrowing Constans and changing Roman foreign policy. He was a natural choice, given his submissive attitude and the influence he enjoyed in Transcaucasia, as a very senior prince. His task, it may be conjectured, was to rally Albanians, Siwnikʻ, Iberians, and Armenians to the cause of pragmatism and accommodation, to initiate a general move among Christian princes to establish stable client relations with the Muslim empire, and, in consultation with the Roman delegates, to fix on a single candidate for the throne behind whom all the Christian peoples of the north could unite. He was well rewarded with additions to his territory, a reduction in tribute, and presents.

We have no reason to doubt the commitment either of the Roman appeasers or of Juansher to the cause of bringing about a rapprochement between the caliphate and both components of eastern Christendom, the rump

[4] Theoph., 348. 29–351. 11; Agap., 488–9; *Chron. 1234*, 189–93; Mich. Syr., II. 451–4; Tab., XVIII. 88, 91, 93.

[5] Movses D., 196. 15–197. 12 (127).

[6] Ibid. 194. 1–196. 10 (125–6); Tab., XVIII. 93, 94.

Roman empire and the peoples of Transcaucasia. It would have been surprising, though, if Muʿawiya had been equally committed, since whatever concessions he made (at a minimum, self-rule under Muslim oversight and full religious toleration) would be likely to hamper the spread of Islam. As events were to show, he did what he could to facilitate the conspirators' task, with the aim of weakening Roman defences and of creating an opportunity to strike a violent blow at the old empire's organizing centre.

On 15 July 669, a senior courtier, Andrew, son of one of the high court judges who had presided over the trial of Pope Martin, went with Constans II into the bathhouse attached to his palace in Syracuse. He was charged with carrying out the first vital act of the conspiracy. He began to wash Constans' hair, working up a lather. Constans naturally shut his eyes, at which Andrew struck him hard with a silver bucket, fracturing his skull. Andrew then slipped away unseen. Constans died two days later.[7] At the news, the Roman forces based in the central Mediterranean declared their support for Mžež, an Armenian of patrician rank.[8] Mžež was, it may be inferred, the candidate judged most likely to command wide support in Transcaucasia. So far so good for the conspirators. But Muʿawiya now revealed his hand. Instead of opening talks with Mžež, he sent Muslim forces into action in east and west, by land and sea. The main action was conducted by sea: naval raids, presumably into the Aegean, were launched from Syria and Egypt, while, in the west, an expeditionary force commanded by Fadala b. ʿUbayd al-Ansari seized the island of Djerba, where he consolidated his position in winter 669–70. The attack switched to land in 670, when ʿUqba b. Nafiʿal-Fihri invaded Byzacena and began construction of a permanent base at Qayrawan. Pressure could now be brought to bear on Carthage from the south by land as well as by sea.[9] Far away, in Caucasian Albania, after spending idle days in the heat of summer in the mountains, accompanied by his bodyguard, a troupe of musicians, and a suite of nobles, Juansher returned to his capital, Pʿartaw, in September 669. There he was lured one night into the garden or paradise adjoining his palace and fatally wounded by a well-born assassin. Nothing is said in the *History to 682* about the assassin's motives, but, given the timing,

[7] Assassination and date: *Lib. pont.*, no. 78 (Vitalianus), I. 344 (trans. 72); Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Lang.*, V. 11; Agap., 490; Mich. Syr., II. 450–1; *Chron. 1234*, 193.

[8] Nic., c. 33; Theoph., 351. 14–352. 4; Agap., 490–1; *Chron. 1234*, 193; Mich. Syr., II. 450–1; *Lib. pont.*, no. 79 (Adeodatus), I. 346 (trans. 72); Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Lang.*, V. 12–13.

[9] Theoph., 352. 13–14; Agap., 491; Mich. Syr., II. 454; *Chron. 1234*, 194; Tab., XVIII. 94, 102–3; Bal., I. 357–9, 361. Cf. Corsi, *Spedizione italiana*, 196–206, A. D. Taha, *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain* (London, 1989), 60–2, Kaegi, 'The Interrelationship', 27–8.

the suspicion arises that someone who knew too much was being eliminated on Muʿawiya's orders.[10]

Mžež seems to have secured himself in Syracuse when Constantine IV, Constans' eldest son and heir, sailed west with the main battle-fleet in 670. Constantine's main aim, it may be conjectured, was to drive the Arabs from north Africa, after which he would be able to deal with the pretender. In the event he achieved it without difficulty. For Muʿawiya dismissed ʿUqba and closed down the north African campaign when it became clear that Constantine intended to defend his western possessions.[11] The second task proved more difficult. Constantine deputed it to his commanders in the west, who were only able to capture and execute the pretender in 672, after regrouping and launching a concerted attack on Syracuse.[12] Constantine took no part in that final operation, as he had had to hurry back to Constantinople as soon as the navigating season opened in 671. For an Arab fleet had attacked the metropolitan region in 670, after he had left with the main fleet. Muʿawiya, a past master of strategic deception as he had shown in 653–4, seems to have turned his attack on north Africa into a feint, once Constantine was lured to the west, ordering instead a naval offensive against the exposed metropolitan region. While two generals raided Asia Minor, a fleet under the command of Fadala (evidently recalled to the east once he had taken Djerba in 669) sailed up the Aegean, when it was too late in the 670 navigation season for Constantine to contemplate a return voyage. Fadala took control of the waters around Constantinople, without encountering serious opposition, established a base on the Cyzicus peninsula, and maintained the pressure through the winter and deep into 671. Constantinople's maritime communications with the outer world were cut for many months. The newly appointed patriarch, Thomas II, could not dispatch the synodical letter which vouched for his orthodox credentials to Pope Vitalian (30 July 657–27 January 672), because of the two-year Arab blockade during his episcopate.[13] Fadala thus

[10] Movses D., II. 34 (142–5).

[11] Theoph., 352. 4–6; Agap., 491; Mich. Syr., II. 451; *Chron. 1234*, 193; Tab., XVIII. 102–3.

[12] *Lib. pont.*, I. 346 (trans. 72) places Mžež's death in the pontificate of Pope Adeodatus (no. 79) which only began on 11 April 672. Cf. Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Lang.*, V. 12.

[13] L. Riedinger (ed.), *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, ii.2 (Berlin, 1992), 612. 20–614. 5. It follows that Thomas's tenure of the patriarchate, which is reported, in later sources, to have begun at Easter (after a hiatus) and to have lasted for two years and seven months, his death being commemorated on 14 or 15 November, ran from spring 669 to the beginning of winter 671, contra J. L. van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610–715)* (Amsterdam, 1972), 117–20, who plumps for an earlier period (17 April 667–15 November 669). It is here that Marek Jankowiak and I, who agree that the putative seven-year siege of Constantinople is a fiction of the source used by Nicephorus and Theophanes, part company (see Chs. 7, section 5, 8, section 5, and 9, section 6 above). Marek dates the two-year blockade by

laid on an impressive demonstration of Muslim naval capability to the governing elite and people of the capital city, in the hope, perhaps, of weakening their resolve to fight on. Having done so, he withdrew before Constantine and the main Roman fleet returned in 671, presumably towards the end of the sailing season.[14]

The military and naval pressure was sustained over the following years. An experienced general on the Roman front, Busr b. Abi Artatis, conducted a summer raid in 671 and another the following winter (although al-Tabari is not quite sure that he was in command). There followed summer and winter raids in 672–3, which acted as the prelude to the renewal of large-scale warfare by sea.[15] For Muʿawiya seems to have been confident in 673 that he had achieved naval hegemony. He dispatched two fleets which took command of the waters off the south and west coasts of Asia Minor. Rhodes was captured and garrisoned. It was a valuable forward base and observation post, commanding the sea-lanes linking the east Mediterranean to the Aegean. Like Fadala in 670, the two admirals then wintered on Roman territory, occupying Smyrna, one of the two main urban centres in the Aegean coastlands, and strategic points on the Lycian and Cilician coasts. The richest Roman lands on the periphery of Asia Minor were now all too exposed to attack from the sea.[16] The Muslims were demonstrating their ability to strike at will, to cause extensive damage by raiding inland, and to winter on Roman territory. The futility of continued resistance was being impressed on Roman policy planners and the population at large.

The failure of Muʿawiya's first attack on Constantinople in 654, when he was governor of Syria, followed by five years of *fitna*, had given Constans and his advisers a first vital breathing space in which to reinvigorate what remained of the east Roman empire ideologically and to reorganize its

reference to van Dieten's patriarchal chronology, while I prefer the opposite procedure. It should be noted that, while the extant sources agree about the length of Thomas's tenure, they give different figures for those of his immediate predecessor (Peter) and successor (John V), making it hard to establish absolute dates. Relevant sources: Nicephorus, *Chronographia compendiaria*, ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), 118. 18–22; Theophanes, 345. 5, 348. 21, 351. 12; *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels, 1902), 223. 41–2 (14th), 228. 46–7 (15th); Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitomae historiarum*, XIV. 19. 26–7, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, CSHB 31, *Ioannes Zonaras*, iii (Bonn, 1897), 220. 13–18; Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, *Enarratio de episcopis Byzantii et de patriarchibus omnibus Constantinopolitanis*, PG 147, col. 457A–B.

[14] Theoph., 353. 7; Tab., XVIII. 96, 122. Little weight should be attached to the garbled account of the crisis in the Spanish *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica*, c. 27, which conflates Yazid's land expedition of 668 with the naval attack of 670–1.

[15] Agap., 491; Tab., XVIII. 122, 165, 166.

[16] Theoph., 353. 14–16; Agap., 492; Tab., XVIII. 166; Bal., I. 375–6.

defences. Now came a second turning point in Muslim–Roman relations. The Muslims renewed their naval offensive in 674. A large military force was landed in Lycia (for the second time), perhaps to establish a permanent bridgehead in the south-west of Asia Minor. It would be easier to push step by step into the interior if there were two springboards for attack, in the south-west as well as the south-east. Three Roman generals counterattacked and defeated the land force when it was engaged in siege operations. There were many casualties but the survivors withdrew and embarked safely on the ships which had brought them. Then came the real disaster from the Muslims' point of view. A Roman fleet, armed with a secret new weapon, flame throwers projecting Greek Fire (a petroleum compound), attacked and annihilated the fleet which was evacuating the troops. This victory, in 674, amounted to a mini-Trafalgar. Muʿawiya's second naval offensive came to an abrupt halt, apart from the temporary occupation of Crete in winter 674–5 (where there was little danger of serious counterattack) and, according to Muslim sources, two later sea-raids (in 676 and 678). Fighting continued by land, but the initiative had passed to the Romans.[17]

After a short delay, the Romans launched a devastating counterattack. Special forces (Mardaites) were landed on the north Syrian coast, between Tyre and Sidon, in 677/8. They moved inland and established themselves in secure, easily defended mountain terrain. Soon they were able to take control of the full length of the highlands which commanded the Mediterranean coast and the desert frontage of Syria and Palestine, from the Amanus range in the north (west of Antioch) to Judaea and Jerusalem in the south. They also pushed out into the foothills of Mount Lebanon, from where they could menace the surrounding lowlands. They were joined by many local resistance fighters (called Djaradjima in Muslim sources), who included former Roman frontier troops, escaped prisoners, and slaves. Before long they had triggered a full-blown Christian insurgency, involving thousands of fighters, which caused great concern to Muʿawiya and his advisers. Muslim rule, as yet but lightly superimposed on the former Roman provinces of the Middle East, was imperilled.[18]

Muʿawiya was forced to acknowledge that the conquest of the Roman empire was not yet divinely sanctioned. He had to contemplate a future in which Christian and Muslim states would exist side by side, for a while at least, both monotheist, both worshipping the same God, although disagreeing on matters of doctrine and rite. Muslim expansionism would have to be directed elsewhere, into the pagan world of central Asia. In the immediate

[17] Theoph., 354. 11–21; Agap., 492; Mich. Syr., II. 455; Tab., XVIII. 180, 183, 191, 192, 199.
[18] Theoph., 355. 6–10; Agap., 492–3; *Chron. 1234*, 195; Mich. Syr., II. 455; Bal., I. 246–8.

future, it was vital to persuade the Romans to restrain the insurgents. So there was no choice but to recognize their independence and to negotiate a peace treaty. The Romans proved receptive and sent an experienced diplomat to talks in Damascus. When he arrived, he was received in state in front of a large gathering of emirs and others (*korasenoi*). The negotiations took time, but, with both sides anxious for peace, terms were eventually agreed. The treaty was to last for thirty years. Muʿawiya was even ready implicitly to acknowledge the seniority of the old empire by agreeing to pay an annual tribute, in cash (a token sum of 3,000 solidi) and kind (fifty freed prisoners-of-war and fifty horses).[19] Constantine IV had successfully countered his second, long planned, and carefully executed Mediterranean offensive, with the help of the naval forces built up by his father and of fire weapons which were deployed for the first time to devastating effect.

2. SECOND CIVIL WAR, 682–692

Muʿawiya's standing was inevitably damaged. The compromise forced on him by naval and military failure cut across his fundamental duty, as God's deputy on earth, to open up new fields for the propagation of the faith by extending the boundaries of the Muslim state. He was also an old man and factions were forming in what had hitherto been a remarkably united court. There was opposition to the designation of his son Yazid as his successor. By espousing the hereditary principle upheld by ʿAli's supporters in first *fitna*, he antagonized the proponents of *shura* who had backed his own candidature. Those who believed that a caliph should be chosen from among the Quraysh by a conclave of Muslim leaders found it hard to accept a prearranged, genealogically determined succession. Yazid himself, although a competent military commander, was also subject to considerable criticism. When Muʿawiya died in April 680, opposition to Yazid was centred on the Hijaz and was led by ʿAbdallah b. al-Zubayr, an austere figure, who refused to take an oath of allegiance. Like his father who had led the initial opposition to ʿAli's seizure of power in 656, he was an unyielding supporter of election by *shura*. Many rallied to his side, and the two holy cities became bastions of opposition. All efforts at conciliation failed. Instead of a settlement, months of negotiation ended in open hostility. Umayyads living in Medina were driven out and fled to Syria. A Syrian expeditionary army then marched south to impose the

[19] Nic., c. 34. 21–31; Theoph., 355. 10–356. 2.

caliph's will. Medina was taken and sacked in August 683, but before Mecca suffered the same fate, first Yazid and then his son, Mu'awiya II, died in quick succession in November.[20]

The crisis escalated. A new division opened up besides that which was pitting Ibn al-Zubayr against the supporters of the Umayyads. When the most important of the latter, Ziyad's son 'Ubaydallah, was forced to flee from Basra to Syria, he persuaded Hassan b. Malik b. Bahdal, head of the Yamani tribe of Kalb and leader of one of two Syrian tribal groupings which had developed out of court factions, to back an Umayyad candidate for supreme authority, the elderly Marwan b. al-Hakam. Marwan was then elected at a meeting of Syrian *ashraf* (tribal leaders) held at Jabiya, the old Ghassan capital. The leader of the rival tribal grouping, al-Dahhak b. Qays al-Fihri, refused to recognize the election and prepared to fight. So began some eight years of war, open and phoney, between different parties within the *umma*. Subsequent developments can be followed in much greater detail than in first *fitna*, because there was no concerted Muslim effort to rewrite history afterwards. As before the Umayyad side made full use of the advantage of inner lines to pick off its principal rivals one by one. First Syria was reunified by main force: the Yamani tribal coalition defeated its Qaysi rivals in July 684 in a hard-fought battle north of Damascus; al-Dahhak was killed and the survivors were driven beyond the Euphrates into the Jazira. Next, the *ashraf* of Fustat were won over by one of Marwan's sons, a success which led to a change of sides on the part of the whole of Egypt.[21]

At this point, in April 685, Marwan died and was succeeded by his eldest son 'Abd al-Malik. The succession was smooth, but the new caliph's position deteriorated markedly. For the northern powers now intervened in the affairs of the Muslim world.[22] The Khazars, who had established their hegemony over the west Eurasian steppes by the end of the 660s, invaded Transcaucasia and inflicted a serious defeat on a coalition of Armenian, Iberian, and Albanian princes in August 685.[23] The following year, Justinian II, the new 16-year-old Roman emperor, who was later to be lambasted as wilful, over-ambitious, devious, and cruel by the Patrician Trajan, followed suit, although,

[20] Tab., XIX. Cf. Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 88–90; Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 43; Humphreys, *Mu'awiya*, 98–101; Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 13–17, 35–6.

[21] *The History of al-Tabari*, xx: *The Collapse of Sufyanid Authority and the Coming of the Marwanids*, trans. G. R. Hawting (Albany, NY, 1989) and xxi: *The Victory of the Marwanids*, trans. M. Fishbein (Albany, NY, 1990); Theoph., 360. 27–32; Agap., 494–6; *Chron. 1234*, 197–9; Mich. Syr., II. 469. Cf. Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 90–3; Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 25–6.

[22] Theoph., 360. 32–361. 3 (death of Marwan); Tab., XX. 160–1.

[23] P'ilon, 199. 25–9. Cf. Zuckerman, 'The Khazars and Byzantium', 430–1; Greenwood, '"New Light from the East"', 245.

in his case, this meant breaking the thirty-year peace treaty which his father had signed in 677–8. He dispatched a large army to Transcaucasia, with the aim probably of showing the flag and demonstrating that local Christian princes should look to Constantinople for support. Any Muslims encountered were killed. Taxes—light probably—were raised from the principal components of the region—Armenia, Iberia, Albania—as well as from Media in north-western Iran.[24] ʿAbd al-Malik's position was parlous. Egypt had only recently been won over. In Syria there were still tensions between Yamani supporters and those who had sided with the Qaysis. The remnants of the Qaysi army remained a danger just across the Euphrates. There was open opposition from Arabia, solid in its backing for Ibn al-Zubayr, especially after the repulse of an expedition sent by Marwan. Iraq too was fixedly hostile, although divided between ʿAlids, led by Mukhtar b. Abi ʿUbayd who took control of Kufa in October 685, and the supporters of Ibn al-Zubayr at Basra. In these circumstances, it is hard to believe that the Mardaites would have refrained from reactivating the Christian insurgency in the highlands of Syria and Palestine.[25]

There was little ʿAbd al-Malik could do in response to the Roman attack and (if it was recurring) the Christian insurgency. His prior concerns had to be the Qaysis, menacingly placed across the Euphrates, and the Iraqis. It was essential to renew the peace with the Romans, so as to free his hands in the struggle for power within the caliphate. He had no choice but to negotiate a revision of the treaty of 677/8. The terms, which were forced on him, were humiliating: the tribute was increased to a swingeing 1,000 solidi a day (so 365,000 per year, as against the maximum of 200,000 ever paid out by the Romans in the past (to the Avars)); the number of freed prisoners-of-war and horses to be handed over was also increased, to one a day; and joint sovereignty was ceded over Cyprus, Armenia, and Iberia, the Romans to receive half the tax revenues. In return, Justinian agreed to withdraw the special forces from Lebanon—a concession later deplored by the Patrician Trajan.[26] ʿAbd al-Malik was able, that same year, to recover two enclaves in northern Syria, Antioch and Circesium, to which the Qaysis had clung after their defeat in 684, but disaster then struck when an expeditionary force led by Ibn Ziyad

[24] Theoph., 363. 26–31. The fifth region attacked, Boukania, is not readily identifiable.

[25] Tab., XX. 63 (flight of Qaysis), 159–61 (death of Marwan), 182–225 (Mukhtar); Theoph. 360. 22–4; *Chron. 1234*, 197; Mich. Syr., II. 468. Cf. A. A. Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate 65–86/684–705 (A Political Study)* (London, 1971), 25–59 (Mukhtar), 89–93 (Qaysis); Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 93–7.

[26] Theoph., 363. 6–20; Agap., 497; *Chron. 1234*, 199–200; Mich. Syr., II. 469. Contra Tab., XXI. 169 who puts the tribute at 1,000 dinars *per week* and dates the agreement to AH 70 (25 June 689–14 June 690). Cf. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 41–2.

invaded Iraq and was comprehensively defeated by the Kufans near Mosul in August 686. It had perhaps been depleted by troop transfers to the Armenian and Qaysi fronts.[27]

It took a long time for the Umayyad side to recover from this low point. No effort was made to renew the war against Ibn al-Zubayr for several years, especially as his position was significantly strengthened in April 687, when his brother, with the active help of the *ashraf* of Kufa, defeated and killed Mukhtar. Thenceforth his sphere was rather larger than ʿAbd al-Malik's, embracing the whole of Iraq, its Iranian hinterland which was administered as a dependency of Basra, and Arabia. But he, like ʿAli before him, faced serious internal opposition. Kharijite radicals resumed the armed struggle against the authorities, in eastern Arabia, Khuzistan and Iran, achieving considerable success with their guerrilla tactics.[28] ʿAbd al-Malik, for his part, probably had to work hard to shore up his position. The withdrawal of the Mardaites to Roman territory north of the Armenian Taurus in 687 must have revived his prestige to some extent, but he only managed to detach the Qaysis in the Jazira from Ibn al-Zubayr in 691, thereby making it possible to attack Iraq without exposing his communications to counterattack. To do so he had to offer a generous deal, under which Qaysi tribesmen were to be reintegrated into the Syrian army and their leader was offered a privileged position at court.[29] In the meantime the conflict was translated onto an ideological plane, as both contenders for supreme authority advertised their Muslim credentials. Ibn al-Zubayr introduced Islamic slogans on his coinage, while ʿAbd al-Malik set about appropriating the Temple Mount, the holiest place in the Holy Land, for Islam, by refurbishing its outer enclosure and constructing the Dome of the Rock, which displayed overt anti-Christian messages and was so placed as to rise well above the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.[30]

Relations with the Romans seem to have remained good throughout this period of armed confrontation, mainly because Justinian II was fully engaged in the Balkans. He was striving to reassert his authority in the south and to stabilize the frontier with the new Balkan Bulgar state which had established itself in the north-east and had repulsed Constantine IV's counterattack in

[27] Theoph., 363. 21–6; *Chron. 1234*, 200; Tab., XXI. 67–9, 74–83; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 59–69, 89.

[28] Tab., XXI. 85–121; Theoph., 364. 19–22. Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 69–76; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 36–7, 42.

[29] Tab., XXI. 122–68; Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 97–8; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 93–5 (Qaysis), 169–74 (east Arabia), 176–7 (Fars and Khuzistan).

[30] Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 59–61 (Dome of Rock); Treadwell, 'The "Orans" Drachms'; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 1–9, 77–80, 90–100.

681.[31] His one foray east, in 689, was probably no more than a tour of inspection of his newly annexed territory. ʿAbd al-Malik renewed the war against his Muslim adversary in 691 with a second invasion of Iraq. This time his forces won a decisive victory and brought the whole of Iraq and its vast eastern hinterland in Iran and beyond back under Umayyad control. The final operation to take control of Arabia and the Meccan sanctuary followed a year later. The invading army, commanded by al-Hajjaj, future viceroy of the east, encountered little resistance, save at Mecca, which he bombarded into submission. Ibn al-Zubayr himself was killed in the fighting.[32]

As he was bringing second *fitna* to a violent end, ʿAbd al-Malik was also preparing the ground for a renewal of the struggle against the Christian empire in the north. Later Syrian and Byzantine sources relay uncritically the line he adopted in his dealings with Justinian II. There was no question of his breaking a treaty set to last for thirty years since that would involve forswearing himself before God. Instead he deliberately strained relations, by sending the 691 instalment of tribute in a new type of gold coin, quite unacceptable to the Romans, since crosses had been stripped down to simple uprights surmounted by small globes and a *shahada* (declaration of faith) was included on the margin of the reverse, reading 'In the name of God, there is no God but God alone; Muhammad is the messenger of God.' Justinian II responded in kind, asserting his special role as Christ's earthly agent by placing his own portrait (standing) on the reverse of a new gold issue, with the legend 'Servant of Christ', and a bust of Christ as Pantocrator on the obverse with the legend 'King of Kings'.[33] He also reconvened the sixth ecumenical council of the church in autumn 691, after an ten-year gap, ostensibly to revise its rules and regulations, but more probably, it may be conjectured, to bring about a general moral upgrading of the Christian world on the eve of the climactic conflict with Islam and to complement military action with the massed prayers of church and monastic leaders. If only God's favour could be secured, the Romans would be assured of victory.[34]

The resettling of some Cypriots on the Cyzicus peninsula (probably rich citizens who had migrated while they could) was then construed by

[31] Theoph., 364. 11–18.

[32] Tab., XXI. 171–233; Theoph., 364. 22–365. 3; *Chron. 1234*, 200–1; Mich. Syr., II. 470. Cf. Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates*, 98; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 131–40.

[33] Theoph., 365. 10–11, 13–18. M. L. Bates, 'History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage', *Revue suisse de numismatique*, 65 (1986), 231–63, at 243; Album and Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 91; *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, ii.2: *From Heraclius Constantine to Theodosius III (641–717)*, ed. P. Grierson (Washington, DC, 1968), 568–70.

[34] Nic., c. 37. 1–10. Cf. Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, 284–6.

'Abd al-Malik as violating the terms of the treaty. When Justinian put the empire on a war footing, mobilizing a large army well inside his sector of Transcaucasia, at Sebastopolis on the Black Sea coast, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched an expeditionary force to intercept and engage the Romans, with public protestations that it was not the Muslims who were breaking the treaty. In the battle which followed, a specially recruited body of Slav soldiers, designated the Chosen Force, changed sides and Justinian's army suffered a crushing defeat.[35] This was the signal for a resumption of the outward expansion of Islam which had been stalled since the beginning of first *fitna*. The mood was confident, even triumphalist, and was made manifest in an extraordinary issue of gold coins glorifying the caliph as leader of the armed struggle. He was portrayed standing, in a flowing robe, with long hair and beard, staring eyes, sword in scabbard at his waist, with the legend 'Commander of the Faithful'.[36]

'Abd al-Malik continued to treat the Romans as the principal enemies of Islam throughout his reign. The outlines of a grand strategy can be discerned from the bare record of his actions in both Muslim and Christian sources. Direct military and naval pressure was kept up against the core territories of the Romans in Asia Minor and north Africa, while the *umma*'s authority was extended step by step over the regions of Transcaucasia ceded in 686. The Roman client-ruler of Armenia submitted in the year after the battle of Sebastopolis. After two attacks on Asia Minor and one on the province of Armenia IV, where the Mardaites were based after their withdrawal from Syria, the Roman client-ruler of Lazica followed suit in 696/7.[37] Then, in 697, Byzacena, the rich heartland of Roman Africa, was attacked. Carthage, which had successfully resisted previous attacks, fell. The imperial government, headed by a new emperor, Leontius, who had ousted Justinian II in 695, responded immediately by dispatching the main battle-fleet to retake the city, a mission which was accomplished and was followed by the liberation, it is reported, of all the fortified centres of Africa. This led to a second Muslim attack in overwhelming force in 698. At the approach of the enemy fleet the Romans escaped from the harbour of Carthage and sailed back to the Aegean. Soon a new political convulsion, originating in the fleet after it had reached Crete, diverted attention from what was happening in Africa. Apsimar, commander of a flotilla from Corycus (on the edge of Cilicia), was

[35] Nic., c. 38. 11–27; Theoph., 365. 8–10, 11–13, 18–21, 30–366. 20; *Chron. 1234*, 205; Mich. Syr., II. 470; Tab., XXI. 233–4.

[36] Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 49–52.

[37] Theoph., 366. 25–6, 367. 1–2, 9–12, 368. 13–14, 370. 2–4; *History of al-Tabari*, xxii: *The Marwanid Restoration*, trans. E. K. Rowson (Albany, NY, 1989), 12, 176, 181.

proclaimed emperor and carried to power in Constantinople. Carthage was left to its fate.[38]

Constans' grand scheme of confronting Islam along a broad front in the north, the core territories of the rump Roman empire being flanked to east by a cluster of client Christian states and to west by outlier provinces, thus came to nought. At the end of the seventh century, the empire was no longer an empire. Stripped of most of its Caucasian clients and north Africa as well as its rich Middle Eastern provinces, it was no match for Islam in open, orthodox combat. The loss of north Africa was critical, since it was a rich agricultural and commercial province and had been able partially to make good the loss of Egypt. As had happened a quarter of a millennium earlier with the western empire, the east Roman treasury was put under instant pressure by the loss of so important a resource-base. It was quite unrealistic to continue the struggle with the aim of recovering the lost provinces. Equally there were not the means, however harshly the emperor's remaining subjects in Asia Minor, the islands of the Aegean, and the southern Balkans were taxed, to trade blows with the Muslims. The reduced Roman state could not afford to strike back against the upstart Islamic empire which was consolidating its position as the dominant power of the Middle East. Survival through dour defence was the most that could be hoped for.

3. THE EARLY MUSLIM STATE

Swift capitulation had been the only rational course for urban notables and church leaders in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt after the initial Muslim victories over Roman armies in the field. Those not swept along by a mood of fatalism at what seemed to be divine intervention in human affairs could submit confident that, before many years had passed, Roman forces would have returned to reassert their rightful authority, as they had done at the end of the war against Persia. Such hopes were not utterly vain. Roman forces did return—to Alexandria in 646–7, to Tripoli in 653 (a successful commando raid), to Syria and Palestine in the late 670s, and to Carthage in 697–8. The patent threat of counterattack made a deep impression on the collective

[38] Nic., c. 41; Theoph., 370. 6–371. 4; Bal., I. 360. Cf. Taha, *Muslim Conquest and Settlement*, 69–71, who follows the chronology of late Muslim sources and dates the initial fall of Carthage to 695, its recapture by the Byzantines to 697, and its definitive loss to 701, and M. Brett, 'The Arab Conquest and the Rise of Islam in North Africa', in J. D. Fage (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ii (Cambridge, 1978), 490–555, who places its capture and destruction in the 690s (at 507–9).

psyche of Muslims. Their control was precarious, and was acknowledged to be precarious, for several decades.[39]

Muslim authority in the west rested directly on perceived military strength and on the resignation instilled in Roman provincials, at all levels of society, by crushing defeat in the recent past. The same was assuredly true in the east, in former Sasanian territories, where provincials could have no expectation of rescue from without. By founding a small number of new cities as well-fortified centres for the propagation of Islam and for the cantonment of soldiers committed to the armed struggle, Muslim leaders maintained a high degree of concentration of fighting power and could project their authority outward over long distances. The principal garrison cities were very few in number: one (Fustat) in Egypt; initially two (Kufa and Basra) in Iraq, supplemented, after the end of second *fitna*, by a third (Wasit), founded as a base from which Syrian troops could keep watch over their Iraqi comrades; finally, some forward bases at the edges of the *Dar al-Islam*, Qayrawan (a site originally chosen and laid out in 670) in north Africa, Darband in Transcaucasia, and Merv on the eastern approaches to Iran.

Evidence of planning and political direction is thus to be found not only in military and naval operations (plainly subject to a grand strategy) but also in the measures taken immediately after victories in the field. The garrison city, a Muslim analogue to the legionary base of the early Roman empire, introduced rule at a distance into most of the conquered territories. Even in Palestine and Syria, where, after the withdrawal of those Arabs who remained most faithful to the Romans, the Muslim conquerors secured the support of the Beduin tribes fronting the prosperous fringe of the desert, a new Muslim centre was laid out at Jabiya, strategically placed near the Hawran. Garrison cities were clearly intended to serve as solid points for rooting Muslim authority in annexed territories and as relatively impermeable bases in which Muslim forces, isolated from the ambient, highly developed, infinitely more numerous conquered peoples, would be able to preserve their cultural identity and to prepare to diffuse the true religion into the surrounding world.[40]

[39] Bashear, 'Apocalyptic and Other Materials'.

[40] H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (London, 1981), 18–34; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 226–45; Kennedy, *Age of Caliphates*, 61–9, 86–8, 101–2, 109; G. R. D. King and A. Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, ii: *Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton, 1994), 155–70 (D. Whitcomb, 'The *Misr* of Ayla: Settlement at al-'Aqaba in the Early Islamic Period'), 171–9 (G. T. Scanlon, 'Al-Fustat: The Riddle of the Earliest Settlement'), and 231–65 (A. Northedge, 'Archaeology and New Urban Settlement in Early Islamic Syria and Iraq'); H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London, 2001), 37–47.

Jabiya was, however, an experiment which failed. There was no need for Muslim colonists to huddle together in a single massive new base, once the local Beduin were won over, since they controlled the whole sweep of the *badiya* from Sinai to the Euphrates. Cultural affinities bonded the two groups together. With the exception of core elements of the Ghassan federation, local tribesmen accepted the transition to Muslim rule and were ready to make common cause with the new arrivals. The Muslims, for their part, felt confident enough to begin settling all over the prosperous inner regions facing the desert. The authorities kept some control of the process by the formal allocation of housing plots or their legalization after the event. In due course, in the Marwanid period, they made strenuous efforts to maintain good relations with tribal leaders, building a large number of sumptuous residences for their entertainment out in the desert. It was the resulting union of conquering Muslims and receiving Beduin which accounted for the strength of the Syrian army. It was able to draw on the largest available reservoir of Beduin manpower, the populous tribes of north-western Arabia. It was ultimately through its numerical strength that it was able to impose Umayyad authority on the whole vast empire of Islam.[41]

Colonization, either concentrated or dispersed, implanted Islam in the conquered lands. The potent threat emanating from garrison cities and the Syrian *badiya* sustained Muslim authority over relatively complaisant subject peoples spread over huge swathes of western Eurasia. Within these weak but extensive force fields, provincial administrations inherited from the antecedent empires and staffed by traditionally recruited officials continued to operate. Justice was dispensed, taxes were raised, local affairs were managed largely as before. Muslim authority was light but made itself felt, notably in the introduction of Arabic as a language of administration and of Arab legal formulae into the upper reaches of local government, where it was used side by side with the existing language. No less important were the early changes made to traditional systems of provincial administration and taxation. The best evidence of Muslim innovation comes from Syria and Egypt.

In Syria (into which Palestine was subsumed), the administrative system inherited from the Romans was thoroughly recast. Frontier commands (under dukes) and civil provinces (in the interior) were combined to form

[41] Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 245–50; O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1975); S. Helms, *Early Islamic Architecture of the Desert* (Edinburgh, 1990); G. R. D. King, 'Settlement Patterns in Islamic Jordan: The Umayyads and their Use of the Land', *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, 4 (1992), 369–75; D. Genequand, 'Umayyad Castles: The Shift from Late Antique Military Architecture to Early Islamic Palatial Building', in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria from the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, History of Warfare 35 (Leiden, 2006), 3–25.

four new commands (*ajnad*). These were rooted in the desert and faced west towards the Mediterranean rather than looking east towards the desert as in the Roman past. The Damascus command was given much the largest territory, enveloping both of the southern commands, al-Urdunn and Filastin, and backing on to that of Hims to the north. It incorporated the old heartland of the Ghassan north of the Hawran, including Jabiya, as well as Bostra, the Romans' principal city in the southern *badiya*. The compact Roman province of Palestina II, responsible for the management of the principal concentration of Jews in Galilee, was enlarged to incorporate those cities of the Decapolis which had previously lain beyond its southern boundary and was extended west to the coast between Acre and Tyre. The whole orientation of the region was altered. The commands faced west and north, ready to strike out by sea and land against what remained of the Roman state, and to fend off naval and (less likely) military attacks by Roman forces.[42]

The Egyptian documentary record is good enough to reveal the immediate impact of the Muslim takeover. It was not just that authority at the top was now vested in an *amir*, appointed by the caliph and dispatched from Damascus, nor that correspondence at the highest level took place in Arabic as well as Greek. As in Syria but on a much smaller scale (Egypt being removed from the main theatre of war in northern Syria), there was some restructuring of local government. The Muslim authorities concentrated their efforts, however, on bringing the existing system under firm central control. Power was leeched from the fifty or so district administrators (pagarchs), who continued to be recruited from the local landowning elite. They became little more than conduits through whom commands from above were passed down to the localities. Their prime functions were to transmit tax demands to village headmen and to forward the taxes raised to higher authority. An intermediate tier of regional government (under dukes, of whom there were six) oversaw their work. A sharp increase in the volume of Greek and Coptic documents generated in the middle and lower reaches of local government testifies to a general increase in the monitoring of officialdom. Most striking of all, though, was the introduction of a new poll-tax (*andrismos*) within a generation of the conquest. This was the act of a ruling elite which could and did draw on considerable experience of administration and financial management

[42] Cf. J. Haldon, 'Seventh-Century Continuities: The *Ajnad* and the "Thematic Myth"', in Cameron, *States, Resources and Armies*, 379–423, and I. Shahid, 'Heraclius and the Theme System Revisited: The Unfinished Themes of Oriens', in E. Kontoura-Galake (ed.), *The Dark Centuries of Byzantium (7th–9th c.)* (Athens, 2001), 15–40.

(that of the Quraysh), and which was ready to intervene in basic fiscal processes of government.[43]

It may be surmised that similar methods were used by the new Muslim state to seize hold of former Persian territory, where, as in Egypt, there is no evidence of wholesale restructuring of local government. The Muslims' grip was not that firm outside the Syrian *badiya*. They relied on the exercise of authority from above and made use of culturally distinct bureaucracies, still controlled by local elites. If, at any stage, the complaisance of the population or the collaboration of the elites were to come into question, Muslim authority would be imperilled. That was indeed what happened in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of second *fitna* when the Christian insurgency triggered by the Mardaites posed a grave threat to the political and military heartland of the caliphate in Syria. The victor in the civil war could be under no illusion about the need to consolidate Islam's position in the world outside Arabia. Indeed this was probably the main achievement of the Marwanid dynasty, even more important than the renewal of the outward military drive. ʿAbd al-Malik initiated a programme of Arabization of provincial administration, beginning with the appointment of Arab sub-governors to take direct charge of provincial administration (the core of a new cadre of professional administrators) and a push to make Arabic the language of the whole apparatus of government from top to bottom (achieved in Egypt by the end of the eighth century).[44]

The break from the past was most radical in the monetary sphere. Hitherto, with a single possible exception (identifiable perhaps as a limited gold issue celebrating the accession of Muʿawiya, with the top bar or cross bars removed from crosses), the Muslim authorities had been content to top up the volume of currency in circulation with familiar types, modelled on the Roman gold solidus, the Sasanian silver drachm, and the copper coins of both old states. Continuity was most marked in the east where broad-flan drachms with designs modelled on the third series of Khusro II were minted to the turn of the century. In the west, imitation Roman folles, modelled mainly on types dating from the reigns of Heraclius and Constans, were issued from the late 650s, when there was a sharp decline in the volume of official Roman imports.

[43] R. Hoyland, 'New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State', *BSOAS* 69 (2006), 395–416, at 401–3; P. M. Sijpesteijn, 'New Rule over Old Structures: Egypt after the Muslim Conquest', in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt: From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, PBA 136 (2007), 183–200, at 183–95; A. Papaconstantinou, 'Administering the Early Arab Empire: The Value and the Limits of the Papyrological Evidence', in J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, Exchange and the Economy in the First Century of Islam* (forthcoming).

[44] Sijpesteijn, 'New Rule over Old Structures', 195–7; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 33–62; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 59–80.

It was only in the 670s, when the war with the Romans was hotting up, that the first moves were made to distinguish Muslim issues from their Roman antecedents (with the addition of a short religious formula, as well as the mint name). They were struck at twelve or more mints, most of them located in the *badiya*.[45] As for the silver Arab–Sasanian drachms, it was only during the second civil war (from 685/6) that Islamic declarations naming Muhammad as messenger of God first appeared, initially on issues from a prolific Zubayrid mint in Iran, Bishapur.[46]

Far more dramatic changes occurred after the end of the civil war. The two monetary zones, silver in the east and gold in the west, were merged. A new imperial mint was founded at Damascus in addition to the local Syrian mints previously established for the production of folles and the many Sasanian mints which had remained in use. The traditional propaganda function of coins had already been revived with the inclusion of a statement of faith on ʻAbd al-Malik's offensive gold coins of 691, as well as Zubayrid silver. The propaganda was much more forceful on ʻAbd al-Malik's triumphalist issues (silver and copper as well as gold) of 693/4–696/7, on which the image of the caliph in arms presented an unambiguous and threatening message to the world.[47] ʻAbd al-Malik then embarked on a thoroughgoing reform of the precious metal coinage. A new weight standard was introduced, based on the Arabian carat. Figures and symbols were completely eliminated. Legends, traditionally marginal, took over the central fields on both sides, and conveyed, in Arabic, the language of the third and final revelation, an uncompromisingly Islamic and anti-Christian message. On the earliest of the new gold coins, issued in 696/7, as on subsequent Umayyad issues, the following Qur'anic declarations were inscribed, which run on from obverse to reverse: 'There is no god but God alone. He has no associate. God is one. God is the Eternal. He does not beget and He is not begotten'. The Qur'an (sura 9: 33) was quoted directly in the obverse margin: 'Muhammad is the Apostle of God whom He sent with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it victorious over every other religion.' Finally there was no reference to the

[45] Bates, 'History, Geography and Numismatics', 239–42; Album and Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 1–39, 51–60, 77–91, 98–107; Foss, 'A Syrian Coinage of Muʻawiya?'; S. Heidemann, 'The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery', in A. Neuwirth (ed.), *The Qur'an in Context: Entangled Histories and Textual Palimpsests* (forthcoming).

[46] J. Johns, 'Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years', *JESHO* 46 (2003), 411–36, at 426–8; Hoyland, 'New Documentary Texts', 396–7; Album and Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 21–2; Heidemann, 'Evolving Representation'.

[47] Bates, 'History, Geography and Numismatics', 254–5; Album and Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 91–8; Heidemann, 'Evolving Representation'.

earthly ruler who was issuing the coins. In an extraordinary act of self-effacement, the caliph removed himself from his coinage.[48]

The reformed coinage was then introduced into the caliphate in a remarkably efficient bureaucratic operation. There was no fumbling, no experimentation, when this revolutionary coinage was introduced. Seldom, if ever, in the pre-modern period, has there been so impressive an assertion of state power. In less than ten years, this purely epigraphic coinage in gold and silver was imposed on virtually all the variegated territories ruled by Muslims. The new dinars and dirhams marked a complete break with a tradition of figural imagery which went back over a millennium. The Arabic legends were not translated for the benefit of the great majority of the caliph's subjects. They simply had to accept the new illegible coins which attacked their own faiths, as the currency duly validated by higher authority. 'Abd al-Malik was demonstrating both that the Muslim state was in firm command and that it would endure. He was also declaring it to be in essence a religious state, all authority, including that which validated the coinage, coming from God himself.[49]

4. SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE 717–718

The principal adversary of the caliphate was gravely weakened by the definitive loss of north Africa in 698 and by the steady advance, in the previous few years, of Muslim power over western Transcaucasia. By the end of the seventh century, the Roman state was reduced to its core territories—the south-western promontory of Asia, the south-eastern extremity of Europe, and the islands of the Aegean, together with distant enclaves in the Crimea and Italy. It could not lay claim to even a semblance of imperial status. The east Roman empire had been destroyed. Its surviving rump has been rightly distinguished from it and designated Byzantium (a term of art which serves a useful historiographical purpose).

Byzantium would live on, conscious of an imperial past, conscious too of a special role in the Christian God's providential scheme, but well aware that it

[48] *Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum*, ii: *Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umaiyad Coins*, ed. J. Walker (London, 1956), pp. lv–lix; Bates, 'History, Geography and Numismatics', 255–60; Hoyland, 'New Documentary Texts', 396; R. Hillenbrand, 'For God, Empire and Mammon: Some Art-Historical Aspects of the Reformed Dinars of 'Abd al-Malik', in M. Müller-Wiener, C. Kothe, K.-H. Golzio, and J. Gierlichs (eds.), *Al-Andalus und Europa zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Düsseldorf, 2004), 20–38; Heidemann, 'Evolving Representation'.

[49] Tab., XXII. 90–2; *Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum*, ii. 84–201.

was nothing more than a medium-sized power on the north-west flank of the caliphate. It would have to operate within a larger Muslim world, careful, even in phases of confidence, not to provoke *jihad*.[50] However, it took time for the body politic to acknowledge the loss of imperial power, to abandon long-held claims to supreme authority on earth, and to adapt its behaviour and policies to such changed circumstances. Ideological inertia was (and still is) a powerful historical force. Deep-ingrained attitudes could not be shed easily, after many centuries of trans-Mediterranean rule. The old ideology had to be battered into lifelessness by repeated blows from without. It took another twenty years of grim fighting, of defeat, of grave peril, before a new, realistic set of policies was adopted which made survival possible.

Emperor after emperor continued to behave in an imperial manner in the unsettled period following the deposition and mutilation of Justinian II by Leontius in 695. At the first opportunity, in 699, when Muslim forces were engaged in putting down a dangerous rebellion in Persia, Apsimar, the navy-backed candidate who had ousted Leontius and taken power as Tiberius III in 698, launched a conventional attack on northern Syria, directed against Samosata on the Euphrates.[51] The riposte which came in 701 was ferocious: 'Abdallah, one of the caliph's sons, gathered a rich haul of booty on a raiding expedition into Asia Minor (only marred by the successful resistance of Tarantum) and occupied Mopsuestia in Cilicia, which was soon transformed into a well-defended and menacing forward base.[52] A year later (702) Armenia IV was brought into subjection to the Muslims, and Asia Minor was directly exposed to attack from the east as well as from Cilicia in the south.[53] Even so, Tiberius continued to trade blows with Islam. When the Armenians rose up against the Muslims in 703, he sent them military aid (which did little good—the rising was brutally suppressed) and, at the same time, intervened in Cilicia, where his brother defeated a Muslim force besieging the fortress of Sisium on the northern edge of the Cilician plain.[54]

This time the Muslim response was deferred, mainly because al-Walid, 'Abd al-Malik's eldest son and successor as caliph, was bent on renewing Islam's aggressive drive on other fronts. In central Asia, most of Sogdia was conquered in his reign (705–15). In north Africa, Muslim forces, consisting largely of recently converted Berbers, advanced west to the Atlantic and

[50] H. Ahrweiler, *L'Idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975), 9–59; J. Howard-Johnston, 'Byzantium and its Neighbours', in E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 939–56, at 946–54.

[51] Theoph., 371. 27–30; Mich. Syr., II. 473–4.

[52] Theoph., 372. 2–4; Mich. Syr., II. 477–8; *Chron. 1234*, 206; Tab., XXIII. 72.

[53] Theoph., 372. 6–7.

[54] Ibid. 372. 13–21; *Chron. 1234*, 206; Mich. Syr., II. 474.

crossed the Straits of Gibraltar into Spain (711).[55] Offensive action on the main, Byzantine, front was delayed, but the blows, when they came, were well directed and powerful. Tyana, a small fortified city guarding the northern outlet of the main Taurus pass, the Cilician Gates, was taken after a nine-month siege in 709.[56] A marauding expedition returned with much booty in 710, and durable gains were made over the following years. The Muslims advanced step by step, seizing and garrisoning strongholds as they went. Camacha, commanding the eastern end of the main northern road, surrendered in 711, as did a number of fortified places in Cilicia. The advance continued in spite of the efforts of the Emperor Philippicus (the usurper who disposed of Justinian II after he had returned to power and had instituted a reign of terror (705–11)). Gains were made in the north (Amaseia and other forts), in the centre (notably Tarantum), and in the south-east (Mistheia and other fortified places) in 712. The southern thrust netted Antioch-in-Pisidia in 713 while Galatia was devastated in 714.[57]

Finally, after a short interlude, during which al-Walid was succeeded by his brother Sulayman, a massive land army invaded Asia Minor in 716 under the command of another brother, Maslama, preceded by two advance forces sent in by land and by sea. The inhabitants of Cappadocia, all too exposed to attack, lost hope and offered to surrender. The most capable Byzantine general, Leo, in command of the Anatolic theme army, prevaricated, feigning readiness to change sides, rather than risk battle. Maslama was able to march on without encountering resistance and take up winter quarters in the Aegean coastlands, where he captured Pergamum. A large fleet was made ready in the ports of Syria to sail directly for Constantinople and to resupply the land army in 717. Local shipping was collected together during the winter months, to ferry Maslama's troops across the Dardanelles, so that they could attack Constantinople from the land.[58] The campaign had been carefully planned and involved a complex logistics effort. Two more fleets, from Egypt and north Africa, were programmed to resupply the land forces in 718. However

[55] H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London, 1923), 29–58; de la Vaissière, *Marchands sogdiens*, 238–45; Brett and Fentress, *Berbers*, 81–7; Brett, 'Arab Conquest', 505–13.

[56] Nic., c. 44. 1–18; Theoph., 376. 31–377. 14; Agap., 498–9; *Chron. 1234*, 208–9; Mich. Syr., II. 478; Tab., XXIII. 140–1 (dated two years earlier); Bal., I. 248–9.

[57] Theoph., 377. 16–22, 382. 6–10, 28–383. 3, 383. 27–8; Agap., 499–500; *Chron. 1234*, 209; Mich. Syr., II. 479. Tab., XXIII. 146, 149–50, 164, 182, 184, 204, 215, 217, and XXIV. 28 gives the correct dates for the capture of Amaseia (712) and Antioch-in-Pisidia (713), but spreads the preceding campaigns back to 708 (rather than 710).

[58] Nic., cc. 52. 7–13, 53. 1–54. 7; Theoph., 386. 25–390. 19, 390. 26–391. 2, 395. 13–396. 3; Agap., 501–2; *Chron. 1234*, 211–13; Mich. Syr., II. 483–4; Tab., XXIV. 30, 39–41.

long it took, the besieging forces were going to capture the city which energized the Byzantine body politic.

The general who had done what he could to shore up Byzantine defences in 716 seized power as Leo III in a bloodless coup in the following winter. He conducted the defence of Constantinople with great skill. The city had been well prepared, with plentiful stocks of food, to withstand a long siege.[59] Two contingent events also aided the Byzantines—the death of the caliph before the fleet reached Constantinople and the harsh winter of 717–18 which weakened the land forces. A successful naval action, involving the use of fireships against the rear of the caliphal fleet, gave the Byzantines a decisive moral advantage at sea from an early stage of the siege in late summer 717. When the Egyptian and African fleets arrived in 718, they dared not confront the Byzantines in open waters. When intelligence was brought by Egyptian deserters about the anchorages where they were concealed, fireships were sent to destroy both fleets. On the Asian side of the Sea of Marmara successful guerrilla attacks 'in the manner of the Mardaites' were launched on Muslim troops operating in the area of Nicaea and Nicomedia. By this time starvation was setting in among the besiegers in Thrace. The *coup de grâce* took the form of harassing attacks by the Bulgars with whom Leo had evidently struck a deal. The new caliph, 'Umar II, son of 'Abd al-Malik's capable brother 'Abd al-Aziz who had governed Egypt successfully throughout his reign, had no choice but to order a withdrawal before a second winter. There were further losses—attributed to a violent hailstorm and a volcanic eruption—on the voyage home.[60]

5. BYZANTIUM AND ISLAM

Twenty-five years of grim fighting, defeat, and territorial loss finally forced the governing elite of Byzantium to face reality. Islam was in firm command of the Middle East and was reaching out to take control of the remotest parts of the known world in the west and the east. Hitherto strenuous efforts had been made to reshape inherited institutions—both the fiscal system (centralized and reorganized) and the army (rebranded and redeployed, but still geared to take the war to the enemy)—and to pour money into new defensive installations and

[59] Nic., cc. 49. 11–17, 52. 13–24; Theoph., 384. 7–14; *Chron. 1234*, 213–15; Mich. Syr., II. 484–5; Tab., XXIV. 41–2 (starvation), 61 (death of Sulayman at Dabiq, the military assembly point in northern Syria).

[60] Nic., cc. 54. 7–39, 56. 2–8; Theoph., 396. 3–398. 4, 399. 5–19.

the construction of an offensive battle-fleet.[61] But it had become plain that Byzantium would merely deplete its own resources, above all its manpower, if it were to continue to engage Muslim forces in open, orthodox combat. The case for making full use of the accumulated knowledge and expertise of a long-established state, for bending its collective intelligence to the task of survival, for fighting on while minimizing the risks of failure, was overwhelming. The new emperor was, almost certainly, an active proponent of a new mode of waging war, after a career in which he had had to make the best possible use of limited resources, whether involved in clandestine operations in the Caucasus during the second reign of Justinian II (705–11) or trying to minimize damage in the area of his command in 716.[62] Hence he did not follow up the retreat of the Muslims with counterattacks of his own, but prepared Byzantium as a whole for the long struggle which lay ahead.

A new defensive doctrine was formulated—which, after much further refinement in the course of many generations, was summarized in a military handbook commissioned by the emperor Nicephorus Phocas (963–9) as a historical record of what was by then an obsolescent way of fighting. Byzantine forces were to refrain from orthodox engagements. The first task of the army was to preserve the lives of provincials and to safeguard their livelihood, by evacuating them and their livestock to defended safe havens, whether heavily fortified cities or highland regions festooned with castles. The second task was to harry Muslim invading forces, to attack raiding forays and foraging parties, so as to limit the physical damage to the country and, by cutting off the supply of fresh provisions, to hasten their withdrawal. The third was to prepare to ambush them as they withdrew through the frontier mountains, at spots where Byzantine troops could exploit every advantage offered by terrain. It was a guerrilla strategy of defence, which relied on the wholehearted commitment of the civilian population, mass recruitment into the armies, and effective cooperation between soldier and civilian at times of crisis. The greater strength of enemy forces was turned against them by small-scale actions designed to affect their morale as well as their stomachs.[63]

Several elements in the strategy had already been tried as experiments. Peasant villagers had been conscripted in large numbers to form a relief force

[61] Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 17–92; Howard-Johnston, 'Thema'; J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 173–253; Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, 96–133, 165–81; W. Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.–9. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2002); Zuckerman, 'Learning from the Enemy', 80–4, 107–34.

[62] Theoph., 386. 25–395. 12. Cf. Afigenov, 'Source', 17–20.

[63] G. Dagron and H. Mihăescu, *Le Traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris, 1986); Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, 175–81.

for Tyana in 709 (an operation which ended in abject failure).[64] Guerrilla harassment, on the other hand, had worked when applied to Muslim forces in Bithynia during the siege of Constantinople in 717–18, and Leo had learned of the importance of covert operations and deception in his previous career.[65] He should, almost certainly, be credited with moulding the different elements into a coordinated strategy of defence as well as redirecting the emergency fortification programme initiated by Constans II to the rural hinterlands of cities and to the interior plateau region. For it was the castles studding the landscape of Byzantine Asia Minor which made possible the creation of the safe havens required by the new strategy.[66]

The great siege of Constantinople in 717–18 was the climactic episode in the initial bout of warfare between two great monotheist religions. Its capture would have rounded out the core territory of the *umma*, marking the completion of a first phase of expansion. A massive effort was made. All the resources of the caliphate were mobilized. Even so the attack failed, and both sides then settled down to a long war of attrition, with occasional intermissions when civil strife distracted one or other party from the fray. The two rival ideological systems and their earthly protagonists were destined to confront each other in western Eurasia (and later further afield) for the foreseeable future.

The war had been undeclared at first. A clear line of demarcation between the two related faiths was drawn for the first time towards the end of second *fitna* when the two contenders within the *umma* were vying for support on explicitly religious grounds. Mu'awiya's strategy (in first *fitna*) of seeking support from Christian groups by ecumenical gestures would have been utterly counterproductive at this stage. For it was a conflict in which Christians of all denominations, wherever located, had been sidelined. There was no backtracking when Ibn al-Zubayr was killed and 'Abd al-Malik secured his position. Slogans on the inner walls of the Dome of the Rock, the most spectacular building erected by the *umma* in the seventh century, and on coins disseminated throughout the caliphate declared Islam to be a distinct, exclusive faith. By his actions too, the caliph made it plain that there was no place in the divine plan for an antithetical, Christian power. He instituted, as

[64] Theoph., 376. 31–377. 14.

[65] Ibid. 397. 15–19.

[66] Ibn Khurradadhbih, *Book on Itineraries and Kingdoms*, trans. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum VI (Leiden, 1889), 77–80 reports the existence of 108 fortified cities and castles in the more exposed regions of Asia Minor on the basis of an intelligence report of *c.*845. Corroboration is to hand in the *Hudud al-'Alam, 'The Regions of the World': A Persian Geography, 372 A.H.–982 A.D.*, trans. V. Minorsky (London, 1937), 157: '. . . most of the districts are prosperous and pleasant, and have (each) an extremely strong fortress . . . '

we have seen, a twenty-five-year war for the elimination of the rump Roman state. All men were to be brought within the sphere of Islam, beneath the authority of God's vice-gerent on earth.[67]

These confident assertions of the truth and distinctiveness of the new faith were also made manifest in the mosque. Instead of the longitudinal, aisled basilica or the centralized domed structure, aligned on an eastern apse, characteristic of Christendom in late antiquity, the Muslim house of prayer was merely an enlarged portico on one side of a rectangular assembly ground, with rows of columns supporting a sheltering roof. Instead of an apse, a small indentation, the *mihrab*, marked the wall which faced Mecca. The alignment of the covered area was at right angles to the direction of prayer, transepts in effect combining to form a single, lateral nave. Prayer could, of course, take place anywhere, at any time. There was no need of formal, ritual consecration of a safe space, permanent or ephemeral, for prayer. The whole material world was Allah's. A Muslim simply needed to halt, turn towards Mecca, and prostrate himself before God. So the mosque's primary purpose was as much social and political as religious—it was the place of assembly for Muslims in Muslim centres of population, the arena for political debate and decision-making as well as for collective worship, for speeches as well as sermons.

The early Islamic state which had already exerted itself and imposed an explicitly Muslim coinage on all its subjects demonstrated its power in another way during the caliphate of al-Walid (705–15), when mosques of the regulation type and built on a grand scale began to be erected in the garrison cities and other Muslim centres of population across the caliphate. There was, of course, much variation in the specifics of plans, decoration, fabric, decoration, and building techniques, determined as before by local architectural traditions. But there was a basic uniformity of design, which is best explained by circulation of an officially sanctioned template by the governing centre of the caliphate.[68] Centuries were to pass before the antecedent local traditions were able to reassert themselves effectively, so strong was the initial impression of the *umma*'s authority on the subordinated cultures. Even in the case of Iran, where Sasanian influence remained strong and showed itself in individual features (surface decoration, thickness of columns, and architectural forms), it was only in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries and within the framework of the first sedentary Turkish state that

[67] Donner, 'From Believers to Muslims'; Johns, 'Archaeology', 424–33; Hoyland, 'New Documentary Texts', 409–10.

[68] J. Johns, 'The "House of the Prophet" and the Concept of the Mosque', in Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii. 59–112, at 59–69.

the *iwan*, the large arched recess fronting a courtyard, and the dome on squinches, two key elements of Sasanian monumental architecture, came into their own and began to dominate the design of mosques.[69]

The historian should never forget the leading role of Islam in Islamic history. There can be no clearer demonstration of this than the dissemination of the approved design of the mosque or the swift, universal introduction of a purely epigraphic coinage in the early, unitary phase of Islamic history. Admittedly the huge empire of Islam, which, by the middle of the eighth century, reached deep into the steppe world and to the furthest reaches of the west where Africa and Europe fronted the ocean, and which before long was able to tap the sources of gold in the heart of Africa, the fur-bearing forests of Siberia, and the silver mines of central Asia, was bound together by conventional political and economic ties. It was at the outset an Arab empire, created by a people from the margins of the civilized, developed world, who naturally remained conscious of their shared identity in the lands they had conquered and looked to each other for support. Human barriers to communication and trade were dismantled. With a common (epigraphic) currency, a single language (Arabic), and no customs levies, the caliphate constituted a single market of unprecedented size, and was to see steady economic growth for several centuries to come.[70] But it was a shared faith which gave the earthly polity extraordinary tensile strength. Islam enabled it to survive repeated bouts of civil war and, after the emergence and consolidation of regional states in the second half of the ninth century, to continue to cohere, not merely in the cultural sphere but on a higher, meta-political plane, that of Allah's grand plan for mankind.

There was, in the first place, a single holy book, a canonical text, universally acknowledged to embody God's instructions to mankind. There might be divergent interpretations of specific passages or terms, but there could be no fundamental disagreement about the principal articles of faith. Equally scholars could argue about the worth of transmitted traditions about the deeds and words of the Prophet (*hadith*), but, by the tenth century, a core of authentic material had been identified and accepted by a broad consensus. This in turn ensured that rival schools of law could engage in disputation rather than exchanges of anathemas.[71]

[69] R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, and M. Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven, 2001), 105–10, 134–45; R. Hillenbrand, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Architecture*, ii (London, 2006), 65–106.

[70] M. Lombard, *L'Islam dans sa première grandeur (VIIIe–XIe siècle)* (Paris, 1968).

[71] Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 22–3, 195–9, 211–13; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 85–92; Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 79–81.

Even the early constitutional split, between the supporters of an electoral college of acknowledged leaders and those who backed the hereditary principle, did not lead to a complete separation between Sunni and Shi'i confessions, let alone to long-lasting active hostility between the two (as opposed to temporary outbursts of local sectarian strife). Sunni and Shi'i Muslims abased themselves before the same awesome, infinitely remote, infinitely powerful God. They were both agents of God on earth, members of a single, divinely ordained community of believers. Regular movement outwards, to the frontiers of the *Dar al-Islam*, for the conduct of *jihad*, and regular movement inwards for the *hajj*, reminded the faithful, whatever their confessional allegiance, that they belonged to a single supranational, supraconfessional *umma* and were engaged in a joint divinely sanctioned enterprise.

Jihad and *hajj* were crucial bonding agents and also imparted extraordinary dynamism to Islam, above all in the first century or so of its existence. Given this impetus, the faith continued to spread long after its initial, violent phase of expansion. There were checks from outside and unexpectedly stiff resistance to the new faith within the *Dar al-Islam*, but in the long run Islam prevailed. Byzantium was not alone in holding its own against the forces of the caliphate in the eighth century. The Khazar khaganate succeeded in penning Islam back behind the Caucasus, while the Muslim advance north of the Pyrenees ground to a halt in Aquitaine.[72] Later, from the second half of the ninth century, Byzantium moved on to the offensive in the Middle East, an example followed two centuries later by Latin Christendom.[73] Non-Muslims within the caliphate also proved obdurate, even in relatively complaisant Egypt where, ostensibly in reaction to tax increases, open rebellions broke out in 725/6 and subsequent years.[74]

But Islam ultimately overcame these obstacles, a crucial gain being the conversion of the Turks in the steppes beyond Transoxiana in the tenth century. Re-energized militarily and politically by Turks and, later, Mongols, it reached out into south-eastern Europe and the Indian subcontinent. It was spread by trade as well as armed action—to east Africa, south-east Asia, and the western fringes of China. Within the caliphate, it percolated out from Muslim centres of population into the surrounding countryside, leaving but a rump of Christians both in Lebanon and in Egypt and eventually gaining hold of highlands as refractory as the Caucasus and Elburz ranges. By the sixteenth

[72] D. J. Wasserstein, 'The Khazars and the World of the Islam', in Golden, Ben-Shammai, and Róna-Tas, *World of the Khazars*, 373–86, at 374–80; Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 245–53; I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London, 1994), 281–4.

[73] Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, 310–34; C. Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006).

[74] Kennedy, 'Egypt as a Province', 64–7, 73–4.

century when Christendom was taking to the oceans, Islam was in firm control of the whole Middle East and had cast its net over all but the western, eastern, and southern extremities of the Eurasian continent.[75]

Thus the initial military and political success of the Muslim *umma* was eventually crowned by its wide dissemination among mankind. The aim, from the first, had not been to gain territory but to draw all men everywhere into the true faith. Islam was in essence a proselytizing religion. Without a multi-layered hierarchy of priests, shorn of elaborate ritual, and of doctrinal complexity, Islam was monotheism purified of contaminants, stripped of accretions, made plain and accessible to the faithful. Brought face to face with God, without any protective or intercessory intermediaries, the believer simply had to pray and to submit entirely to the will of his maker. It was an austere, overpowering monotheism, which proved remarkably attractive in the millennium following the Prophet's death.

It has not lost its awesome appeal with the passage of time.

[75] De Planhol, *Fondements géographiques.*

Conclusion

I hope that I have been able to demonstrate that it is possible to write history in the proper manner, building up a narrative piece by piece out of carefully vetted primary sources and then picking out some of the principal causal forces at work, even when the brief time in question is as remote from the present as the seventh century and the events retailed are as extraordinary as those involved in the rise of a new universal religion and the breakdown of one world order and its swift replacement by another. There has never been much doubt about the importance of the seventh century as the formative period of the Middle East as we know it, and indeed, because of the worldwide impact of Islam, as a key period in the historical evolution of humanity as a whole. But hitherto it has been difficult, if not impossible, to look with clear eyes at what happened, because scholars' gaze has been directed almost exclusively through an Islamic lens and questions about the lens, the degree to which it distorts historical reality, have usurped the place in Islamicist scholarship which ought to have been assumed by seventh-century actualities. Historiography is, of course, the handmaiden of history. In this case, though, over the last thirty years, she has turned into a tyrannical mistress.

Only a very few contemporary Islamicists, of whom Fred Donner and Hugh Kennedy are the most notable, have been prepared to put a fair amount of trust in the canonical history of the first Muslim century and to present a modified version of what may be termed the authorized history of the rise of Islam, that sanctioned by the Abbasid intelligentsia in the ninth and tenth centuries, in terms intelligible to a modern readership.[1] They place the voluminous materials supplied by Islamic sources in a non-Muslim context, viewing what is reported of Arabia in the first thirty years of the seventh century against the background of a world war between the two established great powers of the Middle East at the end of antiquity. The war, which lasted nearly thirty years, did, in their view, leave both the east Roman and the Sasanian empires exhausted. They were thus ready prey for the rising power of Islam. Exhaustion of the thitherto dominant powers in the arc of fertile

[1] Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*; Kennedy, *Great Arab Conquests*.

lands to the north of Arabia is thus viewed as playing a leading role in history, alongside the social energy generated by the fusion of the traditionally fractious kin-groups of a tribal society into a new religio-political union in little more than a decade.

This beleaguered school encounters a virtually insuperable problem—the very narrow focus of Islamic sources on the inner circles around the Prophet and his successors, their preoccupation with debates and machinations of a governing elite, with initiatives and divisions at the heart of the Islamic community. Those who belong to it have no choice but to enter a world in which the central arena of decision-making is that of a small coterie, which subsequently, with the extension of Muslim authority over large tracts of the developed world in western Eurasia, spawns two sets of subsidiary coteries, the inner circles around great regional governors and subversive, conspiratorial groups which would not condone accommodation with current political realities and were all too ready to take up arms. Foreign affairs, above all foreign wars, figure in the narrative, but they are covered usually in brief notices, which simply round up the news at the end of a year-entry.

It follows that most foreign news preserved in the canonical version of history is plucked out of context and that individual campaigns are not related to each other but simply noted in discrete reports. The outside world, whether it be Byzantium, or the Berbers who determined the course of history in north Africa, or the Khazar khaganate which emerged as the dominant power in the steppes to the north of the Caucasus in the 660s, or the rich mercantile cities of central Asia, plays no more than a passive role in the story told. Counterattacks which proved devastating in the short term, such as the dispatch of Byzantine special forces to Lebanon in the 670s and the widespread Christian insurgency which followed, or the invasion by the Khazars of Transcaucasia in 685 which came at the worst possible moment for the Umayyad party in the second civil war, are passed over in virtual silence. The same is true of the outbreak of the first civil war, which is attributed entirely to internal causes, with only glancing references to the serious reverses suffered in the north—outside Constantinople, in Cappadocia, in Iberia, in the mountains of north-west Iran and the Caucasus. Islamic history takes place largely in a historical vacuum, in a world which resembles that of the legendary past, whether Greek or Iranian, a world bestridden by war-leaders, riven by intrigue, timeless in the sense of being removed from real time.

Viewed from this high vantage point, the history of the Middle East becomes one dominated by personality and policy, religious and political, rather than by the interplay between different, opposing political and cultural systems in observable geographical arenas. So there is no seizing of opportunities or countering of potential threats either by the Arabs or by their adversaries. The course of the battle for the Mediterranean which was initiated by Muʿawiya in

649–50, with his attacks on Cyprus and seizure of Aradus, and which only ended with the definitive Muslim conquest of north Africa in 698, cannot be followed without the aid of Christian sources. The subtle combination of diplomacy, political assassination, deception, and naval operations devised by Muʿawiya and put into action in 668–71, which can be documented from Armenian and Syrian sources, largely vanishes from the Islamic record. Similarly the gravity of both periods of internal crisis in the Muslim community, the scale of armed conflict in the first and the problems engendered from without in the second, have been ironed out. It would be equally hard to determine the outer limits of the field of force exerted by the new power-centre in Syria-Palestine without the evidence of the Eulogy of Juansher, prince of Caucasian Albania, about his two visits to Muʿawiya's court at Damascus.

But if the history retailed by Islamicists of a more positivist disposition is thin and denuded of far too many particulars of importance, it is rich, meaty fare compared to that offered by their sceptical colleagues. They have been chopping away at whatever links might be supposed to exist between Islamic historical traditions and historical realities, whether by questioning the authenticity of *isnads* (chains of citations), or by focusing on distortion and fiction introduced in the process of transmission of traditions, or by picking out elements retrojected from the Abbasid age. They cannot begin to sketch the life and career of Muhammad, to analyse the campaigns of conquest or the structures of the early Umayyad caliphate, on the basis of the exiguous contemporary Arabic documentary material which survives. With the single exception of the *Constitution of Medina*, there is nothing in the *sira* which they will take on trust (many concede that authentic materials may be lurking there but insist that they cannot be fished out from the soup of the spurious). The collections of verse, for which prose narratives provide a commentary, are likewise discarded, notwithstanding their vetting by Ibn Ishaq's critical editor Ibn Hisham. The Qur'an itself is put to the side as evidence, being viewed by the more radical critics as a later concoction, generated in the course of several generations of sectarian controversy and projected on to an imagined seventh-century Hijazi past.

There are many distinguished champions of the sceptical party. Their inspiration comes from earlier work by scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Schacht, and John Wansborough.[2] Among contemporary anglophone Islamicists, Lawrence Conrad, Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, and Gerald Hawting have proved doughty fighters.[3] A German column, marshalled by

[2] I. Golziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2 vols. (London, 1967–71); J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1953); J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978).

[3] Conrad, 'Conquest of Arward'; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*; Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry.*

K.-H. Ohlig and G. R. Puin and inspired by the hyper-sceptical *Crossroads* of Y. Nevo and J. Koren, has joined the fray, arguing that Islam took shape in Iraq, in a Jewish–Christian milieu, that it built on a pre-Nicene theology which had evolved in the Syro-Aramaic world, that the figure of Muhammad was constructed as a focal point for Arab identity in the Abbasid empire, and that the Islamic era was calculated not from the passage of émigrés from Mecca to Medina in 622 but from the minor victory won in the same year by the Emperor Heraclius on a first, aborted counteroffensive against the Persians.[4] Academics are congenitally contrary and counter-suggestible. They like to tease, to play with their readers, to take ideas and to see how far they can press them. None more so than the sceptics. They have performed a valuable service in subjecting the *sira* and the Qur'an to ultra-rigorous critical scrutiny, but they allow their imaginations to run wild when they devise a counter-history of their own. Rightly they accord primacy to ideas in the early history of Islam (confining their efforts to the relocation of its emergence in time and space), but they leave observers of seventh-century events yet more dumbfounded at the destruction of the late antique world order and the subsequent Arabization of the Middle East and north Africa. In effect, they leave us to face a historical miracle of unprecedented scale, for which only divine intervention in human affairs can provide a satisfactory explanation.

There is, however, an array of non-Muslim sources which, as has been seen, can be used to vet early Islamic traditions and to test their chronological ordering in later compendia. They can then be quarried to construct a relatively complete history of international relations in the seventh century. There is great variety in the extant non-Muslim works. They range from the elegant, intellectual verse of George of Pisidia, suffused by the mood of the time but always reflective, placing the affairs of men beneath the canopy of heaven, to verbatim reproductions of contemporary documents in the *Chronicon Paschale*. They enable us to look upon the strange phenomena of the seventh century from different vantage points—Roman, Byzantine, Armenian, Syrian, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Iranian—at the time and in later centuries.

So we have watched the two long-established great powers of western Eurasia in late antiquity launch into a long war (603–28), in the course of which the *shahanshah*, buoyed up by an unprecedented series of victories and conquests, resolved to liquidate the east Roman empire, only to be frustrated when a third great power, that of the transcontinental Turkish empire, intervened in force on the Roman side (626–9). That great war undoubtedly made an impression on the

[4] Y. D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst, NY, 2003); K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin (eds.), *Die dunkle Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2005).

Arabs. Since Arabia was a vast region appended to the developed Middle East, where news travelled far and fast, its inhabitants, whether nomads or sedentaries, could not but be aware of what was happening in the wider world and could not but be affected by what they heard. In particular, the millenarian fears which are so vividly expressed in the earliest *suras* of the Qur'an surely capture, at least in part, the Prophet's reaction to what was going on in the north. There are also tantalizing references, in the poetry embedded in the *sira*, to connections between the *umma* and the revived Ghassan in the north. But it was the extension of the Persians' sphere of influence over most of Arabia, an inevitable consequence of their conquest of the Roman sectors of the Fertile Crescent, which had the greatest impact. For the Hijaz was left as the only region out of their reach. No wonder then that a sense of Arab identity was growing significantly stronger, providing fertile ground for the dissemination of the Prophet's message that the Arabs were the chosen people, that, menaced from without though they were, they had been assigned a special role in the providential story of mankind.[5]

It is also true, as the more positivist among contemporary Islamicists argue, that circumstances in the wider world facilitated Islam's rise. The dismantling by Khusro II of the Lakhm client-state, after centuries of loyal service, led to considerable disturbance on the desert approaches to Mesopotamia. But the trouble was dealt with (after an initial reverse) and a new client-management system had been in place for over twenty years when the *umma* first began to impinge on the region. The new arrangements may have been less firm, certainly more contested, than the old, but they were working.[6] The relative ease with which Khalid extended the *umma*'s influence over many tribes in the region is surely to be explained primarily by their acknowledgement of the ascendancy achieved by the new politico-religious force in Arabia during the *ridda* wars of 632–3, rather than by innate weakness in the Persian client-management system.

Equally, it is unlikely that the administration of the recently recovered Roman provinces of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and northern Mesopotamia was working as smoothly as it would have been, had there been no Persian occupation. However, nothing indicates that the region was so disorganized as to be easy prey to Muslim armies. There is no evidence of serious and widespread war-damage or dislocation suffered during the Persian advance.[7] Existing administrative arrangements were left undisturbed during the occupation. The Persians could not afford distractions from the important

[5] Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 242–50.

[6] Donner, 'The Bakr b. Wa'il Tribes'.

[7] J. Russell, 'The Persian Invasions of Syria/Palestine and Asia Minor in the Reign of Heraclius: Archaeological, Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence', in Kontoura-Galake, *Dark Centuries of Byzantium*, 41–71; Foss, 'Persians in the Roman Near East'.

task of devising and introducing a new system of client-management along the desert frontage of the Roman provinces. They could not risk alienating local notables who had been ready to capitulate after the withdrawal of Roman forces. They soon abandoned an attempt to redress the balance between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem and its environs—for fear, probably, of the repercussions in their own Mesopotamian heartlands as well as in the occupied territories.[8] While the war was being fought, they continued to shy away from administrative innovation. So there were no insuperable problems confronting Roman provincial authorities when they returned. Local elites, who had been managing the affairs of their cities and territories under Persian rule, simply reverted to the pre-war status quo, when Persian forces withdrew under the terms of Shahrvaraz's agreement with Heraclius (July 629). The transition seems to have been uneventful. More remarkable was the apparently smooth takeover by the Romans of the client-management system introduced by the Persians in the *badiya*. The Ghassan, who had re-emerged as a leading force in the region as Persian clients, were in effect rehabilitated, and, when the Arabs attacked, proved remarkably loyal to the Romans, despite the backing which they seem to have given the *umma* in the 620s.

It should not be imagined, then, that there was serious disruption in Palestine and Syria at the end of the Persian–Roman war, let alone six years later when the threat from the south first materialized. The chief effects of the war had probably been psychological, both in the secular and in the religious spheres. Local urban notables, temporarily plucked from the grasp of the Roman state, had become used to fending for themselves and were ready, when Roman forces were again driven from the region, to agree terms with the Arabs, in the sure expectation that the Romans would return in due course. The collective experience of a decade and a half of relatively unintrusive Persian occupation thus rendered them more submissive. On the other hand, the propaganda spewed out by the Roman side during the war helped to build up a new sense of Christian solidarity, transcending confessional boundaries. Far from exacerbating tensions between different communities, what was presented as a religious war against an impious, evil empire provided the east Roman church authorities with an opportunity to bring about a grand reconciliation of the three principal confessions in eastern Christendom, Chalcedonian, Monophysite, and Nestorian, when the war ended. It was a project which emperor and patriarch pursued with vigour through the early 630s. Some striking successes were achieved, reducing the

[8] Ps. Sebeos, 116. 8–118. 6, with *Hist. Com.*, n. 35.

opposition, which insisted on divisive Christological niceties rather than acknowledging a shared Nicene faith, to a small, beleaguered, and fractured minority in each of the main components of the Middle East. The ultimate failure of the project is attributable primarily to the Arab conquest, which immediately eased government pressure on refractory groups.[9]

War-weariness cannot be discounted as a factor, of course, although, on the Roman side, it was tempered by elation at the sudden reversal of fortunes at the end. The effects were much graver for the Persians. Four years of political instability (628–32), with rival candidates ready to fight to secure the throne, followed the death of Kavad Shiroe, principal beneficiary of the Roman-backed *putsch* against Khusro. The shock of defeat after so many years of unbroken military success was partly responsible for the length and intensity of the crisis, although it was undoubtedly exacerbated by the brutal measures taken by Kavad Shiroe to secure his position (the liquidation of all his brothers). Still the crisis was abating by the time of the Prophet's death, and, within five years, the new regime of Yazdgerd III was able to mobilize Persian forces effectively and on a large scale for a well-conceived counteroffensive which succeeded, in 637, in driving the Arabs out of Mesopotamia.

More insidious was the damage inflicted by sustained high levels of taxation on both sides. Resources were depleted and social relations were strained. The sudden outbursts of hostility to established elites in town and country documented in the Life of Theodore of Syceon (d. 613) may be symptomatic of a wider social malaise, in an age of financial stress. But it was not yet out of hand. The local crises in Galatia were swiftly defused by the holy man, and may be attributed as much to growing anxiety at the time as to economic and social stress.[10] Equally there is no denying that both economies suffered during the war, whether by direct military action (Heraclius seems to have pursued a systematic policy of economic degradation on Persian territory) or through the exaction of massive sums from defeated opponents or from sustained high levels of taxation. But there was no vertiginous decline in the material conditions of life in the Middle East and construction work on new or restoration projects did not cease.[11]

All in all, circumstances were propitious, but not excessively so, when, after uniting Arabia in a short, fierce war of conquest, the *umma* headed by the Caliph Abu Bakr turned its attention to the north. The Arabs had to fight their way into the Fertile Crescent against stiff resistance. It was only after

[9] Dagron, Riché, and Vauchez, *Histoire du christianisme*, iv. 22–8, 40–60; C. Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden, 2008), 55–72.

[10] Cf. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, ii. 139–41, 144–50.

[11] A. Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London, 2007).

decisive victories in the field over substantial Roman armies that local notables, first in Palestine (late 634 or early 635), then in Syria (636), were ready to submit. The record of the Persians, which might have been expected to be worse, given the after-effects of the civil wars fought in 628–32, was, in the event, rather more impressive. Arab forces may have succeeded initially in penetrating deep into the irrigated alluvium and besieging Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir, but the military riposte in 637 was devastatingly effective and has left a firm imprint on Islamic historical traditions. The climactic engagement of Qadisiyya (6 January 638) naturally looms even larger. It was a conventional battle on which hung the fate of the Muslim *umma*. The Persian victory was reversed, but Arabs from throughout the peninsula had been summoned to reinforce the original expeditionary force and hard fighting was needed to break the large army mobilized by Yazdgerd. Even so there was no softening in the Persian will to fight. The capital continued to hold out when once again it came under attack, only falling after the botched evacuation of the *shahanshah*, his government, and the state treasury in 640. Resistance continued thereafter, in Khuzistan and in Iran proper. It took ten years (to 651/2) before Yazdgerd, isolated in Khurasan, was forced to flee and was killed on his flight.

This collective Persian performance was remarkable, given the initial shock suffered, first at the news of the Arabs' victories and swift advance in the west, then at direct experience of defeat at their hands from 636. There were only two points at which resistance wavered—first at the battle of Nihawand, when the morale of the Persian army suddenly dropped, second, near the end, when the commanders in the west were dissuaded from going to Yazdgerd's aid in the east. The Romans were abject, by comparison. The general movement to submit which affected Palestine late in 634 or early in 635 and which was probably replicated in Syria in 636 bespoke an awed acceptance of what appeared to be a divinely sanctioned invasion. In Egypt, the whole Roman regime headed by the Patriarch Cyrus capitulated after a mere two seasons' operations by the small force under ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs' command. This Arab success is all the more striking, as the Egyptian campaign was a side-show, grudgingly authorized by the caliph after the astonishing success of the initial attack. It is partly, but only partly, to be explained by other factors peculiar to Egypt—religious resentment at the patriarch's energetic campaign against the Monophysite episcopate and, perhaps, social alienation of the mass of the rural population in an age of stifling aristocratic power.[12] The relinquishing of Egypt, however, pales into insignificance in comparison with the behaviour of Asia Minor in 654. Highlanders and lowlanders, peoples of the coasts and

[12] Cf. P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2006), 200–34.

of the interior, townsmen and villagers offered their submission to Mu'awiya. The heartland of the medieval Byzantine state, which was, from the early eighth century, to embark on an apparently unending guerrilla war of defence, put up no resistance. It may well be that the imperial authorities had recognized the futility of resistance against so strong an invading power, but acknowledgement that Arab expansion was divinely sanctioned assuredly played a part.

Had Constantinople fallen in 654, it is highly likely that what remained of the east Roman empire would have been swallowed whole by the caliphate, the young emperor Constans fleeing for his life first to Italy, then perhaps across the Alps to Francia. As it was, the weather, always the greatest hazard for long-distance maritime ventures, proved Byzantium's best defence (together with Constans' new fleet). Christians could begin to hope again, no longer certain that the Arabs really were God's earthly agents. For the Arabs, failure before Constantinople had grave consequences. Their opponents everywhere took heart. The reserve force securing communications across Asia Minor suffered a reverse in Cappadocia. Resistance grew stronger in Transcaucasia and Media. Then came a serious defeat in the eastern Caucasus and the disordered flight south of the survivors. At this a political crisis burst into the open in the *umma*, with the killing of the Caliph 'Uthman and the seizure of power by 'Ali b. Abu Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. The five years of conflict (556–61)—religious, political, and, increasingly, military—which followed saved Byzantium. The authorities made good use of first *fitna*, not only to reorganize their fighting forces and to invest in improved fortifications in Asia Minor, but above all to re-energize eastern Christendom, both in Transcaucasia and in what remained of the Roman empire, with the consciousness that it was they, not the Arabs, who had special relations with God, that it was their duty to fight to preserve their faith and the Roman state, and that they would not fail because of God's protection of what was a latter-day Chosen People.[13]

The extraordinary initial success of the Islamic *umma* thus owed something to weaknesses in the ambient developed world, above all to the readiness of Christians to accept Arab conquerors on their own terms, as properly authorized agents of the Lord who were carrying out his will on earth. For Arab rule was evidently sanctioned from above. To the Christians of the Middle East, whether once subjects of the Sasanian *shahanshah* or of the Roman emperor, the old political order had been demolished by direct supernatural intervention in mundane affairs. There was no question then of their rising up and challenging

[13] Cf. Ahrweiler, *L'Idéologie politique*, 29–36.

their new rulers in the conquered lands when the Arabs turned in on themselves in 656, nor even when they engaged in full-hearted civil conflict from 658. That fighting was taking place, as it were, on a higher plane, above that of ordinary human existence, like the great aerial battle between supernatural forces which St George of Choziba witnessed one day as he was walking towards Jericho between the gardens and orchards outside the city, not long before the siege and sack of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614.[14] Admittedly we have but exiguous evidence from non-Muslim sources from the period of first *fitna*, but, such as it is, it points to widespread passivity among Christians who watched and waited as the great war between regional armies ran its course. It was only on the periphery of the new Arab empire, beyond the line of mountains which separated the Fertile Crescent from the higher country of Transcaucasia and Anatolia, that the Roman governing elite was able to revive Christians' spirits and to galvanize Roman provincials, Armenians, and Caucasian Albanians into activity.

But the fundamental causes of Islam's success have to be sought within Arabia and within the belief-system propagated by the Prophet rather than in the developed lands to the north, with their two organizing centres on the Bosporus and the lower Tigris and their four massive resource-bases (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Iran). The initial conquests, which changed the familiar face of the Middle East out of all recognition, clearly stemmed from the *umma*'s success in Arabia. The best chance of maintaining the fragile union of so many rival tribal groups brought about in the *ridda* wars was to turn north and to lay into the surrounding world. United the Beduin would be able to pose a serious challenge to the established powers, especially the Romans with two naturally weak sectors in their desert frontage.

But mere unification of the fractious peoples of the peninsula cannot by itself explain the scale of the initial conquests, let alone the ability of the new imperial power to renew its outward drive after each bout of civil war and to maintain the momentum of expansion at huge distances from the organizing centre at Damascus. In the first place there was the question of the horizons of vision. It was one thing to launch attacks on Romans or Persians so as to bind the Beduin together, but quite another to set out on a programme of world conquest. Arabs had to conceive of pushing out to the limits of the known world, of bringing all mankind within the framework of an Arab empire. It may be that the Quraysh had, through their trading ventures, acquired a good knowledge of the Fertile Crescent and the nearer parts of the southern world (Yemen, east Africa, conceivably the Malabar coast of India), but it is highly unlikely that the idea of constructing a terrestrial empire without limits was

[14] *V. Georgii*, c. 30 (128. 8–17).

conceived by them. Like the Sogdian traders of central Asia, they were used to operating within a larger, fixed world of polities. Their statecraft was geared to creating pathways across lands dominated by competing powers, along which their caravans could make their way safely to distant destinations. The idea of universal rule—and it was an idea, a thought, which changed the history of the world—originated with the Prophet. God who presided over the whole cosmos expected his Prophet and those who listened to his Prophet to carry the message to the whole of mankind.

Islam not only raised the horizons of vision. It also imparted extraordinary dynamism to the expansion of the Islamic community. For, once armed struggle was sanctioned, as it was early in the Medinan period, *jihad*, striving for the faith, could and did take the form of world war, with the ultimate goal of bringing all men to knowledge of their maker and the manager of all things. The driving force behind Arab expansion was religion. The conquests were Muslim, not Arab conquests. The ultimate explanation for Islam's worldwide success was Islam. A universal religion was being made universal. Muslims, suffused by faith to an unprecedented degree, were committed to disseminating Islam over the surface of the known world. The religious bonds of the Islamic community gave it unprecedented tensile strength. Caliphs were thus able to exercise authority (attenuated, perhaps, but nonetheless effective) over an empire of unprecedented size, overcoming the normal obstacles to communication over long distances. The limited resources generated by Arabia and the military colonies established in the conquered lands could be husbanded and channelled to designated fronts by a single organizing centre.

One of the vital services performed by non-Muslim sources, in conjunction with demonstrably reliable early Islamic historical traditions, is to document the ability of caliphs to direct operations at a distance, to establish priorities, and to deploy the necessary resources at the right places to achieve their objectives. The notion that caliphs, at so early a stage, were capable of devising and implementing a grand strategy will undoubtedly be contested by Islamicists, above all by those of the sceptical party, but that is the most plausible construction to put on the evidence of documented, datable actions, when they are placed in context. Certainly caliphs were in a position to concentrate resources against particular defined targets—in 635 against Roman Syria, when Khalid was brought into play in conjunction with the forces which had conquered Palestine, or in January 638 at the battle of Qadisiyya, or subsequently, from 641 to 651/2, in highland Iran. Even more telling is the general redeployment of Muslim forces to the west ordered by the Caliph 'Uthman in 652 and completed by the beginning of the 654 campaigning season. It is plain that Constantinople had succeeded highland Iran as the prime target, just as it is that any actions initiated in the west, between the

initial conquest, in 634–6, of the Holy Land and a buffer zone to the north (Syria) and the death of Yazdgerd in 651/2, were subordinated to the needs of warfare in the east—hence the reluctance of the Caliph ʿUmar to authorize ʿAmr's opportunistic attack on Egypt and the modest scale of the reinforcements sent in 641.

The statecraft and organizational capability which made it possible to devise and to carry out a grand strategy could not have been developed in the course of Muhammad's prophetic career, when his concerns were quite other—to convey God's message to all who would listen and, after the *hijra*, to ensure the survival of the Meccan exiles and their Medinan allies in the face of growing external pressure orchestrated by the Quraysh. It was the Quraysh, rightly portrayed as masters of the Hijaz and manipulators of the Beduin further afield, who bestowed those vital collective capacities on the nascent *umma*. Hence the importance of the great compromise which the Prophet made before Hudaybiya, the sort of adaptation of position which would have outraged the radicals if it had been made in a later generation by a caliph. As it was, it provoked a serious crisis, which has left its mark on the Holy Book itself. It was the one occasion when, it is hinted, the faithful bridled at what they were told by the Lord through his mouthpiece the Prophet. It was indeed an extraordinary command that they should change their direction of prayer from what it had been (almost certainly Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth for both the previous monotheist religions) to the Kaʿba, the premier pagan sanctuary of Arabia. What need, it could be asked, was there of any defined focal point of prayer, when God pervaded the universe, was above and all around them? The silencing of objections, despite the feebleness of the argument (God had been testing the faith of the faithful), bears witness to the extraordinary authority achieved by the Prophet over the heterogeneous *umma* in the course of five years of unremitting stress at Medina.[15]

The incorporation of the Kaʿba and its associated rites into Islam, forced though it was on the Prophet, was a political act which not only transformed the fortunes of the *umma* in the short term, once reciprocal concessions had been extracted from the Quraysh at Hudaybiya, but enabled it in due course (once Mecca had formally submitted in 630) to draw on the developed institutional endowment, diplomatic expertise, and mercantile ingenuity of the well-established trading city. It would be hard otherwise to explain the *umma*'s triumph in the *ridda* wars, let alone its ability to dispatch two forces to the north against Palestine at the beginning of 634, forces which were quite independent of that which had been operating with Khalid b. Walid on the

[15] Q 2: 142–4.

outer fringes of Sasanian Mesopotamia. A grand strategy, bespeaking intelligence, good understanding of the surrounding world, up-to-date information, and managerial control, can be discerned from 634. The first target was, indeed had to be, Palestine, the Holy Land for the recipients of God's third and final revelation as it had been for Christians and Jews. Thereafter, as we have seen, there was no deviating from pursuit of a second aim, the conquest and destruction of the Sasanian empire, from 636 to 651/2, which took precedence over any action in the west, whether by land (against Egypt) or by sea (against Cyprus and Aradus). It was only after its achievement that the battle for the Mediterranean could begin, a battle destined to last to the end of the seventh century.

Meccan statecraft manifested itself with extraordinary brilliance in the caliphate of Mu'awiya which marked the ascendancy of the old Qurayshi governing elite in the *umma*. His political skills, his guile at home and abroad, were more than a match for those of his father, Abu Sufyan, Muhammad's chief opponent. His complex plan for applying steadily increasing pressure on what remained of the Roman empire over the years 668–73 was a cleverly designed offensive strategy, involving subversive diplomacy, political assassination, deception on the grandest possible scale, and expeditions by land and sea, targeted on both the organizing centre and the peripheries of Roman power. It was a virtuoso performance by a master statesman, only frustrated in the end by dogged defence and technical innovation on the Roman side. Political skills of the first order were on display again in the second civil war, when 'Abd al-Malik managed, at great cost, to divide his enemies, domestic and foreign, and to take them on one by one. Great patience was required before he could deliver the decisive blows against his chief rival, Ibn al-Zubayr, first in Iraq, then in the Hijaz. Then and only then could he provoke war with the Romans, renew the battle for the Mediterranean, and, once it was won (in 698), resume direct attacks on the Roman heartland in Anatolia.

Still statecraft, dramatic as its effects could be in the short term, cannot of itself explain the extraordinary phenomenon, witnessed by contemporaries and well remembered by later generations, which dominates the history of a brief slice of time in the first millennium of the Christian era. This small-scale analogue of the Big Bang, on the mundane plane of human existence, was set in motion by an ideological explosive charge. It is a rare case in which the charge itself can be examined after the explosion, since the various ingredients are itemized in the canonical version of God's instructions to the faithful delivered through his Prophet. Mere reiteration does not strengthen an argument. Nonetheless it is worth repeating once again that the charge was religious and that the rise of Islam was powered by faith. Faith acted as an unprecedentedly strong unifying force among God's chosen earthly agents. Hence the

relatively easy overlaying of sectarian and regional differences among Muslims at the end of each bout of civil strife, as they joined together in the grand enterprise of spreading the faith into new lands. Hence the increasing resort to coercion within the territories which they controlled, when the recipients of the second revelation proved refractory—discriminatory taxation, the placing of Islamic statements of faith over church doorways, removal of marble fittings and plate from the interior, the branding of monks and a ban on new admissions, travel restrictions, and the denial of rights to Christians . . .[16]

Religion, always important in the lives of men, in the sense of ritual practice considered vital for safety and prosperity, advanced in the seventh century and established its hegemony over public political and private moral life. It was a transformation fraught with significance. It marked the definitive ascendancy of faith over reason, a closing of minds yet tighter than that already brought about by the wildfire spread of Christianity in the later Roman empire. Authority at all levels, from the imperial court at the centre of the caliphate to small groups of sectarian radicals in the provinces, was immeasurably enhanced as political and social life was subsumed in religion. Nothing better symbolized the change than the coinage issued by ʿAbd al-Malik, once he had made himself the master of the Middle East and the surrounding lands. There was no image of the ephemeral earthly ruler, nor was he named as the issuing authority. Dinars and dirhams simply bore legends, taken from Islamic scripture. God spoke to his people on his coins. It was a coinage issued to a God-guided state in the name of God himself. It marked the beginning of a new world order.

[16] The best documented case is that of Egypt at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century, where, at one point, all the bishops were assembled and interned for three years (*Hist. Patr.*, V. 25, 34–5, 42, 50–64, 67–73). The monk George, who wrote up that account of contemporary events, undoubtedly made as much as possible out of the acts of persecution which he enumerated, but it is hard to believe that he invented them or the chilling remark attributed to one emir—that his Christian subjects enjoyed no more rights in the eyes of God than the Roman enemies of the caliphate.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, ii.2, ed. L. Riedinger (Berlin, 1992).

Agapius: A. A. Vasiliev (ed. and trans.), 'Kitab al-'Unvan, histoire universelle écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj', part 2.2, *PO* VIII (1912), 399–547.

Antiochus monachus, *Epistula ad Eustathium*, *PG* 89, cols. 1421–8, trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, ii. 177–9.

Al-Baladhuri: P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State: A Translation with Notes of the* Kitab futuh al-buldan *of al-Baladhuri*, 2 vols. (New York, 1916–24).

Book of Chastity, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot, *Le Livre de la chasteté, composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Baçra* (Rome, 1896).

Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk', trans. N. G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

Chronica Byzantia-Arabica, ed. J. Gil, Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum I (Madrid, 1973).

Chronicle of Seert, ed. and trans. A. Scher, *Histoire nestorienne (chronique de Séert)*, *PO* IV. 3, V. 2, XIII. 4 (Paris, 1908–19).

Chronicon anonymum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens, ed. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO 81–2, Scriptores Syri 36–7 (Paris, 1916–20), trans. (Latin) J.-B. Chabot, CSCO 109, Scriptores Syri 56 (Louvain, 1937) and (French) A. Abouna, CSCO 354, Scriptores Syri 154 (Louvain, 1974), trans. (English) A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, TTH 15 (Liverpool, 1993), 111–221.

Chronicon Maroniticum, trans. (Latin) J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 4, Chronica Minora II (Louvain, 1955), 37–57, trans. (English) Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 29–35.

Chronicon miscellaneum ad annum Domini 724 pertinens, trans. (Latin) J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 4, Chronica Minor II (Louvain, 1955), 63–119, trans. (English) Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 13–23, 49–50.

Chronicon Paschale, ed. L. Dindorf, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (Bonn, 1832). The last section is translated by Michael and Mary Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD*, TTH 7 (Liverpool, 1989).

Commemoratio eorum quae saeviter et sine Dei respectu acta sunt... in Martinum papam, *PL* 129, 591A–600B.

Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, CFHB 1 (Washington, DC, 1967).

——*De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, ed. J. J. Reiske, 2 vols., CSHB 7–8 (Bonn, 1829–30).

——*Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, ed. and trans. V. Déroche, *TM* 11 (1991), 47–229.

Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia Christiana*, ed. and trans. W. Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès, Topographie chrétienne*, I–III (Paris, 1968–73), Sources chrétiennes, nos. 141, 159, 197.

Eutychius, *Annals*, ed. and trans. M. Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: Ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Sa'id ibn Batriq um 935 A.D.*, CSCO 471–2, Scriptores Arabici 44–5 (Louvain, 1985).

Evagrius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia* (London, 1898), trans. Michael Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, TTH 33 (Liverpool, 2000).

Firdawsi, *Shahname*, trans. J. Mohl, *Le Livre des rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1876–8) and A. G. and E. Warner, *The Shahnama of Firdausí*, 9 vols. (London, 1905–25).

Fredegar: ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960).

George of Pisidia: complete edition of poetry, ed. and trans. L. Tartaglia, *Carmi di Giorgio di Pisidia* (Turin, 1998).

Earlier editions of individual poems:

——F. Gonnelli, 'Il *De vita humana* di Giorgio Pisida', *Bollettino de Classici*, ser. 3, 12 (1991), 118–38.

——F. Gonnelli (ed. and trans.), *Giorgio di Pisidia, Esamerone* (Pisa, 1998).

——J. M. Querci (ed.), *In Christi resurrectionem, De vanitate vitae*, and *Contra Severum*, *PG* 92, cols. 1373–84, 1581–600, 1621–76.

——A. Pertusi (ed. and trans.), *Giorgio di Pisidia, Poemi I: Panegirici epici*, Studia Patristica et Byzantina, 7 (Ettal, 1959).

——L. Sternbach, 'Georgii Pisidae carmina inedita', *Wiener Studien*, 13 (1891), 1–62 and 14 (1892), 51–68 (*In Alypium* and epigrams).

Georgius Syncellus, *Ecloga chronographica*, ed. A. A. Mosshammer (Leipzig, 1984), trans. W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford, 2002).

Hippolytus, *Diamerismos*, ed. A. Bauer and R. Helm, *Hippolytus Werke*, iv: *Die Chronik*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Berlin, 1955).

History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, ed. and trans. B. Evetts, *PO* I.2 and 4, V.1 (Paris, 1907–10).

Hudud al-'Alam, 'Regions of the World': A Persian Geography, 372 A.H.–982 A.D., trans. V. Minorsky (London, 1937).

Ioannes Antiochenus: ed. and trans. U. Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta ex historia chronica*, Berlin-Brandenburgische Ak. Wiss., Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 154 (Berlin, 2005).

Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. J. Thurn, CFHB 35 (Berlin, 2000), trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Byzantina Australiensia 4 (Melbourne, 1986).

Ioannes Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, *PG* 87.3, cols. 2852–3112.

Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitomae historiarum*, iii, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, CSHB 31 (Bonn, 1897).

Ibn Ishaq: A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's* Sirat Rasul Allah (Oxford, 1978).

Ibn Khurradadhbih, *Book on Itineraries and Kingdoms*, trans. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, VI (Leiden, 1889), 1–144.

John of Nikiu, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, trans. R. H. Charles (London, 1916).

Khuzistan Chronicle: trans. T. Nöldeke, 'Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik übersetzt und commentiert', *Sitzungsberichte der kais. Ak. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Cl.*, 128 (1893), 1–48.

Laudatio S. Anastasii, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 202–59.

Łazar P'arpets'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, ed. G. Ter-Mkrtch'ean and S. Malkhasean (Tiflis, 1904), trans. R. W. Thomson, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i* (Atlanta, 1991).

Leontius of Neapolis: A. J. Festugière (ed. and trans.), *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), 255–637).

Łewond, *Patmut'iwn*, ed. K. Ezean (St Petersburg, 1887), trans. Z. Arzoumanian, *History of Łewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians* (Philadelphia, 1982).

Liber pontificalis, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, i (Paris, 1955), trans. R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Bishops to AD 715*, TTH, Lat. Ser. 5 (Liverpool, 1989).

Maximus Confessor: see *Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessories illustrantia.*

Methodius, *Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris*, ed. V. V. Latyshev, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie*, ser. 8, Cl. hist.-philol., 13.4 (1918).

Michael the Syrian: *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910).

Miracula S. Anastasii, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 116–53.

Miracula S. Artemii, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Varia Graeca sacra*, Zapiski Ist.-Phil. Fakulteta Imp. S. Petersburgskavo Universiteta 95 (St Petersburg, 1909), 1–75, trans. V. S. Crisafulli, J. W. Nesbitt, and J. F. Haldon, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, 1997).

Miracula SS. Cyri et Ioannis, ed. N. Fernandez Marcos, *Los* Thaumata *de Sofronio: contribucion al estudio de la* incubatio *cristiana* (Madrid, 1975).

Miracula S. Demetrii, ed. P. Lemerle, *Les Plus Anciens Recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius*, i: *Le Texte* (Paris, 1979), with ii: *Commentaire* (Paris, 1981).

Movses Daskhurants'i, (or Kałankatuats'i) *History of Albania*: ed. V. Arak'eljan, *Movses Kałankatuats'i: Patmut'iwn Ałuanits'* (Erevan, 1983), trans. C. J. F. Dowsett, *The History of of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranc'i* (London, 1961).

Narratio de rebus Armeniae, ed. and trans. G. Garitte, *La Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, CSCO 132, Subsidia 4 (Louvain, 1952).

Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, ed. and trans. C. Mango, *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History*, CFHB 13 (Washington, DC, 1990).

——*Chronographia compendiaria*, ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), 79–135.

Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, *Enarratio de episcopis Byzantii et de patriarchibus omnibus Constantinopolitanis*, *PG* 147, cols. 449–68.

Nicephorus Phocas, *De velitatione bellica*, ed. and trans. G. Dagron and H. Mihăescu, *Le Traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris, 1986).

Opusculum de Persica captivitate, ed. F. Combefis, *PG* 86.2, cols. 3228–68.

Pauli historia Langobardorum, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, *MGH*, *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX* (Hanover, 1878), 12–187, trans. W. D Foulke, *Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia, 1907), trans. F. Bougard, *Paul Diacre, Histoire des Lombards* (Turnhout, 1994).

P'awstos Buzand: see *Buzandaran Patmut'iunk'.*

Photius, *Bibliotheca*, ed. and trans. R. Henry, 8 vols. (Paris, 1959–77).

P'ilon: ed. A. G. Abrahamyan, *Anania Širakats'u matenagrut'yune* (Erevan, 1944).

Ps. Sebeos: *Patmut'iwn Sebeosi*, ed. G. V. Abgaryan (Erevan, 1979), trans. R. W. Thomson in R. W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, TTH 31 (Liverpool, 1999), i: *Translation*, ii: *Historical Commentary.*

Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessories illustrantia, ed. P. Allen and B. Neil, Corpus Christianorum, Ser. Gr. 39 (Turnhout, 1999), ed. and trans. P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002).

Sophronius, *Anacreontica*, ed. M. Gigante (Rome, 1957).

Strategius: ed. and trans. G. Garitte, *La Prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*, CSCO 202–3, Scriptores Iberici 11–12 (Louvain, 1960) and *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614 Recensiones Arabicae*, CSCO 340–1 and 347–8, Scriptores Arabici 26–9 (Louvain, 1973–4).

Suidae Lexicon, ed. A. Adler, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1928–38).

Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, ed. H. Delehaye, *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels, 1902).

Al-Tabari: E. Yar-Shater (ed.), *The History of al-Tabari*, 39 vols. (Albany, NY, 1985–99).

Theodorus Protasecretis, *Laudatio Theophanis*, ed. K. Krumbacher, *Sitzungsberichte der k. Bayer. Akademie* (1896), 608–18.

Theodorus Studites, *Laudatio Theophanis*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, 'Le Panégyrique de S. Théophane le Confesseur par S. Théodore Stoudite (*BHG* 1792b)', *An. Boll.* 111 (1993), 259–90.

Theodorus Syncellus, *Or.* 1: ed. L. Sternbach, *Analecta Awarica*, Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydział Filologiczny, ser. 2, vol. 15 (Kraków, 1900), 298–320.

—— *Or.* 2, ed. F. Combefis, *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum*, Bibliothecae Patrum Novum Auctuarium (Paris, 1648), 751–88, ed. C. Loparev, 'Staroe svidetelstvo o Polozhenii rizy Bogoroditsy vo Vlakhernakh.', *VV* 2 (1895), 581–628, trans. Averil Cameron, 'The Virgin's Robe: An Episode in the History of Early Seventh-Century Constantinople', *Byz.* 49 (1979), 42–56, repr. in Cameron, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London, 1981), xvii, at 48–56.

Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–5), trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997).

T'ovma Artsruni, *Patmut'iwn Tann Artsruneats'*, ed. K. Patkanean (St Petersburg, 1887), trans. R. W. Thomson, *Thomas Artsruni: History of the House of the Artsrunik'* (Detroit, 1985).

Translatio reliquiarum S. Anastasii, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 98–107.

Typicon of St Sophia *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, ed. J. Mateos, i (Rome, 1962), 328–31.

Vita S. Anastasii, ed. and trans. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, i. 40–91.

Vita S. Georgii Chozebitae, *An. Boll.* 7 (1888), 97–144, 336–70.
Vita S. Ioannis, ed. H. Delehaye, ' Une vie inédite de saint Jean l'Aumônier', *An. Boll.* 45 (1927), 5–74 and E. Lappa-Zizicas, 'Un épitomé de la Vie de S. Jean l'Aumônier par Jean et Sophronios', *An. Boll.* 88 (1970), 265–78.
Vita S. Martini, ed. P. Peeters, 'Une vie grecque du pape S. Martin I', *An. Boll.* 51 (1933), 225–62.
Vita S. Spyridonis, ed. P. van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon évêque de Trimithonte*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 33 (Louvain, 1953).
Vita S. Theodori, ed. and trans. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1970).
Vitae S. Theophanis: ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, ii. 3–30, and ed. K. Krumbacher, *Sitzungsberichte der k. Bayer. Akademie* (1897), 389–99.

Secondary Authorities

Afigenov, D., 'The Source of Theophanes' *Chronography* and Nikephoros' *Breviarium* for the Years 685–717', *Hristiansky Vostok*, NS 4 (2002), 11–22.
Ahrweiler, H., *Byzance et la mer: la marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris, 1966).
—— *L'Idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975).
Akopjan, A. A., *Albanija-Aluank v greko-latiniskikh i drevnearmjanskikh istochnikakh* (Erevan, 1987).
——'O khronologii poslednikh sobytij v "Istorii 684 goda"', *Kavkaz i Vizantija*, 6 (1988), 24–36.
Album, S., and Goodwin, T., *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean*, i: *The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period* (Oxford, 2002).
Alexander, P. J., *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople* (Oxford, 1958).
—— *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985).
'Arafat, W., 'A Controversial Incident and the Related Poem in the Life of Hassan b. Thabit', *BSOAS* 17 (1955), 197–205.
——'An Interpretation of the Different Accounts of the Visit of the Tamim Delegation to the Prophet in A.H. 9', *BSOAS* 17 (1955), 416–25.
——'The Development of a Dramatic Theme in the Story of Khubaib b. 'Adiyy and the Related Poems', *BSOAS* 21 (1958), 15–30.
——'Early Critics of the Authenticity of the Poetry of the *Sira*', *BSOAS* 21 (1958), 453–63.
——'An Aspect of the Forger's Art in Early Islamic Poetry', *BSOAS* 28 (1965), 477–82.
——'The Historical Significance of Later Ansari Poetry', *BSOAS* 29 (1966), 1–11, 221–32.
——'The Historical Background to the Elegies on 'Uthman b. 'Affan Attributed to Hassan b. Thabit', *BSOAS* 33 (1970), 276–82.
Barfield, T. J., *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford, 1989).
Barišić, F., 'Le Siège de Constantinople par les Avares et les Slaves en 626', *Byz.* 24 (1954), 371–95.

Bashear, S., 'Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim–Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources', *JRAS* ser. 3, 1 (1991), 173–207.

Bates, M. L., 'History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage', *Revue suisse de numismatique*, 65 (1986), 231–63.

Baynes, N. H., 'The Date of the Avar Surprise: A Chronological Study', *BZ* 21 (1912), 110–28.

——'The Finding of the Virgin's Robe', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 9 Mélanges Grégoire (1949), 87–95, repr. in Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 240–7.

Beaucamp, J., Bondoux, R.-C., Lefort, J., Rouan, M.-F., and Sorlin, I., 'Temps et histoire i: le prologue de la *Chronique Pascale*', *TM* 7 (1979), 223–301.

——'La *Chronique Pascale*: le temps approprié', in Colloques internationaux du CNRS, no. 604, *Le Temps chrétien de la fin de l'antiquité au moyen âge IIIe–XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1984), 451–68.

——Briquel-Chatonnet, F., and Robin, C. J., 'La Persécution des chrétiens de Nagran et la chronologie himyarite', *ARAM* 11–12 (1999–2000), 15–83.

Bianchi, G., 'Note sulla cultura a Bisanzio all'inizio del VII secolo in rapporto all'*Esamerone* di Giorgio di Pisidia', *RSBN* 12–13 (1965–6), 137–43.

——'Sulla cultura astronomica di Giorgio di Pisidia', *Aevum*, 40 (1966), 35–52.

Blair, S., 'What is the Date of the Dome of the Rock?', in Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, i. 59–87.

Blockley, R. C., *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, i (Liverpool, 1981).

Bonneau, D., *La Crue du Nil, divinité égyptienne à travers mille ans d'histoire (332 av.–641 ap. J.-C.)* (Paris, 1964).

Booth, P. A., 'John Moschus, Sophronius Sophista and Maximus Confessor between East and West' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2008).

Borrut, A., 'Entre tradition et histoire: genèse et diffusion de l'image de 'Umar II', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 58 (2005), 329–78.

Bosworth, C. E., *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994–1040* (Beirut, 1973).

Bowman, A., *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1986).

Boyce, M., 'The Parthian *gosan* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition', *JRAS* (1957), 10–45.

Brandes, W., ' "Juristische" Krisenbewältigung im 7. Jahrhunderts? Die Prozesse gegen Papst Martin I. und Maximos Homologetes', *Fontes minores*, 10 (1998), 141–212.

——*Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2002).

Brett, M., 'The Arab Conquest and the Rise of Islam in North Africa', in J. D. Fage (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ii (Cambridge, 1978), 490–555.

——and Fentress, E., *The Berbers* (Oxford, 1996).

Breydy, M., 'La Conquête arabe de l'Égypte: un fragment du traditionniste Uthman ibn Salih (144–219 A.H.=761–834 A.D.) identifié dans les Annales d'Eutychios d'Alexandrie (877–940 A.D.)', *Parole de l'Orient*, 8 (1977–8), 379–96.

——*Études sur Sa'id ibn Batriq et ses sources*, CSCO 450, Subsidia 69 (Louvain, 1983).

Brock, S. P., 'Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History', *BMGS* 2 (1976), 17–36.

Brown, P., 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *JRS* 61 (1971), 80–101, repr. in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), 103–52.
Bulliet, R. W., *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).
Bury, J. B., *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene* (London, 1889).
Busse, H. ''Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 73–119.
——''Omar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 149–68.
Butler, A. J., *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Domination*, rev. ed. P. M. Fraser (Oxford, 1978).
Caetani, L., *Annali dell'Islam*, 10 vols. (Milan, 1905–26).
Cameron, Averil, 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *DOP* 23–4 (1969–70), 67–184.
——'New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature: Seventh–Eighth Centuries', in Cameron and Conrad, *Literary Source Material*, 81–105.
——(ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, iii: *States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton, 1995).
——and Conrad, L. I. (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, i: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992).
Canard, M., 'Les Expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende', *JA* 208 (1926), 61–121.
Canivet, P., and Rey-Coquais, J.-P. (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VIIe–VIIIe siècles* (Damascus, 1992).
Carile, A., 'Giovanni di Nikius, cronista bizantinocopto del VIIo secolo', in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos* (Athens, 1986), ii. 353–98.
Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, ii.2: *From Heraclius Constantine to Theodosius III (641–717)*, ed. P. Grierson (Washington, DC, 1968).
Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum, ii: *Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umaiyad Coins*, ed. J. Walker (London, 1956).
Chadwick, H., 'John Moschus and his Friend Sophronius the Sophist', *JTS* NS 25 (1974), 41–74.
Chevedden, P. E., Schiller, Z., Gilbert, S. R., and Kagay, D. J., 'The Traction Trebuchet: A Triumph of Four Civilizations', *Viator*, 31 (2000), 433–86.
Christensen, A., *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944).
Christides, V., *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa*, BAR Int. Ser. 851 (Oxford, 2000).
Cobb, P. M., 'A Note on 'Umar's Visit to Ayla in 17/638', *Der Islam*, 71 (1994), 283–8.
Collins, R., *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710–797* (Oxford, 1989).
——*Early Medieval Europe 300–1000* (London, 1991).
Colonna, A., 'Michaelis Pselli de Euripide et Georgio Pisida iudicium', *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini* (Rome, 1953), i. 16–21.
Conrad, L. I., 'Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission', *BF* 15 (1990), 1–44, repr. in M. Bonner (ed.), *Arab–Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* (Aldershot, 2004), 317–60.

Conrad, L. I., 'The Conquest of Arwad: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East', in Cameron and Conrad (ed.), *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, 317–401.
——'The Arabs and the Colossus', *JRAS*, ser. 3, 6 (1996), 165–87.
Cook, D., *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005).
Coptic Encyclopedia, ed. A. S. Atiya (New York, 1991).
Corsi, P., *La spedizione italiana di Costante II* (Bologna, 1983).
Croke, B., *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford, 2001).
Crone, P., *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford, 1987).
——'Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade', *BSOAS* 70 (2007), 63–88.
——and Cook, M., *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977).
Dąbrowa, E. (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East* (Kraków, 1994).
Dagron, G., and Déroche, V., 'Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle', *TM* 11 (1991), 17–273.
——Riché, P., and Vauchez, A. (eds.), *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, iv: *Évêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)* (Paris, 1993).
Davidson, O. M., *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca, NY, 1994).
Delaporte, L.-J., *La Chronographie de Mar Élie bar-Šinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences hist. et philol. 181 (Paris, 1910).
de la Vaissière, E., *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* (Paris, 2002).
den Heijer, J., *Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarriğ et l'historiographie copto-arabe*, CSCO 513, Subsidia 83 (Louvain, 1989).
de Planhol, X., *Les Fondements géographiques de l'histoire de l'Islam* (Paris, 1968).
de Vries, B., *Umm el-Jimal: A Frontier Town and its Landscape in Northern Jordan*, i: *Fieldwork 1972–1981*, JRA Suppl. Ser. 26 (Portsmouth, RI, 1998).
Dixon, A. A., *The Umayyad Caliphate 65–86/684–705 (A Political Study)* (London, 1971).
Donner, F. M., 'The Bakr b. Wa'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam', *Studia Islamica*, 51 (1980), 5–38.
——*The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981).
——*Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998).
——'From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community', *Al-Abhath*, 50–1 (2002–3), 9–53.
Doughty, C. M., *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (3rd edn., London, 1923).
Drijvers, J. W., 'Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 175–90.
Drinkwater, J., 'Maximinus to Diocletian and the "Crisis"', *CAH* (2nd edn.), xii: *The Crisis of Empire A.D.193–337* (Cambridge, 2005), 28–66.
Duri, A. A., *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs* (Princeton, 1983).
Eickelman, D. F., 'Musaylima: An Approach to the Social Anthropogy of Seventh Century Arabia', *JESHO* 10 (1967), 17–52.
Elad, A., 'Why did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-examination of the Muslim Sources', in Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, i. 33–58.
Encyclopaedia Iranica, ed. E. Yarshater, 14 vols. (London, 1985–2007).

Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edn., 12 vols. (Leiden, 1960–2004).
Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, 6 vols. (Leiden, 2001–6).
Ettinghausen, R., Grabar, O., and Jenkins-Madina, M., *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven, 2001).
Feissel, D., 'Inscriptions chrétiennes et byzantines 532. Chypre. Soloi', *Revue des études grecques*, 100 (1987), 380–1.
Fiey, J.-M., 'Ichô'dnah métropolite de Basra, et son œuvre', *L'Orient syrien*, 11 (1966), 431–50.
——'Išo'dnah et la *Chronique de Seert*', *Parole de l'Orient*, 6–7 (1975–6), 447–59.
Fine, J. V. A., *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1983).
Flusin, B., *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1992).
Foss, C., *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).
——*Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979).
——*Survey of the Medieval Castles of Anatolia*, i: *Kütahya*, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph 7, BAR Int. Ser. 261 (Oxford, 1985).
——'The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age', *DOP* 48 (1994), 1–52.
——'The Cities of Pamphylia in the Byzantine Age', in Foss, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot, 1996), iv.
——'Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: An Archaeological Approach', *DOP* 51 (1997), 189–269.
——'A Syrian Coinage of Mu'awiya', *Revue numismatique*, 158 (2002), 353–65.
——'The Persians in the Roman Near East (602–630 AD)', *JRAS*, ser. 3, 13 (2003), 149–70.
Fowden, G., *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).
Frendo, J. D. C., 'The Significance of Technical Terms in the Poems of George of Pisidia', *Orpheus*, 21 (1974), 45–55.
——'The Poetic Achievement of George of Pisidia: A Literary and Historical Study', in A. Moffatt (ed.), *MAISTOR: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5 (Canberra, 1984), 159–87.
Garrigues, J. M., *Maxime le Confesseur: la charité, avenir divin de l'homme* (Paris, 1976).
Garsoïan, N., *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'orient*, CSCO 574, Subsidia 100 (Louvain, 1999).
Geertz, C., *Local Knowledge* (London, 1993).
Gelzer, H., *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie*, ii (Leipzig, 1885).
Genequand, D., 'Umayyad Castles: The Shift from Late Antique Military Architecture to Early Islamic Palatial Building', in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria from the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, History of Warfare 35 (Leiden, 2006).
Gibb, H. A. R., *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London, 1923).

Gignoux, P., 'Prolégomènes pour une histoire des idées de l'Iran sassanide: convergences et divergences', in Wiesehöfer and Huyse, *Eran ud Aneran*, 71–81.
Glubb, J. B., *The Great Arab Conquests* (London, 1980).
Gnoli, G., *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin*, Serie orientale Roma 62 (Rome, 1989).
Golden, P. B., Ben-Shammai, H., and Róna-Tas, A. (eds.), *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives—Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Colloquium* (Leiden, 2007).
Golziher, I., *Muslim Studies*, 2 vols. (London, 1967–71).
Görke, A., 'The Historical Tradition about al-Hudaybiya: A Study of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr's Account', in Motzki, *Biography of Muhammad*, 240–75.
——and Schoeler, G., 'Reconstructing the Earliest *sira* Texts: The Hiğra in the Corpus of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr', *Der Islam*, 82 (2005), 209–20.
Grabar, O., *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1975).
Greatrex, G., *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532* (Leeds, 1998).
——and Lieu, S. N. C., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II: AD 363–630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London, 2002).
Greenwood, T. W., 'A History of Armenia in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries' (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2000). 'Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos', *Le Muséon*, 115 (2002), 323–97.
——'A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions', *DOP* 58 (2004), 27–91.
——' "New Light from the East": Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late Seventh-Century Armenian Source', *JECS* 16 (2008), 197–254.
Hacikyan, A. J., Basmajian, G., Franchuk, E. S., and Ouzounian, N., *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*, ii (Detroit, 2002).
Haldon, J., *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990).
——'Seventh-Century Continuities: The *Ajnad* and the "Thematic Myth"', in Cameron, *States, Resources and Armies*, 379–423.
——'The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief', in Cameron and Conrad, *Literary Source Material*, 107–47.
Halkin, F. (ed.), *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca* (Brussels, 1957).
——*Novum auctarium B.H.G.* (Brussels, 1984).
Hawting, G. R., 'Al-Hudaybiyya and the Conquest of Mecca: A Reconsideration of the Tradition about the Muslim Takeover of the Sanctuary', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 1–23.
——*The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750* (2nd edn., London, 2000).
——*The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge, 1999).
Heather, P., *Goths and Romans 332–489* (Oxford, 1991).
Heidemann, S., 'The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery', in A. Neuwirth (ed.), *The Qur'an in Context: Entangled Histories and Textual Palimpsests* (forthcoming).
Helms, S., *Early Islamic Architecture of the Desert* (Edinburgh, 1990).
Herrin, J., *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987).

Hillenbrand, R., *Studies in Medieval Islamic Architecture*, ii (London, 2006).

——'For God, Empire and Mammon: Some Art-Historical Aspects of the Reformed Dinars of 'Abd al-Malik', in M. Müller-Wiener, C. Kothe, K.-H. Golzio, and J. Gierlichs (eds.), *Al-Andalus und Europa zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Düsseldorf, 2004), 20–38.

Hinds, M., 'The First Arab Conquests in Fars', *Iran*, 22 (1984), 39–53.

Hovorun, C., *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden, 2008).

Howard-Johnston, J., 'Thema', in A. Moffatt (ed.), *MAISTOR: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5 (Canberra, 1984), 189–97.

——'The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns', in Dąbrowa (ed.), *Roman and Byzantine Army*, 57–87, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, iv.

——'The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison', in Cameron *States, Resources and Armies*, 157–226, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, i.

——'The Siege of Constantinople in 626', in C. Mango and G. Dagron (eds.), *Constantinople and its Hinterland* (Aldershot, 1995), 131–42, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, vii.

——'Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources and Working-Methods of Sebeos and Movses Daskhurantsi', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 41–62, repr. in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, v.

——*East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot, 2006).

——'Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity', in Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, vi.

Hoyland, R., 'Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century: An Inquiry into Inter-Cultural Traffic', *ARAM* 3 (1991), 211–33.

——*Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

——*Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London, 2001).

——'New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State', *BSOAS* 69 (2006), 395–416.

Humphreys, R. S., *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (London, 1991).

——*Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan: From Arabia to Empire* (Oxford, 2006).

——'The Narrative Art of Sayf b. 'Umar', unpublished paper delivered at a conference on The Life and Works of Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, held in St Andrews (30 August–2 September 1995.

Hunger, H., *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978).

Huxley, G. L., 'On the Erudition of George the Synkellos', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 81.6 (1981), 207–17.

Jarry, J., 'La Conquête du Fayoum par les Musulmans d'après le Futuh al-Bahnasa', *Annales islamologiques*, 9 (1970), 9–19.

Jeffreys, E., Croke, B., and Scott, R., *Studies in John Malalas*, Byzantina Australiensia 6 (Sydney, 1990).

Johansen, B., 'Formes de langage et fonctions publiques: stéréotypes, témoins et offices dans la preuve par l'écrit en droit musulman', *Arabica*, 44 (1997), 333–76.

Johns, J., 'The *Longue Durée*: State and Settlement Strategies in Southern Transjordan across the Islamic Centuries', in E. L. Rogan and T. Tell (eds.), *Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan* (London, 1994), 1–31.

Johns, J., (ed.), *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii: *Jerusalem and Early Islam*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9.2 (Oxford, 1999).

——'The "House of the Prophet" and the Concept of the Mosque', in Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii. 59–112.

——'Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years', *JESHO* 46 (2003), 411–36.

Kaegi, W. E., 'New Evidence on the Early Reign of Heraclius', *BZ* 66 (1973), 308–30.

——'The Interrelationship of Seventh-Century Muslim Raids into Anatolia with the Struggle for North Africa', *BF* 28 (2004), 21–43.

Kazhdan, A., *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–c.850)* (Athens, 1999).

Kennedy, H., *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (London, 1981).

——*The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (London, 1986).

——'Egypt as a Province of the Islamic Caliphate, 641–868', in C. F. Petry (ed.), *Cambridge History of Egypt*, i: *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (Cambridge, 1998), 62–85.

——*The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London, 2001).

——*The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (London, 2007).

Khan-Magomedov, S. O., *Derbent, gornaja stena, auly Tabasarana* (Moscow, 1979).

King, G. R. D., 'Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine', *BSOAS* 48 (1985), 267–77.

——'Settlement Patterns in Islamic Jordan: The Umayyads and their Use of the Land', *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, 4 (1992), 369–75.

——and Cameron, Averil (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, ii: *Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton, 1994).

Kister, M. J., 'The Campaign of Huluban: A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha', *Le Muséon*, 78 (1965), 425–36.

——'Mecca and Tamim', *JESHO* 8 (1965), 113–63.

——'The Struggle against Musaylima, and the Conquest of Yamama', *JSAI* 27 (2002), 1–56.

Klein, H. A., 'Niketas und das wahre Kreuz. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Überlieferung des Chronicon Paschale ad annum 614', *BZ* 94 (2001), 580–7.

Klíma, O., *Mazdak: Geschichte einer sozialen Bewegung im sassanidischen Persien* (Prague, 1957).

Konidaris, J., 'Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios', in D. Simon (ed.), *Fontes Minores*, v (Frankfurt, 1982), 33–106.

Kontoura-Galake, E. (ed.), *The Dark Centuries of Byzantium (7th–9th c.)*, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposium 9 (Athens, 2001).

Kugéas, S., 'Analekta Planudea IX: Zu den historischen Exzerpten des Planudes', *BZ* 18 (1909), 126–46.

Laurent, V., *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, v.1: *L'Église* (Paris, 1963).

Lauxtermann, M. D., *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, Wiener Byzantinische Studien 24, i (Vienna, 2003).

Lecker, M., 'The Hudaybiyya-Treaty and the Expedition against Khaybar', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 1–11, repr. in Lecker, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia* (Aldershot, 1998), xi.

——'The Ridda', *EI* (2nd edn.), Supplement XII, 692–5, repr. in Lecker, *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muhammad* (Aldershot, 2005), xi: 'Tribes in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia', 3–15.

——'The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)', *JSAI* 27 (2002), 109–26, repr. in Lecker, *People, Tribes and Society*, i.

——*The 'Constitution of Medina': Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton, 2004).

Leder, S., 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing', in Cameron and Conrad (eds.), *Literary Source Material*, 277–315.

Lemerle, P., *Le Premier Humanisme byzantin: notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971).

Lombard, M., *L'Islam dans sa première grandeur (VIIIe–XIe siècle)* (Paris, 1968).

Louth, A., *Maximus the Confessor* (London, 1996).

McCormick, M., *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986).

MacCoull, L. S. B., 'George of Pisidia, *Against Severus*: In Praise of Heraclius', in R. Dahood (ed.), *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends and Opportunities for Research* (Turnhout, 1998), 69–79.

Macdonald, M. C. A., 'Reflections on the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia', *AAE* 11 (2000), 28–79.

McGeer, E., *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 23 (Washington, DC, 1995).

Madelung, W., *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997).

Mango, C., 'A Byzantine Hagiographer at Work: Leontios of Neapolis', in I. Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz und der Westen*, Österreich. Ak. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl., Sitzungsberichte 432 (Vienna, 1984), 25–41.

——'Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse sassanide', *TM* 9 (1985), 91–118.

——'The *Breviarium* of the Patriarch Nicephorus', in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos* (Athens, 1986), ii. 539–52.

——'The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), 360–72.

Manning, J. G., *Land and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Structure of Land Tenure* (Cambridge, 2003).

Marshak, B., *Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana* (New York, 2002).

Marsham, A., *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh, 2009).

Matthews, J., *The Roman Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1989).

Meisami, J. S., *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999).

Mercati, G., 'A Study of the *Paschal Chronicle*', *JTS* 7 (1905–6), 397–412.

Mitchell, S., *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1993).

Montgomery, J. E., *The Vagaries of the* Qasidah*: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge, 1997).

Morony, M., *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984).
Motzki, H. (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000).
Motzki, H. 'The Murder of Ibn Abil-Huqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of Some *Maghazi*-Reports', in Motzki, *Biography of Muhammad*, 170–239.
——'The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam*, 78 (2001), 1–34.
——(ed.), *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (Aldershot, 2004).
——'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', *Arabica*, 52 (2005), 204–53.
Nasrallah, J., *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle: contribution à l'étude de la littérature arabe chrétienne*, ii.2: *750–Xe. S* (Louvain, 1988).
Nau, F., 'Lettre de Jacques d'Édesse à Jean le Stylite', *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, 5 (1900), 581–96.
Nautin, P., 'L'Auteur de la *Chronique de Séert*: Išo'dnah de Basra', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 186 (1974), 113–26.
——'L'Auteur de la "Chronique anonyme du Guidi": Élie de Merw', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 199 (1982), 303–13.
Nevo, Y. D., and Koren, J., *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst, NY, 2003).
Nokandeh, J., Sauer, E. W., Rekavandi, H. O., et al., 'Linear Barriers of Northern Iran: The Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe', *Iran*, 44 (2006), 121–73.
Nöldeke, T., *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden, aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari übersetzt* (Leiden, 1879).
Northedge, A., 'Archaeology and New Urban Settlement in Early Islamic Syria and Iraq', in King and Cameron, *Land Use*, 231–65.
Noth, A., and Conrad, L. I., *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, 1994).
Ohlig, K.-H., and Puin, G.-R. (eds.), *Die dunkle Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2005).
Oikonomidès, N., 'A Chronological Note on the First Persian Campaign of Heraclius (622)', *BMGS* 1 (1975), 1–9.
Olster, D. M., 'The Date of George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron*', *DOP* 45 (1991), 159–72.
Palmer, A., 'Une chronique syriaque contemporaine de la conquête arabe: essai d'interprétation théologique et politique', in Canivet and Rey-Coquais, *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam*, 31–46.
——*The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, TTH 15 (Liverpool, 1993).
Panaino, A., 'Women and Kingship: Some Remarks about the Enthronisation of Queen Boran and her Sister Azarmigducht', in Wiesehöfer and Huyse, *Eran ud Aneran*, 221–40.
Papaconstantinou, A., 'Administering the Early Arab Empire: The Value and the Limits of the Papyrological Evidence', in J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, Exchange and the Economy in the First Century of Islam* (forthcoming).
Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A., *Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias*, 5 vols. (St Petersburg, 1891–8).
Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–66).
Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64).

Patrologia Orientalis, 50 vols. (Paris, 1907–2008).
Pattenden, P., 'The Text of the *Pratum Spirituale*', *JTS*, NS 26 (1975), 38–54.
Pernice, A., *L'imperatore Eraclio* (Florence, 1905).
Pertusi, A., 'Dei poemi perduti di Giorgio di Pisidia', *Aevum*, 30 (1956), 395–427.
——'L'encomio di S. Anastasio martire persiano', *An. Boll.* 76 (1958), 5–63.
Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Erste Abteilung (641–867), ed. F. Winkelmann, R.-J. Lilie, C. Ludwig, T. Pratsch, and I. Rochow, *Prolegomena* and 6 vols. (Berlin, 1998–2002).
Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1971–92).
Raby, J., and Johns, J. (eds.), *Bayt al-Maqdis*, i: *'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9.1 (Oxford, 1992).
Reinink, G. J., 'Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 81–94.
——and Stolte, B. H. (eds.), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven, 2002).
Retsö, J., *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London, 2003).
Rheidt, K., *Die Stadtgrabung*, ii: *Die byzantinische Wohnstadt*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Altertümer von Pergamon 15.2 (Berlin, 1991).
Riedel, D., 'The Sum of the Parts: A Pre-Islamic *Qasida* by Bishr b. Abi Hazim al-Asadi', *Der Islam*, 79 (2002), 274–315.
Robin, C. (ed.), *L'Arabie antique de Karib'îl à Mahomet: nouvelles données sur l'histoire des Arabes grâce aux inscriptions*, Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée 61 (1991–3).
——'Le Royaume hujride, dit "royaume de Kinda", entre Himyar et Byzance', *CRAI* (1996), 665–714.
Robinson, C. F., *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge, 2000).
——*Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003).
——'Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences', in H. Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 101–34.
——'The Conquest of Khuzistan: A Historiographical Reassessment', *BSOAS* 67 (2004), 14–39.
——*'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford, 2005).
Rochow, I., *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes: Quellenkritisch-historischer Kommentar zu den Jahren 715–813* (Berlin, 1991).
Rodinson, M., *Mohammed* (Harmondsworth, 1973).
——'Notes sur le texte de Jean de Nikiou', *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici* (Rome, 1974), ii. 127–37.
Roueché, C., *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, JRS Monographs 5 (London, 1989).
Rousseau, P., 'Ascetics as Mediators and as Teachers', in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward (eds.), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), 45–59.
Rubin, U., 'The Ka'ba: Aspects of its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times', *JSAI* 8 (1986), 97–131.

Rubin, U., 'Muhammad's Curse of Mudar and the Blockade of Mecca', *JESHO* 31 (1988), 249–64.

—— *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims—A Textual Analysis* (Princeton, 1995).

—— 'The Life of Muhammad and the Islamic Self-Image: A Comparative Analysis of an Episode in the Campaigns of Badr and al-Hudaybiya', in Motzki, *Biography of Muhammad*, 3–17.

—— 'The Life of Muhammad and the Qur'an: The Case of Muhammad's *Hijra*', *JSAI* 28 (2003), 40–64.

Rubin, Z., 'The Reforms of Khusro Anushirwan', in Cameron (ed.), *States, Resources and Armies*, 227–97.

—— 'Ibn al-Muqaffa' and the Account of Sasanian History in the Arabic Codex Sprenger 30', *JSAI* 30 (2005), 52–93.

—— 'Islamic Traditions on the Sasanian Conquest of the Himyarite Realm', *Der Islam*, 84 (2008), 185–99.

—— 'Musa ibn 'Isa al-Kisrawi and the Other Authors on Sasanian History Known to Hamza al-Isfahani', *JSAI* (forthcoming).

—— 'Al-Tabari and the Age of the Sasanians', unpublished paper delivered at a conference on The Life and Works of Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, held in St Andrews (30 August–2 September 1995).

Ruggieri, V., and Nethercott, F., 'The Metropolitan City of Syllion and its Churches', *JÖB* 36 [1986], 133–56.

Russell, J., 'The Persian Invasions of Syria/Palestine and Asia Minor in the Reign of Heraclius: Archaeological, Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence', in Kontoura-Galake, *Dark Centuries of Byzantium*, 41–71.

Sako, L., 'Les Sources de la chronique de Séert', *Parole de l'Orient*, 14 (1987), 155–66.

Sarris, P., *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2006).

Sartre, M., *Bostra: des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985).

—— 'The Arabs and the Desert Peoples', in A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and Averil Cameron (eds.), *CAH* xii (Cambridge, 2005), 498–520.

Scanlon, G. T., 'Al-Fustat: The Riddle of the Earliest Settlement', in King and Cameron, *Land Use*, 171–9.

Schacht, J., *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1953).

Schoeler, G., *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996).

—— *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam* (London, 2006).

—— *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh, 2009).

Schöller, M., '*Sira* and *Tafsir*: Muhammad al-Kalbi on the Jews of Medina', in Motzki (ed.), *Biography of Muhammad*, 18–48.

Serjeant, R. B., 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', in *Mélanges Taha Husain* (Cairo, 1962), 41–58, repr. in Serjeant, *Studies*, iii.

—— 'The "Constitution of Medina"', *Islamic Quarterly*, 8 (1964), 3–16, repr. in Serjeant, *Studies*, v.

—— *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation* (London, 1981).

Sezgin, F., *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, ii: *Poesie bis ca.430 H.* (Leiden, 1975).

Shahid, I., 'Heraclius and the Theme System Revisited: The Unfinished Themes of Oriens', in Kontoura-Galake, *Dark Centuries of Byzantium*, 15–40.

Sijpesteijn, P. M., 'The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule', in R. S. Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700* (Cambridge, 2007), 437–55.

——'New Rule over Old Structures: Egypt after the Muslim Conquest', in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt: From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, PBA 136 (2007), 183–200.

——and Sundelin, L. (eds.), *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden, 2004).

Speck, P., *Zufälliges zum Bellum Avaricum des Georgios Pisides*, Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 24 (Munich, 1980).

——*Das geteilte Dossier: Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros* (Bonn, 1988).

Spuler, B., *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952).

Sternbach, L., *De Georgii Pisidae apud Theophanem aliosque historicos reliquiis*, Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydzial Filologiczny, ser. 2, 15 (Kraków, 1900), 1–107.

——*De Pisidae fragmentis a Suida servatis*, Rozprawy Ak. Um., W. Filol., ser. 2, 15, 108–80.

Stratos, A. N., *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, i: *602–634* (Amsterdam, 1968).

Taha, A. D., *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain* (London, 1989).

Thesiger, W., *Arabian Sands* (London, 1959).

Thomson, R. W., 'The Defence of Armenian Orthodoxy in Sebeos', in I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (eds.), *AETOS: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart, 1998), 329–41.

Torrey, C. C., *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran* (Leiden, 1892).

Treadgold, W., 'A Note on Byzantium's Year of the Four Emperors [641]', *BZ* 83 (1990), 431–3.

——'The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania', *International History Review*, 29 (2007), 709–45.

——*The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007).

Treadwell, W. L., 'The "Orans" Drachms of Bishr ibn Marwan and the Figural Coinage of the Early Marwanids', in Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, ii. 223–69.

Tyerman, C., *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006).

Tyler-Smith, S., 'Calendars and Coronations: The Literary and Numismatic Evidence for the Accession of Khusrau II', *BMGS* 28 (2004), 33–65.

——*The Hoard of Husru's Year 12* (Wiesbaden, forthcoming).

van Bekkum, W. J., 'Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112.

van Dieten, J. L., *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610–715)* (Amsterdam, 1972).

van Ess, J., ' 'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: An Analysis of Some Texts', in Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, i. 89–103.

von Schönborn, C., *Sophrone de Jérusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972).

Wagner, E., *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, i: *Die altarabische Dichtung* (Darmstadt, 1987).

Walmsley, A., *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London, 2007).
Walton, F. R., 'A Neglected Historical Text', *Historia*, 14 (1965), 236–51.
Wansbrough, J., *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978).
Wasserstein, D. J., 'The Khazars and the World of Islam', in Golden, Ben-Shammai, and Róna-Tas, *World of the Khazars*, 373–86.
Watt, J. W., ' The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Historical Sources', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 63–79.
Watt, W. M., *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953).
——*Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956).
Wellhausen, J., *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall* (Calcutta, 1927).
Wenger, A., *L' Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIe au Xe siècle: études et documents*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 5 (Paris, 1955).
Whitby, Mary, 'A New Image for a New Age: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius', in Dąbrowa, *Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, 197–225.
——'The Devil in Disguise: The End of George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron* Reconsidered', *JHS* 115 (1995), 115–29.
——'Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and his Deputies', in Mary Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1998), 247–73.
——'George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns: Variety and Development', in Reinink and Stolte, *Reign of Heraclius*, 157–73.
——'George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word: Words, Words, Words . . . ', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), 173–86.
Whitby, Michael, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988).
——'Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality', in Cameron and Conrad, *Literary Source Material*, 25–80.
Whitcomb, D., 'The *Misr* of Ayla: Settlement at al-'Aqaba in the Early Islamic Period', in King and Cameron, *Land Use*, 155–70.
Whittow, M., 'Social and Political Structures in the Maeander Region of Western Asia Minor on the Eve of the Turkish Invasion' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1987).
——*The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996).
——'Rome and the Jafnids: Writing the History of a Sixth-Century Tribal Dynasty', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, ii: *Some Recent Archaeological Research*, JRA Suppl. Ser. 37 (1999), 215–33.
Wiesehöfer, J., *Iraniens, Grecs et Romains* (Paris, 2005).
——and Huyse, P. (eds.), *Eran ud Aneran: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt* (Munich, 2006).
Witakowski, W., *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: A Study in the History of Historiography*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala, 1987).
Wood, I., *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London, 1994).
Yarshater, E., 'Iranian National History', *Cambridge History of Iran*, iii.1 (1983), 359–477.
Zacos, G., and Veglery, A., *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1972).

Zotenberg, H., 'Mémoire sur la chronique byzantine de Jean, évêque de Nikiou', *JA* ser. 7, 10 (1877), 451–517, 12 (1878), 245–347, and 13 (1879), 291–386.
Zuckerman, C., 'À propos du *Livre des cérémonies*, II, 48', *TM* 13 (2000), 531–94.
——'Jerusalem as the Center of the Earth in Anania Širakac'i's *Ašxarhac'oyc*', in M. E. Stone, R. R. Ervine, and N. Stone (eds.), *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land* (Leuven, 2002), 255–74.
——'Learning from the Enemy and More: Studies in "Dark Centuries" Byzantium', *Millennium*, 2 (2005), 79–135.
——'The Khazars and Byzantium: The First Encounter', in Golden, Ben-Shammai, and Róna-Tas, *World of the Khazars*, 399–432.
Zwettler, M., 'The Poet and the Prophet: Towards Understanding the Evolution of a Narrative', *JSAI* 5 (1984), 313–87.

This page intentionally left blank

Index

Abasgia 305, 311
Abasgians 309, 336
Abbasids 197–8, 210, 229, 256, 336, 341, 367, 404, 419, 424, 517, 519, 520
ʿAbd al-Aziz, brother of ʿAbd al-Malik, emir of Egypt 231, 316, 322, 510
ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas 489
ʿAbdallah b. al-Muqaffaʿ 334, 337, 341
ʿAbdallah b. al-Tahir 333
ʿAbdallah b. al-Zubayr 490, 495–9, 512, 529
ʿAbdallah, son of ʿAbd al-Malik, emir of Egypt 319, 323, 508
ʿAbdallah, son of ʿUmar I 490
ʿAbd al-Malik, caliph 137, 228–9, 235–6, 263, 301, 304, 308, 310, 316, 321, 331, 338, 362, 391, 426, 434, 461, 496–500, 505–7, 510, 512, 529–31
ʿAbd al-Muttalib 405
ʿAbd Shams 405, 409
Abraha 396–7
Abraham 37, 60, 132, 135, 399, 412–14, 457–8
Abraham, Palestinian rabbi 156
Abu Ayyub al-Ansari 490
Abu Bakr, caliph 210, 328, 337, 356, 373, 415, 464–6, 481, 523
Abu Habib al-Damanhuri 315
Abu Jabr 397
Abu Lahab 406
Abu Mansur al-Maʿmari 349
Abu Mansur Muhammad b. ʿAbd-al-Razzaq 349
Abu Maʿshar 378
Abu Mikhnaf 365
Abu Murrah Sayf b. Dhi Yazan al-Himyari 398
Abu Qurra, emir of Egypt 316, 323
Abu Sufyan 383, 409, 414, 458–9, 482, 529
Abu Talib 406, 408, 453
Abu ʿUbayd 375, 393
Abu ʿUbayda 373, 474
Achaemenids 56, 342, 344
Acre 504
Adam 36–7, 59–60, 140, 182, 209, 432
Adeodatus, pope 434
Adhruh 385
Adriatic 476
Adur Gushnasp 101, 245
Aegean 63, 220, 227, 303, 391, 476, 480, 484, 486, 491–3, 500–1, 507
Aegean Sea, command of 270
Africa 514
  east 515, 526
  north 153, 173, 207, 218, 357, 432, 476, 483, 486, 508–10, 518, 520
    Arab attacks 219, 225–6, 234–5, 262, 302, 310, 377, 389–90, 477, 491–2
    Arab conquest 229, 257, 260, 263, 301, 311, 461, 500–2
    Heraclian rebellion 203, 439
Africanus, Julius 38
Agapius 196–9, 208, 211, 223, 229–32, 298–9
Agathias 143, 273, 314, 341
Agathon, Coptic partriarch of Alexandria 319
Ahaz 147
Aikelah 183
Ailiots, lavra of 172
ʿAʾisha 384, 481
ajnad 504
Ajnadayn 373
akhbar (sing. *khabar*) 208, 360, 404, 424–5, 427
akhbari 365–6
Ałaman, church at 127
Alans 223, 489
Albania (Caucasian) 103–10, 112, 123, 225; *see also* Ałuankʿ
  assembly 120
  Constans II's progress 118
  contingent 468
  conversion 105, 107
  Hun attacks 119–20
  military operations in 89, 113–15, 121, 309, 377
  nobles 120–1
  social status 126–7
  sparapet (Juansher) 105, 107–8, 116–17, 120, 489–91, 519
  Turkish occupation 115, 121, 137, 443
Alexander II, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 316
Alexander Romance 332
Alexander the Great 22, 131, 146, 175, 279, 343, 384, 462

Alexandria 143, 171–3, 261, 314–19, 322, 331, 333, 384, 479
 Arab appointments 186, 188
 Arab military operations against 185–9, 296, 339, 376, 469, 477
 archives 130
 Heraclian rebels, seizure by 181, 190
 Persians, capture by 65–6, 68, 136, 184, 205, 440
 Persians, threat from 180–1
 Romans, recovery by (646–7) 154, 190, 214, 219, 232, 377, 501
ʿAli 74, 176–7, 190, 222, 235, 380, 382–8, 418, 434, 481–3, 488, 495, 498, 525
ʿAlids 388, 497
Allah 410, 446, 449, 456–7; *see also* God
 agents 370
 and Kaʿba 399, 413–14
 beneficence 401
 judgement 370
 knowledge 449
 mastery of world 513
 power 407, 449
 providential plan 371, 514
 ubiquitous 456
 vice-gerents 427, 513
Alps 525
Ałtamar 478
Ałuankʿ 84; *see also* Albanians
Alypius 19
Amanus mountains 215, 226–7, 390, 494
Amaseia 311, 509
Amathus 180
Amida 64, 287
amir 504
Amorium 224, 298, 490
ʿAmr b. al–ʿAs 186–8, 214, 221–2, 261, 263, 296, 318–20, 333, 338–9, 373, 458, 469, 475, 477, 524, 528
Amul 366
Anania Mokatsʿi, Albanian catholicos 107
Anastasiopolis 150
Anastasius, disciple of Maximus 160–2, 190, 299
Anastasius II, emperor 55, 141, 243, 258, 260–1, 264, 301, 306, 311, 317, 320
Anastasius, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 320
Anastasius, papal legate 162
Anatolia 204, 219, 439–42, 475, 490, 526; *see also* Asia Minor
Anatolikoi (Anatolic theme army) 302, 311, 484, 509
Anchialus 266, 311
Ancyra 200, 442
Andrew, *cubicularius*, son of Troilus 126, 225, 491
Andrew, eunuch, ambassador to Muʿawiya 224
andrismos 504; *see also* poll-tax
Andronicus, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 320–1
Anianus, magister 255
ansab 364
ansar 361, 408, 411, 461, 464, 480
antigrapheus 143
Antinoe 188
Antioch 20, 23, 55, 61–6, 101, 122, 156, 172, 195, 200, 212, 215–16, 233, 261, 297, 304, 310, 320–1, 333, 389, 439, 494
Antioch-in-Pisidia 17, 311, 389, 509
Anti-Taurus 65, 224, 483
Antony, biographer of George of Choziba 167
Apamea 200, 233, 298, 310
Aphrodisias 143
Aphtharto-Docetism 183
Apocalypse of Zerubbabel 156
apocalyptic writings 445, 474
Apsimar 257, 261, 266, 311, 320, 500, 508; *see also* Tiberius III
Apulia 485
ʿAqaba 409, 453
Aquitaine 515
Arabissus 65, 224
Arabia 177, 208–9, 357, 374, 385, 393, 396, 398–402, 412, 425–6, 428, 441, 451, 456, 482, 505, 517–18, 526
 ancient history 137, 365
 environment 448–9
 infiltration of ideas 448
 mobilization 375, 468
 news 445, 454, 521
 province 166, 168
 role in second *fitna* 393, 497–9
 Sasanian sphere of influence 131, 437–8
 tribes of north-west 503
 unification 101, 337, 361, 364, 415–16, 459–61, 465, 471–2, 523
Arabic 472, 503–4, 506, 514
Arabs 41, 111, 132, 135, 149, 177–8; *see also* Beduin
 chosen people 521, 525
 code, moral and social 395
 conquests, *see under* warfare
 empire 514, 526
 kindred, role of 395, 417

naval power 153
Roman clients 472
Sasanian clients 130, 133, 329–30, 369
Aradus 170, 217, 220, 299, 371, 478, 519, 529; *see also* ʻArwad
Aran, ruler of Albania 105
Araxes, river 96, 101, 119, 377, 475
al-Arbagh 322
Arcadia 186
Archesh 84
archives 63, 73, 81, 130
Ardabil 336
Ardashir I 342, 344, 350, 463
Ardashir III, son of Kavad Shiroe 328, 347
Arians 269
Aristomachus from Nikiu 183
Aristotle 238, 240
Armenia 123–4, 157–8, 205, 207, 217, 228, 232, 304, 310–11, 336, 351, 394, 431, 436, 467, 484–5, 497, 500
Arab attacks 219, 377, 469, 477
church 73, 80
inscriptions 96–7
military commanders 77, 85
military contingent 116
military operations in 82, 101, 200, 202, 300, 303, 378, 423, 437, 480
nobles 75, 77, 79, 86
Persian governors 81, 86, 88
revolts 75, 98, 100
Romans, expulsion of 221, 223, 298
social status 96–7, 126–7
Sasanian rule 78
Turkish invasion 115, 137
Armenia IV 306, 311, 391, 500, 508
Armeniakoi (Armeniac theme army) 484, 489
Arsanias, river 336
Arsacids 342, 429
Artemius 266, 311; *see also* Anastasius II, emperor
artillery 91, 174; *see also* trebuchet
Artsʻakh 115
Artsapʻkʻ 99
Aruč 96
ʻArwad 303; *see also* Aradus
Ascension 37
Asfadh Jushnas, *see* Aspadh-Gushnasp
ashraf 496, 498
Asia
central 110, 127, 137, 336, 343, 390, 394, 429, 461, 474, 494, 514, 518, 527
south 429
south-east 429, 515
Asia Minor 122, 149–51, 154, 205, 213, 218, 226, 261, 263–4, 299, 303, 357, 442, 470, 476, 493–4, 501, 524–5; *see also* Anatolia
Arab attacks, *see under* warfare, Arab-Byzantine
Byzantine commands 483–4
defences 512, 525
Persian operations 20, 89; *see also under-* warfare, Persian-Roman
social order 150–1
Asia, province of 223
Asorestan (Assyria) 114
Aspadh-Gushnasp 309
aspet 98
Assyria 205
Atalaric 246, 252
Athanasius Bar Gumoye 231, 322–3
Athanasius, Jacobite patriarch of Antioch 320, 328
Athens 61, 429, 485
Athos 141
Athrib 187
Atlantic 508
Atropatene 66, 68, 76, 89, 97, 101, 113, 117, 124, 136, 205, 309, 344, 348, 352, 376, 443, 470; *see also* Atrpatakan 84
Augustus 61
al-Aus 453
austerity measures (615, 618) 53–4
Avars 153, 177, 204, 243, 245–6, 255, 442, 483, 497; *see also* under Constantinople
Thessalonica, attacks on 55, 151–3
treaty (623/4) 254–5
Avesta 342
Axum 396, 401, 408
Ayla 373, 465
Ayrarat 119
ayyam 364, 372, 425
Azarmig, daughter of Khusro II 347–8

Baanes 212–13, 215, 231, 296, 299, 310, 467; *see also* Vahan
Babylon (Egypt) 180, 185, 187–8, 318, 339, 376, 469, 477
Babylon (Mesopotamia) 145, 165
Bactria 344
badiya 338, 401, 437, 503, 522
Badr 355, 364, 383, 403, 408, 446–7, 455
Bagaran 97
Baghdad 205, 301, 324, 367, 419
Bahram b. Mardar Shah 342, 349
Bahram Chobin 75, 82–3, 92, 128, 144, 146, 198, 334, 336, 347, 349–50, 352

Bahram V Gor 334, 344
al-Baladhuri 355, 366, 373, 390, 397
al-Bal'ami 342
Balanjar 378
Balkans 20, 89, 145, 151–4, 226, 263, 282, 298–9, 437, 442, 463, 476, 498, 501
Balkh 377
Balqa' 211, 373, 447, 465
Banu 'Amir 397
Banu Hashim 405–6, 408, 416
Banu Hanifa 453
Banu 'Ijl 438, 441
Banu Muttalib 406, 408
Banu Tamim 384
Barbed the musician 351
Basra 132, 135, 137, 367, 384, 388, 488, 496, 498, 502
baya 177–8, 191
Beduin 338, 384, 425, 441, 448, 457, 459, 461, 474, 526; *see also* Arabs
  allies of Muslims 356, 411
  anti-Sasanian coalition 368, 437–8
  code 402, 417, 450–3
  garb 372, 381
  identity 472
  Quraysh hegemony 455–6, 528
  raiding 165–8, 172, 180
  story-telling 364
  targeted by Khalid b. al-Walid 373, 465
  tribes of north-west Arabia 502–3
Bekłał, palace 116
Benjamin I, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 317–21
Berbers 462, 508–9, 518
Bethlehem 337–8
  church of Nativity 338
Bible 42, 57, 73, 90, 92, 405
Bimand 378
Bindoe 133, 334, 346
al-Biruni 342
Bishapur 506
Bistam 82, 87, n.32, 100–1, 133, 330, 334, 346
Bithynia 20, 150, 223, 239, 257, 310, 476, 512
Bitlis
  monastery of St. John the Baptist 72
  pass 324
Blachernae 147–8
Black Sea 122, 242, 429, 500
Blessed Virgin, monastery 315
Blues 142; *see also* factions
Bonosus 150, 185
Bonus 21, 47, 255
Boran, daughter of Khusro II 133, 327, 330, 347, 444
Bosporus 45–6, 88–9, 169, 204, 240, 242, 244–6, 258, 260, 377–8, 439, 442, 479–80, 526
Bostra 234, 296, 374
Bridge, battle of 375, 393, 467, 471
Brigand of Thrace 333–4
Bugler, sons of 208, 221
Bulgars 153, 239, 257–8, 260, 266, 302, 305–6, 310–11, 391, 498, 510
Burgundians 432
Busr b. Abi Artat 489, 493
Buwayb 375
Byzacena 491, 500
Byzantines 33, 112
Byzantium 137, 139, 149, 151, 162, 176, 301, 351, 390, 394, 462, 486, 515, 518, 525
  defensive strategy 256, 507–8, 510–12
  domestic politics 217, 228, 302, 306–7, 311, 317, 475–6
  militarisation 268, 301, 483–4
  reforms in seventh century 429–30

Caesar 281, 293, 328
Caesarea (Cappadocia) 55, 76, 101, 200, 221, 298, 439
Caesarea (Palestine) 164, 169–71, 189, 211, 215–16, 234, 295, 298, 317, 337, 439, 468–9
Cagliari 162
caliphate 98, 110–11, 126–8
  administration 503–5
  Arabization 505
  garrison cities 502
  monetary reform 505–7
  news management 392
  religious state 514–16
caliphs 62, 65, 107, 187, 507
  authority of 392–3, 471, 513–14, 527–8
Calliopas, exarch of Italy 158
Camacha 301, 311, 509
Cambyses 183
Camel, battle of 384
Canal, battle of 384
Cappadocia 89, 219, 477, 479–80, 509, 518, 525
Carpathian basin 442
Carthage 155–7, 160, 162, 266, 301, 311, 391, 491, 500–1
Caspian Gates 344, 371, 480; *see also* Chor
Caspian, sea 71, 103, 352, 366, 378, 485
catholicos, Armenian 73, 79

Caucasus 78, 102–3, 114, 119–20, 123–4, 126, 136–7, 221, 300, 309, 371, 378, 394, 444, 462, 483, 485, 511, 515, 518, 525
Cave of Treasures 332
Cecrops 61
Cedrenus, George 313
Chalcedon 45–6, 68, 76, 88, 101, 200, 205–6, 224, 251, 390, 430
 Council of 315
Chalcedonians 23, 73, 77–8, 93, 172–3, 179, 197, 201–2, 321, 330, 431, 479, 522
Chaldaean church 324; *see also* Nestorians
chartophylax 18
Chelidonia, cape 221, 479
Cherson 257–9, 266, 300, 306, 311
China 127, 436, 444, 462, 515
Chor 114, 136; *see also* Caspian Gates
Choresmia 344
Chosen Force 500
Chosen People 424
Choziba 168
Christ 19, 23, 38, 43, 62, 155, 178, 209, 358
Christendom 26–7, 41, 157, 162, 294, 516
Christianity 39, 155, 262, 530
Christology 81, 158, 171, 173
Chronicle to Year 636 70, 90, 97, 116, 125, 135–6, 467
 chronological exactitude 54, 65–6
 coverage 65
Chronicle to Year 724 210–11, 255, 374, 424
 Chronicle to 636, use of 63–4
 chronological exactitude 59, 62
 computations 59
 editorial practice 59
 manuscript 59, 62
 organisation 60
 sources 62–5
Chronicle to Year 741 432–4
Chronicle to Year 1234 194–6, 198–9, 208, 212, 222–4,
Chronicon Paschale 59, 65–6, 68, 70, 90, 94, 98, 124–5, 144, 146, 148, 155, 182, 252–6, 282, 284, 286–8, 346, 421, 424, 520
 annalistic framework 37, 39, 43–4
 authorship 57–8
 chronological exactitude 37, 43, 52–3, 58–9
 chronological slips 59
 computations 37–8, 42–4, 53, 57
 Constantinople
  city annals 39–40, 44
  focus on 39–40, 57
 coverage of recent past, restricted 54–7
 documents, use of 44–53, 520
 Easter, date of 37
 editorial restraint 43, 54, 57–8
 Gospel story, centrality of 38
 learning, appearance of 42
 Malalas, use of 38–40, 42
 manuscript 41
 sources 37–40
 themes in Roman imperial history 55–7
 time, beginning of 37
Cilicia 172, 215, 227, 235, 302, 309–11, 391, 467–8, 472, 493, 501, 508–9
Cilician Gates 509
Circesium 304, 310, 497
civil wars, Arab, *see fitna*
Cleopatra 183
cleisurarch 224
Clovis 463
Colossus of Rhodes 218, 221, 234
Commander of Faithful 500
communiqués
 Byzantine 268–9, 300
 Roman 50–2, 59, 67
 Umayyad 390–3
Companions 363, 384, 394, 455, 464
confessions, conflicts between 23–4, 157, 190
Constans II, emperor 80, 87, 91, 97, 154, 177, 207, 237, 256–8, 260, 264–5, 297, 299, 317, 319, 382, 429–30, 473, 483, 492, 501, 505, 512, 525; *see also* Constantine Augustus
 accession 244, 249, 256, 475–6
 Armenia, visit to (653) 73, 77, 88, 102–3, 220–1, 478–9
 assassination 119, 126, 224–5, 235–6, 241, 257, 307, 491
 conspiracy against 490–1
 demonstrations against 176
 Monotheletism, promulgation of 157, 197
 naval defeat 218, 298, 479
 show-trials 158–62
 Transcaucasian progress 118–19, 126–8, 137, 225, 257, 378–9, 484–5
 west, departure and residence in 108, 154, 177, 223, 433, 485–6, 489
Constantia (Cyprus) 219–20
Constantia (Roman Mesopotamia) 216
Constantina, widow of Maurice 280
Constantine Augustus 118, 319
Constantine IV, emperor 177, 224, 226, 228, 231, 262–3, 266, 302, 307, 310, 319–20, 429, 485, 487, 489, 492–3, 495, 498
Constantine V, emperor 238, 240–1, 243, 258–9, 266, 301, 311

Constantine VI, emperor 239
Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, emperor 141, 222, 230, 241–2, 252, 307, 430
Constantine, son of Heraclius,see Heraclius the New Constantine
Constantine the Great 32, 39, 53, 60–1, 105, 119, 463
Constantinople 20, 23, 39, 70, 136, 138–43, 152–3, 170, 173, 176, 181, 200, 205, 241–2, 244, 253, 257, 264, 286–8, 315, 319, 340, 389–90, 439–40, 485, 497, 501, 527
  Arab attack (654) 91, 99, 102, 132, 177, 217–8, 220–1, 226, 231–2, 234, 298–9, 377–8, 479–80, 518, 525
  Arab attack (670–1) 227, 235, 262, 302–4, 390, 486–7, 492–3
  Arab siege (717–18) 137, 229, 237, 243, 254, 258–60, 266, 300–1, 306, 311, 391–2, 462, 509–10, 512
  Avar-Persian siege (626) 21–2, 30, 45–7, 58, 67–8, 88–9, 125, 146–7, 200, 202–4, 208, 245, 254, 256, 277, 282, 335–6, 368, 442–3
  Avar surprise attack (623) 50, 55, 67–8, 147–8, 252–4, 265, 277, 280, 282, 442
  Caesarius quarter 50
  city annals 39–40, 44
  construction projects 53
  factional troubles 156, 274
  hippodrome 158
  Hun visit 255, 265
  Oxeia quarter 429
  politics 54, 77–8, 86, 216, 225, 256, 320, 328, 475, 490
  race for 203, 232, 244, 250, 326
  St. John the Baptist, church of 429
  show-trials 158–62
  supernatural defenders 55
  Theodosian walls 148
  triumph of Heraclius 25, 246, 254
Constantius 61
Constitution of Medina, *see under* Muhammad
consulships 37
Coptic 185, 315, 319, 504
Coptic church 314, 317, 319–20, 322
Corycus 500
Cos 221, 479
Cosmas Indicopleustes 38, 42
Cotiaeum 484
Creation 24, 30, 37, 43, 178, 279
Crete 221, 303, 310, 479, 494, 500
  archbishop of 181
Crimea 158, 190, 226, 257, 483, 507
Crucifixion 52, 61
Ctesiphon 104, 116, 125, 164–6, 247, 329, 347
  Arab capture 129, 135, 375–6, 468–9
  Arab siege 76, 101, 137, 214, 374, 467, 524
  Heraclius' march on 84, 95–6, 114, 123, 200, 285, 346
  Khusro II's flight to 205, 287, 309, 367
cubicularius 126, 157
curopalate 96, 484
Cyprian, bishop of Thenae (Africa) 153
Cyprus 159, 172, 180–1, 190, 228, 232, 304, 310, 439, 497, 499
  Arab attacks, *see under* warfare
Cyriacus, patriarch of Constantinople 150
Cyrus, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria 135, 173, 188, 214, 261, 263, 296, 318, 321, 338–9, 475, 524; *see also* al-Muqawqas
Cyzicus 227, 262, 270, 300, 302, 305, 492, 499

al-Dahhak b. Qays al-Fihri 228, 496
dahr 450–1
Damascus 111, 164, 167, 171, 175–6, 211–13, 228, 234, 261, 299, 310, 338–9, 373–4, 382, 393, 467, 478, 486, 488, 495–6, 504, 506, 526
  fall to Persians 65–6, 68, 168
  Umayyad court 121, 125, 137, 224–5, 235, 389, 489–90, 519
Damietta 186, 188
Daniel 32, 74, 93, 155, 297
Danube, river 153, 257, 266, 302, 310, 476
Dara 55, 66, 68, 101, 130, 133, 136, 200, 216, 279, 328, 437–8
Darabjird 385
Dar al-Islam 392, 462, 502, 515
Darartasis 23
Darband 502
Dardanelles 442, 509
Daskhuren 106
Dastagerd 116, 130, 169, 205, 287, 309, 367
David 21, 32, 145
Dawit' Saharuni 96
Day of Judgement 209, 428
De administrando imperio 222, 230
Dead Sea 98, 373, 472
Decapolis 504
deception 47, n.23, 478–9, 490–3
De ceremoniis 252
dehqanan 349
Delta (Nile) 186–9, 318, 322, 339, 384, 469–70, 477

Devil 19
Dhu Qar 368–9, 438
dinar 530
al-Dinawari 342, 365, 398
Diocletian 39, 183, 271, 308
  era 316, 318
Dionysius of Tel-Mahre 195–9, 201, 206, 208, 211, 219–20, 222, 224, 229–32, 256, 298–9, 313, 320, 322, 382, 424
Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria 315
Diospolis 170
diplomacy, *see also under* Avars, Turks
  Arab-Byzantine 228, 478, 494–5, 499–500
  Arab-Persian 470
  Roman-Persian negotiations (628–30) 49, 136, 245, 255, 310, 444
  Senate's embassy to Khusro II (615) 45, 58, 430, 440
dirham 530
disinformation 67, 309
dispatches 20, 22, 25, 45–9, 57, 67, 83, 95–6, 285–8
diwan 319
Diyala 443
Djaradjima 390, 494
Djerba 389, 491–2
djinn 407, 450
Doctrina Jacopi nuper baptizati 155–7, 209, 211, 394, 432
documents, key characteristics 50, 520
Dome of the Rock 178, 321, 338, 498, 512
Dometianus 145
Domnitziolus 150
Don Quixote 169
Dorotheus, *staurophylax* 168
drachm 505–6
dromones 476
duke 503–4
Dumat al-Jandal 373, 385, 466
Dvin 71, 73, 77, 80, 86, 88, 93, 96, 101, 126, 221, 336, 478

Easter 59
Edessa 63, 68, 85, 98, 101, 197, 201–3, 212, 215, 227, 233, 235, 280
  notables 231
  Persian measures (620s) 201
  sectarian conflict 201–2, 231
  Theodosius, coronation of (603) 202
Egypt 139, 157, 203, 213, 219, 225–6, 314, 316–21, 331, 333, 339–41, 363, 367, 393, 401, 442, 486, 491, 501–2, 509–10, 515, 521
  Arab administration 188–9, 503–5
  Arab conquest, *see* under warfare
  defence 132, 135, 137, 160
  grain 253
  Heraclian rebellion 181, 185, 190, 439
  local history 365
  Persian conquest and occupation 65, 179–81, 200, 203, 245, 335, 440
  population 340
  religious conflict 524
  role in first *fitna* 481–2
  role in second *fitna* 496–7
    Kharbita troops 382, 384–5
  Roman counterattack (646) 477–8
  social order 185, 524
  tribute 234, 261–2, 265
ekphrasis 350
Elburz mountains 100, 352, 485, 515
Elephant, Year of 397
Eleusius 149
Eleutherius, palace of 271
Elias, bishop of Merv 131–2, 325
Elias of Nisibis 326
Elijah 32
Ełishe 105, 107
Elpidius 280
Emesa 65–6, 68, 200, 211–12, 233–4, 261, 296, 339, 467; *see also* Hims
End of Time 356–7, 400, 448
England 170
Ephesus 484
Epic Histories 78
eschatological anxiety 155–6; *see also* under *History of Khosrov*, *History to 682* and Muhammad
Etna 19
Euchaita 219, 475
Eudocia 245, 252
Eulogius, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria 172
Euphrates 55, 63, 65–6, 68, 101, 116, 215–16, 221, 235, 280, 352, 375, 384, 437–9, 467–8, 481, 496–7, 503–6, 508
Euprepius, disciple of papal legate Anastasius 162
Europe, south-east 515
Eusebius 38–9, 61–3, 173, 176
Eusebius, Jerusalem deacon 166
Eutychius 314, 331, 341, 424
  anecdotes, penchant for 333
  Arab conquests, account of 337–9
  chronology 340–1
  Khwadaynamag, use of 334–5, 337, 340
  life 331–2

Eutychius (*cont.*)
  manuscript 332
  Persian-Roman war, deformation of 336–7
  scope 333, 339–40
  sources 332–7, 340
Eve 182
Exaltation of Cross 119, 171
exarch 158, 160
Excubitors 160
Ezr, Armenian catholicos 77, 93

factions, circus 19, 23, 50, 53–4, 142, 155–6; *see also* Blues, Greens
Fadak 414
Fadala b. ʿUbayd al-Ansari 491–3
al-Fadl 224
al-Farama 339
al-Farazdaq 388
Farroxzad Khusro, son of Gurdyeh 348
Farrukhan 368–9
Farrukhzad 352
Fars 385, 393, 482; *see also* Persia
fatalism 451, 501
Fate, see *darh*
al-fath 459
Fatima 337
Fayyum 187, 315, 318
Fertile Crescent 68
Filastin 504; *see also* Palestine
Firdawsi 314, 348–53
fitna 71, 78, 101–2, 104, 175–6, 361, 392, 426, 445, 518, 526, 529
  first (656–61) 118, 126–8, 217–18, 221–3, 228, 230, 233, 298–9, 319, 362, 366, 378, 381–9, 393, 434, 461, 480–3, 488, 493, 500, 512, 525–6
    authorised version 383–5
    constitutional issue 383, 481, 495
    Karbala episode 232, 386–7, 483
  second (682–92) 218, 222, 228, 231–2, 235, 301, 310, 316, 321–2, 386, 393, 431, 490, 495–9, 502, 505–6
Flood 60, 105
follis 505–6
Francia 525
Fredegar 432
Fustat (Old Cairo) 316, 322, 331, 496, 502; *see also* Misr
futuh 216, 232, 361, 365, 370–1, 379, 394, 426

Gabitha 261, 296; *see also* Jabiya
Gabriel 406
Gabriel of Singara 130–1
Galatia 150, 223, 509, 523
Galen 198
Galilee 148, 335, 337, 504
Ganzak 49, 287, 309
Gaul 432, 463
Gaza 295, 333
  Arab victory near 63, 65, 68, 156–7, 211–12, 337, 373, 466
Gełam, lake 115
Genesis 24, 60
Germaniceia 242
Germans 432, 462–3
Germanus, lay magnate 280
Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople 300
George, monk at St. Macarius and archdeacon, *see under History of the Patriarchs*
George of Pisidia 36–7, 41, 58, 69–70, 95, 141, 145–8, 170–1, 174, 277, 288–91, 350, 352, 394, 421, 424, 520
  bureaucratic career 17–18
  commissions 16, 20, 22–3, 28, 32
  devotional poetry 19, 24–25, 27, 36
  documents, use of 20, 25
  epigrams 16, 19
  hawkish sentiments 24, 32
  Heraclius, as subject 17, 19–23, 25
  Heraclius, relations with 33–4
  independence of mind 32
  literary culture 16, 28
  manuscript tradition 18, n.7, 23, n.27
  Official History 83–4, 86, 254, 294–5, 308, 342
    authorship 290–2
    date and readership 294–5
    dispatches, use of 286–8
    literary embellishment 290–3
    scope and character 277, 285–6, 293–4
  poetic achievement 16, 27–9
  religious commitment 16, 28–9
  self-projection 21
  works
    Bellum Avaricum 22, 30, 33, 147, 292
    Contra Severum 23, 32, 291
    De vanitate vitae 25, 27, 29, 34
    De vita humana 25
    Expeditio Persica 21, 30–3, 89, 275, 277, 283
    Heraclias 22, 30–3, 124, 289, 291
    Hexaemeron 18, 24–5, 27, 29–30, 32
    In Bonum patricium 21, 291
    In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem 17, 19, 27, 147
    In restitutionem S. Crucis 24, 32
    In resurrectionem 19

George Syncellus 244, 271–4, 279, 282, 295, 424
George the Monk, Byzantine chronicler 313
Gethsemane 178
Ghassan 397, 400, 404, 417, 438, 441, 446–8, 455, 472, 496, 503–4, 521–2
Ghatafan 465
Ghaznavid 314
God 209–10; *see also* Allah
  agents on earth
    Arabs 352, 451, 463, 465, 525–6
    caliph 382, 507, 513
    Heraclius 20, 22, 26
    Romans 16, 31
  anger 152
  covenant with mankind 177
  creative power 357, 421
  destruction of empires 132
  favour 76, 268
  knowledge 144, 456
  license to kill 323
  plan for mankind 360, 370, 421, 424, 473, 507
  power 145–6, 456
  punishment by 92, 483
    Khusro II 48
    Palestine, invasion of 26
  remote 463
  unity 403
Gog and Magog 93
Golan Heights 159, 211, 213, 371, 466
Golden Horn 46, 148
Golgotha 178, 191
Goliath 32
Gołon Mihran 81
Gospels 110
Great Oasis 172
Great Zab, river 309, 346
Greece 154, 226, 485
Greek 504
Greek Fire 494
Greens 50, 142, 274; *see also* factions
Gregory, exarch of Africa 160, 217, 219, 234, 477
Gregory of Kashkar 325
Gregory of Prat, Nestorian catholicos 131
Gregory, patrician, father of Nicetas 203
Gregory the Illuminator 107
Grigor 127
Grigor Mamikonean 96
Grimoald, duke 485
Gulf, Persian 77, 101, 376
  coast 344, 373
Gurdanaspa 369
Gurdyeh, sister of Bahram Chobin 347–8
Gurgan 344, 378, 480; *see also* Hyrcania

hadith 360–1, 514
Hadramaut 465
hagiography
  historical material, inclusion of 152–3, 191
  history, rooting in 138, 149
  spurious detail 166
hajj 196, 380, 412–13, 416, 429, 457, 481, 515
al-Hajjaj 228–9, 331, 499
Haliban 397
Hamadan 376
Hamazasp Mamikonean 118, 484
Hamza al-Isfahani 341–2
Hanifa 465
haram 395
harra 399, 405
Hasan, son of ʿAli 385, 482–3
Hasan, son of Nuʿman 329–30
Hashim 399
Hassan b. Malik b. Bahdal 496
Hassan b. Thabit 400, 403
Hawazin 415, 448, 459, 465
Hawran 211, 296, 338, 374, 466, 472, 502, 504
Heliopolis 187, 189
Hellas 241
Heracles 19, 22, 32
Heraclius, brother of Constantine IV 302
Heraclius, emperor 18, 47–8, 55, 61, 72, 76, 91–2, 96–7, 114, 130, 145, 150, 154, 173, 180, 203–6, 212, 214–15, 245–9, 252, 261, 277–8, 308, 310, 318, 321, 325, 328, 337–41, 422, 440–2, 447, 484–5, 505
  Blachernae ceremony (628) 148
  Christian unity, drive for 23, 26, 32
  death 185, 216, 246, 249
    subsequent political conflict 217, 249, 256, 297–8, 326, 328
  dispatches 20, 22, 25, 48–9, 57–9, 67–9, 83, 95–6, 346, 350
  George of Pisidia
    estrangement from 33–4
    patronage of 16, 20, 23, 25
  heroic feats 433
  incestuous marriage 34, 252–3, 265, 281–2
  leadership 25
  military reforms 19
  Middle East, abandonment of 132, 467
  Middle East progress and visit to Edessa (630) 201, 205, 210, 231

Heraclius, emperor (*cont.*)
Monotheletism, proclamation of 157, 197, 302
negotiations
with khagan of Turks 245, 251, 255, 277
with Shahen 45, 76, 97, 101, 245, 254–5
with Shahrvaraz 63–6, 68, 250, 253, 255, 369, 522
New David 32
Persian campaigns, *see under* warfare, Persian-Roman
propaganda against Phocas 205, 282, 433
rebellion and seizure of power 17, 23, 50, 71, 87, 98, 143, 200, 203, 335–6, 439
triumphal return 22, 246
True Cross, restoration of 24–5, 32, 41, 76, 96, 167, 205, 246
vice-gerent of God 20, 22, 26
Heraclius senior, father of the Emperor Heraclius 144, 203, 423, 439
Heraclius the New Constantine 18–19, 89, 249, 256, 265, 281, 475
Heraclonas 249, 265, 281, 297, 475
herbad 169
Hermolaos 156
Herod 61
Herodotus 206
Hesiod 61
Hexapolis 310
Hezekiah 91
Hierapolis 95, 169; *see also* Manbij
Hieria 20
Hijaz 24, 31, 209, 366, 373, 383–4, 395–7, 399, 401–2, 410, 412, 415–17, 425–6, 428, 441, 446–8, 451–2, 454–6, 459, 461, 464–5, 468, 472, 495, 519, 521, 528–9
hijra 87, 203, 209–10, 236, 299, 340, 357, 363–4, 369, 371, 380, 392, 401, 405–6, 408, 412–14, 416, 418, 427–8, 454–5, 460, 528; *see also under* Muhammad
Hims 338, 504; *see also* Emesa
Himyar 364, 396–7, 414, 441, 448, 451
Hippolytus 60, 62, 107
Hira 76, 101, 130, 177, 214, 329, 337, 352, 368, 374–5, 382, 388, 438, 468, 471
historical traditions, Islamic 329, 348
arrangement 361–3, 365–6
chronological accuracy 375–8, 389–90
chronological errors, serious 375, 381, 383, 386, 390
collection 361–3
deformation, deliberate 360–1, 373–4, 380–1
isnads 359–61
narrative, core 363–5, 428
transmission 371–2, 394
transmutation, involuntary 359–60, 372, 407, 427–8
writing, role of 359, 426
history
and faith 170–1
annalistic format 37, 39, 43–4, 59
antiquarian 141–2
authorial self-effacement 421
classicism 17, 141, 420
dark hole in 151
digressions 25, 143
documents 67–9, 191, 421–3
eschatological fears 421–2
Islamic
categories 426
compendious 426
democratization 394, 427
development 361–3, 365–6
personalities and politics 518
scholarship 359–61, 426–8
literary display 424
Old Testament parallels 421
present, influence of 145
relations with other genres 425
speeches 25, 91–2, 97, 99, 143, 350
tabloid material 130–1, 388–9, 424, 427–8
universal history 38, 424
History of Heraclius 72
History of Khosrov 103, 105, 113, 120–1, 123–6, 128–9, 132–6, 144, 151, 162, 209–10, 214–15, 217–18, 220–2, 254, 261, 299, 327, 334, 341, 348, 351, 368, 373, 376, 380, 382, 385, 387, 421, 423–4, 430, 434, 476, 479, 482; *see also* ps.Sebeos
authorship 72–3
Bible, influence of 73, 90–1, 99
chronological indicators 87–8, 97–9
detachment 79, 92–3
documents, use of 73, 80–1
editorial confusion 88–90, 99
eschatological apprehension 74–5, 93, 100
historical causation 92
Khwadaynamag, use of 82–3, 88, 94–6, 100
manuscript tradition 71–2
scope 74–9, 100
sources 80–6
speeches 91–2, 97, 99
History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria 314
author 315–16
sources used 315–16

George, monk and archdeacon, work of 316–17
chronology 320
contemporary church history 321–3
coverage 317–20
life 315–17, 321
History to 682 162, 178, 214, 218, 223, 225, 255, 306, 313, 327, 329, 334, 341, 348, 351, 374, 387, 423–4, 431, 491
Albanian narrative 109–10, 121–3
components 108–9
date of compilation 109–13
editing 122–4
eschatological anxiety 110–11
Eulogy of Juansher 108, 111–12, 121, 123, 125–7
History of Khosrov, awareness of 123–4
Khwadaynamag, material from 121
Life of Israyel 108–9, 111–12, 121, 123
style 111
History to 720 259–60, 262–5, 295–6, 299–300, 302–8
anecdotes 259
authorship 259, 306–8
critique of Justinian II 304–7, 309
historical worth 259–60, 264
blockade of Constantinople 262
breaking of treaty by Justinian II 263
scope 257–8
sources 258–9
Hnanishnoʿ Bar Sarushweh 325
Holy Land 380, 466, 474, 498, 528–9
Holy Places 174, 178
Holy Sepulchre, church of 339, 498
Homer 61, 306
Honorius, bishop of Canterbury 281
Honorius I, pope 281
Hormizd IV 75, 82, 128, 133, 334, 345
Hormizdan 375–6
Hormizdas 297
houri 403
Hudaybiya, *see under* Muhammad
Hujr b. ʿAdi 388
Hums 399
Hunayn 356, 415
Huns 55–6, 245, 255, 265, 490
Huns of north Caucasus 104, 109, 112–13, 119, 120, 123, 128, 137
Husayn 222, 228, 232, 380, 386, 418, 482–3, 488
Hyrcania 344; *see also* Gurgan

Iberia (Georgia) 102, 114, 117, 123, 221, 228, 304, 310, 377–8, 436, 443, 480
Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ *see* ʿAbdallah b. al-Muqaffaʿ
Ibn al-Nadim 404
Ibn Qutayba 342
Ibn al-Zubayr 228–9, 321, 386, 393
Ibn Hisham 355, 362, 370, 402–3, 519
Ibn Ishaq 355, 362, 365, 367, 370, 373, 375, 398–400, 402–4, 408, 411, 417, 519
iconoclasts 269
ilaf 395, 399
Iliad 198
illustris 127
Incarnation 37–8, 53
India 343, 515, 526
Indian Ocean 401
Indians (Arabs) 168
indictions 37, 63–4, 66, 186
Iran 82, 137, 226, 236, 304, 314, 336, 340, 342–3, 348–9, 351–2, 367, 371, 376, 385, 419, 462–3, 478, 480, 497–8, 502, 506, 518, 526; *see also* Persia
Arab conquest, *see under* warfare
Iraq 135, 228, 314, 330, 337, 340, 367, 385, 391, 393–4, 426, 428, 481–2, 488, 497–9, 502, 520, 529
Irene, empress 239, 241
Isaac 60, 414
Isaac, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 320
Isaac, leading Carthaginian Jew 155
Isauria 298, 389
Isfahan 336, 344, 376, 440
*ishkhan Hayots*ʿ 96
Ishmael 129, 399, 413–14, 457, 482
Ishoʿbarnun, Nestorian catholicos 325
Ishoʿdnah, metropolitan of Basra 326–7, 331
Book of Chastity 326–7
ecclesiastical history 326
Ishoʿyahb II, Nestorian catholicos 327, 347
Ishoʿyahb III, Nestorian catholicos 324–5
Ishoʿyahb IV, Nestorian catholicos 325
Isidore of Seville 433
Islam
austere monotheism 407, 450–1, 516
Beduin values, challenge to 452–3
bleak cosmology 407, 448, 450–1
declaration of 499, 512–13
dissemination 321–3
divine sanction 189
era 87, 328
historical traditions 177
imperial drive 510, 516, 520, 526–7, 529–30
inclusiveness 177–8
individual responsibility 449–50
martyrdom 447
osmosis, resistance to 462

Islam (*cont.*)
  state 178, 392–3, 507
  submission of believer 407, 451, 463
isnad 359–62, 365, 367, 427
Israel 61
Israyel, bishop 104, 137
  Huns, mission to 109, 112–13
  Jerusalem relics, discovery of 108–9, 111
Istakhr 376, 385
Italy 139, 150, 154, 225–6, 430, 432–3, 476, 485–6, 507
iwan 514
'Iyad 297

Jabiya 211, 338, 496, 502–4; *see also* Gabitha
Jacob 60
Jacobites 176, 195, 197, 230–1, 326, 330, 382; *see also* Monophysites
Jacob, Jewish convert to Christianity 155–7
Jacob of Edessa 62–3, 176
Jalula' 214, 468–9
Jar 470
Jason 32
Jayy 376
Jazira 371, 496, 498; *see also* Mesopotamia, north
Jazirat ibn 'Umar (Cizre) 324
Jebel Druze/Jebel Hawran 213
Jericho 168, 526
Jerusalem 77, 85, 109, 111, 150, 165–7, 261, 333, 337–40, 390, 441, 466, 482, 494, 522
  al–'Aqsa mosque 298
  bastion of Chalcedonianism 173
  capture by Arabs, authorized version 374, 380–1
  capture by Persians (614) 65–6, 68, 89, 101, 122, 136, 140, 172, 174, 200, 202, 245, 251, 283, 335, 422, 439, 526
    atrocities 165, 203
    damage 164, 166
    date 164, 202
    death-toll 167
    emergency aid 180, 190
  cult site 164, 177–8, 381
  deportations 164–6, 190
  Mary, tomb of 178, 191
  Persian occupation 81, 130
  pogrom (614) 100, 174
  qibla 413, 456, 528
  Resurrection, church of 166
  threatened (634) 173, 381, 466
  True Cross, restoration of 24–5, 32, 41, 76, 96, 205, 254, 294
  'Umar, visit of 173–4, 215–16, 232, 234, 297, 328–9, 338, 341, 381, 474
Jews 63, 85, 98, 146, 152, 155–7, 177, 215, 331, 340–1, 380, 414
  Galilee 335, 504
  Jerusalem 174, 203, 231, 335, 522
  Medina 409–10, 416, 428, 454, 456
  Tiberias 337
jihad 176, 463, 508, 515, 527
John, archbishop of Thessalonica 152–3
John, Armenian catholicos (Chalcedonian) 93
John Catholicos, historian 71
John III, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 316
John, Cypriot priest 180–1
John, governor of Damietta, prefect of Lower Egypt 186–8
John, Jerusalem notable 166
John Lydus 142
John Moschus 171–2, 179
John of Antioch 140, 143, 182–3, 429, 467
  authorship 140, 142
  classicism 141–2
  continuation 141–2, 276, 278, 281, 284, 308
  second continuation 247–51, 255–6, 259–60, 263, 265, 276–8, 282, 295–7
    date of composition 248
    historical worth 252–3, 255–6, 263
    scope 248, 253–5
    sources 252–3
    views 248
  sources 140, 142
  transmission of fragments 141
John of Biclar 432–3
John of Epiphania 144
John of Nikiu 70, 135, 248–9, 296, 316, 318, 341, 423–4, 434
  career 182
  chronicle 186
    Arab conquest of Egypt 185–9
    scope 182–4, 189
    sources 182–3, 248–9
    transmission 184–5
John of Samnud, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 182
John Pitzigaudius 262
Jordan, river 101, 338, 465–6, 472
Joseph, leading Carthaginian Jew 155
Juansher 104, 137, 178, 468
  appointments 116–17
  assassination 109, 112, 119–20, 491
  Damascus, visits to 108, 119, 225, 489–90
  Eulogy of 108, 519
  Sasanian service 115–17, 125

secession 117, 125
submission to Romans 118, 485
Judaea 494
Judaism 396
Julian 39, 61, 467
Justin I 142
Justin II 59, 144, 328, 423
Justinian 39–40, 59, 142, 316, 437
Justinian II 207, 228–9, 235–6, 257, 259–60, 263–6, 297, 299–300, 304–7, 309–11, 320, 322, 389, 487, 496, 498–500, 508–9, 511
Justinian, son of Germanus 145
Justus, Jew from Ptolemais 155–6

Ka'ba 132, 135, 209, 229, 395, 397–9, 410, 412–14, 416–17, 452–3, 456–9, 528
Ka'b b. Malik 400
Kalb 496
Karbala 222, 232, 380, 386–7, 403, 418, 483
Karbita 384–5
Kalila wa-Dimna 341
Kavad I 343
Kavad Shiroe 49, 68, 84, 96–7, 115, 200, 205–6, 245, 287, 290, 324, 328, 336–7, 347, 351–2, 369, 444, 523
Kayanis 342–3
khabar 365; *see also akhbar*
Khadijah 400, 405, 408
khagan
of Avars 46, 147, 253, 255
of Khazars 301
of Turks 200, 245
Khalab (Aleppo) 95
Khalid b. al-Walid 132, 337, 373–4, 458, 465–6, 473, 521, 527–8
Kharijites 384, 386, 388, 393, 434, 481, 498
Khasraj 453
Khaybar 399, 414, 458, 465
Khazars 100, 113, 119, 123, 126, 128, 137, 200, 205, 207, 229, 257–8, 301, 305, 336, 378, 389, 434, 444, 462, 489–90, 496, 515, 518
al-Khirrit b. Rashid 384, 388
Khorokhazat 117–18, 125
Khosrov 72, 84; *see also* Khusro II Parvez
Khurasan 101, 311, 344, 349, 352, 365, 371, 376, 378, 387, 440, 470, 474, 480, 524
Khusro I Anushirvan 63, 66, 75, 122, 145, 334, 343–5, 396, 398
Khusro II Parvez 26, 66, 74–5, 78, 82, 97, 100, 108, 129–30, 134, 138, 169, 174, 203–5, 231, 246–7, 290, 317, 326–8, 330, 333, 335–6, 340, 345, 347–8, 350, 368–9, 421, 423, 436–40, 442–5, 473, 505, 521; *see also* Khosrov
confrontation with Bahram Chobin 349–50, 352
death 66, 145, 200, 310, 325, 347, 368
deposition 22–3, 48, 66, 68–9, 114–15, 121, 123–5, 245, 310, 337, 345–6, 350, 368–9, 443, 523
flight from Dastagerd 205, 287, 309, 367
Heraclius, ultimatum to 91, 422
image in *Khwadaynamag* 345–7
N 'uman, relations with 131, 136, 368, 438–9
restoration 66, 83, 94–5, 133, 144–6, 325, 334, 346
Senate, letter from 45, 67, 92, 440
Turks, correspondence with 111, 113–14, 122, 125
Khuzro III 348
Khuzistan 85–6, 135, 344, 348, 371, 474, 478, 498, 524
Khuzistan Chronicle 71, 213, 314, 329, 424, 434
continuation 131–2, 134–5
date 129
editing 129–30
manuscript 128
scope and content 128–9
tabloid character 130–3
Khwadaynamag ('Book of Lords') 82–4, 86, 88, 94–6, 100, 217, 314, 325, 327, 329, 367–8, 384, 388, 393, 397, 440; *see also under* Eutychius, *History of Khosrov*, *History to 682*, *Shahname*
Khusro II and subsequent troubles 346–8
oral material 342–3
preoccupation with personalities and good government 345–6
scope 343–5
transmission 341–2, 349
written version 343
Kinda 397, 453
kingship 177–8
Kirman 344, 376–8, 387, 389
Komitas, Armenian catholicos 81, 86, 97
korasenoi 495
Kuban, river 119
Kuber 153
Kubrat 245–6, 255, 265
Kufa 132, 135, 137, 177, 221, 228, 367, 382, 384, 386, 388, 393, 498, 502
Kura, river 89, 105, 119, 489
Kurds 384–5, 482

Lakhm 65, 130, 136, 177, 329–30, 368, 398, 437–9, 441, 445, 447, 471, 521
Lapithus 220
Last Days 149, 360, 400, 421, 445, 462, 464
Last Judgement 178, 400, 406, 448–9
Lateran 158, 160–1
Lateran Council (649) 431
Latin 432
Latin Christendom 515
Laz 309
Łazar Parpets'i 78
Lazica 162, 311, 500
Lebanon 235–6, 257, 262, 303, 310, 390, 497, 515, 518
  Mount 227, 263, 494
Lent 59, 64
Leo III, emperor 243, 258–9, 264, 266, 300, 306, 308, 311, 391, 509–10, 512
Leo IV, emperor 241, 243, 270
Leo V, emperor 271–2
Leo Bucoleon 158
Leontius, emperor 257–9, 266, 306, 311, 320, 500, 508
letters 59
  Modestus-Komitas correspondence 81
  Senate to Khusro II (615) 45, 67
Łewond 431
Liber Pontificalis 126, n.46, 155, 236, 430, 432, 434
Long Wall 46, 68, 148, 253
Lycia 208, 218, 227, 234–5, 262, 298, 302–4, 310, 319, 377, 390, 493–4

Ma'add 214, 397
Maccabees 91
al-Mada'in 374–5, 388
al-Mada'ini 365
al-Mas'udi 365, 398
Maeander river 484
Maghreb 301
magister militum 484
Mahbub, son of Constantine the Byzantine, *see* Agapius
al-Mahdi, caliph 197–8
Mahmud of Ghazna 349, 351
Mahra 465
Makhzum 405, 409
Makran 344
Malabar coast 526
Malalas, John 38–40, 42, 56, 140, 142, 182–3, 273, 313
Mamila 335
Manbij 196; *see also* Hierapolis
Manichaeans/Manichaeism 131, 341
Manuel 214, 296; *see also* Marianus
Manuf 187
Marcellinus Comes 40
Marcus Aurelius 142
Mardaites 227, 235–6, 263, 303–4, 306, 310, 390, 494–5, 497–8, 500, 505, 510, 518
Mardin 64–5
Mar Emmeh, Nestorian catholicos 129, 131
Mareotis 185
Mariam, daughter of Maurice 335
Mariam, wife of Grigor 127
Marianus 262; *see also* Manuel
Maria, wife of Khusro II 347, 352
Marj al-Rum 373
Marj Rahit 393
Marmara, Sea of 270, 510
Maronite Chronicle 70, 151, 164, 222, 382, 423–4, 434
  Arabs, information about 176–8
  date 176
  manuscript 175
  scope 175–6
Maronites 175–6, 197, 230–1, 382; *see also* Monotheletism
Martin I, pope 158, 160–2, 190, 431, 479
Martina 34, 89, 244, 246, 249, 252–3, 256, 265, 281–2, 297, 475
Martyropolis 145
Marwan b. al-Hakam, caliph 228, 322, 496–7
marzban 97, 330
Maslama 391, 509
Masruq, son of Abraha 398
Masts, battle of 377
al-Mas'udi 342
Matenadaran, Erevan 72
matn 360
Maurice, emperor 40–1, 53, 63, 66, 75, 92–4, 133, 138, 142–4, 183, 195, 200–1, 276, 328, 333–5, 340, 423, 425, 436–7
Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrij 315–16
Maximus Confessor 158–62, 173, 190–1, 225, 231, 264, 319, 425, 429, 431, 485
Maximus Planudes 141
Mazdakite movement 345
Mecca 164, 361–4, 370, 386, 393, 397–402, 404, 407–8, 412–16, 428, 453–60, 464, 496, 499, 513, 520
  alliances, system of 408–11, 455–6, 465
  commerce 399–401, 416–17, 452
  elite 74, 402, 405, 482
  location 399, 406, 445, 451–2

regional hegemony 383, 395, 399, 446, 448, 452–3, 455–6, 472
sanctuary 135, 380, 399, 412–13, 429, 452–3
statecraft 459, 471, 528–9
Media 77, 85, 101–2, 116, 125, 156, 344, 376, 378, 443, 467, 470, 480, 485, 497, 525
Medina 101, 175, 178, 222, 228, 233, 235–6, 328, 337, 356, 363–4, 380, 382–3, 386, 388, 400, 406, 408–12, 414–17, 428, 446, 453–60, 465, 470–1, 495–6, 520; *see also* Yathrib
Megas Agros, monastery 270–1, 275
Melchisedech 160
Melitene 145, 224, 311, 489
Melkite (Chalcedonian) 196, 331–3, 338
Menander Protector 143
Menas, prefect of Lower Egypt 188
Menuthis 172
Merv 129, 131, 217, 325, 336, 371, 502
Merv-ar-Rud 377
Mesene 318, 344
Mesopotamia
north (Roman) 97, 200, 202, 205, 210, 228, 232, 235, 297, 333, 348, 367, 371, 436–7, 441; *see also* Jazira
Persian 63, 66, 68, 76, 90, 101, 104, 114–15, 117, 122, 125, 128–9, 133, 136, 157, 165, 170, 210, 215, 226, 285, 326, 328–9, 336, 344, 348, 352, 373–6, 381, 438, 443, 445, 465, 474, 478, 521–3, 526, 529
Arab conquest, *see under* warfare
Messiah 155, 157
Methodius, patriarch of Constantinople 269
Michael the Syrian 195–9, 211–12, 224,
mihrab 513
Mihrakan 104
Miracula S. Demetrii 152–4, 299, 423, 425, 430, 432
Misr 319; *see also* Fustat
Mistheia 266, 311, 509
Mkhitar Gosh 106
Modestus, abbot of St. Theodosius, patriarch of Jerusalem 81, 86, 167, 169–70, 173, 245, 251, 337
Mongolia 436
Mongols 515
Monoenergism 173
Monophysitism/Monophysites 23, 32, 62–3, 68, 73, 78, 80, 131, 134, 158–9, 175, 179, 197, 201–2, 316, 321, 339, 445, 522, 524; *see also* Jacobites
Monotheletism/Monotheletes 157–62, 175–6, 197, 248, 258, 299, 302, 422, 429, 431; *see also* Maronites
Monte Cassino 432
Mopsuestia 311, 508
Moses 21–2, 61
mosque, design 513–14
Mosul 324, 389, 498
Mother of God 22, 47
Mount of Olives 173
Mount Sinai 172
Movses, Albanian catholicos 106–7
Movses Daskhurants'i 69, 71, 82, 95–6, 105–6, 424
History of Caucasian Albania; *see also* *History to 682*
authorship 105–6
core of 7th century material 106, 108–113
editing 107–9, 111–12
partisanship 105, 120
scope 103–6
sources 106–7
Movses Khorenats'i 107
Mren 96
Mu'awiya 93, 162, 208, 224–5, 263, 266, 298, 310, 494–5, 525
caliphate 96, 104, 121, 128, 136–7, 366, 388–9, 393, 488, 529
civil war and victory 74, 102, 221, 235, 382–6, 481–3, 488, 512
death 110, 235, 495
Hira ceremony 177
inquiry into Christianity (659) 176
investiture as caliph 177–8, 190–1, 434, 482, 505
Mediterranean policy 153, 207, 218–21, 225–7, 234–5, 303–4, 308, 377, 389–90, 461, 477–81, 486–94, 518–19
Syria, governor of 297, 382, 474, 481, 487, 493
Mu'awiya II 496
muhajirun 361, 408, 461, 464, 480
Muhammad 31, 63, 76, 85, 87, 98, 107, 129, 135, 157, 206, 208–10, 230, 232–6, 295, 323, 325, 327, 337, 340, 355–66, 369–70, 382–4, 394–5, 398–9, 403–18, 425–8, 433–4, 438, 441, 445–61, 463–5, 470, 481, 499, 506, 514, 516, 518–21, 523, 525–9
Arabia, unification of 101, 458–60
armed struggle 428, 455–6
asylum, search for 453–4

Muhammad (*cont.*)
childhood 405
confrontation with Mecca 408–10
Constitution of Medina 409, 417, 428, 454, 519
eschatological fear 406, 422, 445–6, 449, 464
failures 416, 418
family 405
hijra 408
Hudaybiya negotiations 364, 369–70, 383, 404, 410–14, 428–9, 456–8, 471, 528–9
intermediary between God and man 456
Jews, relations with 428
Meccan *Anschluss* 414–16, 458–9
monotheist ideas in circulation 448
Night Journey 380
north, awareness of, connections with 446–8, 520–1
Old Testament paradigm 407, 417
opposition 416
prophetic career 405–8
Muhammad, brother of ʿAbd al-Malik 228
Mukhtar b. Abi ʿUbayd 228, 393, 497–8
al-Mundhir 65
al-Muqawqas 339–40
muruwa ethos 452–3
Musaylima 415, 465
Musheł Mamikonean 75, 83, 86, 92, 484
Muslims 85, 119
al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllifah 388
Mu'ta 230, 414, 447
al-Mutawakkil, caliph 367
al-Muthanna 375
Mžež 225–6, 310, 433, 491–2

an-Nadir 409
Nahrawan canal 310, 350, 443
Nahya 315
Najran 325, 396–7
Nakhchawan 377, 475, 482
Nakhlah 455
Naples 485
Naqsh-i Rustam 344
Narses 201, 233, 437
Nasrids 130–1, 329
Nativity 176
Nativity of Mother of God 147
Nebuchadnezzar 183
Negev 373, 465
Nerses, Armenian catholicos 77, 93, 97, 126, 485
Nestorians 23, 62, 134, 159, 522; *see also* Chaldaean church
catholicos 130–1
church 128–9, 133, 325, 328–30
New Lavra 172
news bulletins 50–2, 59, 67
New Testament 43, 61, 209, 332, 355, 453
Nicaea 60, 510
Nicaea II, Council of 238, 271
Nicene faith 520, 523
Nicephorus I, emperor 237, 239, 269
Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople 215, 231, 295–7, 300, 308–9, 319, 424–5, 433
editorial work 250–1, 264
life 238–40
Breviarium 66, 149, 318
classicism 240, 242
date 242–4, 249
errors 245–6
manuscripts 241–2
scope 240–1, 244–6, 256–8, 260–1, 264
sources 247–8, 252–3, 259–62, 487
Nicephorus II Phocas, emperor 511
Nicetas, cousin of Heraclius 150, 203, 244, 321
Nicomedia 510
Nihawand 214, 348, 352, 371, 376, 470, 524
Nika Riot 39
Nikiu 180, 183–5, 187–8, 317, 477
Nile, river 138, 172, 180, 186–8, 341, 440, 469
Nineveh 84, 91, 95, 245–6, 287, 309, 443
Ninus 61
Nishapur 336, 349, 376
Nisibis 330
Noah 22, 32, 60
Nonnus 25
Nuʿman 130–1, 136, 325, 329, 368, 438

Obsequium 484–5; *see also* Opsikion
Odysseus 32
oikoumene 168
Old Lavra, Palestine 159
Old Testament 28, 38, 43, 56, 60–1, 74, 90–1, 209, 355, 358, 407, 421, 424
Olympiads 37
Olympius, exarch of Italy 158
Oman 465
Onogundurs 245–6, 255, 265
opsikion 220
Opsikion 266, 310; *see also* Obsequium
Oriens 484
Origenist 159, 161
Osama b. Laden 389
Osrhoene 210–11, 214, 216, 234, 297
Ostrogoths 476

Oxus river 462
Oxyrhyncus 186–8, 318, 469

pagarch 504
Palestine 135, 203, 208, 226, 230, 274, 295, 303–4, 333, 337, 339, 340–1, 367, 382, 401, 445, 447, 451, 494, 497, 501–4, 519, 521–2; *see also* Filastin
  ancestral land of Jews and Arabs 380
  Arab conquest, *see under warfare*
  communal troubles 155–7
  Persian invasion 156, 368, 439–40
  Persian occupation 164, 166, 168, 169–72, 440
  relief effort 180, 190
  wine 180
Palmyra 468
Pamphylia 223, 262
Pannonia 243
Paphlagonia 177
Paradise 145, 156, 208–10, 295, 388, 394, 447, 464
P'artaw 89, 113–14, 117, 119, 121–2, 136–7, 491
Parthians 56, 105, 342
Pasagnathes 220
Pasargadae 344
Passover 38
Paul, patriarch of Constantinople 249, 253, 266
Paul the Deacon 432–4
P'aytakaran 84, 89
Pentapolis 188, 226, 318, 470, 477, 486
Perbund 153–4
Pergamum 176, 259, 266, 311, 484, 509
Peroz 334, 343–4
Peroz II 348
Persarmenia 301, 436–7, 478
persecution of Christians 321–4
Persepolis 344
Perseus 22, 32
Persia 21, 41, 145, 167, 201, 287, 294, 297, 344, 348, 447, 501, 505, 508; *see also* Fars and Iran
  Arab conquest, *see under* warfare
Persian Gulf 470
Persians 46, 128
Peter, abbot of Beyt 'Abé 325
Peter, exarch of Africa 160
Peter Mongus, patriarch of Alexandria 315
Pharan, monastery of 171
Pharaoh 21
Pharos, harbour of 180
Philippicus, emperor 241, 243, 258, 260, 266, 280, 300, 311, 320, 509
Phineas 32, 147
Phocas, emperor 88, 142, 150, 154, 179, 201, 206, 233, 244, 275–6, 278, 281–2, 284, 308, 340, 433, 437, 439
  deposition and death 140, 185, 248, 335–6
  factional violence 19, 23, 155–6, 274
  harsh rule 275, 280
  seizure of power 17, 50, 66, 98, 145, 200, 203, 274, 326, 328, 335, 368, 436
Phoenicia 172
Phoenix 218, 221, 234, 261, 479
Photius, exarch of Italy 150
Photius, patriarch of Constantinople 242
P'ilon Tirakats'i 431
Pishdadis 342–3
plague 40, 59
Plato, Studite 239
poetry
  in *sira* 402–4
  pre-Islamic 397
poll-tax 323, 331, 339–40, 486; *see also andrismos*
Pompey 476
Pontus 223
Pratum Spirituale 172
prefect of city 158, 160
Priene 484
Priscus, general 144, 245, 423
Procopius, ambassador 220
Procopius, historian 66, 142, 242, 314
propaganda
  Roman 143, 152, 165–6, 191, 317, 320, 433
  Persian 81
Prophet, *see* Muhammad
Providence, God's providential scheme 36, 92
psogos 259
Ps.Sebeos 55, 66, 116, 123; *see also History of Khosrov*
Ptolemais 155
Pylae 20
Pyrenees 515
Pyrrhus, patriarch of Constantinople 160, 242, 246, 248–9, 265

Qadisiyya 85, 116–17, 126, 137, 214, 297, 328–9, 348, 351–2, 371, 374–5, 381, 468, 471, 524, 527
qasida 404, 419, 425, 472
Qatar 130
Qatari 132
Qaynuqa' 409
Qayrawan 389, 491, 502
Qaysi 496–8
Qedar monastery 64

qibla 413, 416, 456
Qinnasrin 338
qisa 364, 425
Qumis 376
Qur'an 31, 135, 156, 209–10, 359, 361, 366, 388, 400, 402, 404, 406, 412, 416–17, 425, 428, 446, 448, 453, 457, 482, 506, 519–21
  acts of Prophet, absence of 355
  ahistorical 355–6
  edition of 425–6
  exegesis 407
  historical examples 364–5
  language 356
  last Persian-Roman war, reference to 368–9
  speech acts 356–7
  suras, chronology of 357
  third revelation 355
  writing down 356
Quraysh 208, 352, 364, 383, 399, 403, 405, 409–15, 417–18, 441, 446, 450–9, 461, 464, 471, 474, 480, 482, 495, 505, 526, 528–9
Qurayzah 409
qurra' 388

Rabba 98
Rahzadh 95, 125, 136, 245–7, 287, 309, 367
Rayy 169, 367, 376, 440
Red Sea 115, 188, 469
referendarius 18
Resurrection 448
Rhodes 65, 156, 200, 218, 221, 234, 261, 299, 303, 389, 391, 442, 479, 493
ridda 361, 374, 415, 472, 521, 526, 528
Romance of Bahram Chobin 350
Romance of Khusro and Shirin 350
Roman constitution 141
Roman empire 39, 41–2, 61, 93, 151, 156
  economic strain 523
  war weariness 523
Roman-Persian frontier 96
Roman republic 140–2, 264
Rome 21, 57, 140, 155, 170, 172, 293, 432, 485
Romuald 485
Rumiyozan 368
Rustam, legendary warrior 342
Rustam, Sasanian general 116, 125, 137, 348, 351–2, 374, 468

Sabat 388
Sabrisho, Nestorian catholicos 325, 328–9
Sa'd 375
sacellarius 132, 134, 158, 160, 212–13, 215, 231, 234; *see also* Theodore, *sacellarius*
Sa'id ibn Batriq, *see* Eutychius
St. Anastasius 26, 28
  Life of 163, 169–71
  monastery of 170
St. Artemius, miracles of 429
SS. Cyrus and John 172, 180
St. Demetrius 152–3
St. Epiphanius of Salamis 333–4
St. Euthymius 333–4
St. George of Choziba 167–9, 422, 425, 445, 526
St. Hrip'sime, church of 97
St. James 105
St. John the Almsgiver, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria 172, 180, 190, 333–4
  Life 172, 179–80, 335
St. Macarius, monastery 315–16, 319
St. Mark 318
St. Sabas 333–4
  lavra 164–6
St. Sergius 145
St. Sophia 17, 18, 22, 48, 52, 54, 58–9, 475
  Council of 240
St. Spyridon, Life of 180–1, 217, 219
St. Theodore, monastery 315
St. Theodore of Syceon 422, 445, 523
  asceticism 149–50
  career 150–1
  connections 150
  Life
    authorship 149
    content 150–1
    historical worth 149–51
    organisation 149–50
    sources 149–50
St. Theodosius, monastery of 169, 171–2
Sakastan 344
Samanids 349
Samaria 147
Samaritans 63, 159, 211
Samarra 324
samizdat 161
Samnud 187–8
Samosata 311, 508
San'a' 397
Sardinia 162, 483
Sardis 484
Sariba 336
Sat' 114, 125, 136
Satan 407
Satanic Verses 428

Sawad 371, 467
Sayf b. Dhi Yazan 398
Sayf b. ʿUmar 365, 373, 375
scepticism, Islamicist 519–20
Scipio 22
Scythopolis 227
Sebastopolis (Sulusaray) 112, 257, 263, 266, 311, 500
Sebeos 69, 71–2
Second Coming 110
Seert 323
Seert Chronicle 314, 333, 341, 351, 368, 425, 438
  chronology 328–9
  church history 330
  coverage 324–6, 329
  date 324–5
  Lakhm, material about 329–30
  manuscript 324
  sources 325–7
  Nisibis, disturbances in 330
Seleucid era 202, 207, 328
Seleucus 131
Selymbria 253
Semiramis 61
Senate 45, 67, 146, 158, 160, 249, 297, 430, 440, 473, 475
Sennacherib 91
Sergiopolis 145
Sergius, ambassador to Muʿawiya 224
Sergius, governor of Sicily 261, 266, 311
Serg Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople 17, 22, 24, 26, 34, 41, 47–8, 57–8, 67, 146, 150, 157, 170–1, 173–4, 292
Sergius, patrician 156, 207, 211–12, 234, 295
Sermesiani 153
Seth 60
Seven Sleepers of Ephesus 332
Severus, patriarch of Antioch 23, 62
Shadost, bishop of Tirhan 325
shahada (declaration of faith) 499
shahanshah 48–9, 92, 116, 202, 209, 218, 285, 297, 347, 350, 520, 524–5
Shahen 45, 76, 88, 95, 97, 101, 254, 317, 430
Shahname 314
  composition 348–9
  dramatization 349–50
  embellishment 350–3
  Khwadaynamag, use of 348–9, 352
  Persian-Roman war, omission of 351
  tabloid material 351
Shahrazur 310
Shahrvaraz 46, 63, 65–6, 68, 89, 95, 113, 115, 204–5, 232, 234, 247, 250–1, 265, 287, 325, 335, 347, 350, 368–9, 444, 522
Shapur I 344
Shapur II 344
Shapur, commander of Armeniac theme 224–5, 489
Shi'i 386, 418, 434, 515
  mourning 418
Shirin 347, 350
shura 383–4, 481, 495
Shustar 131–2, 376, 469
Siberia 514
Sicily 162, 226, 258, 266, 298–300, 310–11, 319, 433, 486, 489
Sidon 227, 494
Siffin 384, 388, 481
Simeon, doorkeeper of Qedar monastery 64
Simeon of Beth Garmai 62
Simon I, Coptic patriarch of Alexandria 182, 315–16, 320
Sinai 172, 333, 503
sira 31, 362, 365, 370, 380, 383, 395, 397, 399–400, 402, 404–5, 407–11, 413–14, 416–18, 426, 428, 441, 454, 520–1
  triumphalism 416, 418
  verse, authenticity of 402–4, 417
Sirmium 153
Sisium 508
Sistan 214, 387–8
Siwnikʿ 116–17, 119, 123, 125, 484, 490
skeuophylax 18
Slavs 266, 299, 310–11, 489, 500
  Bithynia settlement 257, 263
  fleet 46
  naval raids 63
  siege of Constantinople 254
  Thessalonica, attacks on 151–3, 190, 442
Smbat Bagratuni 75, 85, 87, n.32, 88, 90, 100–1
Smyrna 176, 227, 235, 302, 310, 493
Sogdia 391, 402, 461–2, 508
  traders 527
Soloi 181, 217, 219
Sophronius 139, 159, 297, 337–8, 474
  John Moschus
    influence of 171
    travels with 171–2
  Maximus, influence on 173
  Monoenergism, combat against 173
  origin 171
  patriarch of Jerusalem (634–9) 173–4, 215
  writings 172, 174

spahbed 116, 118
Spain 301, 429, 432–3, 461, 486, 509
sparapet (of Albania) 116, 137
staurophylax 168
Stephen, Cypriot deacon 180–1
Straits of Gibraltar 461, 509
Strategius 140, 163–7, 317, 335, 422
Suda 17–18, 25, 141, 289–90, 307
Suhayl b. ʿAmr 410
Sulaym 465
Sulayman, caliph 391, 509
Sunni 418, 434, 515
Susa 131–2
Susenyos, Ethiopian emperor 184
Syceon 150
Syllaeum 262
Symeon, Carthaginian Jew 155
Synodicon Orientale 128
Syracuse 119, 126, 224–5, 257, 486, 489, 491–2
Syria 66, 71, 95, 134, 137, 147, 202–3, 219–20, 226, 228, 230, 232, 236, 264, 303–4, 309–10, 322, 330, 333, 339, 341, 365, 367, 381, 388, 390, 393–4, 441, 447, 458, 462, 468, 472, 474, 478–9, 483, 491, 494, 500–3, 505, 508–9, 519, 521–2, 524
  Arab conquest, *see under* warfare
  army 177, 384, 488, 498, 502–3
  commerce 399, 401, 405, 411, 446
  Muʿawiya's governorship 297, 382, 474, 481, 487, 493
  Persian invasion, *see under* warfare, Persian-Roman
  role in first *fitna* 482
  role in second *fitna* 393, 495–7
Syrians 128

al-Tabari 83, 303, 314, 342, 347–8, 351, 355, 365–71, 374, 376–7, 387–91, 393–4, 396–8, 438, 493
  chronological slips 368–9
  discretion 377, 390–1
  life 366–7
  Persian-Roman war, account of 367–9
  religious dissent, preoccupation with 387–8, 393
  tabloid material 388–9
  working methods 367
Tabaristan 352
Tabuk 373, 415, 465
Tacitus 416
tafsir 366
Taʿif 397, 399, 415–16, 453, 455, 459, 465
Takht-i Sulaiman 23, 124, 245
Tale of Vachagan 107
Talha 384
Tamim 465
T'ang 127, 444
tanuter 96
Tarantum (Asia Minor) 311, 508–9
Tarasius, patriarch of Constantinople 237–9, 244, 271
Tardu, khagan 436
Tarentum (Apulia) 485
Taurus 68, 76, 80, 82, 100–1, 205, 207, 304, 369, 437, 483, 509
  Armenian 226, 286, 436, 498
Tayma' 414
Temple Mount 338, 380, 474, 498
Tendunias 187
Tʿeodoros Rshtuni 85–6, 88, 93, 220, 478
ter 96
Terek, river 119
Tʿetals (Hephthalites) 84
al-Thaʿalibi 342
Thaddaeus 105
Thebarmais 309
thema (theme) 483, 489, 509
Thenae 153
Theoderic 463, 476
Theodore Bar Koni 325
Theodore, bishop of Paphos 180–1
Theodore, brother of Heraclius 205, 211–12, 234, 246, 255, 261, 296, 466
Theodore, commander-in-chief, Egypt (640/1–641/2) 189
Theodore, disciple of papal legate Anastasius 162
Theodore, father of Nicephorus 238
Theodore, minister under Phocas 280
Theodore, nephew of Heraclius 246
Theodore, *sacellarius* 296, 310, 467
Theodore, son of Heraclius 265
Theodore, Studite 239, 270–1
Theodore Syncellus 22, 171, 424
  biblical analogies and language 147
  career 146–7
  George of Pisidia, literary interplay with 147
  homily I (on 626 siege) 147
  homily II (on Virgin's Robe) 147–8
Theodoret 175
Theodore Trithyrius 261; *see also* Theodore, *sacellarius*
Theodosiopolis 101, 478
Theodosius, brother of Constans II 176, 223, 382

Theodosius I, emperor 61, 333
Theodosius III, emperor 306, 311
Theodosius, son of Heraclius 253
Theodosius, son of Maurice 41, 133, 136, 202, 266, 326, 437
Theophanes 25, 30, 83, 95, 142, 149, 151, 195–6, 198, 203, 208, 211, 213, 215, 220, 222, 229–32, 244, 249, 259, 262, 264, 313, 319, 367, 391, 424, 433, 487
annalistic format 273, 279, 282–3, 301, 309
bias 269
biographies of 269–72
continuator of George Syncellus 271–4
editorial practice 268, 272–3, 278, 283–4, 295–301, 303–5, 308–9
errors, chronological 279–82
errors, major 302–5
non-classical 268, 308
scope 268, 271, 274–5, 295–7, 299–301
sources 249, 268–9, 271–7, 295–301
Chronicle to 720 299–300, 302–5
George of Pisidia 277, 283
John of Antioch, second continuation 276–7, 297
Official History 277, 284–95
Theophilus of Edessa 276, 295–9, 303–5
Theophanes of Byzantium 397
Theophilus of Edessa 134, 197, 250, 256, 258–60, 262, 264, 274, 276, 278–9, 281–3, 295–300, 302–5, 308–10, 314, 318, 326, 341, 351, 368, 382, 386, 389–90, 423–4, 430, 433, 487
anecdotes 203–4, 206–8, 222, 224
career 197–9
command of languages 198
errors 205
scope of history 198–202, 206–7, 228
views 202, 209
Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria 333
Theophylact Simocatta 66, 94–5, 138, 142, 171, 174, 242, 276, 291–3, 346, 351, 423, 425
career 142–3, 145–6
classicism 143–4
documents, use of 144–5
innovations 144
official attitudes, representative of 145–6
Sergius, patronage by 146
sources 144
speeches 145, 146
Thessalonica 55, 152–3, 190, 266, 299, 310, 335, 432, 442
Thomas Artsruni, historian 71–2
Thomas, corpse-enumerator 167
Thomas I, patriarch of Constantinople 150, 280
Thomas II, patriarch of Constantinople 492
Thomas, priest 64–5, 67
Thrace 153, 161, 484–5, 510
Arab attack 176
Thrakesioi (Thracesian theme army) 484
Thucydides 350, 416
Tiberias 337–8
Tiberius, brother of Constantine IV 302
Tiberius II, emperor 183, 328, 423
Tiberius III, emperor 319, 508; *see also* Apsimar
Tiflis 111, 114–15, 123, 136, 443
Tigris, river 71, 116, 214, 323, 371, 375, 469, 526
Timothy the Cat, patriarch of Alexandria 315–16
Tirhan 325
Tower of Babel 60
Trachonitis 466, 472
Trajan, patrician 307–9, 423, 429, 487, 496–7
Trajan's Canal 188, 469
Transcaucasia 68, 78, 102, 104, 111–20, 122–7, 137, 154, 225–6, 299–300, 376, 378, 387, 429–30, 467, 480, 484–5, 490–1, 502, 525–6
Arab authority 112, 301, 305, 391, 462, 507
Khazar invasion (685) 207, 305, 389, 431, 434, 496–7, 518
military operations in 77–9, 81, 89, 101, 107, 110, 112–15, 124–5, 127, 136, 202, 206, 285, 304, 310–11, 377, 443–4, 474–5, 489, 496–7, 499–500, 508
Transoxiana 207, 301, 387, 515
Trebizond 336
trebuchet 177
Trench, battle of 364, 408
Trdat, king of Armenia 105
Tripoli 208, 217, 234, 298, 479, 501
Troilus 158, 161, 225
Trojan War 140
True Cross 24, 31, 41, 76, 81, 84, 96, 104, 118, 122, 126, 130, 133, 201, 205, 335, 347, 485
deportation 165–6
restoration 174
Trullan Council (680–1) 161
truth, religious 379–80
Tur Abdin 97, 467
Turan 336, 342–4, 376

Turks 55, 93, 100–1, 103–4, 112, 123–4, 127, 190, 200, 205, 245, 251, 336, 343, 351–2, 378, 440, 443–4, 515
  Albania, occupation of 115, 121, 137
  crisis in central Asia 110, 115, 127, 137
  diplomacy 111, 114, 122, 124–5, 136, 277, 443
  empire 397, 437, 520
  ideology 127
  nobles 115
  Seljuk 513
Tus 349
Tyana 258, 260–1, 266, 301, 311, 509, 512
Typos 158, 161
Tyre 170, 227, 335, 494, 504

ʻUbaydallah, son of Ziyad 389, 496–8
Uhud 364, 400, 408, 446, 455
Ukhtanes 72
ʻUmar I, caliph 77, 173, 210, 215–17, 219, 234–6, 297–8, 328, 337–9, 381, 464–6, 470, 474, 488, 528
ʻUmar II, caliph 392–3, 462, 510
Umayya b. Abu'l-Salt 403
Umayyads
  caliphate 120
  court 104
umma 68, 70, 128, 177, 221, 319, 321, 363–4, 366, 370, 373, 378, 380, 382–3, 393, 404–5, 409–12, 416–18, 420, 426–9, 434, 446, 454–7, 459–61, 463–5, 471–2, 474, 481–3, 488–9, 496, 500, 512, 516, 521–2, 525–6, 528–9
ʻumra (Little Pilgrimage) 410, 414, 456, 458, 481
Unogundurs 55
ʻUqba b. Nafiʻ al-Fihri 491–2
al-Urdunn 504
Urnay, king of Albania 105
ʻUrwa b. al-Zubayr 362, 391
Usama, emir of Egypt 316, 323
ʻUthman b. Salih 337, 340–1
ʻUthman, caliph 101, 216, 221–2, 235–6, 356, 378, 383–4, 458, 471, 476, 479–81, 483, 488, 525, 527
Uti 121

Vahan 339; *see also* Baanes
Valaršapat 485
Valentinus 217, 234, 249, 265, 297, 475–6
Valerian, emperor 324
Van, lake 72, 89, 95, 101, 309, 377, 436, 478
Vanakan Vardapet 106
Vandals 476
Varaz-Grigor, ruler of Albania 116
Varaztirotsʻ Bagratuni 97
Varaz-Trdat, ruler of Albania 120
Vardan Balishetsʻi 72
Vaspurakan 377, 436
Veh Ardashir 76, 101, 137, 367, 374–6, 467–8, 524
Venetia 476
Virgin's Robe 147
Viroy, Albanian catholicos 104, 115, 121, 127, 137
Visigoths 434
Vitalian, pope 434, 492

Wadi Habib 315, 319
Wadi l-Qura 414
Wahriz 398
al-Walid, caliph 316, 508–9, 513
al-Waqidi 373, 375, 377
war economy 200
warfare
  Arab-Byzantine
    ʻAbd al-Malik's outward drive 229, 301, 391, 499–501, 508–9
    Arab reverses (early 650s) 378
    Asia Minor, attacks on 126, 175, 191, 218, 223–4, 298, 301, 310–11, 390, 475, 478–80, 489–90, 500, 508–9
    battle for Mediterranean (669–78) 225–7, 302–4, 310, 389–90, 488, 491–4, 500–1
    Constantinople, attacks on, *see under* Constantinople
    Cyprus, attacks on 181, 217–220, 234, 236, 298–9, 371, 377–8, 424, 477–8, 519, 529
    naval war, opening of 474–80
    Transcaucasia, operations in, *see under* Transcaucasia
  Arab conquests 64, 75–7, 85, 100–2, 154, 328–9, 333, 337–8, 461–4, 523–5
    Egypt 71, 76, 185–90, 207, 210, 214–16, 221, 232, 246, 296, 318, 339–40, 371, 376, 469–70, 473–6, 528–9
    Iran/Persia 77, 98, 101, 129, 137, 216–17, 371, 376–7, 469–71, 473, 524, 527
    Khuzistan 76, 128, 131–2, 134, 137, 371, 375–6, 469
    Mesopotamia 63, 66, 68, 101, 115–17, 125, 136, 214, 297, 325, 327, 329, 348, 371, 374–5, 379, 381, 467–9, 471, 473

Palestine 26, 63, 66, 76, 85, 90, 97–8, 101, 117, 132, 135, 173, 207, 210–11, 215, 246, 255, 261, 295–6, 337–8, 371, 373–4, 379, 381, 465–6, 471–2, 483, 524, 527–9
Caesarea (Palestine) 298, 468–9
Syria 76, 97, 117, 132, 134–5, 137, 210–13, 215, 233, 235, 246, 261, 296–7, 299, 338–40, 368, 371, 373–4, 379, 381, 466–7, 471–2, 527–8
Avar-Roman, *see* under Avars and Constantinople
Persian-Roman 75–6, 78–80, 144, 154, 440
Antioch campaign (613) 20, 55, 76, 101, 280, 439
Caesarea (Cappadocia), Persian occupation (611–12) 55, 76, 280, 439
Chalcedon, Shahen's advance to (615) 45, 67, 101, 169, 205, 251, 254, 430, 439
Egypt, Persian invasion (619) 55, 65–6, 68, 200, 202, 205, 280, 317, 440–1
Euphrates, Persian advance to/opening phase (603–10) 55, 65–6, 68, 101, 200, 279–80, 437
Jerusalem, Persian siege (614), *see under* Jerusalem
Persian campaigns of Heraclius (622–8) 20–1, 23, 25, 30, 32–3, 55, 66, 76, 84, 86, 88–9, 99, 101, 113–14, 121–5, 133, 136, 169, 200, 202, 205, 252–3, 274–5, 277, 285–8, 290, 309–10, 317–18, 336, 340, 345–6, 367, 441–4, 523
Persian operations in 623 200, 442
Syria, Persian invasion (610–11) 55, 65–6, 68, 200, 205, 280, 335, 439
Wasit 367, 502

Xerxes 21

yabghu khagan (of Turks) 115
Yahya, son of ʿUthman b. Salih 331, 337
Yamama 373, 415, 465
Yamani 496
al-Yaʿqubi 342, 365, 398
Yarmuk 212–13, 232–4, 261, 296, 339, 371, 373–5, 441, 466, 472
Yathrib 209, 232, 399; *see also* Medina
Yazdgerd I 334
Yazdgerd III 77, 82, 85, 98, 101–2, 115–18, 129, 131, 133, 137, 214, 216–17, 325, 329, 337, 343, 345, 348, 352, 371, 375–8, 444, 470–1, 473, 480, 523–4, 528
Yazdin 130, 133
Yazid, brother of Muʿawiya 474
Yazid I, caliph 224, 228, 235–6, 388, 390, 489, 495–6
Yazid II, caliph 62
Yazid b. Mufarigh 388
Yemen 364, 368, 396–9, 401, 446, 451, 465, 482, 526
Persian conquest 397–8
Yovhannes Senekerim, prince of Albania 107
Yusuf 396

Zacharias, patriarch of Jerusalem 164–5, 167, 190, 245, 335, 422
Zagros mountains 49, 95, 118, 200, 205, 207, 215, 287, 369, 371, 376, 443–4, 467–8, 470, 474
al-Zahir, caliph 324
Zakʿaria, Albanian catholicos 122
Zamzam well 399
Zendan-i Zardosht (Cube of Zoroaster) 344
Ziyad 385, 388–9, 482–3, 488
Zonaras, John 313
Zoroaster 56
Zoroastrianism/Zoroastrian 41, 56, 169, 330, 342–3, 348, 422, 441
al-Zubayr 384, 481
al-Zuhri 356, 362–3, 365, 391, 397, 426
Zvartnotsʿ, church of 97, 485