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CHAPTER 22*a*

THE SASANID MONARCHY

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I. ROMANS AND SASANIDS

A chapter dealing with Iranian feudalism in a distinguished series dedicated
to *The Rise and Fall of the Roman World* bears the title *Iran, Rome's Greatest
Enemy*. This title is more than merely a justification for the inclusion of a
chapter on Iran in a series whose subject is Roman history. It also reflects
a host of fears and prejudices fostered for long centuries in the Roman
world, since the trauma of Crassus' defeat by the Parthians at Carrhae. Not
even extended periods of decline and internal disarray within the Parthian
monarchy, in the course of which it was repeatedly invaded by the Roman
army, could dispel the myth of the uncompromising threat posed by Iran
to the Roman order. The replacement of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty by
a new vigorous one, based in Fars, namely the Sasanid dynasty, at a time
when the Roman empire itself was facing one of its severest crises, only
aggravated its inhabitants' deeply rooted fear of Iran. Ancient writers in the
Roman *oikoumene* passed on this attitude to modern western scholars.[1]

It is the Sasanid bogeyman which has left a deep imprint in modern
historiography. The Sasanid state is widely regarded as a much more cen-
tralized and effective political entity than its Parthian counterpart, with a far
better army. The great pretensions and aspirations of its monarchs are
believed to have been fed by the fervour of religious fanaticism, inspired
by the Zoroastrian priesthood, which is commonly depicted as a well orga-
nized state church. No wonder that such a state posed the gravest threat to
its greatest rival – the other great power of late antiquity.[2] Each of these
accepted beliefs raises a multitude of problems, and a fundamental revision
is called for. Only a few of the more salient points can be dealt with in the
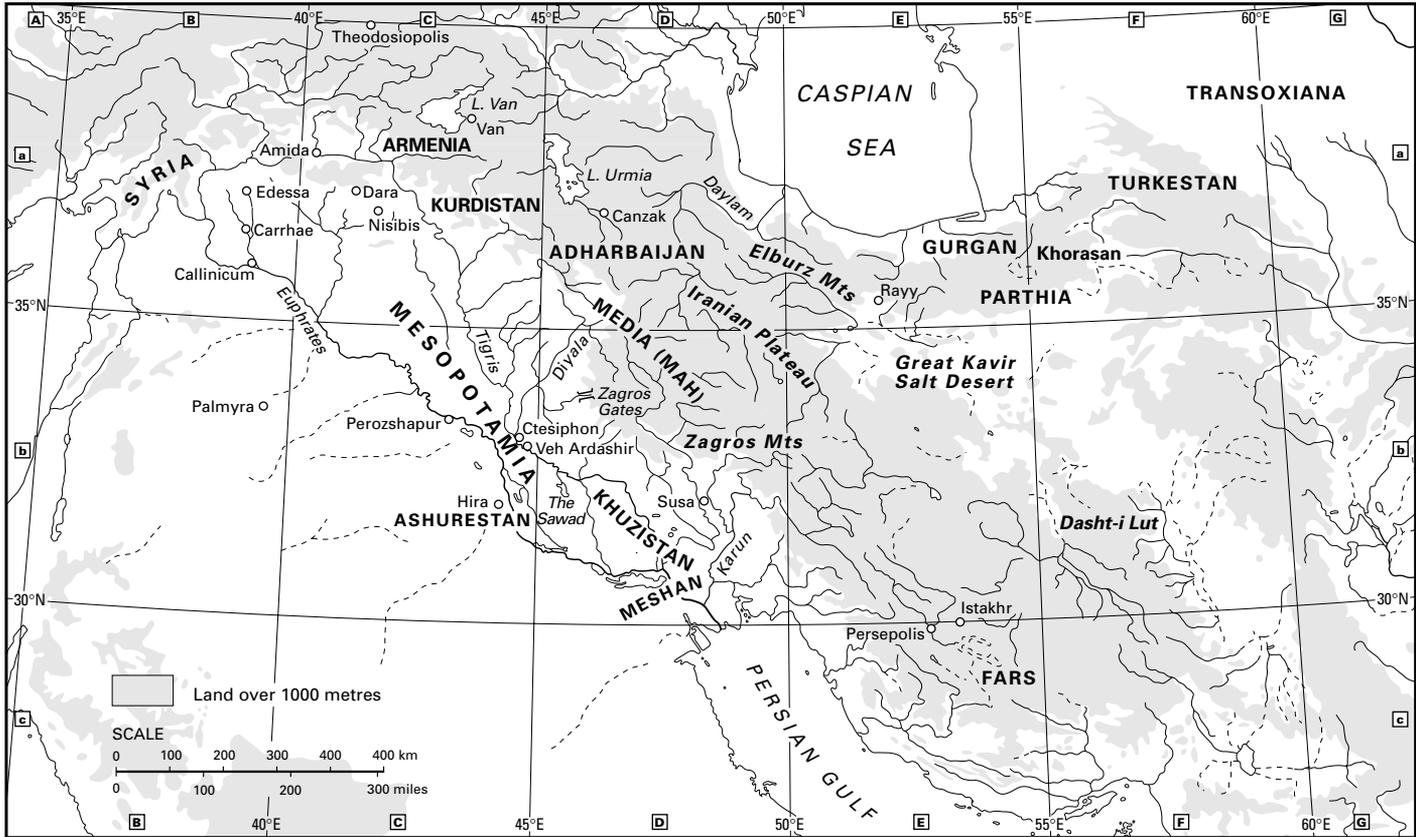present brief survey.

The Sasanid empire embraced two distinct geographical areas, the very
fertile lowlands of Mesopotamia and the Iranian uplands, which were separ-
ated from each other by the mighty Zagros chain that stretched from the

[1] Widengren (1976). In general, see the contributions in Yar-Shater (1983); also Schippmann (1990),
Herrmann (1977), Christensen (1944). There are detailed bibliographic essays in Wiesehöfer (1996)
282–300.   [2] Howard-Johnston (1995); Lee (1993) 15–25.

Kurdistan highlands to the fringes of the Persian Gulf in the south.[3] Mesopotamia, where a complex irrigation system permitted dense settlement, was the economic heart of the Persian realm, whose rich agriculture generated the largest part of the Sasanid state's tax revenues and supported a network of major cities: Ctesiphon, the capital; Veh Ardashir, on the west bank of the Tigris opposite Ctesiphon, which was founded by the first Sasanid monarch; Perozshapur on the Euphrates, which commemorated the site of Shapur I's victory over Gordian and exploited the large number of Roman captives secured then; and Veh Antiok Khusrau, which was a similar foundation by Khusro I to celebrate his capture of Antioch on the Orontes and provide a home for the captives and booty from his successful 540 campaign. By contrast, the Iranian plateau was sparsely settled, with the main centres of habitation clustered around and along the sources of water emerging from the Zagros: rainfall is low, and beyond the reach of rivers and *qanats* (underground water channels) lay the expanse of the Gedrosian Desert in the south-east, where much of Alexander's army had perished in 324 B.C., and the salt desert of the Great Kavir to the north. On the fringes of the Sasanid world were further distinct areas of considerable military importance: the sub-Caucasian zone in the north-west, where Iran competed for influence with Rome among the nobilities of Armenia, Lazica, Iberia and Albania and attempted to control movements across the Caucasus passes, and the wide expanses of Transoxiana, where Iran had to confront its traditional enemies, the succession of nomadic federations of the Central Asian steppes, the Hephthalites or White Huns who dominated the frontier in the fourth and fifth century and the Turks who co-operated with Khusro I in the elimination of their mutual enemy, the Hephthalites, in the 550s and then rapidly emerged as a much more powerful threat during the rest of the sixth century. The vast barrier of the Zagros restricted communications to a limited number of major passes, so that the structural backbone of the empire was simple: from the economic and political heartland of lower Mesopotamia, routes up the Tigris led to the area of conflict with Rome in the north and north-west, while the road to the east crossed the Zagros into Media and then continued along the southern flanks of the Elburz range, another major defining mountain range, towards Khorasan and the frontier.

The Sasanid heartland was located in Fars, the relatively fertile region at the south-western end of the Iranian plateau, where the family combined positions of religious authority (the chief priesthood of the temple of Anahita at Istakhr) and secular power (governorship of Darabjird). After two decades in which a strong local power base was transformed into authority over the Iranian plateau, Ardashir descended to the Mesopotamian lowlands, overthrew the Arsacid monarch and was crowned King of Kings at

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[3] Comprehensive discussion of all aspects of Iranian geography in Fisher (1968).

Map 18 Sasanid Iran

The following labels appear on the map:

35°E · 40°E · 45°E · 50°E · 55°E · 60°E

A · B · C · D · E · F · G

35°N · 30°N

a · b · c

Theodosiopolis

CASPIAN SEA

TRANSOXIANA

L. Van
Van

ARMENIA

Amida

TURKESTAN

Edessa · Dara

KURDISTAN

L. Urmia

Carrhae · Nisibis

Canzak

Daylam

ADHARBAIJAN

Elburz Mts

GURGAN · Khorasan

Callinicum

MEDIA (MAH)

Iranian Plateau

Rayy

PARTHIA

Euphrates

MESOPOTAMIA

Tigris

Great Kavir
Salt Desert

Diyala

Zagros
Gates

Palmyra

Zagros Mts

Perozshapur

Ctesiphon
Veh Ardashir

Dasht-i Lut

Hira

The
Sawad

KHUZISTAN

Susa

ASHURESTAN

Karun

MESHAN

Istakhr

Persepolis

Land over 1000 metres

PERSIAN GULF

FARS

SCALE

0 100 200 300 400 km

0 100 200 300 miles

SYRIA

Ctesiphon in 226. Military success, and in particular conflict with Rome, was an important mechanism for demonstrating the legitimacy of the new regime. The initial thrusts of the two first Sasanid monarchs, Ardashir I (224–40) and Shapur I (240–70), against the Roman east turned out, in the long run, to be little more than a series of wars of plunder: the Romans were defeated three times in the field, with the emperor Valerian being captured at Edessa in 260; the great cities of Nisibis, Carrhae and Antioch were sacked; and ravaging extended into Cappadocia and Cilicia as well as Syria – but there were no permanent gains.[4] Under their immediate successors, aggressive initiative seems to have passed momentarily to the Romans. The conflicts between the two empires at that time brought to the foreground the problem of Armenia, which was to be a major bone of contention for most of the following century. The attempt of king Narseh (293–302) to regain the upper hand ended in humiliating defeat by the Romans in 297, followed by a no less humiliating treaty. The tide was partly reversed during the long reign of Shapur II (309–79). The wars fought between the two powers at the time were largely over contested frontier lands – first and foremost Armenia and northern Mesopotamia. Stability began to emerge after Julian's invasion in 363 permitted the Persians to regain Nisibis and other territories in upper Mesopotamia, and this was reinforced by the treaty between Shapur III (383–8) and Theodosius I in 384, which arranged the division of Armenia.[5]

This ushered in a long period of relative quiet in the relations between the eastern Roman empire and Persia, apart from two brief conflicts, in 421–2 and 440–1. On the first occasion, the dispute was caused by the Roman reception of Christian fugitives, especially from the Arab tribes allied to Persia: Yazdgard I (399–421) had been favourably disposed towards Christians and other minority religious groups within his kingdom, but energetic Christian missionary activity seems eventually to have forced him to permit persecution; an Arab chief, Aspabad, was instructed to prevent the flight of Christian converts to the Romans, but he in fact joined the exodus, converted and, now renamed Peter, became bishop for the wandering tribal groups in the desert.[6] Persian demands for subsidies towards the cost of defending the Caspian passes (the so-called Gates) caused the second conflict, when Yazdgard II (438–57) attempted to exploit Theodosius' concern over the Vandal capture of Carthage. On each occasion Roman armies checked Persian attacks and peace was rapidly restored, with renewed treaties that contained clauses to regulate the alleged origins of the war.[7]

A plausible explanation for the change from persistent warfare in the third and fourth century to peaceful relations in the fifth is provided by the

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[4] Sources in Dodgeon and Lieu (1991) 9–67.
[5] Rubin (1986); Frye in Yar-Shater (1983) 153–70; Blockley (1992) 39–45; Whitby, *Maurice* 197–218.
[6] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* 10, on which see Rubin (1986) 679–81 and Blockley (1992) 199 n. 28. [7] Blockley (1992) 56–61; Frye (1984) 320–1.

other external problems which faced successive rulers: developments in the west and the Balkans, as well as internal problems in Isauria, commanded the attention of the emperor at Constantinople, while Sasanid kings had to contend with the equally serious threat posed by the Hephthalites on their north-east frontier. This Sasanid problem is not regularly reported in our sources. The succession of Greek classicizing historians from Priscus of Panium through to Theophylact Simocatta narrate diplomacy and warfare that involved Romans and Sasanids, but only rarely extend their horizons further east.[8] Sasanid sources are mostly preserved for us through compilations from the Islamic period, of which the most important are the *Annals* of al-Tabari in Arabic and the *Shahnama* or *Book of Kings* of Firdawsi in new Persian. Both date from the tenth century and depend on lost Iranian sources in which anecdotal material had substantially ousted reliable information, so that the resulting narratives are dominated by charming and exotic stories. Though al-Tabari attempted to cut his way through the more sensational of his source material and produce a sober historical narrative, he still incorporated two parallel versions of Sasanid history; it is not safe to trust his information uncritically.[9] Furthermore, these Iranian sources are more informative for the royal court and internal affairs and, like their Roman counterparts, are silent about a difficult frontier relationship in which the Persians were often at a disadvantage. Only for the reign of Peroz (459–84) is there substantial information about Persian–Hephthalite relations, partly because Peroz was defeated in 464/5 when the Roman ambassador Eusebius was accompanying the royal army, partly because two decades later Peroz perished with much of his army in a catastrophic attempt to reverse the previous humiliation.[10]

The death of Peroz was followed by a period of dynastic weakness in Iran: Peroz' brother Valash ruled for four years (484–8) before being overthrown by Peroz' son Kavadh (488–96), who relied on Hephthalite support. Kavadh, however, was in turn ousted by the nobility and replaced by his brother Zamaspes (496–8), but he was returned to power (498–531) with Hephthalite assistance, after marrying the king's daughter. His reign witnessed the rise of the Mazdakite 'movement' (see p. 655 below), which advocated communal rights over property, and perhaps also women; it appears to have received some support from the king, and can be interpreted as an attempt to undermine the entrenched power of the hereditary aristocracy. An indirect consequence of Kavadh's dynastic problems was the resurgence of warfare with Rome: Kavadh undoubtedly needed money to repay the Hephthalites and to enhance his position as supreme patron within Persia, and this led to a request to the Romans for contributions towards the costs

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[8] Discussions in Blockley (1981); Cameron (1969/70); Cameron, *Procopius*; Blockley (1985); Whitby, *Maurice*.   [9] Howard-Johnston (1995) 169–72.   [10] Procop. *Wars* I.3–4.

of defending the Caspian Gates. Anastasius' refusal provided a pretext for
war (502–5), in which Kavadh secured considerable prestige and booty
through the capture of Theodosiopolis and Amida during his first campaign,
whereafter Roman generals gradually stabilized the position.[11]

In the sixth century, Roman–Persian relations are characterized by two
opposite tendencies: the recollection of the relatively harmonious fifth
century, during which elaborate diplomatic practices for managing rela-
tions had emerged, and international rivalry caused both by weaknesses in
the position of the Persian king and by mutual suspicions of each other's
intentions. Towards the end of Kavadh's reign, in 527, war again broke out:
tension was already increasing because of competition for the allegiance of
the sub-Caucasian principalities, where acceptance of Christianity by local
rulers threatened to weaken loyalties to Persia, but the flashpoint came
when Justin I refused to co-operate with Kavadh's plans to ensure the suc-
cession of his third son, Khusro. Overall, the Persians were on the
offensive, but a sequence of invasions failed to result in the capture of any
major Roman city, and two pitched battles, at Dara in 530 and Callinicum
in 531, resulted in one victory for either side. Hostilities were concluded in
the Endless Peace of 532, when the new Persian king, Khusro I (531–79),
accepted a lump sum of 11,000 pounds of gold in lieu of regular contribu-
tions for the defence of the Caucasus.[12]

Peace did not last. Justinian exploited the quiet on his eastern frontier to
launch the reconquest of Africa and Italy, but his startling victories were
brought to Khusro's attention; jealousy fuelled suspicions about Justinian's
long-term intentions, and Khusro exploited a dispute between client Arab
tribes to attack in 540. After spectacular Persian successes in this first cam-
paign, the Romans organized their defences, and after 545 a truce confined
fighting to Lazica. The respective Arab allies continued their own conflict
until in 554 the Ghassanid allies of Rome secured a decisive victory near
Chalcis, in which the Lakhmid king al-Mundhir, the scourge of Roman prov-
inces for the previous half-century, was killed. Peace finally came in 562 with
an agreement that was intended to endure for fifty years; the detailed terms,
which illustrate the range of disputed issues that might provoke conflict, are
preserved in an important fragment of Menander Protector.[13] Peace lasted
for a decade, but on this occasion the Romans were the agressors: Justin II
objected to paying for peace (at the rate of 30,000 *solidi* per year) and believed
that he could count on the support of the Turkish federation in Central Asia,
which had replaced the Hephthalites as Persia's north-eastern neighbours, to
crush their common enemy. Two decades of fighting were concluded when
Khusro I's son and successor, Hormizd (579–90), was overthrown in a palace

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[11] Joshua the Stylite 43–66; Procop. *Wars* 1.7–10; Theophanes 144–9; Zachariah 151–64. Blockley
(1992) 89–96.   [12] Procop. *Wars* 1.11–22; Malalas 427–73.
[13] Procop. *Wars* II; Menander fr. 6.1 (Blockley).

coup; Hormizd's son, Khusro II (590–628), was almost immediately challenged by Vahram, who had gained great glory from defeating the Turks and was the first non-Sasanid to secure the throne. Khusro sought assistance from the emperor Maurice, was reinstated by a Roman army in 591, and peace was again arranged.[14]

The final conflict of the two great rivals of the ancient world broke out in 602, when Khusro took advantage of the murder of his benefactor Maurice and the arrival in Persia of Maurice's eldest son Theodosius (or at least a plausible imitator); Khusro could shed the image of Roman client, present himself as the supporter of international ties of gratitude and friendship, and obtain significant booty and military glory into the bargain. For twenty-five years the conflict ranged across the whole of the near east, from Chalcedon on the Bosphorus to Canzak on the Iranian plateau, until a daring counter-offensive by the emperor Heraclius prompted the Persian nobility to overthrow Khusro in 628.[15] Once more peace was restored, but the defeated Sasanid dynasty lapsed into a bout of rapid turnover of rulers (eight rulers within five years, including, for forty days, the Christian and non-Sasanid Shahvaraz). The last Sasanid ruler, Yazdgard III (633–51), had only just ascended the throne when he had to confront Islamic attacks; the diminution of royal prestige and the weakness of his armies after a quarter of a century of unsuccessful warfare against the Romans made Persia particularly vulnerable, and Yazdgard was forced to flee to the north-east, where he was eventually killed.

Wars and animosity loom large in the record of the relations between Rome and Persia, both of which presented a claim to universal ascendancy. The imprint they have left on the Roman sources tends to obscure the fact that both sides could also exploit a rhetoric of peace and co-operative relations. The Sasanids, who had to contend with a succession of nomadic and semi-nomadic powers along their long continental frontiers, tried to impress on the Romans in their diplomatic dealings that they were defending these frontiers for their mutual benefit. This claim justified repeated demands for diplomatic subsidies, but Sasanid internal propaganda depicted these as tribute, which aggravated Roman resistance to the payments:[16] international prestige was one of the factors that individual Sasanid monarchs used in order to balance the divergent constituencies within their realm and preserve their own supreme position.

II. ROYAL LEGITIMATION

The best evidence for examining Sasanid royal ideology comes from the first century or so of the dynasty, and, although it is possible to detect

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[14] Theophylact I–V; Whitby, *Maurice* 250–304. [15] Howard-Johnston (1994); Stratos (1968).
[16] Rubin (1986); also Braund (1994) 270–1.

developments thereafter, the basic principles apply throughout the regime's history. Shapur I was the first to claim the title King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran, whereas his father, Ardashir, had contented himself with the title King of Kings of Iran only. The legitimation of the new royal dynasty in its own realm was the immediate task that the early Sasanids had to face, and it is to this subject that we ought to turn first. The great official state inscriptions from the early Sasanid period do not conceal the newness of the dynasty. The *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* – a list of the exploits of king Shapur I (240–70), on the so-called Ka'ba of Zardusht (Cube of Zoroaster), an Achaemenid tower at Naqsh-i Rustam, a royal Achaemenid burial area near the ancient capital of Persepolis – traces the royal geneaology back three generations, through his father Ardashir to his grandfather Papak. On the Paikuli inscription, set up by king Narseh (293–302) in commemoration of his successful bid for supreme power and his victory over his nephew Bahram III, there is only one significant addition. The dynasty is described 'the seed of the Sasanids', elucidating to some extent the role of 'the lord Sasan', mentioned in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* as a recipient of an honorary cult, but not explicitly as a forebear of the dynasty. None of the other remaining six inscriptions that allude to the genealogy of the Sasanid kings adds anything of significance.[17]

The great pictures that accompany many of these inscriptions present the key elements of legitimate royal authority: the king and his entourage unseat their rivals in a dramatic joust; foreign enemies demonstrate their submission, including in some scenes the Roman emperor, who arrives at speed to acknowledge Sasanid mastery, kneels before his conqueror or lies prostrate at his feet; and the proper transfer of power at each accession is symbolized by grand ceremonies involving king and court; in some pictures, divine investiture is symbolized by the figure of Ahura Mazda or Anahita handing over a diadem to the king.[18] The monuments present a self-fulfilling legitimation. Supernatural sanction for the Sasanid house is demonstrated by the sequence of royal victories through which the Sasanids have achieved power; royal gratitude for this divine support is displayed by the establishment of a series of ritual fires. It is noticeable that no attempt is made to conceal the totally aggressive character of the king's bellicose activity. This self-glorification in divinely sponsored aggression is repeated three times in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*. According to the ideology enunciated in this document, wars of conquest are the duty of a good king and military success proves legitimacy.[19]

Externally, or at least with regard to the Roman empire, which is the only area for which we have evidence, Sasanid strategies for legitimation were slightly more complex. Victory was still crucial, but warfare ought to have

[17] Back (1978) 284–371 (*Res Gestae*); Huyse (1999); Humbach and Skjaervø (1983) (Paikuli).
[18] Pictures in Ghirshman (1962) 135–201.   [19] Whitby (1994).

some justifiction. In his *Res Gestae*, two of Shapur's three expeditions against the Romans are presented as responses to Roman aggression; one of the three versions of the inscription is in Greek, and its contents were probably proclaimed to the inhabitants of the Roman empire, or to its former inhabitants resettled in Iran.[20] More significantly, three historians writing in the Roman empire – Cassius Dio (LXXX.3.3) and Herodian (VI.2.1–5) from the third century, Ammianus Marcellinus from the fourth (XVII.5.3–8) – record how Sasanid envoys presented territorial demands on the Romans in terms of the revival of the old Achaemenid empire.[21] The repeated Roman refusal to return what rightly belonged to the new dynasty was sufficient justification for war.

If the Achaemenid heritage was important in their western diplomatic dealings, there is no evidence that it was significant for internal legitimation. Although Ardashir and Shapur I chose to glorify themselves at Naqsh-i Rustam, near Persepolis, a site rich in Achaemenid association,[22] the possible connection is not voiced in their public inscriptions. The site was chosen for its monumental and awe-inspiring nature, and there is no evidence that those who beheld these monuments were aware of their specific Achaemenid associations, or indeed of the pristine greatness of the Achaemenids themselves. The modern name of the site, Naqsh-i Rustam (with its reference to the hero of Iranian epic tradition), indicates the extent to which folk memory can msirepresent the true nature of such sites. When Shapur I refers to his ancestors' domain in his *Res Gestae*, this is merely to state that exiles from the Roman empire were settled in Iran on crown lands – specifically in Fars, Khuzistan and Ashurestan. Again, this is not a reminiscence of the Achaemenid empire or a claim to legitimation as their heirs.[23]

It has been alternatively suggested that the Sasanids' claims to legitimation harked back not to the Achaemenids but to the Kayanids, the heroic mythical rulers of Iran long before the historical Achaemenids.[24] However, this hypothesis is not supported in the inscriptions: Shapur I only traced his genealogy back to his grandfather Papak, and did not claim universal kingship before his own reign (he is the first 'King of Kings of Iranians and non-Iranians'). More striking is the absence of any allusion to the dynasty's Kayanid origin in Narseh's Paikuli inscription, precisely in the context where its description as the 'the seed of the Sasanids' invited a link

[20] English translation, based mainly on the Parthian and Middle Persian versions, in Frye (1984) 371–3.

[21] Whitby, *Maurice*; Potter (1990) 373 argues that Persian demands were reshaped to fit the presuppositions of Roman historiographical traditions.

[22] Wiesehöfer (1994) 207–8 and (1996) 27–8, 154–5; Lee (1993) 21–2.

[23] As suggested by Wiesehöfer (1994) 208, cf. 220–1; (1996) 155, 165–6; cf. also Lukonin (1961) 23 for a less extravagant interpretation of this passage.

[24] For a full development of this hypothesis, see Yar-Shater (1971).

with a more glorious house. Kayanid names (e.g. Kavadh, Khusro) only enter royal nomenclature in the late fifth century and probably reflect a change at that time in strategies for dynastic legitimation. Furthermore, it is the mythological Kayanid link which eventually introduces into royal genealogies an Achaemenid element that had not been present in previous centuries. This Achaemenid link was clearly derived from the *Alexander Romance*, which had become popular at the Sasanid court in the first half of the sixth century. The Sasanid genealogies preserved in Arabic and New Persian sources that derive from lost Pahlavi historiography reflect, as often, the conditions and traditions of the last century of Sasanid rule; little genuine knowledge was preserved.[25]

III. SASANID KINGS AND THE ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTS

Divine sanction was an important part of royal legitimation, and it is therefore necessary to investigate the relations between monarchs and the Zoroastrian priesthood, the repository of pristine mythological traditions. The orthodox view that Sasanid kings relied on the support of the Zoroastrian priesthood, whose beliefs they in turn actively encouraged and whose power within their realm they enhanced, has been largely modified in recent decades.[26] True, the term *mazdesn*, 'Mazda-worshipping', recurs frequently on the Sasanid monuments as a royal epithet, but this need not imply automatic recognition of one organized priesthood as sole exponent of this deity's cult. Kings could perhaps best consolidate royal power by fostering variety, both inside the 'Zoroastrian church' and between different religions.

For the orthodox view, difficulties arise already with the personality of the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir I. According to the Zoroastrian tradition enshrined in the *Denkard*, a post-Sasanid Zoroastrian encyclopedia, this monarch ought to be considered as the great restorer of the Zoroastrian faith, under whose aegis the priest Tansar collected the scattered remnants of the Avestan books that had survived though the period after Alexander's conquests.[27] The picture that emerges from the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* is rather different: it makes no mention either of Tansar or of any other member of the Zoroastrian priesthood except Kirder, whose appearance is rather inconspicuous. Ardashir himself can reliably be described as a worshipper of Anahita of Stakhr, whereas evidence of his attachment to Ahura Mazda is more equivocal. As worshipped by the early Sasanids, Anahita was the goddess of victory at whose shrine the severed heads of vanquished enemies were habitually dedicated. If the devotion of

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[25] Cf. Nöldeke (1887) 87–8; (1920) 13.   [26] For a survey of views, see Schippmann (1990) 92–102.
[27] Shaki (1981).

Ardashir and of his immediate successors to this goddess can be considered as part and parcel of a Zoroastrian orthodoxy, then this orthdoxy must have been entirely different from the kind of orthodoxy assumed in his glorification in the *Denkard*.[28]

The absence of any clear reference to an organized clergy in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* is at odds with the role ascribed by modern scholars to a 'Zoroastrian church', at least under the early Sasanid kings. This gap is not filled by the far-reaching claims made in four inscriptions celebrating the career of Kirder, the one priestly character who does figure on Shapur's monument. Kirder was promoted within the Zoroastrian priesthood from a mere *herbed* under Shapur I to the rank of a *mobed* (*mgwpt*, i.e. chief *magus*) under his immediate successors, Hormizd I, Bahram I and Bahram II. Bahram II bestowed additional honours and supposedly authorized Kirder to enforce Zoroastrianism and persecute heresies and other religions. This only indicates that this king was attached to the kind of Zoroastrianism preached by Kirder, which is more than can be said of Shapur I.[29]

The extent of Shapur I's Zoroastrian piety as it emerges from his own *Res Gestae* is not entirely clear. He was indeed the founder of many fire-temples throughout his realm, according to his own testimony as well as to Kirder. Yet fire-temples were sacred not only to Ahura Mazda but also to Anahita, and Shapur's favourable attitude to Zoroastrianism should be conceived in the framework of a religious eclecticism that could also accommodate Manichaeism.[30] Furthermore, the fact that he granted Kirder sweeping powers to conduct the affairs of his religion, without matching these powers with the appropriate titulature (*herbed*, whatever its meaning, appears to be a rather modest title), suggests that Kirder was a court-priest, not the designated head of a powerful church. Some tension between Kirder in this function and some of his brethren cannot be ruled out. Kirder's statement, reiterated on his inscriptions as a refrain, that under his leadership *many* of the *magi* (not all of them) were happy and prosperous, implies an attempt to mute the voices of an opposition. The early Sasanid monarchs, far from depending on an already powerful organization for vital support, may rather have helped Zoroastrian clergy to improve their position in a fluid and competitive religious milieu.

It is usually assumed that under Narseh (293–302) the influence of the Zoroastrian priesthood declined, but that it regained much of the lost ground under Shapur II (309–79). The figure of Aturpat, son of Mahrspand, looms large in the post-Sasanid Zoroastrian literature, where he is depicted as a model of Zoroastrian orthodoxy who submitted himself

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[28] Chaumont (1958); Duchesne-Guillemin in Yar-Shater (1983) 874–97.
[29] Back (1978) 384–488; Duchesne-Guillemin in Yar-Shater (1983) 878–84.
[30] Wikander (1946) 52–124; Chaumont (1958) 162–3; Lieu (1994) 24–5, 35–6 for Manichaeism in the Sasanid empire.

to the ordeal of molten metal to refute heretics whose precise doctrine is disputed. It would have been quite natural to visualize Aturpat as standing at the head of a mighty Zoroastrian hierarchic organization, authorized by the king himself to administer the institutions of the only fully recognized official state religion. On the other hand, the hierarchy within what we habitually conceive of as 'the Zoroastrian church' probably did not become fully established until much later. It is only under Yazdgard II (439–57) that the high priest Mihr-Shapur, who had already distinguished himself under previous reigns as a persecutor of Christians, is called *modaban mobad* (*magupatan magupat*), the earliest reliable attestation of this title. But even then the relative positions of *mobeds* and *herbeds* in the organization of Zoroastrian clergy are not entirely clear. The title *herbedan herbed*, conferred upon Zurvandad, the son of Yazdgard's powerful prime minister, Mihr-Narseh, has been interpreted as evidence for a hierarchy distinct from that of the *mobeds* within the Zoroastrian church.

The Zoroastrian priesthood appears to have gained a truly undisputed position as the sole representative of the one and only state religion in the course of the fifth century. It is precisely at this time that a sudden proliferation of Avestan names borne by members of the royal house, and the appearance of the title *kavi* (*kay*) on the coins of its kings, mark a crucial stage in the fabrication of the Kayanid genealogy as a source of legitimation of the Sasanid dynasty. Yet the Zoroastrian priesthood was soon to suffer a severe blow under Kavadh I (488–96; 499–531), during the Mazdakite revolt (on which, see p. 655 below). The reign of Khusro I appears to have been a period of harmony between the monarchy and the Zoroastrian priesthood, but it was a priesthood restored by the king following the Mazdakite débâcle, and consequently more dependent on the king than before. Under Khusro's successors, Zoroastrian influence seems to have declined: Khusro II (590–628), rather than follow his predecessors in the grand-scale establishment of fire-temples staffed with a vast multitude of *herbedan*, relied heavily on Christians, who included his favourite wife, his finance officer and his chief general; Zoroastrian tradition, as reflected in the apocalyptic composition *Jamasp Namagh*, branded him as an unjust and tyrannical king.[31]

The personality of Mihr-Narseh, Yazdgard II's prime minister, highlights the problem of orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the Zoroastrian religion of the Sasanid period. From Armenian sources dealing with the persecution he launched against the Christians in Armenia, it is plain that he was an adherent of Zurvan i Akanarag – that is, Infinite Time:[32] his son's name, Zurvandad, is certainly a theophoric name, celebrating this rather shadowy

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[31] Duchesne-Guillemin, in Yar-Shater (1983) 896; cf. Boyce in Yar-Shater (1983) 1160.
[32] Elishe Vardapet in Langlois (1869) 190–1; cf. Eznik of Kolb in Boyce (1984) 97–8.

divine personification (such names seem to have been common among the Iranian nobles under the Sasanids). The role of this divinity in the Zoroastrian pantheon is much disputed, but represents a trend in Zoroastrian religion which attempted to provide a unifying monistic framework for its fundamentally dualistic theology: Ohurmazd, the good principle, and Ahriman, the evil principle, were depicted as the twin sons of Infinite Time. There is, however, little reliable information: the Pahlavi Zoroastrian literature of the post-Sasanid period is virtually silent, whereas contemporary non-Sasanid and non-Zoroastrian sources suggest that this doctrine was the orthodoxy endorsed by the Sasanid kings.[33]

Various attempts have been made to overcome the discrepancy. It has been postulated that the orthdoxy reflected in the extant Zoroastrian literature triumphed only after the collapse of the Sasanid monarchy, in the context of rivalry between supporters of the old national religion and the new Islamic monotheism, so that the former monistic orthodoxy was deliberately suppressed.[34] According to another view, the story of Zurvanism is one of intermittent success: whereas under some kings it was indeed the accepted orthodoxy, under others the pendulum swung in the opposite direction and the dualistic trend became dominant. Dualism was finally triumphant under Khusro I (531–79), whose reign also constitutes a decisive stage in the canonization of the surviving Avestan Nasks and in the development of Zoroastrian theological literature. Attempts have also been made to play down the significance of Zurvanism, either as a fad entertained by the upper classes or as a popular version of Zoroastrianism, and, at any rate, as nothing tantamount to a heresy in its familiar Christian sense.[35]

Perhaps the best way of approaching a solution is to get rid of the notion of a Sasanid Zoroastrian church analogous in its position to that of the Christian church in the late Roman empire, intent upon using secular support to impose a uniform doctrine within its ranks. The truth may well have been that although the early Sasanid kings had found Zoroastrianism, as represented and propounded by the estate of the *magi*, the most potent religious factor in many of their domains, they were not always prepared to allow it to become the sole officially dominant state religion. Thus, for example, Anahita, who seemingly fades out after the reign of Narseh, springs again into prominence under the last Sasanids, from Khusro II to Yazdgard III (633–51).[36]

Furthermore, the fact that some Sasanid kings, like Shapur I, were prepared to unleash the Zoroastrian priesthood against the Christians in the

[33] Christensen (1944) 149–54; Boyce (1979) 112–13, 160–1.
[34] Boyce (1979) 160–1; cf. Boyce (1984) 96–9.
[35] Zaehner (1955); reaction in Boyce (1957), (1990); Frye (1959), (1984) 321 with n. 27; Shaked (1979) xxxiv.6.   [36] Wikander (1946) 55–6; Duchesne-Guillemin in Yar-Shater (1983) 897.

service of their own policies does not mean that they themselves subscribed to any version of Zoroastrianism as the binding orthodoxy. Attitudes towards this religion appear to have varied according to circumstances and the tempers of individual kings. A sober monarch like Shapur I was quite capable of striking an alliance of convenience with the Zoroastrian clergy while keeping his options open by toying with Manichaeism. Shapur II, a notorious persecutor of the Christians, may well have played off dualism against Zurvanism precisely in order to check the growth of an excessively strong, unified priestly caste. Yazdgard I (399–421) was favourably inclined towards Christianity and Judaism for most of his reign.[37] On the other hand, such kings as Bahram I and Bahram II may be described as truly pious Zoroastrians in the version adhered to by Kirder – probably but not certainly that of dualism.

The attitude of the Sasanid monarchs towards Nestorian Christianity is another consideration against the interpretation of their religious policy exclusively in terms of their Zoroastrian piety. After it had been condemned as a heresy at the Council of Ephesus in 431, believers in this creed found a relatively safe haven in the Sasanid empire. A Nestorian school was founded in Nisibis by fugitive Nestorian teachers from Edessa, Bar Sauma and Narsai, in 457, and flourished in that city, particularly under the king Peroz (459–84), when the Zoroastrian priesthood appears to have been at the peak of its power. There was no danger in a policy of toleration towards a religious sect which was banned within the eastern Roman empire while its emperors were either Chalcedonian or inclined to Monophysitism. On the other hand, even a king like Khusro I, who could afford to be tolerant without marring his relations with a Zoroastrian priesthood which was firmly in his control, could not or would not prevent persecution, even of Nestorians, after war against Rome flared up in 540. Khusro II is habitually described as philo-Christian, but the picture is more complex: he astutely played off Monophysites, whose cause was advocated at court by his favourite wife, Shirin, and her influential physician, Gabriel, against Nestorians, who found a faithful champion in his powerful finance minister, Yazdin. Towards the end of his reign, when his empire succumbed to a Byzantine invasion, he reversed his policy of general toleration, and threatened a wave of persecutions.[38]

IV. KINGS AND NOBLES

The Sasanid monarchy has a reputation for better organization and greater centralization than its Arsacid predecessor. But the notion that the Arsacid

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[37] Widengren (1961) 139–42; Rubin (1986) 679–81.
[38] Duchesne-Guillemin in Yar-Shater (1983) 889–90; *Khuzistan Chronicle* chs. 8, 11, 18, 26.

kingdom was in essence a cluster of largely independent political entities, held together in little more than a semblance of formal allegiance to a shadowy central royal authority, may have its roots in tendentious Sasanid traditions. These treat the whole of the Seleucid and Arsacid periods as that of the 'petty kings' or 'tribal kings' (*muluk al-tawa'if*) and, in clear contrast, depict the Sasanid monarchy established by Ardashir as a coherent and effective political and military power. In the Sasanid sixth-century historical romance, the *Karnamag Ardasher i Papakan*, the fragmentation of Alexander's empire into 240 small states is the foil to Ardashir's expoits; the impression produced by the *Khwaday-namag* tradition, as reflected principally by al-Tabari, is that Ardashir's rise to power was in effect a long succession of wars for the unification of Iran.[39]

Greek and Latin sources give the point of view of contemporary outside observers, which helps to modify this distorted picture, especially with regard to the Parthian empire. These sources, though, also suggest that the establishment of the Sasanid monarchy was a dramatic development: the new energetic drive displayed by an incipient power is all too easy to contrast with the patchy picture of a lethargic Parthian kingdom. The result is a widespread consensus among modern scholars that the statehood of the Sasanid monarchy was more advanced than that of the Arsacid one. A more balanced picture emerges when Sasanid institutions are examined without being distorted by the propagandistic vein that prevails in many of the extant sources: the dynasty was new, but many of its structures were inherited.

The territorial extent of the Sasanid empire was vast but the control exercised by central government was not uniformly effective.[40] Evidence for the foundation of cities by the Sasanid monarchs after Ardashir, chiefly on the detailed data preserved by Tabari, indicates that their activity was confined to a rather limited area. It basically comprised territories conquered by Ardashir I during his wars against the Arsacids and their vassal kinglets – i.e. the provinces of Fars, Meshan, the Sawad and Mah (Media): Sasanid kings did not encroach upon territories held by the great lords of the realm, some of whom belonged to houses whose roots reached far back to the Parthian era (see further below). To this rule, only one exception can be shown. Occasionally, cities were established in newly acquired border zones where the king's lordship by right of conquest could not be contested, or in remote provinces where royal authority was being re-established. A notable example

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[39] *Karnamak Artakhshir-i Papakan* ed. Edalji Kersaspji Antia (Bombay 1900) ch. 1, 1–5 (English trans.) and Nöldeke (1878) 35–8 for annotated German trans.; Tabari 813–20 (Leiden edition) = Nöldeke (1879) 1–22 (German trans.); also Bosworth (1999) 1–18 for an annotated English translation.

[40] The efficacy of royal control is stressed by Howard-Johnston (1995), but his model is based on a hypothetical interpretation of archaeological finds rather than the more explicit literary evidence. Limitations on ability to tax: Altheim and Stiehl (1954) 47–8.

is the foundation of Ram Peroz in the region of Rayy, Roshan Peroz on the border of Gurgan and the Gates of Sul, and Shahram Peroz in Adharbaijan: all these were clearly foundations of Peroz (459–84) and were located in areas affected by his wars against the Hephthalites.[41] Foundation of a city represented a substantial investment of manpower and resources, and kings only undertook these in locations where they would benefit themselves, not one of their overmighty nobles.

The picture of a well-ordered hierarchic society, controlled and regulated by a strong monarchy, has to be reassessed. This picture emerges from later literary sources from the Islamic period, such as al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, Ps. al-Jahiz[42] and *The Letter of Tansar*, a letter attributed to the powerful third-century *herbed* but probably composed three centuries later, which is preserved in Ibn Isfandyar's *Ta'rikh-i Tabaristan*, the use of which involves serious problems of *Quellenforschung*.[43] But these complex issues can be avoided, since the epigraphic sources from the earlier Sasanid period, notably the third century and the first half of the fourth, anticipate and corroborate this later testimony. The inscriptions suggest that already under Shapur I the framework of a social hierarchy had been formally established. The highest rung, immediately below the King of Kings, was that of the *shahrdaran*, virtually independent kings, whose number seems to have been much lower under the Sasanids than the Arsacids; they tended to be senior members of the royal dynasty, officially ruling their kingdoms as royal apanages. Below them ranked the *vaspuhragan*, apparently princes of the royal family who held no official post in the royal court. Third in rank were the *vuzurgan*. This group comprised the members of the great noble houses Suren, Karin, the Lords of Undigan, and others. As late as the end of the fifth century, the unruly heads of these houses admitted only a nominal allegiance to the central power but were virtually independent in their hereditary territorial domains. The fourth and the lowest rung documented on the inscriptions was the *azadan*, minor gentry of free status, distinct from the other nobility but probably also dependent on them in many cases; from this lesser nobility were recruited the mounted warriors, *asavaran*, who were the core of the Sasanid army.[44]

The stratification that emerges from the later, literary sources is more general and reflects the (post-Sasanid) Avestan concept of social stratification. The priests (*asronan*) appear at the top of the ladder. They are followed by the military estate (*artestaran*). The third estate is that of

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[41] Altheim and Stiehl (1954) 12–18; cf. Lukonin (1961) 12–19, specifically on the foundations of Ardashir I and Shapur I.

[42] Tabari 821 (Leiden) = Nöldeke (1979) 21. al-Masudi, *Muruj al-Dhahab* (ed. De Maynard and De Courteille) 2, 156–63; al-Jahiz, *Kitab al-Taj* 21–8 (ed. Ahmed Zeki Pacha) = Pellat (1954) 51–6 (French trans.). [43] Boyce (1968).

[44] For these categories, see Schippmann (1990) 82; cf. Wiesehöfer (1994) 228–43; (1996) 171–6.

the royal bureaucracy (*dibiran*, i.e. scribes). Finally, the commoners are enumerated, subdivided into peasants (*vastaryoshan*) and artisans (*hutuxshan*). If the two hierarchies, inscriptional and literary, are to be amalgamated, the inscriptional hierarchy of nobility should be seen as an expansion of the second estate in the literary sources; on the other hand, the literary hierarchy may not be contemporaneous, since there is no evidence for a separate priestly caste in the early period.

Royal power and influence depended to a large degree on effective control of the *shahrdaran* as well as on the active support of the majority of the *vuzurgan*, or equivalent groups, whatever their names in later periods. Their co-operation would be needed for the recruitment of the *asavaran* who owed allegiance to them, and their consent would be required for the imposition of royal taxation within their domains. Sasanid military organization has been described as 'feudal', basically similar to its Arsacid predecessor, and this definition may help us to understand how the Sasanid system functioned. From our meagre information about remuneration for the professional core of soldiery, we may conclude that it was supported through land grants rather than paid in money or kind. Thus it is tempting to accept the notion of enfeoffment, which by its very nature entails bonds of trust and dependence that may be described as ties of vassalage. Yet, if this picture provides a fairly accurate idea of the relationship between the king and warriors conscripted in his own domain, as well as of that between the grandees and their own warriors, it does not reveal the realities of the links between king and grandees. The latter's domains might have been considered as fiefs from the former, but in most cases this status would only have been theoretical, since forfeiture of such 'fiefs' to the crown could hardly be enforced by means of a simple legal procedure, without the need to resort to arms: as in any feudal monarchy, there was no guarantee that every Sasanid king could control all the grandees all the time.

V. TAXATION AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION

In an empire which minted a stable silver coinage, the *drahm*, throughout most of its history, this continuing resort to grants of land in return for military service calls for an explanation. The *drahm* was the only denomination in constant circulation, which raises the question whether such a simple economic system can be described as a truly advanced monetary economy. Gold *dinars* were issued occasionally – not, so it seems, for purposes of monetary circulation, but rather in commemoration of solemn events. Bronze change seems to have been issued only very intermittently, perhaps in response to specific demands, as at Merv; the volume progressively decreased, which poses problems for the mechanics of everyday eco-

nomic exchanges.[45] The assumption that Arsacid copper coinage was still used in many parts of the Sasanid kingdom is unconvincing,[46] and the conclusion must be that much economic activity was based on barter.

This situation explains a good deal about the Sasanid system of taxation before the beginning of the sixth century. It was based on crop-sharing, the exaction of agricultural produce proportionate to annual yield, as assessed by royal tax-collectors on the spot, and levied in kind. In addition, a poll tax was imposed on most subjects, which may largely have been paid in money, though part was perhaps commuted to goods. The system was inefficient and wasteful, especially with regard to the land-tax; it was subject to frequent fluctuations, and allowed little scope for advance financial planning. The necessity of waiting for the tax-collector with the crops untouched in the field or on the tree involved the risk that some would be damaged or destroyed before being enjoyed by farmers or the king. Only lands held directly by the king could be effectively taxed in this manner, but even on royal domains the avarice of corrupt tax-assessors will have hampered collection.[47]

Towards the end of the fifth century, the burden of taxation on the peasantry seems to have become increasingly oppressive: the complex relations with the Hephthalite khanate, the threat of which loomed in the east, resulted in heavy demands when recurrent famines were compelling kings to grant occasional, and not entirely adequate, tax remissions. This oppression contributed significantly to the popularity of Mazdak, a heretic Zoroastrian priest, who advocated the economic equality of all human beings and regarded the higher classes of the Sasanid kingdom as the worst enemies of his doctrines. For some time he managed to enlist the support of king Kavadh himself, who appears to have used this movement precisely to humble his recalcitrant nobility.[48] When he ultimately turned his back upon the movement and allowed his son to put it down, the battered nobles needed royal support to recuperate and regain a fraction of their former grandeur. They were obviously in no position to form a viable opposition to the one serious attempt to introduce a tax reform in the Sasanid realm, begun apparently towards the end of Kavadh I's reign (531) and continued by his son Khusro I Anushirwan.[49]

On the basis of a general land survey, a new system for exacting the land-tax was devised. Fixed rates of tax were imposed on agricultural land

[45] See Göbl in Altheim and Stiehl (1954) 96–9; cf. Göbl (1971) 25–30; Göbl in Yar-Shater (1983) 328–9. On Merv, see Loginov and Nikitin 1993.

[46] Göbl in Altheim and Stiehl (1954) 98; also Göbl (1971), where continued circulation is only suggested for the earlier period, and no explanation is offered for the subsequent mechanics of exchange.

[47] For a very different picture, see Howard-Johnston (1995), who postulates the existence of an efficient tax-raising system not dissimilar to that in the Roman empire.

[48] For summary and bibliography on Mazdak, see Guidi (1992); Crone (1991).

[49] For more detailed discussion of sources, see Rubin (1995).

according to its size and according to the kind of crops raised; the tax was calculated in the *drahm* currency, but some at least probably continued to be levied in kind, calculated according to the current value of the produce in *drahms*. This new system, if efficiently applied, would enable a monarch to anticipate incomes and budget expenses. It might be seen as oppressive on the peasantry, primarily because the fixed *drahm* rates apparently disregarded fluctuations in agricultural yield caused by drought, other natural calamities or war, but this is to ignore the best testimony about the reform: if a distinction is drawn between the reform's institution and operation in Khusro's reign, and what it subsequently became, the system appears reasonably efficient and fair. It considerably augmented crown revenues, but also included a mechanism that enabled constant revision and made tax rebates and remissions possible where and when necessary.

The fiscal reform was accompanied by an agricultural reform. Dispossessed farmers were restored to their lands, financial help was available to enable them to restart cultivation, and a mechanism was instituted to assist farms affected by natural disasters. The overall result should have been to maintain a system of small farms that might be easily taxed, and to prevent the growth of huge estates whose powerful owners might accumulate privileges and immunities, and obstruct effective taxation.

Khusro's reform was meant to have a lasting impact on Sasanid military organization by providing the king with a standing army of crack units of horsemen (*asavaran*), under his direct command and permanently at his disposal, who received a salary, at least when on foreign campaign. This body of *palatini* was recruited among young nobles as well as the country gentry, the *dehkanan*, who wished to start a military career. On the frontiers, troops recruited from the nomadic periphery of the Sasanid empire (e.g. Turks), as well as from semi-independent enclaves within it (e.g. Daylam in the mountainous region of Gilan), might be employed to repel invasions or check them until the arrival of the mobile crack units.

Khusro's system appears to have enjoyed moderate success for a few decades, until the difficulties that beset the Sasanid monarchy exposed its weaknesses. In the fiscal area, its proper functioning depended on internal stability, external security and continuing financial prosperity, backed up by revenues other than the land and poll taxes (e.g. taxes on international trade, especially the silk trade, booty from foreign wars, tributes and diplomatic subsidies, etc.). These supplementary sources of income were necessary to ensure the smooth running of the control mechanism that was integral to Khusro's system. However, its stability as a whole depended too much on a delicate balance which only a very powerful monarch could maintain at the best of times, and in the vast Sasanid monarchy, with its long continental frontiers, it was exposed to the dangers that threatened the empire itself. Growing military commitments increased financial demands and pressure

on the tax-payers, thereby threatening the system; if central government lost effective control, abuse and corruption might swamp arrangements.

A neglected source which appears reliable on this issue, the *Sirat Anushirwan* embedded in Ibn Misqawayh's *Tajarib al-Umam*, indicates that Khusro, towards the end of his reign, was hard put to keep his system functioning.[50] The control mechanism proved to be as susceptible to corruption as the taxation machinery that had to be controlled. Furthermore, the strained relations between soldier and civilian, especially in the remoter zones, exacted their toll. In effect, the king could restrain only the soldiers under his direct command from despoiling the rural tax-payers, as is shown by the restrictions imposed by Hormizd IV (579–90) on a journey to Mah. It is probable, however, that already during the last days of his father many of the cavalrymen no longer owed direct allegiance to the king, but had become again retainers of greater and virtually independent landlords. A brief glance at the aftermath of Khusro's military reforms may provide the clue to understanding what happened.

The fragility of the financial arrangements that underpinned the standing army militated against enduring success for Khusro's reforms. If, as suggested above, the Sasanid economy was never fully monetized, the need to provide for the soldiers' everyday needs, at times mostly in goods, will have encouraged the reinstitution of enfeoffment as the standard military contract, even among the lower ranks. Thus, following a limited period when Khusro seriously attempted to sustain his new standing army, already in his own lifetime the *asavaran* were increasingly reverting to an enfeoffed estate, even though the tendency of such allotments to become hereditary, with the consequent problems caused by alienation, had to be faced.[51] Khusro's reforms were, at best, of such limited duration and impact that their scope and intent might be questioned.

From the royal perspective, the high nobility was a more serious problem even than the cavalrymen. The Mazdakite revolt and its aftermath made possible a feudal system more directly dependent on the king than ever before: the nobility restored by Khusro himself was firmly beholden to the king, so there could be no doubts about the origin of its estates and the nature of the services owed to the crown. But the nobility soon returned to its pristine positions of power. The notion that the supreme military commanders and ministers of state were now salaried civil servants is contradicted by the limited available evidence. Thus, for example, Khusro's nominees as *spahbads* – the four supreme military commands he created to supersede the old office of the *artestaransalar* – must have been mighty territorial lords right from the

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[50] Discussion in Rubin (1995) 237–9, 279–84.

[51] Theophylact III.15.4 states that Persian troops did not receive a proper salary during service within the kingdom's borders, but had to rely on 'customary distributions' from the king. This contradicts the hypothesis of a salaried standing army in Howard-Johnston (1995).

start, as the very territorial nature of their command suggests. The same is true about the *marzbans*, the commanders of the frontier provinces.

The delusion that the direct dependence of Khusro's nobility on the king as its restorer and benefactor would make it enduringly more tractable and obedient shatters in view of the role played by people of this class under subsequent reigns, quite apart from the revolts in Khusro's first decade. Vahram Chobin of the noble house of Mihran, the first serious pretender outside the royal house since the establishment of the Sasanid dynasty, was supported by many disgruntled nobles. Khusro II overcame him with great difficulty in 591, but only with the expensive support of the Byzantine emperor Maurice.[52] Later, the Sasanid monarchy was rocked by other major revolts, such as those of Bistam and Bindoe, Khusro's relatives and allies turned his foes, and of his powerful general, Shahrvaraz, who was to depose his grandson Ardashir III and claim the throne.[53] By the time of the Arab conquest, local rulers, especially in the east and in the Caspian provinces, had become virtually independent. The same is indicated by the confused Arabic traditions concerning Yemen after its conquest by the Persians in the last decade of Khusro Anushirwan's reign. The growing independence of the great landlords meant that sooner or later they would inevitably control not only their own retinues of fighting men but also independent taxation in their own domains. Thus, for example, according to Dinawari, the rebel Bistam instituted taxation in the territories under his rule (Khorasan Qumis, Gurgan and Tabaristan) and in the process remitted half the land-tax.[54] Other potentates, not in direct revolt against the king, may have acted less openly but may not have been impelled by the requirements of war propaganda to be as generous.

Under Khusro II, oriental sources record impressive data about royal revenues, which might suggest that the machinery devised by Khusro I was still operating smoothly, and that Khusro II made even better use of it than his grandfather.[55] But the full narrative of Tabari conveys a different impression: the revenues were not the product of regular taxation but are to be explained, in part, by the influx of booty from Byzantine territories (the rich spoils of Alexandria and Jerusalem), and in part by extreme measures of extortion. It was primarily as an efficient operator of the taxation machinery that Khusro's Nestorian finance minister (*vastaryoshansalar*), Yazdin, endeared himself to his lord; the favourable *Khuzistan Chronicle* insists on the vast amounts of money that he sent to the treasury from the sunrise of one day to the sunrise of the next.[56] Such extortions seem to have involved not only the imposition of an unbearable burden on tax-

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[52] Theophylact IV–V; Whitby, *Maurice* 276–308.   [53] Whitby (1994) 252–3.
[54] Dinawari p. 102 (ed. Guirgass).
[55] Altheim and Stiehl (1954) 41–2; Altheim and Stiehl (1957) 52–3.
[56] *Khuz. Chron.* 23; Tabari 1041–3; cf. Nöldeke (1879) 351–6.

payers in the royal domain but also an attempt to reintroduce direct royal taxation in the domains of grandees, who had by now come to regard this as a blatant encroachment upon their privileges: the nobles proved to be the ultimate cause of his downfall. Thus Khusro II's riches cannot be attributed to the tax reforms of Khusro I.

<div align="center">VI. SASANID COLLAPSE</div>

The last decades of the Sasanid dynasty are the story of a chain of violent upheavals, which expose all the inherent weaknesses of the huge empire. The reforms of Khusro I did constitute a serious attempt to cope with these weaknesses and to re-establish the king's position on a firmer basis. They failed in the long run because they strove to superimpose the framework of a fully centralized state, with a salaried civil bureaucracy and army, financed by an efficient and easily manageable taxation apparatus, on a realm which proved too weak to carry these heavy burdens. The political and military organization of its vast territories was too flimsy, the economic infrastructure was too primitive, and the social structure was fixed by traditions that could not be easily transformed. Khusro's own conservatism was a characteristic reflection of these traditions, for it was Khusro who did a lot to restore the battered nobility to its traditional powers after the Mazdakite interlude.

Warfare had always been the primary activity of the Sasanid state, but even by its own standards the last century of its existence witnessed a sustained intensity of campaigning that may have weakened the structures of society. After the outbreak of war against Justin I in 527, there were only twenty-eight years of formal peace with Rome until the conclusive victory of Heraclius in 628 – and this is to ignore the recurrent tensions which embroiled the Arab satellites of the rival empires, Sasanid involvement in the affairs of the Arabian peninsula and the struggle to maintain control in sub-Caucasian principalities such as Suania and Albania. We know much less about the sequence of campaigns on the north-eastern frontier, but these were probably more debilitating. Khusro's apparent triumph over the Hephthalites in the 550s was only achieved through alliance with the rising Turkish federation, which now replaced the Hephthalites as Persia's neighbours and soon constituted a far more powerful threat during the 570s and 580s.[57] No less than Justinian, Khusro was repeatedly involved in wars on more than one front, and the expenses of eastern campaigning probably proved much heavier than the gains from spoils, ransoms and payments stipulated in his treaties with Rome.

The success of the state depended ultimately on the character and reputation of the king, and there was a recurrent danger that such a personal

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[57] Menander fr. 10.3; 13.5 (Blockley); Theophylact III.6.9–14.

monarchy would experience bouts of severe dynastic competition: thus, the long reigns of both Shapur I and Shapur II were both followed by shorter periods of instability. This danger may have been increased in the sixth century by the withdrawal of Persian kings from regular active participation in warfare, a move which fundamentally changed the nature of royal legitimation. Early rulers from the house of Sasan had demonstrated divine favour for their rule through personal victories, but the successors of Khusro I relied on others to win their wars.[58] From the royal perspective, legitimacy ran in the family, but the nobility and armies might prefer to give their loyalty to a successful commander such as the non-Sasanid Vahram Chobin or Shahvaraz. The existence of substantial minority religious groups, Jews as well as Christians, allowed an established ruler to secure his position by balancing their different claims against the majority Zoroastrians, but it also meant that a rival could promote himself by seeking the support of one particular group: Vahram Chobin is known for his links with the Jews.

In spite of the attempted reforms of Khusro, the Sasanid state remained a fairly simple structure in which much economic and military power rested with the feudal nobility. Royal authority was bolstered by a supremacy of patronage, but this required a regular inflow of wealth for redistribution. Wars against the Romans provided considerable short-term gains, and Roman peace payments under the Endless Peace (532) and the Fifty Years Peace (562) were also important, but it is impossible to calculate how much of this wealth drained eastwards, almost immediately, to the Hephthalites or the Turks. The monetarized heartland of the Sasanid state (as of its Achaemenid antecedent) lay in the rich agricultural lands of Mesopotamia and lower Iraq, areas susceptible to attack from the west, and it seems to have been impossible to increase their tax revenues in the long term.

It is ironic that the most successful Sasanid conqueror, Khusro II, must also bear responsibility for the monarchy's subsequent rapid collapse. In the first decade of his reign, his status as a virtual puppet of the Romans must have contributed to support for the long-running rebellion of Bistam in the east.[59] The overthrow of his patron Maurice in 602 gave Khusro an opportunity to assert his independence, and the disorganization of Roman defences, particularly during the civil war between supporters of Phocas and Heraclius in 609–11, permitted Khusro to transform the sequence of traditional lucrative frontier campaigns into a massive expansionist thrust towards the west. But, whereas a war of pillage replenished royal coffers, the annexation of territories reduced the inflow of funds and meant that the newly acquired resources had to be devoted to the maintenance of

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[58] Whitby (1994).
[59] *Nihayat al Irab*, Ms. Qq.225, fol. 185a; summarized in Browne (1900) 240; Firdausi, *Shanamah* 2791–6 (ed. S. Nafisy); trans. Jules Mohl, vol. VII (1878) 143–50.

troops in remote regions. Furthermore, Khusro's successful armies had little direct contact with their distant monarch, but were tied more closely to their victorious commanders: as a result, the soldiers of Shahvaraz supported their general when he was threatened by the king. In the 620s, Heraclius' campaigns into the heart of Persia exposed the fragility of Khusro's achievements, and prompted a palace coup that introduced the most severe bout of dynastic instability that the Sasanid state had ever experienced. The return of booty to the Romans combined with the destruction caused by campaigns in Mesopotamia to leave the monarchy short of wealth and prestige at the very moment when the Arabs started to raid across the Euphrates. Yazdgard III (633–51) was forced to abandon Iraq in 638/9 and thereafter lacked the resources and reputation to challenge the new Islamic superpower: the Iranian nobility abandoned the Sasanids and transferred their allegiance to the Muslim rulers, who offered stability, while the rural majority continued to pay their taxes to support a new élite.

THE ARABS*

LAWRENCE I. CONRAD

I. INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTION OF SOURCES

In the present state of our knowledge it is not difficult to describe the physical setting for pre-Islamic Arabian history, and new archaeological discoveries in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan and the Gulf are producing much valuable and unique evidence. Over the past century a vast body of epigraphical material – some 50,000 north and south Arabian inscriptions and the inscribed sticks now emerging by the hundreds in northern Yemen – has provided a wealth of information on the societies of the peninsula, especially the bedouins.[1] But all this seldom provides a coherent picture of the course of events, as opposed to vignettes and bare details, and thus does not replace a literary historical tradition. There are external epigraphic records of the Arabs and Arabia, and historical sources – especially in Greek and Syriac – are often helpful.[2] But this information too is profoundly discontinuous, and in any case represents the perspective of outsiders who regarded the Arabs as barbarian marauders and most of Arabia as a menacing wasteland.[3]

There is voluminous material on the subject in the Arabic sources, but herein lies the problem.[4] The relevant accounts, including a vast bulk of poetry, are frequently attributed to the pre-Islamic period or otherwise presented as describing events and conditions of that time, but apart from the Qur'ān the sources containing these accounts are at least two centuries later. In times past it seemed reasonable simply to compare the various accounts to determine which seemed most likely to be true. More recently, however, it has become clear that the Arabic sources on the Arabs in pre-Islamic Arabia – and indeed, on the first century of Islamic history as a whole – represent a fluid corpus that adopted a range of argumentative views on issues important at the time the accounts were being transmitted and the sources compiled; the result was the colouring and reshaping of

[1] See, e.g., Robin (1991); Macdonald (1995a).
[2] See Papathomopoulos (1984); Segal (1984); MacAdam (1989).
[3] On the distorted image of bedouins among settled folk, see Shaw 1982–3.
[4] Two still-valuable overviews are Olinder (1927) 11–19; Caskel (1927–30).

much early and possibly genuine material and the creation of many new accounts.[5] Most importantly, pre-Islamic Arabia played an important role in early Islamic kerygma. In explanation of the success of Islam and the Arab conquerors, Muslim scholars and transmitters interpreted Islam's emergence from Arabia as part of God's divine plan.[6] Part of this conception involved presentation of the pre-Islamic Arabs as naïve coarse barbarians – ragged ignorant nomads and eaters of snakes and lizards, for example – and Arabia as a quintessential wasteland. This contrasted sharply with the powerful and sophisticated peoples of the empires to the north and the richness and fertility of their lands; obviously, the Arab victories against such formidable foes could only have been won by God's permission and as part of his plan for mankind.[7] This paradigm is manifestly kerygmatic, and while it may at various points correspond to historical reality it does not spring from that reality. In each case, then, the historian must judge – often on insecure grounds – the extent to which the motifs and stereotypes of this kerygma have affected his sources.[8]

II. THE ARABS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Extant references to 'Arabs' begin in the ninth century B.C.,[9] and in ensuing centuries attest to their presence in Arabia, Syria and Iraq and their interaction with the peoples of adjacent lands, encouraged in part by the Roman and Persian policy of using Arab groups to protect their desert flanks and perform military functions as confederates and auxiliaries. In Syria, Arab presence was prominent all along the fringe between the desert and the sown,[10] and inscriptions and literary sources confirm that many Arabs took up settled life in rural villages.[11] The hinterlands of inland Syrian cities were partly populated by Arabs, and major cities such as Damascus and Beroea (Aleppo) had significant Arab populations. In such situations Arabs certainly knew Greek and/or Syriac, and perhaps as their first languages.[12] Arabs were also to be found through the pastoral steppe lands of northern Mesopotamia, where monks in the Jacobite and Nestorian monasteries occasionally comment on them.[13] In Iraq there were large groupings of

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[5] Ahlwardt (1872); Ḥusayn (1927) 171–86; Caskel (1930); Blachère (1952–66) 1.85–127, 166–86; Birkeland (1956); Arafat (1958); Caskel (1966) 1.1–71 (with the review in Henninger (1966)); Crone (1987) 203–30.   [6] See the discussion in Conrad (forthcoming).

[7] Conrad (1987b) 39–40 and n. 46; (1998a) 238.

[8] The gravity of the source-critical problems is stressed in Whittow (1999), a detailed critique of the volumes on 'Byzantium and the Arabs' by Irfan Shahīd (specifically, Shahīd (1995)), which, though full of valuable information, pose serious problems and need always to be used with caution.

[9] Eph'al (1984) 75–7; Macdonald (1995a).

[10] Dussaud (1955) 51–161; Mayerson (1963); Sartre (1982).

[11] MacAdam (1983); Millar (1993b) 428–36.

[12] Nau (1933) 19–24; Trimingham (1979) 116–24; Shahīd (1989) 134–45.

[13] Nau (1933) 15–18, 24–6; Charles (1936) 64–70; Trimingham (1979) 145–58.

Arabs; settled Arabs lived as both peasants and townsmen along the western fringes of Iraq, and al-Ḥīra, the focus of Arab sedentary life in the area, was deemed an Arab town. Most were converts to Christianity, many spoke Aramaic and Persian, and they were largely assimilated to Sasanian culture.[14]

The sources referring to the Arabs describe them in various ways. In Greek and Syriac they were most usually called *sarakenoi* and *ṭayyāyē*, terms which refer to their tribal origin or to their character as travellers to the inner desert.[15] In Arabic, interestingly enough, the terms *ʿarab* and its plural *aʿrāb* are generally used to refer to tribal nomads. Though the settled folk of Arabia shared much in common with the nomads, they nevertheless drew a sharp distinction between themselves and the bedouins (and rightly – a tribesman is not necessarily a nomad). It is true that by the sixth century A.D. the Arabic language had spread through most of Arabia (if not so much in the south) and engendered a common oral culture based largely on poetry of often exceptional quality.[16] But in none of this should one see evidence of a supposed archetype for Arab unity in any ethnic, geographical or political sense.

The basis for Arab social organization was the tribe.[17] Genealogical studies in early Islamic times were already elaborating the lineages and interrelationships of the tribes in great detail. The Arabs comprised two great groupings, northern and southern; the former were traced to an eponymous founder named ʿAdnān and the latter to a similar figure called Qaḥṭān, and both were further divided into smaller sections and subgroupings. Ancient Arab history is routinely presented in the sources as determined by these tribal considerations,[18] but modern anthropology has cast doubt on this and has raised the question of whether such a thing as a 'tribe' even exists. While the term is problematic, it seems excessive to resolve a conceptual difficulty by denying the existence of its object.[19] The notion of the tribe, however ambiguous, has always been important in traditional Arab society; in pre-Islamic Arabia there can be no doubt that kinship determined social organization.[20] The problem can perhaps best be formulated as revolving around the questions of how far back this was meaningfully traced, and how stable perceptions of kinship were.

[14] Charles (1936) 55–61; Morony (1984) 214–23.
[15] Macdonald (1995b) 95–6. Other views: Christides (1972); Graf and O'Connor (1977); O'Connor (1986). [16] Fück (1950) 1–28; Blachère (1952–66) 1.66–82; Gabrieli (1959b); von Grunebaum (1963).
[17] See Caskel (1962); and for modern parallels, Musil (1928) 44–60; Jabbur (1995) 261–8, 286–306.
[18] Caskel (1966) 1.1–71.
[19] *Inter alia*, Schneider (1984). Cf. the discussion in Crone (1986) 48–55; (1993) 354–63; Tapper (1990) 60–4.
[20] Even with respect to Arabs from south Arabia, where Dostal's hypotheses (1984) would lead us to expect social organization along other lines. Note that in all three of the early Arab urban foundations in Egypt and Iraq, the Arab conquerors – even Yemeni contingents – organized themselves according to tribe. See Pellat (1953) 22–34; Djaït (1986) 73–135; Kubiak (1987) 58–75.

Individuals were very often aware of their primordial tribal affiliations, and took pride in the achievements, glories and victories of their ancestors. Similarly, personal enemies often vilified the individual by calling into question his tribe as a whole. In practice, however, the vast tribal coalitions rarely acted as a unified whole, and the socially meaningful unit was the small tenting or village group tracing its origins back four or five generations at most. The perception of common descent was not unimportant to the cohesion of such groups, but even more vital were considerations of common interest. In order to maintain itself, the group had to be able to defend its pasturing grounds, water supplies and other resources from intruders, and its members from injury or harm from outsiders. Dramatic changes in kinship affiliations could occur when, for example, the requirements of contemporary alliances or client relationships dictated a reformulation of historical genealogical affinities.[21] Such shifts could even occur at the level of the great tribal confederations,[22] and were facilitated by the fact that no loss of personal or legal autonomy was involved – a 'client' tribe was not in the state of subservience implied by the western sense of the term.[23]

Through most of Arabia, the welfare of the individual was secured by customary law and the ability of his kin or patron to protect him. If a member of a group were molested or killed, this dishonoured the group as a whole and required either retaliation or compensation. Individuals thus adhered to at least the minimum standards required to remain a member of their group, since an outcast could be killed with impunity.[24] This system provided security and guaranteed the status of tradition and custom.[25] Violence in the form of warfare, feuding and raiding did occur, but the last of these has given rise to much confusion, and its scope and scale have often been exaggerated:[26] there was no glory in raiding a weak tribe or ravaging a defenceless village, and fatalities on either side posed the immediate risk of a blood feud. Prowess in battle was without doubt a highly esteemed virtue, and Arabian society was imbued with a martial spirit that elevated the raid, or *ghazw*, to the level of an institution.[27] Still, this usually involved one powerful tribe raiding another for their animals,[28] and the violence involved was limited by considerations of honour, by the ordinarily small size of raiding parties, and – where weaker groups were concerned – by networks of formal arrangements for protection.

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[21] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* I.238.

[22] Goldziher (1967–71) I.92, 96; Caskel (1953) 8, 15; (1966) I.31–2, 43–4; II.22–3, 72, 448; Lancaster (1997) 16–23, 32–4, 151–7. Cf. Gellner (1973).   [23] Lancaster (1997) ix, 73, 128–9.

[24] Musil (1928) 426–70, 489–503; Farès (1932) esp. 44–101; Chelhod (1971) esp. 231–341; Stewart (1994) esp. 130–44.   [25] Cf. Stewart (1994) 139–43.

[26] Most notoriously in Lammens (1928) 181–236; cf. also Meeker (1979) 111–50.

[27] Musil (1928) 504–661; Jabbur (1995) 348–55; Lancaster (1997) 140–5.

[28] Sweet (1965) 1138–41.

Headship of a tribal unit was vested in a shaykh ('chief', 'elder'; other terms were also used), but the powers of this office were seriously limited, and the shaykh remained in power as long as the tribe felt this was to their benefit. He was expected to lead the tribe, protect its prerogatives and interests, mediate among its members and with other tribes, and serve as an exponent of *muruwwa*, an ethic of masculine virtue bound up in such traits as courage, strength, wisdom, generosity and leadership.[29] While the chief had no power to enforce his decisions, it was of course not in the interest of the group to maintain a leader in power and yet regularly defy his decisions. The shaykh led by example and by exercise of a quality of shrewd opportunistic forbearance called *ḥilm*: he was a mouthpiece of group consensus whose reputation required assent to his judgement.[30]

The exception to all this was the south, where plentiful rainfall, carried by monsoon winds, allowed for levels of agriculture, population and sedentary development not possible elsewhere. The numerous small towns of the region thrived on the spice trade and enjoyed the stability of a highly developed agrarian economy with extensive terrace farming and irrigation. The towns were closely spaced settlements of tall tower-dwellings, often with a distinct 'centre', and their organization tended to promote commercial and professional bonds at the expense of large-scale kinship ties. Out of this stability there arose a number of coherent regimes with indentifiable political centres: Maʿīn, Sabaʾ, Qatabān and Ḥaḍramawt, based respectively at Qarnaw, Maʾrib, Tamnaʿ and Shabwa. The most dynamic of them was Sabaʾ, which by the third and fourth century A.D. had managed to annex the territories of all the others.

The south Arabian entities were ruled by figures early on called *mukarribs*, or 'federators'. It has long been held that this office was hereditary and had a distinctly religious function, but this now seems unlikely.[31] Not unexpectedly, social differentiation reached levels unknown in lands to the north. The sedentary tribes were led by powerful chieftains known as *qayl*s, and at the other end of the spectrum both serfdom and slavery were well-established institutions. Nomads were held in check by granting them lands in exchange for military services, thus rendering them dependent upon the regime.

III. ARABIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The social organization of pre-Islamic Arabia was closely bound up with considerations of religion, and it is in this area that problems of methodology and source criticism are most acute. Issues such as borrowing from

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[29] Goldziher (1967–71) I.11–44.   [30] See Pellat (1962–3), (1973). Cf. also Lancaster 1997, 87–9.
[31] Robin (1991) 52, 55.

more advanced civilizations, the starting-points and relative antiquity of religious forms, the roles of animism and totemism, and differences between sedentary and nomadic peoples have been and remain highly controversial, and in many cases important arguments involve value judgements about nomads and, similarly, supposed distinctions between 'high' and 'low' forms of religious expression. There is also the problem that the Arabic sources, where the vast bulk of our source material is to be found, can hardly be said to offer an objective view of pre-Islamic religion. The folly of idol-worship and the credulity of its adherents are routinely stressed in stereotyped ways. One tale describes how a tribe fashioned an idol out of *ḥays* (dried curd mixed with dates and clarified butter) and worshipped it for a time, but eventually devoured it during a famine, leading to a poet's wry comment:

> The tribe of Ḥanīfa ate their lord
> When dearth and hunger swept the land,
> Fearing naught for consequences
> From their lord's avenging hand.[32]

Inspired by Qur'ānic criticisms,[33] Arabic sources also present 'bedouins' as indifferent to matters of faith.[34]

Arabian polytheism took several forms,[35] one of which was stone-worship. Greek and Syriac sources presented this as adoration of lifeless rocks, but such objects were not deities in themselves, but their dwelling-places or the focus of the rituals of the cult. Offerings were made at the site, and ritual observances included circumambulation of the stone. The best-known example is of course the Ka'ba in Mecca, but we are told that other places had such cultic foci.[36] These foci were often surrounded by a sacred territory, usually called a *ḥaram* in the north and a *ḥawta* in the south. These were precincts associated with the sanctity of worship and sacrifice, and violence and killing, including hunting, were forbidden there. Holy men were in charge of these precincts, and their descendants enjoyed a special religious esteem.[37] Also prominent was religious observance revolving around idols – again, with the idol probably representing the deity being worshipped. The names of many idols are known from ancient poetry and from later prose works drawing on this verse, and important new details pertaining to Yathrib (Medina) may be indicative of a more general pattern. Here clans each had an idol in a room belonging to all of the clan. The idol was venerated there and sacrifices were made to it. People also had wooden

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[32] Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif* 621.

[33] Sūrat al-Tawba (9), v. 90 (= Arberry, 189–90): procrastinators, liars, malingerers; vv. 97–8, 101 (= Arberry, 190–1): hypocrites, stubborn in unbelief, opportunists; Sūrat al-Fatḥ (48), v. 11 (= Arberry, 532): dissemblers, malicious, corrupt; Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49), v. 14 (= Arberry, 538): superficial in belief.

[34] Cf. Bashear (1997) 7–14.   [35] Arafat (1968).

[36] This is made especially clear in Lughda al-Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-ʿarab* 32.   [37] Sergeant (1962).

idols in their homes, and made similar observances at that level. To offend the idol was an offence against the honour of the head of the house and a matter for retaliation, and there is some evidence that these idols were intended to be figures of ancestors. There was thus a hierarchy of idols, corresponding to the social status of their owners.[38]

There is good evidence of star-worship and astral divinities as well. The widely venerated al-Lāt (a sky goddess) and al-ʿUzza (possibly the morning star) may have been representations of Venus, and Byzantine polemics against Islam claim that the Islamic slogan *Allāhu akbar*, 'God is great', has as its origin a cry of devotion in astral religion.[39] The worship of astral divinities has also been connected with the veneration of idols.

The attitude of the ancient Arabs toward their gods was entirely empirical and pragmatic. Though they did consider problems of human existence and the meaning of life,[40] they did not look to their deities for the answers. They regarded their gods as the ultimate sources of worldly phenomena beyond human control, such as disease, rain, fertility, and personal and communal adversities of various kinds; they worshipped the gods in expectation of their assistance, but they did not revere them or consider that they owed unwavering commitment to them.[41]

Monotheistic religion was also known in Arabia from an early date. The influx of Jews into Arabia is difficult to trace, but probably had much to do with the failure of the Jewish revolt and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, and the gradual spread of Christianity over the next three centuries. In south Arabia, Judaism enjoyed considerable success in the fifth and early sixth century, and to the north there were important Jewish communities at various places, primarily Yathrib. There Judaism seems to have had deep and powerful roots, if one may judge from reports that in pre-Islamic times the Jews there had three times as many fortified compounds (*quṣūr*) as all the other non-Jewish clans combined,[42] and that in the latter half of the sixth century the Jewish clans of Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr collected taxes from the other tribes.[43] The question of Jewish influences in Arabia and on Islam has become highly sensitive in modern scholarship, but there can be no doubt that such influences were profoundly important; the Qurʾān itself contains many tales and accounts of Jewish origin, as also do early Islamic religious lore and scholarship.[44]

[38] Lecker (1993).   [39] On this see Rotter (1993); Hoyland (1997) 105–7.
[40] E.g. the ephemeral joys of youth and the ultimate fate of either death or senility: Zuhayr, *Dīwān* 29; al-ʿAskarī, *Awāʾil* 1.57.
[41] Wellhausen (1897) 213–14; Crone (1987) 237–41.
[42] Ibn al-Najjār, *Al-Durra al-thamīna* 325. Cf. Conrad (1981) 22.
[43] Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* 128; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, iv.460. Cf. Kister (1968) 145–7.
[44] On the Jews of pre-Islamic Arabia, see Newby (1988) 14–77; and on influences, Geiger (1833); Rosenthal (1961) 3–46; Nagel (1967); Rubin (1995) esp. 32, 217–25.

The Christianization of the Roman empire in the fourth century opened the way for the large-scale spread of faith along and beyond the empire's frontiers, including Arabia.[45] Along the Syrian desert fringe from the Red Sea to the Euphrates, it spread to the Arab tribes via monasteries and wandering missionaries, primarily Monophysite. In some cases, as with the Taghlib and Ghassān, entire tribes converted; tribal settlements such as al-Jābiya and Jāsim, south of Damascus, became ecclesiastical centres too. These tribes were familiar with at least basic observances, yet remained completely within Arab tribal culture as well.[46] Along the Iraqi frontier the spread of Christianity was somewhat slower, perhaps because a network of Nestorian monasteries in the area took longer to appear than had been the case among the Monophysites.[47] Still, al-Ḥīra, the Lakhmid base, was the seat of a bishopric by A.D. 410.[48] Further south, there were major Christian communities at such centres as Najrān and Ṣanʿāʾ, and small ecclesiastical outposts along the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf. In such centres, specifically Monophysite or Nestorian forms of Christianity were practised, but elsewhere the Arab tribesman's main contact with the faith was via individual monks and hermits, and there confessional boundaries may have been less sharply drawn.[49]

Other currents influenced by Judaism and Christianity remained distinct from both. These trends revolved around two notions: that of a 'high god', and a belief in what was called ḥanīfiya. Little can be said about belief in a 'high god' in ancient Arabia, apart from the fact that, as elsewhere in the Near East,[50] some held that a god called Allāh held a certain dignity and status above the other deities of the Arabian pantheon and was extolled as a deity to whom one could turn in case of particular need.[51] On ḥanīfiya there is more information.[52] The Qurʾān makes it the religion of Abraham and associates it, on the one hand, with belief in a single God and, on the other, with rejection of idolatry and repudiation of worship of the sun, moon and stars. In particular, and most importantly, it reflects not the pragmatic attitude toward religion described above, in which the individual worships his god(s) in expectation of services with respect to worldly needs beyond his control, but rather a submissive devotion to and faith in God for his own sake. Ḥanīfiya is also distinct from Christianity and Judaism; in several passages its adherent (a ḥanīf) is equated with a Muslim, and in one variant to the Qurʾānic text ḥanīfiya replaces Islam as the 'true religion'.[53]

[45] For an overview, see Charles (1936); Trimingham (1979).
[46] For a valuable anthology of the verse of early Arab Christian poets, see Cheikho (1890). Cf. also Conrad (1994) 30, 31, 51.   [47] Cf. Brock (1982).   [48] *Synodicon orientale* 36.
[49] On the Qurʾānic evidence, see Ahrens (1930); Michaud (1960); Parrinder (1965); Bowman (1967); Robinson (1991). The relevant Qurʾānic verses, with the commentaries from many *tafsīr*s, are assembled in Abū Wandī *et al.* (1996).   [50] Teixidor (1977) 17, 161–2.
[51] Watt (1979); Welch (1979); Rubin (1981).
[52] For differing interpretations, see Gibb (1962); Rubin (1990); Rippin (1991).
[53] Jeffery (1937) 32, *ad* Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3), v. 19; = Arberry, 47.

Other sources suggest that there were *ḥanīf*s in various parts of Arabia, that the movement was one of individuals rather than religious communities, and that Mecca was important to its adherents. Other details are less reliable, and there is no evidence to link *ḥanīfiya* with south Arabian inscriptions attesting to worship of a god called al-Raḥmān, 'the Merciful', one of the Islamic names for God. But the fact that the tradition on the *ḥanīf*s makes some of them doubters or enemies of Muḥammad suggests that it should not be dismissed entirely as later prophetic annunciation or the tidying up of a pagan past.

Of interest in this respect is the testimony of Sozomen (d. before 448), who from the vantage point of Gaza in southern Palestine offered the following comments on Arab religion:

It seems that the Saracens were descended from Ishmael, son of Abraham, and hence were originally called Ishmaelites. Their mother Hagar was a slave, so in order to hide the shame of their origin they took the name of Saracens, pretending to be descended from Sarah, the wife of Abraham. As such is their descent, they practise circumcision like the Jews, abstain from eating pork, and adhere to numerous other Jewish observances and practices. In so far as they in any sense diverge from the observances of that people, this arises from the passage of time and their contacts with other neighbouring peoples . . . It seems likely that with the passage of time their ancient customs fell into disuse as they gradually took to observing the customs of other peoples. Eventually, when some of their tribe came into contact with the Jews, they learned from them the facts of their true origin and returned to observance of Hebrew custom and law. In fact, even at the present time there are some of them who live their lives in accordance with the Jewish law.[54]

The connection with Judaism may reflect an inclination to associate false belief with the machinations of Jews.[55] As to the Abrahamic religion attested in the text, while the connection is circumstantial and Sozomen wrote long before the testimony of the Qurʾān, the Islamic scripture may refer to continuing monotheistic trends in Arabia that it wishes to distance from earlier monotheistic faiths now viewed as rivals.

IV. ECONOMIC LIFE IN ARABIA

It is difficult to generalize on the notion of an Arabian 'economy', since the internal economic situation in the peninsula varied from place to place and depended on whether a community was settled or nomadic. As noted above, the south had a lively village economy based on terrace farming and irrigation; but even here, production was primarily limited to foodstuffs and

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[54] Soz. *HE* VI.38.10–14. Cf. Cook (1983) 81; Millar (1993a) 42–4.
[55] On the topos of the scheming Jews, see Schafer (1997).

use-value goods. South Arabian spices and incense were much sought-after items for centuries, and undoubtedly fortunes were made from trade in them,[56] but overland trade in such goods appears to have collapsed by the first or second century A.D.[57]

In the rest of the peninsula the economy was far more rudimentary. The interior of the peninsula consists of various types of steppe land where, in most years, no major cultivation can be sustained because of lack of water. Reliable water supplies come from wells and oasis springs, and it was around these that Arabia's towns developed. The date palm dominated agriculture in many places, and this and other crops were often cultivated in large walled gardens (*ḥawāʾiṭ*) scattered over whatever patches of arable land there were in or around a settlement. Goats and sheep were kept, and items produced for sale included hides and leather, wool, cloth, dairy products, raisins, dates, wine, and utensils and weapons of various kinds. Gold and silver were mined, but often figured as a replacement for currency rather than as an export item; perfume was produced, especially in Aden and Najrān, but beyond the Arabian and Syrian markets it could not compete with the cheaper products of such Byzantine centres as Alexandria.[58] Arabian traders in late antiquity were thus known to their neighbours – in Palestine, for example – as bearers not of costly luxury items, but rather of animals, wool, hides, oil and grains.[59]

Bedouins, on the other hand, were largely herders and pastoralists, though members of many tribes settled for varying periods of time and others engaged in opportunistic agriculture – for example by sowing on a fertile watered plot on their way somewhere else, and then reaping when they returned. Tenting groups travelled in recognized tribal territories, their schedules and movements (and willingness to encroach on the lands of other tribes) largely dictated by the needs of their animals. Those who lived along the desert fringes tended sheep and goats, as well as the single-humped dromedary camel; groups venturing into the depths of the Arabian steppe lands did best with camels, but on occasion are known to have taken goats and sheep as well. For barter or sale, nomads could offer such animal products as hides, leather, wool and dairy products.

The symbiosis between village-dwellers and nomads was important to the whole economic structure of Arabia. Leather, for example, was an extremely important product and was the plastic of its day; everything from buckets to items of clothing was made from it, and agriculture could not have been maintained without huge supplies of leather for ropes, irrigation

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[56] Groom (1981). [57] The last reference to it is in the *Periplus maris erythraei* xxvii.
[58] Dunlop (1957) 37–40; Crone (1987) 87–97.
[59] Krauss (1916) 335–6; Kraemer (ed.), *Excavatons at Nessana* III: *Non-Literary Papyri* 251–60 no. 89. The Palestinian church at Dayr al-ʿAdasa, dedicated in 621, has a mosaic floor bearing various rural scenes, including one of a caravan of camels carrying oil or wine jars; see Balty (1989) 149–51.

equipment, harness and so forth. Apart from exchanges (often quite complex) of goods and services, bedouins played a major role in economic development. There is evidence, for example, that parts of different tribes concluded sharecropping agreements and worked together to promote and protect agriculture.[60] Certain villages also specialized in serving the needs of nomads, and oases and springs where herds could be watered attracted settlements that thrived on trade with the nomads. Relations were further dictated by the need of settled merchants to move their goods through lands controlled by nomads, and hence to remain on good terms with the tribes.[61]

Arabian domestic trade thus consisted of caravans of camels organized by settled merchants and protected and guided by bedouins who controlled the lands through which the caravans passed. Seasonal fairs were often held, especially around religious shrines, and security at such important times was guaranteed by the declaration of sacred periods during which no raiding or fighting was to occur.[62] The goods being traded were for the most part not costly items, but rather the basic goods and commodities that people needed to live. This in turn limited the distance and duration that the caravans could travel, since the longer the journey was, the more expensive the goods would be at their destination;[63] that is, the longer the contemplated journey was in both distance and time, the more precious the goods being carried would have to be in order to generate sufficient income to make the journey feasible economically. The internal trade of Arabia thus seems to have involved the transport of goods on short or medium-length journeys, and it is probably this factor that accounts for the proliferation of market centres. The sources present a picture of lively markets dotting the steppe landscape of the peninsula; wells, springs and small villages were all attractive sites for established market activities, though the scale of such operations was probably small.[64] In some cases, commerce was encouraged by banning private land ownership within the market precinct (thus preventing dominance by a few successful merchants) and suspending taxes and fees on traders and visitors.[65]

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[60] Al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā staʿjam* I.77–8. Cf. Kister (1979) 70 on similar arrangements at the time of the Prophet. The same system is still widespread today.

[61] See Simon (1989) 78–86; Morony (1984) 218–19; Donner (1989) 77–8; and for modern examples, Jabbur (1995) 1–2, 5–8, 32–8, 250. Cf. also Nelson (1970).

[62] Wellhausen (1897) 84–94; Brunschvig (1976) 1.113–18; Crone (1987) 87–108.

[63] Jones (1955) 164; Hendy (1986) 556–7. Cf. also Crone (1987) 7. Not all trade was profit-driven, however; see Villiers (1940).

[64] Lughda al-Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-ʿarab* e.g. 224, 227, 243, 333–4, 335, 345, 358, 361, 397; Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar* 263–8; al-Marzūqī, *Kitāb al-azmina wa-l-amkina* 161–70. Cf. also al-Afghānī (1960); Ḥammūr (1979).   [65] Kister (1965); Dostal (1979); Lecker (1986).

V. IMPERIUM AND IMPERIAL POLITICS

It will be seen from the above that there was little in Arabia to attract the attention of the great powers of late antiquity, and at first it was only Arabia's role athwart the route to the east that lent it any importance to them. This factor alone was sufficient to make Arabia a focus of imperial manoeuvring and power politics, but trade operated in conjunction with other factors as well. The spread of Christianity and to a lesser extent Judaism in Arabia reflects the interest of external powers from an early date. In fact, it was the great triad of politics, trade and religion that determined the course of events there from late antiquity onward, with trade providing an imperial momentum later transferred to the other two.

All around the peripheries of Arabia the impact of imperium was being felt. Behind the Roman presence advancing in the north came Roman roads, way stations and forts, reflecting an increasing interest in control of what lay beyond. Far more vigorous, however, were the inroads by the Sasanians, who, with their capital at Ctesiphon, the rich agricultural alluvium of Iraq, and the Persian Gulf trade to consider, had a more immediate stake in Arabia. Settlements were founded up and down the Gulf, and Oman was annexed by Shāpūr I (reigned 241–72). In the fourth century, Arab raids provoked a punitive expedition that reached as far as the Ḥijāz. Discovery of silver and copper in the Najd led to the foundation of a Sasanian outpost at Shamām.[66]

The rivalry between the two powers was exacerbated by several factors. The establishment under Constantine of a Christian empire based at Constantinople made competition with Persia more immediate and provided yet another arena for intrigue and dispute. But more important by far was the evolution of the rival polities themselves. From largely decentralized and culturally diverse empires tolerant of a broad range of contradictory ideologies and traditions, both developed into world powers using political, economic and military strength, justified by élitist ideologies and spurred by aspirations to universal dominion, to pursue imperial aims increasingly dictated from the capital. These states, the empires of Byzantium and the Sasanians, competed for control of the west Asian heartland and adopted more global strategies in efforts to promote their own interests and undermine those of their rival.[67] Thus, while the rise of Christianity led to the collapse of the market for the incense consumed so massively and ostentatiously by pagan Rome,[68] the demise of this formerly

[66] Nöldeke (1879) 56; Dunlop (1957) 40; Crone (1987) 46.
[67] Fowden (1993) esp. 24–36, 80–137, though the focus on monotheism and the stress on premeditated planning from the centre seem overstated. Cf. Crone (1987) 47.
[68] Müller (1978) 733–64; Groom (1981) 162; Crone (1987) 27.

Black Sea

Caspian Sea

Edessa

Dara

Antioch

Beroea (Aleppo)

Nisibis

Tadmur (Palmyra)

R. Orontes

R. Euphrates

R. Tigris

Damascus

al-Jābiya

Ctesiphon

Jerusalem

Gaza

W. Sirhān

al-Ḥīra

Muʾtah

Petra

Ayla

al-Dūma

Taymāʾ

W. al-Rumma

Persian Gulf

Straits of Hormuz

H I J Ā Z

Red Sea

Yathrib (Medina)

Gerrha

Land over 1000 metres

Mecca

al-Ṭāʾif

W. al-Dawāsir

SCALE

0   250   500   750 km

0   250   500 miles

Najrān

Qarnaw

M Aʾ I N

Shabwa

W. Hadramawt

Ṣanʿāʾ

S Aʾ B Aʾ

Marʾib

Tamnaʿ

Y E M E N

H A D R A M A W T

Arabian Sea

QATABĀN

Bāb al-Mandab

Aden

Map 20   Pre-Islamic Arabia and its northern neighbours

crucial aspect of the eastern trade was more than replaced by new rivalries of an unprecedented intensity.

The new level of conflict ushered in by the escalating competition between the two great powers manifested itself in several ways where Arabia and the Arabs were concerned. First, a pronounced religious element was introduced into the struggle, primarily in the southern part of the peninsula and surrounding lands. Monophysite missionary activity[69] led to the conversion of Ethiopia to Christianity in the fourth century and the spread of the faith in Yemen and elsewhere in south Arabia. The Christian presence noted frequently in the Qur'ān was probably the result of commercial contacts with Syria. The Sasanians, on the other hand, supported the spread of the rival confession of the Nestorians and also encouraged the Ḥimyarites, a predominantly Jewish regime which ruled most of south Arabia and had influence elsewhere. Religious rivalries played instrumental roles in an Ethiopian invasion of Yemen in about 518 and shortly thereafter a civil war among the Ḥimyarites between Christian and Jewish factions. This struggle led to a persecution of Christians in south Arabia under the Ḥimyarite Dhū Nuwās, and in the 520s culminated in the massacre of the Christians of Najrān. Ethiopia responded with a second invasion, killed Dhū Nuwās, and once again installed a puppet regime in Yemen. The power of the Ethiopian governor, however, was soon usurped by a certain Abraha, who established himself as the paramount authority in the south; among the Meccans he was remembered as the leader of an expedition that they viewed as a campaign against themselves, but that in fact was a move (in 552) against tribal forces to the east.

Second, the peninsula was gradually encircled and penetrated by external forces. The Sasanians established trading posts beyond the Straits of Hormuz as far as Aden and in the sixth century occupied Yemen. Persian authority extended as far as Yathrib, where taxes were collected by the Jewish tribes of Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr and in part sent on to a Persian 'governor of the desert' (marzubān al-bādiya).[70] Byzantium, on the other hand, still had trade through Clysma and Ayla to protect,[71] and sought a sea route to the east that would not be subject to Persian taxes and interference. It thus tried to extend its influence down the Red Sea and battled against pirates and adventurers to maintain control of ports and customs stations; epigraphical evidence places Byzantine forces nearly 1,000 km south of Damascus in the mid sixth century.[72] It also used its new Christian ally, Ethiopia, to pursue its economic interests and intervene militarily in the affairs of the south, and encouraged the Ḥimyarites to attack Persian interests.[73]

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[69] Altheim and Stiehl (1971–3) 1.393–431; Shahīd (1971) 252–60.
[70] Christensen (1944) 373–4; Altheim and Stiehl (1957) 149–50; Whitehouse and Williamson (1973); Frye (1983).   [71] E.g. Wilkinson (1977) 88.
[72] Cf. for example, Abel (1938); Seyrig (1941); Simon (1989) 34.   [73] Smith (1954) 427.

Third, both powers used tribal allies in Arabia to further their own inter-
ests, protect their Arabian frontier zones, and confront the tribal forces of
the other side. Such a tactic was not new. Rome and Persia had routinely
used tribal auxiliaries in various capacities,[74] and in the late fifth and early
sixth century the Ḥimyarites in Yemen co-opted the great north Arabian
tribal confederation of Kinda into acting in their interest and controlling
caravan traffic along the routes from Yemen to Syria and Iraq. Kinda even-
tually extended its control over all of central Arabia, as well as part of the
Ḥijāz and areas along the Persian Gulf coast, and in the early sixth century
it was attacking both Byzantine and Sasanian targets along the desert
fringes of Syria and Iraq. Seeking to avoid further incursions and gain a
strong tribal ally against forces acting for the Sasanians, the Byzantines
reached an understanding with the confederation and on several occasions
sent embassies to promote good relations. Kinda thus became an ally of
Byzantium; turning against the Sasanians, it gained considerable authority
in the hinterlands of south-western Iraq and even occupied al-Ḥīra for a
time.[75] Its primary sponsors remained the Ḥimyarites in Yemen, however,
and as this regime declined, so also did the fortunes of Kinda.

The Sasanians' main tribal ally was the Lakhmids, a tribe that had estab-
lished itself in north-eastern Arabia by the fourth century A.D. and founded
a stable base at al-Ḥīra. There had been contacts and relations between the
two sides in the past, but the combination of deteriorating relations with
Byzantium and the spectre of powerful Kinda forces allied to Byzantium and
positioned within easy striking distance of Ctesphon and the agricultural
plains of Iraq led the Sasanians to support and encourage the Lakhmids with
renewed vigour. The latter had long been subordinate to Kinda, and double
marriages between them had been arranged at least twice in the past.
Nevertheless, by about 504 the new Lakhmid chieftain al-Mundhir III ibn al-
Nuʿmān (reigned 504–54) was able to rid himself of Kinda suzerainty and
launch operations against the confederation with a well-organized army.[76]
Fighting over the next two decades ended with the utter disintegration of
Kinda and the extension of Lakhmid authority over their rival's former
clients among the Arab tribes. By the 540s the Lakhmids held sway over
many of the tribes of central Arabia and over towns as far west as Mecca.[77]

Byzantium was thus forced to turn to other Arab clients for the pro-
tection of its position and interests. Its choice fell on the Ghassānids, a
south Arabian tribe, closely related to the Kinda, that had migrated to
northern Arabia and Syria in the fifth century and established itself as

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[74] On Rome, see Shahīd (1984) 52–63; and on the fifth-century Ṣāliḥids in particular, see Shahīd
(1958), (1989) (to be used with caution).
[75] Olinder (1927) 32–93; Simon (1989) 42–6; Lecker (1994); Shahīd (1995) 1.148–60.
[76] Rothstein (1899) 134–8; Altheim and Stiehl (1957) 117–23; Kister (1968) 165–7.
[77] Rothstein (1899); Simon (1967), (1989) 27–30, 42–6, 55–8, 149–52; ʿAbd al-Ghanī (1993) 11–23.

the pre-eminent power on the desert fringe there. Compared to the Lakhmids, the Ghassānids were a more nomadic group; though they were often associated with the camping-ground called al-Jābiya sixty-five km southwest of Damascus, they had no real fixed centre comparable to that of the Lakhmids at al-Ḥīra. Their influence was not as broad-ranging as that of the Lakhmids, and though they had trading connections with Iraq through Nisibis and Dara, their control over the relevant routes was tenuous. Nevertheless, Byzantium granted the Ghassānid shaykh the title of phylarch and showered him with honours, privileges and money. In return, it was expected that the chieftain would keep his own tribe under control and protect imperial interests from other tribes as well.[78]

The Ghassānids and Lakhmids, confronting one another across the Syrian desert, were thus drawn into the series of great Byzantine–Persian wars that began in 502 and ended with a decisive Byzantine victory in 628. Significant fighting between them began in the 520s and continued sporadically for sixty years, with dire consequences for the agricultural infrastructure of both Syria and Iraq. Several observers describe the destruction in Syria,[79] and whatever survived the passage of raiding parties and military expeditions was exposed to the brigands and outlaws hovering around such forces.[80]

The military strife tends to overshadow other developments in which the two sides were variously involved. The Ghassānids were responsible for the establishment of several small towns in the hinterlands south of Damascus and perhaps also for some of the so-called 'desert palaces' of the Syrian steppe.[81] Sponsors of Monophysite Christianity, they also erected numerous churches and monasteries. In Iraq, al-Ḥīra grew from a camp (which is what the name means in Arabic) into a lively Arab town noted for its churches and monasteries, impressive residential compounds and taverns. Persian Gulf shipping could sail up the Euphrates as far as al-Ḥīra, and Lakhmid income included proceeds not only from raids but also from agricultural rents and produce, trade, and taxes from tribes they controlled. There also seems to have been a nascent literary tradition emerging there.[82] Both sides, especially the Lakhmids, were also major patrons of Arab oral culture, and some of the most important poets of pre-Islamic times gained generous support from Ghassānid or Lakhmid shaykhs.[83]

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[78] Nöldeke (1887); Simon (1989) 27–32, 55–8; Sartre (1982); Peters (1984). On the term phylarch, which originated as a post in the provincial administration, not necessarily relating to nomads, see Macdonald (1993) 368–77.

[79] John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 2957–8, 2995–8, 3023–4 nos. 99, 133, 155; Delehaye (1927) 23–4; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* 1.1007 (cf. also Nöldeke (1879) 299 n. 4); al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-fāḍil* fol. 105r. Cf. also Foss (1975); (1977) 68–71; Schick (1995) 25, 31–3.

[80] Abū l-Baqā', *Al-Manāqib al-mazyadīya* 1.105–6. Early Islamic works on *jihād* also mention the problems posed by these elements.   [81] Gaube (1984).

[82] Much valuable material is collected in ʿAbd al-Ghanī (1993) 25–138.

[83] Nicholson (1907) 38–54; Blachère (1952–66) II.293–356; ʿAbd al-Ghanī (1993) 365–469.

The history of the Arab client regimes is important, but they were not central in the imperial planning of either Byzantium or Persia, in which they figured mainly as threats that had to be countered.[84] Little is known from the Lakhmid and Persian side, but Byzantine emperors, political strategists and historians like Procopius certainly held the Ghassānids in low esteem. The Byzantines had little faith in the abilities, motives or intentions of their Arab allies. The treaty of 561, for example, expresses dissatisfaction with Saracen adherence to treaty terms in the past, comes close to calling them smugglers and traitors, and warns of harsh punishment for lawbreakers.[85] When Ghassānid phylarchs refused to adhere to Chalcedonian orthodoxy, they were exiled. Byzantium made overtures to the Lakhmids when it suited them to do so, and the lack of trust and commitment worked both ways: the capture of Dara by Khusro Anushirvan (reigned 531–79) probably involved some negotiations with the Ghassānid phylarch al-Mundhir ibn al-Ḥārith (reigned 569–82).[86]

Neither side survived the manoeuvrings of their patrons or the broader conflict engulfing the Near East in the sixth century. In 581 al-Mundhir was arrested by the emperor Tiberius (reigned 578–82) and exiled to Sicily in a religious dispute, and in 584 his son and successor al-Nuʿmān joined him. Fragmented by the emperor Maurice (reigned 582–602) into a host of smaller entities and riven with dissension and conflict over the deposition of two leaders within four years, the Ghassānid phylarchate rapidly fell apart. Forces from the tribe are mentioned in accounts of the Arab conquest of Syria, but not in a leading role.[87] The Lakhmids survived a while longer, but during the reign of Khusro II Parviz (reigned 590–628) they were displaced in favour of a similarly decentralized system. The Sasanians also promoted the position of the Banū Ḥanīfa, which roamed in the desert on their southern flank.[88] Later, when a force of Persian troops and Arab auxiliaries sought to quell a desert revolt in about 610, the imperial army was beaten at Dhū Qār, thus marking the first time that the tribes had been able to defeat the Sasanians in battle.[89] It also illustrates how the demise of the Arab client regimes marked not the shift from one system of frontier defence to another, but rather the opening of a great power vacuum extending from the desert fringes of Syria and Iraq all the way to central Arabia. Inhabitants of the peninsula remembered that they had once been 'trapped on top of a rock between the two lions, Persia and Byzantium'.[90] But as the next decade was to reveal, these

[84] Important discussion in Whitby (1992).   [85] Menander fr. VI.i.320–2, 332–40.
[86] Whitby, *Maurice* 257–8. Cf. also the Nemara Inscription of A.D. 328, which has Arabs in the eastern Ḥawrān in contact with both the Romans and the Persians; Bowersock (1983) 138–47; Bellamy (1985).
[87] Nöldeke (1887) 33–45; Shahīd (1995) I.455–71, 634–41, 648–51.
[88] Al-Aʿshā, *Dīwān* 72–87 no. 13, esp. 86 vv. 47–9; Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* XVII.318–22.
[89] Nöldeke (1879) 332–5; Rothstein (1899) 120–3.
[90] Qatāda (d. 735) in al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* IX.145, *ad* Sūrat al-Anfāl (8), v. 26. Cf. Kister (1968) 143–4.

days were gone forever and the Persian setback at Dhū Qār was but a hint of things to come.

VI. MECCA, MUḤAMMAD AND THE RISE OF ISLAM

In about 552[91] a boy named Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh was born into a minor clan of the tribe of Quraysh, which was settled in and around the shrine centre of Mecca in the Ḥijāz, about 900 km south of Syria. A trader by profession, he participated in the caravan trade of Arabia and visited Syria on several occasions. In about 610 he began to preach a monotheistic faith called 'submission to God', or Islam, and summoned his fellow Meccans to prepare for the Last Judgement. Difficulties in Mecca and the erosion of vital support had by 622 reached the point where he was obliged to move to Yathrib, 300 km to the north. This shift, the *hijra*,[92] proved to be of crucial importance, for in Yathrib, henceforth called Medina (al-Madīna, probably referring not to 'the city', but to the Prophet's house), the ranks of his followers increased dramatically. Raids on the caravans, camps and villages of his enemies met with success and further expanded his support. He returned to Mecca in triumph in 630, and by the time of his death in 632 his authority extended over much of Arabia. The rest was brought under control by the first caliph, Abū Bakr (reigned 632–4), and Muslim forces went on to campaigns of conquest that in less than a century created an empire extending from Spain to central Asia.

How all this occurred and why it focused on Muḥammad, Mecca and the late sixth century are questions that early Muslims took up themselves,[93] and that have comprised a major concern of modern historical research. In the 1950s Watt proposed a socio-economic solution. Mecca was a major centre for overland caravan trade, and its merchants and others grew wealthy on the profits from commerce in such precious items as incense, spices, gemstones, gold and so forth. This widened the gap between the rich and the poor and led to social malaise as crass materialism eroded traditional values. Muḥammad's message was essentially a response to this crisis.[94] More recently, however, serious challenges have been made to the notions of a lucrative Arabian trade in luxury items, of Mecca as an important entrepôt, and hence of some serious crisis provoking a religious response.[95] It may thus be useful to indicate the ways in which points made above contribute to the discussion.

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[91] For the date, see Conrad (1987a).   [92] Crone (1994).
[93] But not immediately; see Donner (1998) 75–85.
[94] Watt (1953) 1–29 and in numerous publications of his thereafter. Cf. the review by Bousquet (1954).
[95] Simon (1975), trans. Simon (1989); Peters (1988); Crone (1987). Cf. the highly polemical review of Crone in Serjeant (1990) and the reply in Crone (1992).

Mecca, a place completely unknown to any non-Arabic source of the pre-Islamic period, lies off the main routes of communications in western Arabia. The site itself is barren, inhospitable and incapable of sustaining agriculture for more than a minuscule population. Even had there been a lucrative international trade passing through the Ḥijāz in the sixth century, it would not have found an attractive or logical stopping-point at Mecca, which owed its success to its status as a shrine and pilgrimage centre. As at certain other shrines in Arabia, pilgrims came to circumambulate a rock, in this case associated with an unroofed building called the Kaʿba, and perform religious rituals with strong affinities to those of Judaism: offerings and animal sacrifice, washing and concern for ritual purity, prayer, recitation of fixed liturgies and so forth.[96] There are indications that, early on, there was little resident population at the site: 'People would perform the pilgrimage and then disperse, leaving Mecca empty with no one living in it.'[97]

The success and expansion of Mecca were due to the administrative and political skills of its keepers, the tribe of Quraysh. The Kaʿba seems to have been a shrine of the god Hubal,[98] but in the religiously pluralistic milieu of pagan Arabia it must not have been difficult to promote it as a place where other deities could be worshipped as well. A greater achievement was convincing other tribes to honour the sanctity of the *ḥaram* of Mecca and to suspend raiding during the sacred months when pilgrims came. As agriculture was not possible at Mecca, it had to bring in food from elsewhere and so was at the mercy of nearby tribes in any case. The very fact that Mecca survived, much less prospered, thus reflects the diplomatic skills of Quraysh. The Islamic tradition, of course, makes much of the *a priori* importance of Quraysh, but this is surely something that emerged within the paradigm of a sedentary tribe seeking to protect and promote its interests through skilful manipulation of relations with the nomadic tribes around it. There was mutual advantage in the prosperity of Mecca: trade with pilgrims, import and marketing of foodstuffs and other necessities, and collection and distribution of taxes levied in kind for feeding and watering pilgrims.[99]

It may even be that Quraysh was able to organize a profitable trade with Syria, perhaps as a result of disruption to the agricultural productivity of the Levant caused by the destruction of the Persian wars, numerous droughts in Syria,[100] and the repeated visitations of bubonic plague after 541.[101]

The message that Muḥammad preached in the milieu of a prosperous Mecca was in many ways a familiar one, and in others quite a novelty.[102] His summons to the worship of one God recalled the notion of a 'high god',

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[96] Hawting (1982); Rubin (1986).   [97] Al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā staʿjam* 1.89, citing al-Kalbī (d. 763).
[98] Cf. Wellhausen (1897) 75–6; Crone (1987) 187–95.   [99] E.g. Ibn Hishām 1.1, 83.
[100] Butzer (1957) 362.   [101] Conrad (1994), (1996b).   [102] Cook (1983) 25–60.

and his identification of Islam as the religion of Abraham had important associations with the doctrines of *ḥanīfiya*. As can be seen from the testimony of Sozomen, his call for the restoration of a pristine faith, free from the corruptions that had crept into it, was already a time-honoured tradition in Arabia. The observances he advocated were also well known from either pagan Arabian or Jewish practice: prayer and Friday worship, fasting, pilgrimage, ritual purity, almsgiving, circumcision and dietary laws.[103]

Where Muḥammad broke with tradition was in his insistence on absolute monotheism and his advocacy of a relationship with God that abandoned traditional pragmatic views of religion and summoned man to unconditional commitment and faith in response to God's creative munificence and continuing solicitude. The rejection of pagan eclecticism, however, threatened the entire social and economic position of Quraysh and thus earned him the enmity of their leaders, and among the public at large his message, with its corollaries of reward and punishment in the hereafter, seemed extreme and delusory and evoked little positive response.[104] In order to gain support he had to prove that his God was a winner, and this he achieved by moving to Yathrib (Medina), where he used his expanding following to disrupt Meccan commerce and food supplies.[105] His military success made him a force to be reckoned with: the tribal arrangements so carefully nurtured by Mecca over the years soon fell apart in the face of this challenge, while the victories of the new religion provided the worldly success which Arabs demanded of their gods and also appealed to the Arabs' warrior ethic. Islam also had a broad appeal on other grounds. The Qur'ān presented itself as a universal scripture 'in clear Arabic speech',[106] and thus took advantage of the position of the Arabic language as the common cultural tongue of Arabia and a basis for common action.[107] Arabs could also identify with one another, despite their tribal distinctions, on the basis of a shared participation in Arabian tribal organization and custom, a heritage of similar cultural and religious experience in pagan systems and folklore, and a long history of trade and commerce, revolving around fairs and religious shrines, that engendered a certain feeling of familiarity around the peninsula.

It has often been asserted that the Arab conquests were of essentially Islamic inspiration. The kerygmatic tradition of Islam of course sees things this way, and the Armenian chronicle (written in the 660s), attributed to the bishop Sebeos, also has Muḥammad urging his followers to advance and claim the land promised to them by God as the descendants

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[103] Goitein (1968) 73–125; Bashear (1984) 441–514; Rippin (1990–3) I.86–99.
[104] Cf. Izutsu (1966) 45–54.   [105] Discussion in Donner (1977).
[106] Sūrat al-Naḥl (16), v. 103; Sūrat al-Shuʿarāʾ (26), v. 195 (=Arberry, 100, 379). Cf. also Sūrat Ibrāhīm (14), v. 4 (=Arberry, 246).
[107] Blachère (1952–66) II.230–41, (1956); von Grunebaum (1963); Bashear (1997) 54–5.

of Abraham.[108] It therefore seems probable that there was a religious agenda to the conquests from the start, and it is certainly true that without the unifying factor of Islam there would probably have been no conquest at all.

But the arguments of leaders and advocates are one thing, and the response of the fighters themselves is another. Even in Mecca and Medina the teachings of Muḥammad and the text of the Qurʾān were still known in only fragmentary fashion, and it is difficult to see how most tribesmen elsewhere could have had more than a vague and trivial knowledge of either so soon after the Prophet's death. Many warriors who joined the conquest forces had only recently fought against the Prophet himself, or resisted the effort of the first two caliphs to bring Arabia under their control. It is also implausible that tribal warriors all over Arabia could so quickly have abandoned the pragmatic and worldly attitude toward religion that had prevailed for centuries, in favour of one that expected genuine commitment to the one God. There is, in fact, good evidence on the conquests showing that this was not the case at all.[109]

This is not to detract from the centrality of the message of Islam to Muḥammad's own sense of mission and purpose, and probably to that of others around him. One may also concede that Islam enabled the Muslim leadership to mobilize warriors in a way that transcended important differences, and it is likely that Islamic slogans and admonitions of various kinds were frequently inspiring to fighters on the ground. But if the faith played an important role in uniting and mobilizing the tribes, it was nevertheless waves of tribal forces, motivated primarily by traditional tribal ambitions and goals, that broke over Syria, Iraq and Egypt, beginning in the 630s.

It is unlikely that either Syria or Iraq could have withstood the advance of forces of this kind, given the constitution of their defences after the end of the last Persian war in 628, only six years before the first Arab advance. The Arab armies were not simply marshalled in Medina and then sent forth with the caliph's instructions; providing food, fodder and water for an army of thousands of men and animals would have been extremely difficult. The norm was rather for small contingents gradually to expand as other groups joined them on the march; the sources make it clear that commanders were expected to engage in such recruiting along the way, to ensure that the newcomers were armed and equipped, and to 'keep each tribe distinct from the

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[108] Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius* 95–6. Cf. also the quotations from Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (d. 845) in Michael I Qīndāsī, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* II.403–5 (trans.); IV.404–8 (text); *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* 1.227–30 (text); 1.178–80 (trans.). Discussion in Crone and Cook (1977) 8–10; Hoyland (1997) 124–30.

[109] E.g. al-Walīd ibn Muslim (d. 810) in Ibn ʿAsākir 1.461–2; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* 1.2922; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* 1.75.

others and in its proper place'.[110] In this way a small force could soon swell to thousands as warriors joined its ranks in expectation of adventure, fighting and plunder.

The situation was made more difficult by the fact that confronting the Arabs on this scale posed entirely new military problems. Both powers were accustomed to dealing with Arabs as bands of raiders and had planned their frontier defences accordingly. Watchtowers and forts, many of them abandoned for centuries in any case, were inadequate to deter the forces that now swept past them, and whereas the old Roman system had anticipated incursions by single uncoordinated bands, it was now confronted by penetration at many points simultaneously. It was probably also difficult to determine exactly where the enemy was at any given time, for when battle was not imminent an Arab army tended to fragment into bands of warriors roaming the countryside.

Finally, and as the above example shows, Arab strategy was often highly reactive and thus difficult to counter or predict. Incursions into Iraq, for example, seem to have begun when the tribe of Rabīʿa, of the Banū Shaybān, was obliged by drought in Arabia to migrate to Iraqi territory, where the Sasanian authorities permitted them to graze their herds on promise of good behaviour. But the presence of these tribal elements eventually led to friction, which the Rabīʿa quite naturally interpreted as unwarranted reneging on an agreed arrangement. When they called on their kinsmen elsewhere for support, the crisis quickly escalated into full-scale conflict between Arab and Persian forces.[111]

It is difficult to guess whether either of the great powers would have been able to stem the military momentum that was building in Arabia, even had they correctly gauged the threat it posed. With Kinda, the Ghassānids and the Lakhmids all in a state of either collapse or disarray, the growing strategic power of Islam was able to develop in what otherwise amounted to a political void; the real source of the danger confronting the empires was effectively beyond their reach from the beginning. Byzantium and Persia could fight armies that violated their frontiers, but could not stop the process that was generating these armies in the first place. Initial victories over the Arabs at Muʾta in Syria in 632 and the battle of the Bridge in Iraq in 634 thus proved no deterrent, as in earlier times would have been the case.[112]

What overwhelmed the Byzantines and Sasanians was thus the ability of the message and charismatic personality of Muḥammad to mobilize the tribal might of Arabia at a level of unity never experienced among the Arabs either before or since. Unprepared for defence on the scale required

[110] Ibn ʿAsākir 1.446.   [111] Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ* 1.88–9.
[112] Donner (1981) 105–11, 190–202; Kaegi (1992) 71–4, 79–83.

to counter this new threat and unable to marshal tribal allies of their own
to strike at their foe in his own heartlands, both were forced to fight deep
within their own territories and suffered defeats that simply encouraged
further incursions on a larger scale. Greek and Persian field armies were
crushed in one disastrous battle after another, leaving cities to endure sieges
without hope of relief and encouraging resistance everywhere else to evap-
orate in short order.[113]

[113] Donner (1981) 119–220; Kaegi (1992) 88–180.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

A.D.	Emperors	The West	The East
425	Theodosius II (408–50)		Reform of teaching in Constantinople
	Valentinian III (425–55)		
427			First commission to codify laws
428			Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople
429		Vandals cross to Africa	
431		Aspar and eastern army defeated by Vandals	First Council of Ephesus; deposition of Nestorius
432		Death of Augustine	
435		Revolt of bagaudae in Armorica	Exile of Nestorius
436		Goths besiege Narbonne	
438			Theodosian Code issued
439		Geiseric the Vandal captures Carthage	
440		Vandals ravage Sicily	Yazdgard II attacked eastern provinces
441		Sueves control Baetica and Carthaginiensis	Victories for Attila in Balkans
443			Ascendancy of eunuch Chrysaphius
447			Sweeping successes of Attila in Balkans
449		Embassy to Attila	Second Council of Ephesus (the Robber Synod)
450	Marcian (450–7)		
451		Attila invades Gaul; defeat at Catalaunian Plains	Council of Chalcedon
452		Attila attacks Italy; sack of Aquileia	
453	Death of Pulcheria	Death of Attila	
454		Valentinian III murders Aetius	Huns defeated at River Nedao
455	Avitus (455–7)	Vandals sack Rome	
457	Leo I (457–74)		Aspar controls succession
	Majorian (457–61)		Death of Symeon Stylites

460		Expedition of Majorian to Spain *v.* Vandals	
461	Libius Severus (461–5)	Defeat of Majorian in Spain; Ricimer controls succession	
467	Anthemius (467–72)		
468		Failure of eastern expedition *v.* Vandals	
471			Overthrow and death of Aspar
472		Death of Ricimer	
473	Glycerius (473–4)		
474	Zeno (474–91)		Leo sends Nepos west to depose Glycerius
	Nepos (474–5)		
475	Romulus (475–6)	Rebellion of Orestes	Rebellion of Basiliscus; Zeno retires to Isauria
476	Basiliscus (usurper)	Odoacer deposes Romulus Augustulus	
		Visigoths capture Arles and Marseilles	Return of Zeno; exile and death of Basiliscus
480			Death of Theoderic Strabo
482		Acacian schism divides Rome and Constantinople	Zeno issues *Henotikon*
484		Huneric persecutes Catholics	Rebellion of Illus
489		Theoderic enters Italy	Theoderic the Amal leaves Balkans for Italy
491	Anastasius (491–518)		
492			Rebellion in Isauria
493		Theoderic the Amal captures Ravenna and kills Odoacer	
496			Anastasius deposes Euphemius of Constantinople
497			Suppression of Isaurian revolt
498			Abolition of Chrysargyron tax; coinage reform
502			Kavadh invades eastern provinces; siege of Amida
505			Truce on eastern frontier; construction of Dara
507		Clovis and Franks defeat Visigoths at Vouillé	
511		Clovis' Catholic Council of Orleans	Anastasius deposes Macedonius of Constantinople
		Division of Frankish kingdom on Clovis' death	
512			Deposition of Flavius of Antioch; Severus succeeds
513			First revolt of Vitalian
515			Defeat of Vitalian
518	Justin I (518–27)	End of Acacian schism	
524		Execution of Boethius	
526	Athalaric (526–34)		
527	Justinian I (527–65)		
528			Commission for codification of Law

A.D.	Emperors	The West	The East
529			First edition of *Codex Iustinianus*
530			Commission to codify Roman jurists
531			Accession of Khusro I, king of Persia
532			Nika riot; 'Endless Peace' with Persia
533		Belisarius defeats Vandals	Theopaschite Edict
			Completion of *Digest* of Roman law, and *Institutes*
534		Pragmatic Sanction to regulate affairs of Africa	Second edition of *Codex Iustinianus*
		Burgundian kingdom taken over by Franks	Triumph of Belisarius at Constantinople
		Regency of Amalasuintha in Italy	
535		Murder of Amalasuintha; Belisarius despatched to Italy	Consulship of Belisarius
536		Belisarius lands in Italy; capture of Naples	
		Belisarius occupies Rome	
537		Siege of Rome	Dedication of rebuilt St Sophia
539		Goths capture Milan and massacre inhabitants	
		Franks invade Italy	
540		Belisarius enters Ravenna	Khusro I attacks Romans; sack of Antioch
			Basilius, the last annual consul
			Jacob Baradaeus appointed bishop of Edessa; creation of separate Monophysite hierarchy
542			Bubonic plague strikes Constantinople
544		Belisarius' second expedition to Italy	
546		Totila captures Rome	
547			Pope Vigilius summoned to Constantinople
548	Death of Theodora		
549		Recall of Belisarius	
552		Arrival of Narses in Ravenna	
		Defeat and death of Totila at Busta Gallorum	
553/4			Fifth Oecumenical Council at Constantinople
554		Pragmatic Sanction to regulate affairs of Italy	
558			First contacts between Avars and Romans
559			Kutrigurs cross Danube; raid breaches Long Walls
561		Division of Frankish kingdom on Chlothar I's death	
562			Plot against Justinian; 50 Years Peace with Persia

Visigothic Kings		Vandal Kings		Frankish Kings		Rulers of Italy		Lombard Rulers in Italy		Persian Kings	
Theoderic I	419–51	Geiseric	428–77	Childeric	?–481	Odoacer	476–93			Vahram V	421–38
Theoderic II	453–66	Huneric	477–84	Clovis	c. 481–c. 511	Theoderic	493–526			Yazdgard II	438–57
Euric	466–84	Gunthamund	484–96	Chlothar I	511–61	Athalaric	526–34			Hormizd III	457–9
Alaric II	484–507	Thrasamund	496–523	Theoderic I	511–33	Theodahad	534–6			Peroz	459–84
Gesalic	507–11	Hilderic	523–30	Childebert I	511–58	Vitigis	536–40			Balash	484–8
Amalric	511–31	Gelimer	530–3	Theodebert I	533–47	Totila	541–52	Alboin	568–72	Kavadh	488–531
Theudis	531–48			Theodebald	547–55			Cleph	572–4	Khusro I	531–79
Theudisclus	548–9			Guntram	561–92			Ducal interregnum	574–84	Hormizd IV	579–90
Agila	549–55			Charibert I	561–7			Authari	584–90	Vahram Tchobin	590–1
Athanagild	551–68			Sigibert I	561–75			Agilulf	590–616	Khusro II	590–628
Liuva I	567–71			Chilperic	561–84						
Leovigild	569–86			Childebert II	575–95/6						
Reccared	586–601			Chlothar II	584–629						
				Theodebert	596–612						
				Theoderic II	596–613						

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ABBREVIATIONS

Full references to editions of primary sources and standard collections can be found in, for example, Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Liddell, Scott and Jones, *Greek Lexicon*, and *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vols. I–III.

AA	*Auctores Antiquissimi*
AAntHung	*Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarium Hungaricae*
AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*, 71 vols. 1863–1940
AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ACHCM	*Actes du Congrès d'Histoire et de Civilisation du Maghreb*
ACO	*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin, 1914–40; J. Straub, Berlin, 1971–
ACOR	American Centre for Oriental Research, Amman
Actes XI Cong. Int. d.Arch. Chrét.	*Actes du XI Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne*
AHR	*American Historical Review*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
Anc.H.Bull.	*Ancient History Bulletin*
Annales:ESC	*Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini
Ant. Afr.	*Antiquités Africaines*
AO	*Acta Orientalis*
APF	*Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete*
AR	*Archaeological Reports*
ARCA	Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, Liverpool
AS	*Anatolian Studies*
BAR	British Archaeological Reports, Oxford
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BGU	*Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen* (later *Staatlichen*) *Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*

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BS	*Byzantine Studies*
BSAA	*Bulletin de la Société archéologique d'Alexandrie*
BSAC	*Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
Byz.	*Byzantion*
Byzslavica	*Byzantinoslavica*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CAG	*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, Berlin, 1891
CCSG	*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
Cd'É	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CHAAN	*Colloque internationale d'histoire et archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, Actes*
ChHist	*Church History*
CIC	*Corpus Iuris Civilis*², ed. T. Mommsen, P. Krüger *et al.*, 3 vols., Berlin, 1928–9
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CJ	*Codex Justinianus*, ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1929
CLA	*Codices Latini Antiquiores*, ed. E. A. Lowe, Oxford, 1934–
Class. et Med.	*Classica et Medievalia*
CPh	*Classical Philology*
CPR	*Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CRAI	*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
C.Th.	*Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. Mommsen, Berlin, 1905
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
DBI	*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
EME	*Early Medieval Europe*
FHG	*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller
FIRA	*Fontes Iuris Romani Anteiustiniani*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
Hist. Zeit.	*Historische Zeitschrift*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICS	*Illinois Classical Studies*
IGLS	*Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Paris
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
IQ	*Islamic Quarterly*
IVRA	*Ivra. Rivista internazionale di Diritto romano e antico*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JbAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JFA	*Journal of Field Archaeology*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJP	*Journal of Juristic Papyrology*
JÖB	*Jarhbuch 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*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Justinian, *Nov.*	*Corpus Iuris Civilis III, Novellae,* 6th edn, R. Schoell and W. Kroll, Berlin, 1954
MAMA	*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*
MChr	*Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde, Juristische Teil,* ed. L. Mitteis
MEFR	*Mélanges de l'École française de Rome (Moyen Âge)*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historiae*
Mus. Helv.	*Museum Helveticum*
Mus.Phil. Lond.	*Museum Philologicum Londiniense*
NMS	*Nottingham Medieval Studies*
Num.Chron.	*Numismatic Chronicle*
OC	*Oriens Christianum*
OCA	*Orientalia Christiana Analecta*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OLA	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*
OMRO	*Oudheidkundige Mededelingen vit hen Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden*
OMS	*Opera Minora Selecta*
Oxf. J. Arch.	*Oxford Journal of Archaeology*
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PBSR	*Papers of the British School at Rome*
P.Cair.Masp.	*Papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine, Catalogue général des antiquités du Musée du Caire*
PCPS	*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PGL	*A Patristic Greek Lexikon,* ed. G. W. H. Lampe
P.Herm.	*Papyri from Hermopolis and Other Documents of the Byzantine Period*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
P.Lond.	*Greek Papyri in the British Museum*
PLRE	*Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* I–III, Cambridge, 1971–92
PLS	*Pactus Legis Salicae*
P.Mich.	*Michigan Papyri*
P.Michael.	*Papyri Michaelidae*
P.Monac.	*Byzantinische Papyri in der Königlichen Hof- und Staatsbibliothek zu München*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*

P.Oxy.	*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*
P&P	*Past and Present*
P.Ross.Georg.	*Papyri russischer und georgischer Sammlungen*
P.Ryl.	*Rylands Papyri*
PSI	*Papyri Greci e Latini, Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la Ricerca dei Papiri Greci e Latini in Egitto*, 1912–
P.Warren	*The Warren Papyri* (Papyrologica Lugd.-Bat.) 1, ed. M. David
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RBPH	*Revue belge de philologie et de l'histoire*
RDC	*Revue de droit canonique*
RE	*Pauly–Wissowa–Kroll, Realenzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Stuttgart, 1894–
REA	*Revue des Études Anciennes*
REB	*Revue des Études Byzantines*
REG	*Revue des Études Grecques*
RH	*Revue historique*
RHE	*Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*
RIDA	*Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité*
SB	*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*
SCH	*Studies in Church History*
SChrét.	*Sources Chrétiennes*
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica*
SCNAC	*Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. J. D. Mansi, Florence, 1759ff.
SDHI	*Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris*
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
SRM	*Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*
StPatr.	*Studia Patristica*
StudPal	*Studien zur Paläographie und Papyruskunde*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TAVO	*Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*
T&MByz	*Travaux et Mémoires*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Krause and G. Müller, Berlin, 1977–
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WChr	U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde, Historischer Teil*, ii. Leipzig–Berlin, 1912
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*
ZRG GA	*Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung*
ZRG RA	*Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung*

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