

**THE EMPEROR HERACLIUS; INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE IMAGE
OF AN EMPEROR**

David M. Pritchard

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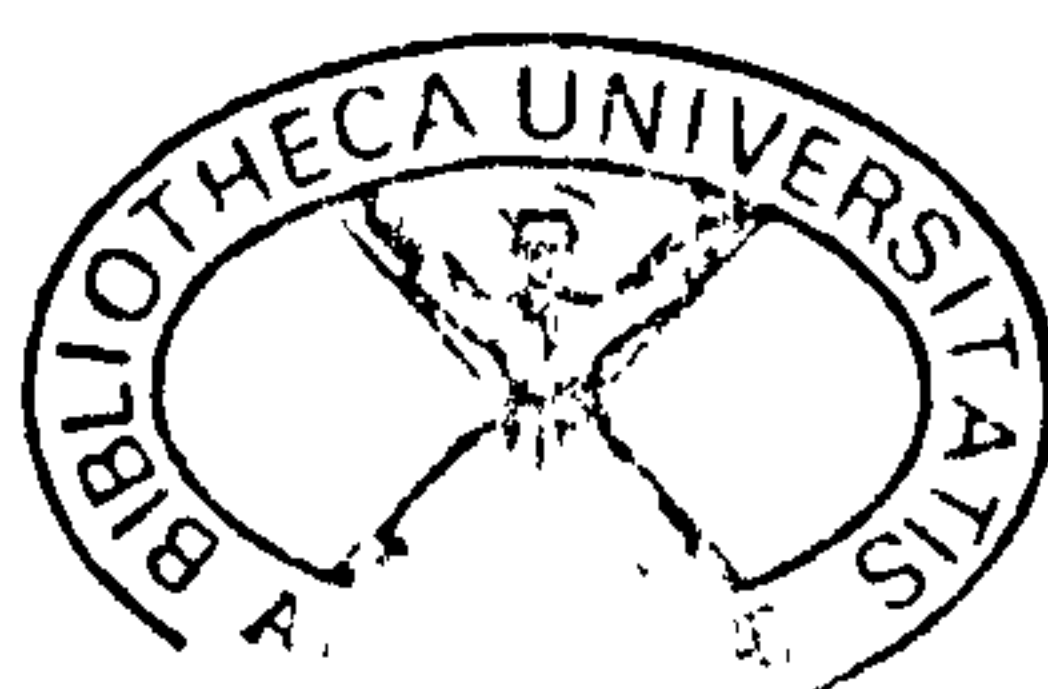
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**The Emperor Heraclius; Investigations into the
Image of an Emperor.**

David M. Pritchard.

Submitted for the Higher Degree of Ph. D.

14. 12. 92.



I, David M. Pritchard, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 85,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1989 as a candidate for the degree of Ph. D. in October 1989; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1992.

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Abstract.

This thesis is an investigation into the image of the emperor Heraclius as depicted by the ancient sources who cover his reign (610-641 A. D.). In order to establish the relevant criteria for the portrayal of an emperor it was first necessary to provide the reader with a synopsis of writings on the role of the emperor from the time of Eusebius onwards. The reign of Heraclius was then treated in roughly chronological fashion, there follow four chapters concerning the sources' description of his military exploits, his coup, and the warfare with the Avars and the Persians, including the siege of Constantinople. Here the discussion concerns the personal role of Heraclius in events and his culpability for their outcome. Heraclius' triumph in these wars led him to seek a compromise with the Monophysite Church that was defeated by opposition from the Chalcedonian Church in the recently liberated provinces. His failure to achieve any lasting settlement is then discussed as a reason for the success of the Arab invasions that followed. Heraclius' reputation as a reformer, amongst ancient and modern authors alike, is then considered with special reference to the controversy surrounding the introduction of the themes. The last chapter is a review of the interrelationship of all the sources that describe Heraclius' reign, in an attempt to define their various influences.

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Jim McClements, Adam Brown, and Simon Dodsworth for making working there an art form.

Three years spent worrying about another guy's image could make one very self-analytical. Luckily I've had my brother Johnny, Neil Anderson, Martin Whittaker, Kenny Lindsay and Keith Irving to bring me down from my ivory tower, and to encourage me if I was ever in any doubt.

There has to be a point to all of this, and so thanks are due to Joanna, for making this a labour of love.

Central Bar
St.Andrews
1992.

List Of Abbreviations.

Sources

Ced.	Cedrenus
Con. Man	Constantine Manasses
<i>C.P.</i>	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i>
G. P.	George of Pisidia
<i>Guidi</i>	<i>The Anonymous Chronicle of Guidi</i>
Leo Gramm.	Leo the Grammarian
Men. Prot.	Menander Protector
Men. Rh.	Menander Rhetor
Niceph.	Nicephorus
<i>Seert</i>	<i>The Chronicle of Seert</i>
Theoph.	Theophanes
Th. Sim.	Theophylact Simocratta
<i>1234</i>	<i>The Chronicle of 1234</i>

Other

<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher</i>
<i>Byz.</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CMH</i>	<i>Cambridge Medieval History</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions</i>

et Belles-Lettres

<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>TM</i>	<i>Travaux et mémoires, Centre d'Études</i>

Byzantines, Paris.

Introduction.

The significance of the reign of Heraclius has been variously interpreted by modern historians. It has been seen as the beginning of the Byzantine empire, the start of that empire's dark age or the end of the Roman era. A consideration of the reign as a whole suggests that all of these interpretations have a degree of relevance. This stems from the multiplicity of attitudes and incidents that the reign encompassed. Whilst some of these looked back to Roman tradition and others were innovations that were to form part of Byzantine culture, some only lasted as long as their initiator. The subject of this study is provided by the fact that this myriad of different topics is bound together by a single theme, a theme that looks both forwards and back, that of the image of the emperor. We shall be concerned with how Heraclius was represented and how he himself wished to be presented. The underlying theme of imperial ideology will be shown to be as consistent as it was in the day of the first Christian emperor, Constantine. What was liable to fluctuation was the personal standing of an individual emperor at significant junctures throughout the reign, and retrospective comments on the whole of his reign.

The reign of Heraclius has been subject to investigation by historians at various times since the turn of this century. However, there has been a marked tendency to concentrate on specific aspects of the reign rather than the reign as a whole. These aspects have ranged from attempts to provide an accurate chronology of the reign, through discussion of supposed economic reforms, to theories on the

extent of the devastation of the empire by invasion. Heraclius reigned in momentous times. His reign saw the final defeat of the Persian empire, the break up of the Avar federation and the expansion of Islam, and the diversity of this has been reflected in previous studies. This study aims to provide a more comprehensive approach to the reign, an approach that takes as its theme the image of Heraclius the ruler. All of the major controversies will be discussed, but emphasis will be placed upon those which reflect upon the role of the emperor. This will not amount to a narrative of events, rather it will be a series of discussions, in roughly chronological order, that have as their unifying theme the image of the emperor.

The last comprehensive survey of Heraclius' reign was written by Stratos as part of his treatment of the empire in the seventh century (1968). For this approach Stratos took his lead from Pernice, whose *L' Imperatore Eraclio*, published in 1906, was basically a narrative of the reign with special reference to the poems of George of Pisidia. Stratos' work was also a narrative of events, but he made use of various contemporary articles to include the occasional discussion of the major controversies that had excited modern scholarship.

Stratos' account needs to be replaced, partly for methodological reasons, partly because scholarship has progressed in the past two decades. Stratos' approach to the sources of Heraclius' reign, which are admittedly diverse and very problematic, was not sufficiently critical: he did not resolve the interdependence of

sources within the Greek and Syriac traditions, nor did he establish a hierarchy of reliability that would facilitate the resolution of some of the numerous contradictions, but instead tended to accept at face value what the sources reported without considering the effect of possible distorting factors. Furthermore, in a study much of which was necessarily devoted to military events, he did not base his discussions of strategy upon a detailed knowledge of the relevant campaign theatres. Scholarship, too, has naturally progressed since the composition of his multivolume study. Since the early 1970's there has been a steady increase in writing on the second half of the sixth century. This has led to a reawakening of interest in the seventh century to which the reign of Heraclius is seminal, since Heraclius' reign cannot be divorced from that of his predecessors. Earlier emperors had fought wars with Persia, suffered barbarian incursions, excited ecclesiastical controversy, and been short of money. Heraclius may have been ruling over a changing empire but it was one that was evolving rather than assuming an identity completely separate from that which had gone before. This is exemplified, for example, by Averil Cameron whose writings on the Theotokos investigate the development of Marian devotion through the sixth century and into the reign of Heraclius, and indeed it was the work of Cameron that initiated and directed interest in the late-sixth century. Her approach, in for example her article 'Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium', is a thematic one which draws upon a variety of sources, both eastern and western, to examine the workings of the imperial court. It is this style that the present piece of work seeks to imitate and develop. The theme is the image of an emperor, but the subject is restricted to one emperor, making the discussion more detailed but less extensive.

I hope that such a study can make a limited contribution to the need to construct a replacement for Stratos' narrative, a highly desirable project that is, however, too large for a single thesis.

Other thematic treatments of the period have been published in recent years. John Haldon, in addition to specialist investigations of military recruitment and organisations, has examined the economic and administrative measures of Heraclius in his survey of the seventh century. Though Haldon's work concentrates on different subject areas from that of Cameron his conclusion does provide a link between the two. He alludes to a break-down in the "traditional, stable framework through which the world could be made to make sense",¹ a framework which Cameron argues was consistently being developed during the sixth century. Both the work of Haldon and that of Cameron delve much more deeply in terms of analysis than the studies of Pernice or Stratos, for which the main concern was the attempt to establish what happened during this period. This type of examination, whilst it provides an important starting point for other research, does not go as far as to explain the events that it describes in terms of previous historical development: for Pernice and Stratos events were significant only in their contemporary contexts. Because of their limited approach one is far more likely to see in the writings of modern historians wide ranging references to treatments of aspects of the reign of Heraclius than to the overall narratives of Pernice and Stratos. These may not necessarily be contemporary, since Baynes' work on Heraclius' first Persian campaign, and Brooks' article on the sources of Theophanes

¹ Haldon, *Byzantium* p. 440.

have continued to influence scholars' research for most of this century.²

Baynes was attempting to solve a problem of chronology, whilst Brooks was concerned with establishing the methods of an important source for the reign. The present piece of work seeks to combine and add to both these interests. Problems of chronology must be examined if they have a direct bearing upon the way in which Heraclius was presented at a certain stage in his career, and the source(s) that are used to conduct this inquiry must be evaluated in order that any inherited bias may be detected. An examination of previous trends in the writing of imperial history provides an introduction to the late Roman concept of political theory, and hence establishes the necessary criteria for a judgement to be made on the reign of Heraclius. However, then the investigation continues with an examination, broadly arranged in chronological order, of Heraclius' image during his reign; his usurpation, diplomacy with the Avars, war with the Persians, the siege of Constantinople, ecclesiastical disputes, and finally the loss of the eastern provinces to the Arabs. Each contributed separately to the overall reputation of Heraclius, some positively, others negatively while for some the standpoint of the particular source is crucial. This is not a jumbled version of the Stratos' approach as events are arranged chronologically only for the reader's convenience. These "chronological" chapters are followed by a chapter on Heraclius' economic reforms, the penultimate discussion, but one which both draws upon and has a direct bearing upon all the chapters that it follows. The final chapter is a review of all the major

² Baynes, 'Military Operations', p. 526-533, and Brooks, 'Sources', p. 582-587.

sources for the reign, conducted in the light of the particular studies of individual sequences of events in the earlier chapters. This produces an overview of the complex issues of source bias and derivation, as well as providing an opportunity to comment on specific source's overall presentation of the reign.

Heraclius' actions have been assessed and judged by ancient and modern historians alike. This investigation concerns the ways in which Heraclius' actions were presented by ancient writers and the relationship of these with modern scholarly thinking. The symbiotic nature of the ancient and modern schools of thought should not surprise us as the image of an individual emperor is constantly changing. For example, Heraclius is treated differently by Theophanes and *The Chronicle of 1234* and by Shahid and Haldon: sources and scholars have their individual perspectives and prejudices which may influence the way they approach and analyse events, and the ancient and modern may interact. Thus part of Theophanes' account formed the cornerstone for the work of Ostrogorsky and Oikonomides on the "themes", namely the hypothesis that Heraclius was responsible for introducing these major administrative changes, a view which Shahid has developed, whilst Haldon has sought to undermine the significance of the passage, and hence Heraclius' role in the innovation to which it alludes. This particular discussion exemplifies the importance of combining ancient and modern scholarship when investigating Heraclius' image. Theophanes did not give Heraclius the credit for instituting the themes, but merely mentioned them in passing. However, this mention was seized upon by modern historians to date

a crucial seventh century development in the organisation and functioning of the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, Heraclius' image was enhanced by some modern historians who used an ancient text whose author did not intend such an interpretation.

So, when one investigates Heraclius' image there are equally as many problems in the secondary literature as there are in the primary. There are two different types of problem. The first involves solely the primary sources and concerns the availability of information. Although the sources for Heraclius' reign come from all parts of his empire, none is consistently well informed. Thus whilst we may know details of what was happening in Egypt in the summer of 610, we are relatively unaware of events in the capital during those same months immediately before the appearance of Heraclius' fleet outside the walls. Not only are the sources incomplete, but they are also biased. Religious affiliations condition the reporting of the reign, and this distortion can take a variety of forms. Heraclius is criticised by Theophanes for his attempt to introduce a compromise creed for his subjects, in the Monergist and Monothelete disputes of the 630's, whereas Nicephorus is also openly critical of Heraclius' marriage to his niece, which contravened the church's code on degrees of kinship for marital purposes. On the other hand the *Chronicon Paschale* prefers to register its disapproval by not describing the wedding, alone of all major imperial events in the capital in the 610's, only mentioning Martina herself once, in the context of Martina's departure to the East in 624, and concludes its narrative before the Christological disputes sullied the triumph of the Persian victory. On a more general Christian theme, the *Chronicle of 1234* lambasts Heraclius for his Chalcedonian stance whilst telling

us nothing of his argument with leading personalities of that Church. Thus, rather than one variously reported account, a preliminary examination of the emperor's image provides us with a variety, and a study of one aspect of his reign may not take in all the sources that make up this patchwork of accounts. This is the importance of the present work. It is an investigation into how the conglomerations of accounts build up into the variety of different pictures that different authors have painted for us of Heraclius' reign.

The second problem concerns modern historians' use of these sources. The incomplete nature of the sources can lead to a concentration on the well documented aspects of Heraclius' reign, which in turn can affect his modern image. We have plenty of information about Heraclius' Persian campaigns, even if this is bedevilled by problems of geography and strategy, but to rely upon the fuller sources would be to accept misrepresentations of the events. The sources that wrote about these campaigns intended to show Heraclius himself to be the hero and, because he was successful, they were able to indulge this inclination: George of Pisidia exploited to the full Heraclius' eastern successes, and his interpretation was followed by Theophanes who used George as an important source. But for the modern historian to place as much emphasis on these campaigns as an ancient historian would be to continue George's propaganda triumph, because Heraclius fought an equally long series of campaigns against the Arabs which do not receive as much attention in the sources as the Persian campaigns, but which were of much greater long-term significance: imperial defeat did not attract contemporary attention, and so our understanding of

these important campaigns depends largely on material transmitted by or through Syriac sources.³ The sources only detail the emperor's victories for a reason and the modern historian needs to be aware of that before a judgement can be made on the sources merit, let alone that of Heraclius. Similarly if there is only the sparsest amount of information it is tempting to incorporate it into the investigations on the strength of its rarity value. However, uniqueness is no guarantee of quality: thus Baladhuri has a list of towns that surrendered to the Arabs upon their advance in the 630's that suggests a wholesale capitulation of Roman provinces, until one remembers that Baladhuri was writing well after this invasion and the information that he preserves suited rather well the legal position of the cities that were now permanently under Arab rule. Conversely the sources' meagre and ambiguous information can be used by modern historians for their own ends: an example of this concerns developments in the Balkans, and the arguments of Fallermayer and Kyriakiades about the proportion of Slavs in the overall population of Greece, but these are less related to the achievement of Heraclius in the Balkans than about the issue of Greek nationalism.

Perhaps it has been these problems that have precluded any recent study of Heraclius' reign. Indeed, at the 26th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 'New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantine History', not one speaker dealt with the emperor directly. Since the periods before and after his reign were covered in varying degrees of detail it may be fair to assume that the reign occupies a pivotal position in the course of

³ See Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 1-45, and 'Arwād', p. 317-401.

Roman/Byzantine history, but that its attendant problems make any kind of concise appraisal appear superficial.

That the image of Heraclius was susceptible to manipulation by both contemporary and later writers makes its study both complicated and interesting. However, there is one constant yardstick against which it can be measured, namely the writings of ancient authors on the hypothetical and practical behaviour of emperors. It is to these that we must turn first, for in order to understand the representation of early seventh century Christian imperialism we must first investigate its conception.

Theory and Image.

The image of Heraclius is a central aspect of the emperor's place in society. In order to establish criteria for judging how his actions were variously interpreted, it will be useful to set the scene by surveying earlier literature on the role of the Emperor. This survey does not claim to be comprehensive. The writers that have been included have been chosen in order to give a general yet concise account which does not flounder in search of subtleties that could provide the inspiration for books. Furthermore this survey is concerned with two specific themes, Byzantine political theory and the portrayal of an Emperor. This chapter sets out to show that the tenets of Byzantine political theory remained constant, although within the genre of historiography certain development takes place. This is a change in terms of style rather than of values which remained faithful to their earliest exposition by Eusebius.

The discussion will begin with Menander Rhetor who produced a definitive treatise on panegyric writing which will serve as a convenient model for us to discuss the objectives of the genre and its metamorphosis during the following three centuries. It was the individual prowess of an Emperor that concerned the panegyricists. These writers were intending to expound the virtues of an emperor, but the virtues that they could include were affected by the individual nature of their sovereign's rule. It was the task of the panegyricist to discover as many of the virtues as possible and present them in a favourable light. These limitations that the writers were placed under led Sabine MacCormack to write:

"Panegyrics are not a good basis upon which to generalise. It is a mistake to extract from them an amalgam of qualities attributable to the Late Antique ideal emperor".¹

However, these virtues were used not only by panegyricists but also by historians. By studying panegyrics we will be able to see how Emperors wanted to be depicted. This may vary from one instance to another depending on the political context of the reading, and not all the defined virtues will appear every time. Nevertheless a study of an amalgam of panegyrics should give us an insight into the mixture of qualities that went to make up the ideal Emperor in the eyes of the ruler and of his subjects, for the panegyricist was as much the mouthpiece of the Emperor as he was of the people.

The basic rule is that a panegyric allows for no debate.

"It will thus embrace a generally agreed amplification of the good things attaching to the Emperor, but allows no ambivalent or disputed features, because of the extreme splendour of the person concerned".²

as Menander writes, the writer must "elaborate it on the assumption that it relates to things universally acknowledged to be good".³

¹ MacCormack, 'Panegyrics', p.159.

² Men. Rh. p. 368 3-8.

³ Men. Rh. p. 368 8-9.

The value of Menander's work is that he clearly lays out what is to be acknowledged and how. He believes that:

"the two greatest things in life are piety towards the divine and honour to the Emperors".⁴

Whether he was pagan or not he has isolated a theme for later eulogies of the Emperor, the relationship of the Emperor to God and its importance for the well-being of the Empire. Menander then proceeds to order the procession of attributes that a writer must dwell on. Firstly, the Emperor's origins, either his city or failing that his nation. Thus, the Thessalians were brave but only the son of Peleus was thought worthy of the leadership of the tribe.⁵ Next come family and birth which like city and nation can be omitted if they lack prestige, and one should then move on to birth as Callinicus did in his *Great Oration*.⁶ For birth one should look for divine signs, and Menander gives the examples of Romulus and of Cyrus of Persia. This stress on the Emperor's birth is in keeping with the classical tradition that a monarch's ancestry should be greater than those of his fellow men. Nature and nurture are considered next. An Emperor is either raised for the throne from birth, "Swaddling clothes robes of purple",⁷ or reaches it by "felicitous chance".⁸ In either case the man in power is the one best suited to the task, and thus the legitimate ruler. Having introduced his subject Menander now considers his actions. These he divides into peacetime and

⁴ Men. Rh. p. 368 17-20.

⁵ Men. Rh. p. 370 6-8.

⁶ Men. Rh. p. 370 14.

⁷ Men. Rh. p. 371 19.

⁸ Men. Rh. p. 371 21-22.

wartime, placing wartime first. Courage is the first of the requisite virtues. "Courage reveals in an Emperor more than do other virtues".⁹ Menander does not say why this is the case, perhaps it is because as a general the Emperor is able to reveal the other three virtues of justice, temperance and wisdom while he is in the field.¹⁰ The description of the Emperor's successful prosecution of warfare may include the other virtues in context. Wisdom is needed to command armies, "Through your wisdom, you discovered their traps and ambushes but they understood nothing of what you were doing".¹¹ Justice can be brought in, in the form of humanity, "for when victorious, the Emperor did not repay the aggressors in kind, but divided his actions in just proportion between punishment and humanity".¹²

The Emperor's role in peace is to be discussed under the three cardinal virtues of justice, temperance and wisdom. Justice is needed "to commend mildness towards subjects, humanity towards petitioners and accessibility".¹³ This is the role of a paternal figure. Justice is concerned with legislation:

"You should say that his laws are just and that he strikes out unjust laws and himself promulgates new ones".¹⁴

⁹ Men. Rh. p. 372 30-31.

¹⁰ Men. Rh. p. 373 7-8.

¹¹ Men. Rh. p. 373 23-25.

¹² Men. Rh. p. 374 29-31.

¹³ Men. Rh. p. 375 8-10.

¹⁴ Men. Rh. p. 375 24-25.

Temperance continues the image of the father of the Empire and the paradigm for his people. "People choose a style of life like that which they observe in the Emperor".¹⁵ Wisdom is necessary for all the Emperor's actions and he is blessed with more than normal men so that all his "other virtues come to successful fruition".¹⁶ The last virtue that Menander mentions is fortune. This "accompanies our mighty Emperor in all things both actions and words".¹⁷ The epilogue merely exhorts the benefits that a ruler with those qualities gives to his Empire. "Prosperity and good fortune of the cities", "the earth is filled with peace, the seas are sailed without danger, piety towards God is increased" and "we fear neither barbarians nor enemies".¹⁸

A perfect Emperor has created a perfect world. It is for this reason that the Pseudo-Dionysius, who wrote a treatise on the form of praise for a festival, can state:

"let the climax of your whole speech be in praise of the Emperor because he who presides over peace is really the organiser of all festivals since it is peace that enables them to be held".¹⁹

¹⁵ Men. Rh. p. 376 8-9.

¹⁶ Men. Rh. p. 376 18-20.

¹⁷ Men Rh. p. 376 26-27.

¹⁸ Men. Rh. p. 377 10-16.

¹⁹ In Russell and Wilson, who place it as contemporary to Menander Rhetor, p. 362.

The discussion can now proceed to the writings of Eusebius on Constantine, which provided the basis for development in subsequent centuries in treatments of political theory and the imperial imagery. Constantine was the first Christian Emperor and Eusebius began a theory and a theme which were to continue beyond the reign of Heraclius. Eusebius brought Christianity to classical political theory and the portrayal of an Emperor. However great a debt later writers and thinkers owed to Eusebius he too had looked to the past for the basis of his theory, when he married the classical conceptions of monarchy to Christian belief.

To develop this assimilation of the Christian religion and Roman imperial rule a writer needed to be aware of classical political concepts as well as being a Christian scholar, and Eusebius of Caesarea possessed both these attributes.²⁰ He took on board Origen's argument that the Pax Augusta had served to propagate the Gospel: the monarchy of Augustus was the beginning of Monotheism, and the collapse of nation states was the end of polytheism (*Dem. Evag.* III. 7,30-35 and *Dem. Evag.* VIII. intro.). In his *Life of Constantine* Eusebius continues to use Origen's argument as he links Augustus with Constantine, the founder of the Empire with the man who raised it to a divine monarchy.

Eusebius did not only borrow from Origen. He looked back further to the classical writers on monarchy. He was to give Christian expression to the pagan idea that a ruler should imitate God's perfection.

²⁰ For writers from Eusebius to Justinian I am indebted to Dvornik, *Political Philosophy* p. 614-724.

"the all pervasive Logos of God from whom and through whom, bearing the image of the higher kingdom, the sovereign dear to God, in imitation of a Higher Power, directs the helm and sets straight all things on earth".²¹

But not only is the Emperor an imitation of God (without being an incarnate God), his reign is to be a replica of that of God's in Heaven, and his function on Earth to be that of *Soter* and *Logos*. He is the one who "Brings those whom he governs on Earth to the only begotten Word and Saviour and renders them fit subjects of His kingdom".²² And who "has modelled the kingdom on Earth into a likeness of the kingdom of Heaven".²³ Constantine is shown to have the classical virtues required of a monarch but now these derive from God (*In Praise V*). Wisdom, courage, justice and prudence are listed in Christian form as his guides. This is in keeping with the writings of Diotogenes and Pseudo-Ecphantos. For Eusebius there was a real connection between the Emperor and God:

"the numerous apperances of our Saviour and the many visions in dreams when He showed you this divinity".²⁴

Constantine believed that this connection had a political context. To him the prosperity of the Empire depended upon the unity of the

²¹ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine I*.

²² Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine II*.

²³ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine IV*.

²⁴ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine XVIII*.

Christian Church, and for this reason he assumed a leading role in the settlement of the Donatist and Arian disputes.²⁵

However, Eusebius did not go as far as to apply the definition of animate law to the Emperor. This had been claimed for Emperors by Philo whom Eusebius followed for other classical conceptions such as the paternal nature of imperial rule, "knowing only how to save, saved even the godless to teach them how to live piously".²⁶ This was because the notion of Living Law was reserved for Christ and Eusebius only applied it to the Logos. "There is only one sovereign and His word and royal law are one".²⁷ The Emperor was "appointed by, and the representative of the Almighty Sovereign".²⁸

This was done, however, by the pagan orator and near contemporary Themistius. In his *Oration to Constantius* he stated that the Emperor was superior to all laws because he was the law. He developed this theory in an oration praising Theodosius, lauding the humanity of Theodosius for pardoning Antioch after an insurrection there. Here judge and Emperor do not have the same function:

"it befits the one to obey, the other to amend the laws and to mitigate what in them is cruel and hard. For he is the animate law, not merely a

²⁵ Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* p. 224-244.

²⁶ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine* VII.

²⁷ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine* III.

²⁸ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine* VII.

law laid down in permanent and unchangeable terms".²⁹

This is our first example of an orator claiming for the emperor powers that he wishes to be implemented. Themistius wants Theodosius to change the law, this explains his emphasis on the law animate. Yet, Themistius is extending Eusebius' Christian approach to divine monarchy (whether or not he himself was familiar with his writings), showing that by the end of the century the classical conception of kingship was still the foundation for Byzantine political thought.

Classical ideas continued to be the source for political discourse in the writings of John Chrysostom. He made use of the classical distinction between tyranny and kingship to portray his ideal ruler. The true king possessed self-control:

"masters his passions of anger, envy and lust and subordinates everything to the laws of God".

(Homily XXI).

The tyrant on the other hand is not fit to govern the Empire because he cannot govern himself. Chrysostom like Eusebius sees all earthly power as deriving from God (Homily XXIII), and he does not question the idea of one man rule. He does not criticise the form of government only its application. He wants a ruler with the personal attributes to "deal with his subjects like a father and govern the

²⁹ Themistius, *Dv. Oration XIX*.

cities with restraint".

There is attributed to John Chrysostom a comparison, of dubious authenticity, between the priesthood and monarchy.³⁰ The monk is superior because whilst the king rules over external things, armies and cities, the monk's rule is internal, over his own passions. Thus the monk is a true king whilst the king is in fact a tyrant. In his Fifteenth Homily this distinction is employed again. Ecclesiastical rule is superior because it is exercised over willing men using gentle persuasion whilst secular rule is over unwilling subjects. The comparison that Chrysostom is now making is between the tyranny of the state and the kingdom of the Church. These writings are included to show another way of looking at the role of the Emperor in society. However, it should be remembered that they are heavily dependent upon Chrysostom's feelings at a given moment in time - monastic withdrawal or priestly involvement - and they never question the political theory of kingship, as Chrysostom's arguments are continually couched in classical terminology.

Homily XXI appeals to the virtues of philanthropy, philosophy and piety, all of which are well-used classical ideals for rulers. In his Homily to the Antiochenes (Homily VII) Chrysostom dwells on the elective character of the Roman monarchy which is at variance with his statement in *Ecloga de Imperio* (Homily XXI) where he quotes Paul (Rom.13:1), saying that all authority derives from God:

³⁰ Schummer, *Chrysostom* p.126-131. Schummer believes that this is not Chrysostom's work, but that of a contemporary or near-contemporary for it has none of his personality, making a neat summation of Chrysostom's thoughts into a continuous text.

"For by a dispensation of divine wisdom there must be magistrates and they must give orders, whilst others must obey".

Homily VII says "Rule is either natural or created by elections; natural as that of a lion over the four-legged animals or that of an eagle over the birds; elected, as our own Emperor".

Because of Chrysostom's huge *oeuvre* and various impassioned stances at different moments in his career this contradiction can be used to argue against a wholesale adoption of classical political theory, as no systematic thoughts on kingship can be ascribed to him. However, the contradiction is important as it shows up a problem that later writers were prepared to deal with, that of the contradictory origins of divine and elective kingship. The Church's supremacy over the empire is not initially evident, and rulers can be pious examples to the people: when the relics of St. Phocas arrive from Rome, at a time of co-operation between Chrysostom and the emperor, he says:

"and see, the emperors take part with our procession. What excuse would a simple man have, if even the emperors leave the royal halls behind?"

(*De s. hieromartyre Phoca* I.49-50).³¹

But later the church is a sanctuary when Arcadius is ineffective, and

³¹ Schummer, *Chrysostom* p. 220.

it does not co-operate with the empire:

"In the shipwreck of others I want to make a safe port for you. When one sees all around the soldiers and swords, when the city is on fire, when the diadem is not strong, when the purple is slighted, when madness rules all, where are all the riches?"

*(De Capto Eutropio III. PG 51-52).*³²

For Chrysostom the church was to take on an ascendancy over the empire. When he returned from his first period of exile Chrysostom was not in a forgiving or humble mood, and he leaves us in no doubt as to where he believes the ultimate power in earth resides:

"Yes, take me out of the city, and you will see the affection of the church for its shepherd,...you will see the splendour of my diadem, the abundance of our treasures,...the general is distant, but the soldiers stand armed...when the basileus enters here, he doffs his diadem...and leaves the symbols of his power at the door".

*(Post Reditum ab priore exsilio II. 2).*³³

All the sources surveyed so far have been ecclesiastical writers and it requires a considerable gap of some hundred years before we come to a series of secular writings on the subject. The

³² Schummer, *Chrysostom* p. 223.

³³ Schummer, *Chrysostom* p. 224-225.

treatise on political theory, the anonymous *On Political Science* concerns itself with political theory and kingship in the abstract rather than with actual state politics. Fotiou believes that it was written sometime between the reign of Anastasius and the Nika Riot of 532.³⁴ The writer wonders whether it is possible to find a theory for the imitation of God which he sees as the true nature of kingship (V.1). The writer acknowledges his debt to Socrates, Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle and quotes from them. In Chapter 5 he incorporates the elective principle into what is essentially classical thought, with the first of his laws for the conduct of a monarch.

"the first to be enacted by kingship for its own self concerns the legal inauguration so that the candidate to the title shall be worthy of it and justly receive it as it is given to him by God and offered by the citizens".

(V.5)

From this point in the argument the elective principle gives way to the idea of a divinely appointed monarch, and the Anonymous, (V.7-8), deals with the qualities of a king that are necessary in order for him to be able to imitate God's kingship. These virtues are the common classical ones of wisdom, justice and philanthropy. The importance of his subjects is discussed in relation to the Emperor not in the context of their elective power but in terms of the paternal nature of kingship. This is the classical notion of the king as *euergetes* and *soter* (benefactor and saviour). The ruler should

³⁴ Fotiou, 'Dicaearchus', p. 534.

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suitability for the throne (Chp. 3-4). From Chapter 7 we hear of Anastasius' military exploits including his defeat of the Isaurian rebels in Chapter 9. The recitation of Anastasius' peacetime accomplishments begins in Chapter 13, especially praiseworthy for Procopius being the abolition of the *collatio lustralis*. Procopius continues with a long list of Anastasius' acts of beneficence towards cities; Caesarea (Chp.19), Alexandria (Chp. 20) and his building of the Long Wall in Thrace (Chp. 21). Anastasius' reign is favourably compared with heroes of old; Cyrus (Chp. 25), Agesilaus (Chp. 26) and even Alexander (Chp. 27). Procopius of Gaza hardly deviates from the path that Menander has laid down for his genre.³⁹

By the time that Agapetus wrote *The Mirror for Princes* for Justinian the contradiction between elective and divine monarchy had been diluted to advice on how to act towards your subjects when you hold power from God, so following the Anonymous. Agapetus leaves us in no doubt as to how he stands on the matter.

"Having a dignity which is set above all other honours, Sire, you render honour above all to God, who gave you that dignity, in as much as he gave you the sceptre of earthly power after the likeness of the heavenly kingdom, to the end that you should instruct men to hold fast the cause of justice, and should punish the howling of those who rage against that cause; being yourself under the kingship of the law of justice

³⁹ For the significance of such comparisons see Matthews, *Ammianus*, p. 242-245.

and lawfully king of those who are subject to
you".⁴⁰

The classical tradition of God-given power for the purpose of ruling in the image of God is explicit here, as is the duty of the ruler to be a father-figure to his subjects in order to justify his position. If this is taken as Agapetus' basic thesis on the source and working of kingship then it is easy to see how he could include Chapter 35:

"Consider yourself to be surely and truly a king when you rule with the consent of your subjects. For a subject people which is unconsenting revolts when it finds an opportunity; but when a people is attached to its sovereign by the bonds of good will it will keep firm and true in its obedience to him".

This Chapter shows a monarch how he will benefit when his rule is acceptable, and is similar to the distinction Lydus draws between kingship and tyranny. It implies that although kings may rule without the consent of their subjects they will not be kings in the truest sense because they are not ruling in imitation of God. Throughout the exposition classical terms abound. "A man should know himself (a Delphic inscription, Chp. 3), philanthropy (Chp. 6), piety (Chp. 15), philosophy (Chp. 17), beneficence (Chp. 19), justice (Chp. 27), and mercy (Chp. 37). Chapter 37 presses home this need to imitate God:

⁴⁰ Agapetus, Chp. 1, tr. Barker, *Byzantium*, p. 54-61.

"He who has attained to great authority should imitate, so far as he can, the Giver of that authority. If in any way he bears the image of God best he thinks that nothing is more precious than mercy".

Not only are the virtues needed for this ideal rule listed but Agapetus includes suggestions for good government on the practical level. The officials that the Emperor uses are to be vetted to determine their suitability, for they represent his government.

"do not employ wrongdoers in the management of affairs; for he who has given wrongdoers their power will owe account to God for what they have wrongly done. Therefore let the appointment of officials be made after strict examination".⁴¹

Again the ruler is accountable not to the people but to God. He must rule for the good of the people not because he is given power by them but because he is given power by God. Whilst Agapetus continues the main thrust of the argument of the Anonymous he does develop it further along Christian lines. He corrects the Hellenistic idea expounded by Menander Rhetor that the ancestry of the king should outshine all others:

⁴¹ Agapetus, Chp. 30.

"Let no man feel conceit about nobility of birth. All men alike have clay for their first ancestor- both those who boast themselves in purple and fine linen and those who are affected by poverty and sickness".⁴²

This equality in the eyes of God is repeated in Chapters 16 and 21, where the crucial point about God-given power is reiterated:

"In the nature of his body the king is on a level with all other men, but in the authority attached to his dignity he is like God who rules over all; for he has no man on earth who is higher than he".

Courage is the one virtue included by Menander that Agapetus does not mention. For courage Agapetus substitutes piety because by the middle of the sixth-century the Emperor was no longer required to be a successful general as had been the case in the days of the Tetrarchy. Moreover not only has the role of his office changed so has its nature. There is now a Christian significance attached to his actions which is wont to play down warfare and emphasise piety in order to fulfill the imperial duty of ruling in God's image.

Having demonstrated the source of a monarch's power and its relationship to the subject people writers were free to discuss how a particular ruler measured up to the ideals of political power that had been defined for him. However, before we examine Procopius,

⁴² Agapetus, Chp. 4.

Agathias, Evagrius, Corippus and Theophylact in their respective application of the principles of political theory to various emperors we must consider how one emperor, Justinian, saw his role. Here we are concerned with one last problem in the definition of the Emperor's position, the question of animate law. We have seen Eusebius reluctant to apply it, Themistius encourage it and the Anonymous (Chp. 5), Agapetus (Chp. 27) and Lydus (*De Mag.* I, 3) avoid it out of respect for the laws. Justinian introduced a compromise solution.⁴³ He was aware of his divinely held monarchy, "the glory of the republic which God has entrusted to us" (Nov. LXXXI), and also of Roman respect for the law, "we have enacted the present law in order to exclude all iniquity and injustice" (Nov. CXLVIII pref.). He considered legislating to be a primary function of a king, and that this was a God-given right unique to him:

"We, to whom God has also given legislative power we refuse...to delegate such power to any other judge...since what has been decided by ourselves cannot be annulled by anyone".⁴⁴

Justinian believed that God was the only source of law and that it was to the Emperor and to the people that He had given this right:

"Considering therefore that God has sent us the *imperium* from Heaven so that it might remedy difficulties through its own perfection and adapt

⁴³ On Justinian's legislation see, Honoré, *Tribonian*, and Maas, 'Reform', 17-31.

⁴⁴ Nov. CXIII.

the laws to the variety of nature; for this reason we have deemed it necessary to draft this law".⁴⁵

This was classical theory combined with Christian belief which left the old Roman polity behind. This new approach was encapsulated in Justinian's Constitution of October 30 529:

"a doubt existed in the ancient laws as to whether the decision of the Emperor should be regarded as a law...we hold that every interpretation of the laws by the Emperor...shall be free from all ambiguity; for if by the present enactment the Emperor alone can make laws it should be the province of the Imperial dignity alone to interpret them".

This is well within the spirit of classical political theory. Only a statement on animate law is missing. Justinian provided this in a Novel for 536:

"The Imperial station, however, shall not be subject to the rules which we have just formulated, for to the Emperor God has subjected the laws themselves by sending him to man as the incarnate law".⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Nov. LXXIII pref.

⁴⁶ Nov. CV.

Indeed the emperor must be completely flexible in his legislating. For the constant variety of Nature, a superhuman agency that caused random and unpredictable changes in society, provided a continuous need for Imperial legislation:

"almost nothing remains stable in Nature, which is always inconsistent and introduces many changes which are neither easy to foresee nor possible to provide for, and...only God, and after him the Emperor, is able to exercise control over these things".⁴⁷

In addition to his definition of the exact legislative function of an Emperor Justinian also dealt with his relationship with the clergy. In the preface to Novel VI, addressed to the Patriarch of Constantinople, he sets out the same relationship that Eusebius had first emphasised upon Constantine's conversion.

"The priesthood ministers to things divine, the Imperial authority is set over, and and shows diligence in, things human, but both proceed from around the same source and both adorn the life of man".

⁴⁷ Nov. LXIX 69.

"If the priesthood be in all respects without blame and full of faith before God, and if the Imperial authority rightly and duly adorns the commonwealth committed to its charge, there will ensue a happy concord which will bring forth all good things for mankind".

Like Constantine, Justinian is aware of the correlation between the well-being of the Empire and Church unity. Paul the Silentiary also recognised this relationship in his *Ekphrasis*. Addressing Justinian he defined his position vis-à-vis the Patriarch:

"For when, Sceptre, in the life-giving counsel of your mind, you appointed the great Initiate to your precincts, straightaway the assault of the wicked minded demon collapsed, straightaway you routed the grievous battle of all the passions, straightaway you bound on the wreath of victory for toils in protection of the city".⁴⁸

Until now we have been examining the relationship between Christian belief and classical political concepts as regards Byzantine political theory. From this point the discussion will centre around the writing of history and panegyric, and how it was affected by this theory and how it may have modified it. When Procopius of Caesarea wrote a damning account of the reign of Justinian in his *Secret History* he did not put forward any new theory for the

⁴⁸ Paul Sil. *Ec. S. Sophia* lines 970-980, I am indebted to Mary Whitby for a translation.

government of the Empire. It is not Imperial power that is criticised but its application. Procopius is very sensitive to the personal role of the Emperor in government. He criticises his right to be ruling not in terms of proposing an alternative form of government but in the context of the actual ruler's personality. Thus there is recurring criticism of Justinian's loyalty, his respect for the laws and his avarice. These criticisms are the opposite values to the traditional virtues of *philanthropia*, justice and beneficence. Indeed the fasting and sleeplessness, which in the *Buildings* prove his piety, are used in the *Secret History* to illustrate the strength of a demon:

"For all the days which precede the Feast of Easter, and which are called days of fasting, he observed a severe routine...Indeed he had gone two whole days without food and that too while rising regularly from his bed at early dawn...And although he went to his couch late in the night he immediately rose again, as if he could not endure his bed".⁴⁹

"He made it his task to be constantly awake and to undergo hardships and to labour for no other purpose than to contrive constantly and every day more grievous calamities for his subjects".⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Procopius, *Buildings* I. 7,7.

⁵⁰ Procopius, *Secret History* XIII. 28.

This demon image is the opposite of the theory that the Emperor should act in imitation of God. Many of Procopius' criticisms are not to do with the warfare which he had concentrated upon in his *Wars*, instead they are concerned the administration. This may reflect the classical idea that the Emperor was responsible for the overall well being of his subjects and not just their internal security. The case of Africa shows contradictory use of information. In the *Secret History* Africa is seen as depressed and depopulated:

"after the defeat of the Vandals Justinian not only did not concern himself with strengthening his dominion over the country, not only did he not make provision that the safeguarding of its wealth should not rest solely in the goodwill of its people but straightaway he summoned Belisarius to return home".⁵¹

Whilst in the *Buildings* the town of Caputvada in Byzacium is transformed from an army camp into a city by Justinian:

"made strong by a wall and distinguished by its other appointments as worthy to be counted as an impressive and prosperous city...the rustics have thrown away the plough and lead the existence of a community, no longer going the

⁵¹ Procopius, *Secret History* XVIII. 4.

round of country tasks but living a city life".⁵²

In the *Secret History*, the Emperor is being criticised for his inability to see to the needs of his subjects. This is on a purely personal level. In order to go beyond this Procopius would have to take into account the problems of reconquest and plague but he does not, instead merely calling Justinian's administration corrupt. Even this illustrates the personal nature of Procopius' criticism, Justinian is ruling badly and so therefore are his representatives to whom he has delegated authority. Individual quaestors are maligned, Tribonian, Junillus and Peter Barsymes (*Secret History* XX. 16-23 and for Barsymes *Secret History* XXII. 3). Indeed according to Procopius Justinian's officials were chosen for their corrupt nature.

"picking out the best men he would sell to them at great price the offices that were corrupted by them".⁵³

What Procopius' criticism amounts to is little more than personal abuse with no attempt at analysis. Cameron sees this as "applying a standardised vocabulary of abuse".⁵⁴ Indeed, it is difficult to see how else he could have commented on the regime, when we have already seen it to revolve, in terms of political theory, around the person of the Emperor. Procopius does not question the role of the Emperor, but he does disagree with his rule. The theory is not questioned, only the practice, as Justinian fails to match up to Procopius' expectations of how an Emperor should act.

⁵² Procopius, *Buildings* VI. 6, 12-18.

⁵³ Procopius, *Secret History* XXI. 9.

⁵⁴ Cameron, *Procopius* p. 66.

These expectations would appear to be fulfilled in the *Buildings*. There are three main areas of praise here; church building, fortifications and the water supply. So the main theme of the work is the beneficence of Justinian, expressed through the advantages accruing to the Empire from his building policy. He is compared to Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire whose rule Procopius says Justinian would regard as "a sort of child's play" (*Buildings* I. i.15-16.). Instead of being a demon Justinian's closeness to God is emphasised:

"It was in requital for this honour which the Emperor showed them that these Apostles appeared to men on this occasion. For when the Emperor is pious, divinity walks not afar from human affairs, but is wont to mingle with men and take delight in associating with them".⁵⁵

This Christian interpretation of the reign is very different from that of the *Secret History*. God supplies the best craftsmen as well as the inspiration for S. Sophia:

"Indeed this was also an indication of the honour in which God held the Emperor, that He had already provided the men who would be most servicable to him in the tasks which were

⁵⁵ Procopius, *Buildings* I. iv, 20-22.

waiting to be carried out".⁵⁶

It is this innovative and restorative activity of Justinian that is most important, rather than the precise detailing of a catalogue of works, giving him a paternal role in the welfare of the Empire.⁵⁷

The existence of these two widely divergent works allows us to see not only how an Emperor was either praised or criticised but it also tells us something about the literary conventions of the Byzantine world. Averil Cameron writes in *Procopius*,

"There is no room for unbiased mean when literary expression is forced habitually into extremes. It is simply therefore that the *Secret History* offers the understandable counterbalance to the excesses of panygeric".⁵⁸

We have already seen that if Procopius wanted to criticise the government then he had to criticise the Emperor because there was no other viable political system for him to advocate. Procopius was prepared to go as far as to write the *Secret History* but he was still a believer in Imperial government. It was in the practical nature of this power that he found faults, not in its theoretical basis.

⁵⁶ Procopius, *Buildings* I. i, 24.

⁵⁷ Procopius, *Buildings* I. i.15.

⁵⁸ Cameron, *Procopius* p. 60

Despite an adherence to literary convention Procopius was a politically aware historian. The same can be said of Agathias who continued his work. Agathias came to the genre from poetry but he was no newcomer to the politics of writing. He prefaced the collection of poems that he edited, *The Cycle*, with a piece in praise of the Emperor Justin II. This political sensitivity may have been motivated by the desire for personal advancement, for Cameron says of him that:

"From the close parallel between the preface to *The Cycle* and Corippus' laudatory poem on the accession of Justin II it is clear that *The Cycle* was in fact meant when published as a compliment to the new emperor".⁵⁹

He says that he chose to write history because friends persuaded him that it was close to poetry. Whatever his motivation his work reflects both sides of contemporary attitudes to the reign of Justinian. Belisarius' recall from the front in 559, Agathias says, is due to jealous courtiers not Justinian himself:

"They put about slanderous rumours to the effect that the popularity that he was enjoying had turned his head and that he was aspiring to higher things. These calamities brought about his speedy return and prevented him from consolidating his achievements".⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cameron, *Agathias* p. 9.

⁶⁰ Agathias, V. 20.5-6.

Though Agathias blames the *logothetes* not Justinian for the sufferings of the troops (V. 14.3-4), there is an undercurrent of criticism of the Emperor for permitting the decline in troop numbers. Yet Agathias defends Justinian's role in government when he discusses the policy of paying the barbarians a subsidy:

"To the inhabitants of Constantinople the terms agreed upon seemed cowardly, dishonourable and base, since they seemed to involve the passive acceptance of an intolerable state of affairs...But the Emperor's decision was aimed at the attainment of a different and more ambitious object which was realised shortly afterwards and to such good effect that it convinced his former critics of his remarkable foresight and sagacity".⁶¹

Agathias like Procopius avoided religious affairs, concentrating instead on wars and foreign policy. There is no trace of the relationship between Church and State, with the Emperor as the representative of God on Earth, which Paul the Silentiary expounded, and about which we have seen Justinian to have been concerned in his Novel VI. This is primarily due to Agathias' perception of what he was producing. The time had not yet come when literary convention would allow for secular and ecclesiastical history to come under consideration in one work. Furthermore Agathias was limited by the belief that to write authoritative history

⁶¹ Agathias, V. 24.1-2.

one had to write in a classicising manner. He followed this belief to such an extent that many modern historians have seen him as a pagan.⁶² This desire to model himself on the past has not led to Agathias advancing any new notions of political theory. On the contrary, he has the same implicit faith in Imperial government that Procopius does. His methods may weaken his value as a source but he would not have seen himself in this light. He aimed to write about the current political scene in order to comment upon events by moralising rather than to seek explanations and question the very structure of the political framework that he was describing.

The Chronicle of John Malalas, which ends with the death of Justinian, includes short character sketches of the emperors which provide a contrast with the high-blown descriptions of their virtues that Procopius and Agathias dwell on.⁶³ Anastasius is,

"very tall, with short hair a good figure, a round face, both hair and beard greying; he had a grey pupil in his right eye and a black one in his left although his eyesight was perfect; and he shaved his beard frequently".⁶⁴

This is not to say that John Malalas does not make judgements on emperors but if he does apply a set of criteria for them to meet we

⁶² Cameron, *Agathias* p. 89 n.1 lists Vossius, Niebuhr, Fabricius, Levcenko and Irmischer.

⁶³ On Malalas see Jeffreys, *Studies* esp. p. 55-85.

⁶⁴ Malalas, XVI.1.

do not hear it: Anastasius is called "sacred" and "the great" but this is was a standard way of referring to emperors without actually implying any specific qualities, and acts as an appendage to a factual account of his deeds, rather than a piece of criticism intended to stand out as independent comment.

Like the secular bias of Agathias, and Procopius before him, the ecclesiastical historians who followed Eusebius had their interests narrowed by the limitations literary convention placed upon their subject matter. Although we have seen secular and ecclesiastical affairs linked by the role of the Emperor as the representative of God on Earth, Socrates in his *Church History* (from 305 A. D. to 439 A. D.) still feels that he must apologize for his inclusion of secular events. Socrates saw disorder in the Church as a corollary of turmoil in the State and vice versa. Thus he can justify the inclusion of the reign of Julian because that Emperor was apostate, the civil troubles under Valens and the revolt of Magnentius because of similar ecclesiastical division. Socrates was used as a source by Sozomen who also includes numerous apologies for covering secular events. The murder of Rufinus led to an increase in piety, conflicts in the Church of Constantinople led to the invasions of the Goths and Huns. Sozomen believed that it was God's design that piety was rewarded. Ecclesiastical history was not intended to be contemporary, unlike classical history which aimed to record events up to the present day - or at least the death of the preceding Emperor. However Sozomen found his interests too compelling. In Books VIII and XI the accent is on secular affairs. The death of Theodosius I and the wars of Stilicho and Alaric are detailed. In his last book Sozomen only includes one chapter on

ecclesiastical affairs, the discovery of the relics of the Prophet Zachariah and of Stephen.

Evagrius saw himself as the continuator of these ecclesiastical historians.⁶⁵ However at the end of Book V (V. 24) he catalogues historians that he considers to have been influential. The Church historians Eusebius, Theodoret, Socrates and Sozomen are there but Evagrius also names secular writers. Zosimus, Priscus, Eustathius of Epiphania, Procopius, Agathias and John of Epiphania are included. Pauline Allen considers this to be "a synthesis of secular and ecclesiastical historiography".⁶⁶ Evagrius feels a sense of heritage from Procopius and Agathias. He concocts rousing speeches for the troops (V. 14 and VI. 12), which are delivered by the general Justinian and the Patriarch Gregory of Antioch. Evagrius is well-disposed to indulge in *Kaiserkritik*. He follows the line of Socrates, begun by Eusebius on Constantine, that there is an identifiable link between Christian piety and prosperity. Evagrius says that the army which Maurice commanded before his accession killed the Persian general not by bravery but by the piety of their leader (V. 20).

This belief gives us two themes in Evagrius' work central to his portrayal of Emperors, and which can be found in Eusebius. It is the duty of Emperors to stamp out doctrinal division, as Constantine did, in order to guarantee the prosperity of the Empire. Secondly, violent or sudden death is the result of an impious reign.

⁶⁵ Allen, *Evagrius* for a full discussion.

⁶⁶ Allen *Evagrius* p. 20

Thus Herod Agrippa (*Ecc. Hist.* ii. 10) and Maximinus (*Ecc. Hist.* ix. 10) die horribly whilst Constantine passes away peacefully (*Ecc. Hist.* viii. 13). This argument is in the tradition of Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, in which divine retribution is manifest in the deaths of Diocletian and Galerius.⁶⁷ When Evagrius is dealing with division in the Church he does not follow his Chalcedonian beliefs consistently. Thus Zeno is censured for his life of pleasure whilst Maurice is master of his passions. However, this criticism does not blacken the whole of the reign of Zeno. He may be condemned by John Lydus, Cedrenus and Zonaras, but Evagrius approves of Zeno's objective in using the Henoticon to find a *modus vivendi* for the Church. This lack of bias in favour of Monophysite or Chalcedonian belief means Evagrius prefers to put the emphasis on piety, and his account of the reign of Anastasius is the least biased of the ancient authors. That Emperor's abolition of the *collatio lustralis* is attributed to his piety by Evagrius. Whereas the *Oracle of Baalbek* and John Lydus criticise Anastasius for his greed, Evagrius does not accuse him of avarice although he does say that his economic reforms were not up to the standard set by the abolition of the *collatio lustralis*. For Evagrius Anastasius' philanthropy brought him close to Maurice as an ideal Emperor, illustrated by his reluctance to spill blood, similar to Maurice's sparing of Mundhir (VI.2).

Evagrius' depiction of the reign of Justinian illustrates contemporary confusion about the Imperial couple. The Emperor's death is quick, possibly because he was about to remove Anastasius of Antioch, which Evagrius considered to be an act of impiety.

⁶⁷ Allen, *Evagrius* p. 161.

Justinian is reviled for the chaos that he brought to the Empire. In Book IV. 30 and 32 Evagrius is in agreement with Procopius about Justinian's rapacity which unlike Procopius he sees as manifesting itself in the building programme. Procopius only complains that Justinian built too much over the sea (*Secret History* VIII.7,8) whilst Evagrius condemns the use of appropriated funds and the misplaced motivation of the pursuit of earthly glory. In common with Menander (frg. 8), but unlike Agathias (V. 14) Evagrius criticises Justinian's liberality towards the barbarians. In IV. 32 Evagrius agrees with Procopius that the lawlessness of the factions disrupted civil harmony. Against this picture of strife Theodora is praised for her kindness and generosity towards the provinces (IV. 10) despite her Monophysite views, and in contrast to Procopius' opinion of her (especially *Secret History* X).

The personal nature of Imperial rule continues to be emphasised in the last three reigns of the History. Evagrius may be breaking new grounds in terms of content but his view of the political framework of the Empire is the same as that of Eusebius or Procopius. The Emperor's position is not in question, merely a particular Emperor's fitness to govern. Again this is discussed in terms of his personality. Justin II 's personal life is condemned, he is "wallowing in wantonness and perverted pleasures". This leads to a denunciation of his policies. He began warfare with Persia but failed to mobilise the necessary war effort (V. 7). For Evagrius an Emperor had God's favour even before he assumed the purple, so that Tiberius was saved by divine providence from the Avars (V. 11). Justin II is able to make a speech on Tiberius becoming Caesar due to a

supernatural grace which allowed him to confess his errors and make suggestions for the benefit of the State (V.13). The eulogy for Tiberius stresses his liberality as being his chief characteristic after his physical beauty. However he undid much of Justin II's careful economising, although Evagrius does say that Tiberius did use the money to mobilise troops unlike his predecessor. Maurice's accession is foreshadowed by prophecies in the tradition of Menander Rhetor. The Emperor sees a vision of Christ exhorting him to avenge him. Maurice's conception and birth are also detailed (V. 21). Maurice is the culmination of Evagrius' history and his accession is seen as the most important legacy of Tiberius' reign (V. 22). Book VI concentrates on Maurice and Gregory of Antioch. There is little reference to ecclesiastical affairs. Only in VI. 22 are the Severans of Antioch mentioned, otherwise the Monophysites are ignored. The wedding of Maurice to Tiberius' daughter Constantina is seen by Evagrius as the real beginning of his reign, for it is here that the author describes the virtues of an ideal ruler. He must wear the purple not only on his body but also on his soul, a well used theme from Sozomen (pro. 2) and Agapetus (Chp. 9), and be a paradigm for his subjects, the same relationship with the people that has been emphasised from as far back as the Anonymous and Agapetus.

A less classicising, more Christian example of the genre of the panegyric is provided by Corippus' description of the accession of Justin II.⁶⁸ Corippus' panegyric takes on a different structure from Menander's model. It is a chronological sequence narrating Justin's dream, his coronation ceremonies, dealings with an Avar

⁶⁸ Cameron, *Corippus* for a full discussion.

embassy, and it then breaks off while describing his taking of the consulship. A panegyric in the Menander tradition would not include so much narration. The Christian side of the Imperial dignity is immediately apparent, in contrast with Menander, "The almighty Father has honoured you with the divine office" (I. 45-50). This theme continues throughout the work, "it could not happen if the voice of God did not order it" (II. 45). "The Roman state belongs to God and does not need earthly arms" (III. 333).

Corippus is able to use the Christian ideals emphasised by Agapetus that would have been inconceivable for Menander writing as he did before the first Christian Emperor. Justin's virtues seem to be more practical than the abstract ones of courage, justice, temperance and wisdom expounded by Menander. According to the Virgin in his dream they are "virtue and strength" :

"your age is excellent you have sound judgement, a stable mind, a holy willingness and vigilance watching over all and your own wisdom worthy of Heaven, guardian of the wide Earth." (I. 50-55).

This dream of the Virgin is analogous to the various portents of Maurice's accession discussed above and there are more portents for the accession of Justin II in *The Life of Patriarch Eutychius*. These virtues make him a legitimate Emperor, for like Menander Corippus does not allow for any debate, and so no mention is made of any other claimants, of whom Justin, a cousin, was the main rival. All

Justin II must do is "Accept the name of Augustus which alone you lacked." (II.150-155). No mention is made either of the Excubitors who were guarding the royal palace or the rapidity of the ceremony inside the palace. Instead Justin's legitimacy is emphasised by the smooth way the various ceremonies run together. His clothing shows the uniqueness of his office and Corippus dwells on it (II. 90-125). Purple boots with Parthian ties, girdle, chlamys and brooch are all described. Looking the part Justin is then invested with the power of office. He is raised on a shield (II. 130-155) , and next crowned (II. 160-175). Then in his coronation speech he defines his responsibilities. "The maker of all has imposed on us the care of ruling" (II. 181), so "We strive to be the imitators of our maker" (II. 215).

He is to be the ideal Christian Emperor, and also in contrast to Menander Corippus introduces a criticism of the preceeding reign. Justinian's financial problems are to be solved. If the Emperor is the "head" of the Empire (II.195) and the Senate the "breast and arms of this head" (II. 260) then the treasury is the "stomach" much neglected in Justinian's reign (II. 260). Justin II continues in this vein when he arrives before the people in the Hippodrome and pays Justinian's debts. "What popularity that brought him" (II. 389):

"more generous than his father and more
merciful for in the virtue of his soul he trampled
the greed of the mind".⁶⁹

Corippus may have felt that he could afford this comparison because

⁶⁹ Corippus, *In Laud. Just.* II. 400.

he had already demonstrated the greatness of Justinian when Justin was grief-stricken at his funeral (I. 225-270). Further comparisons are made with the past in Book III, where Justin II is "A better man than Augustus Caesar" (III. 25) and "the iron age has now gone, and the golden age is rising in your time" (II. 75-80). The first of these comparisons is very similar to Eusebius' desire to link Augustus the founder of the Empire with Constantine the founder of the Christian Empire. The second comparison is also concerned with the birth of the Empire. It seems to conflate the prophecy of Daniel which foretold that the final age of the world would be an iron one with the Hesiodic tradition which said that it would be a golden one.

In his description of the Coronation banquet and the Avar embassy Corippus deals with virtues common to classical thought. He speaks of Justin's "accustomed frugality" (III.106) and his reluctance to squander the resources of the Empire, "our hand is generous but not extravagant, it does not know waste" (III. 350). The Avar spokesman is aggressive and proud but Justin, like Evagrius' Maurice, is serene and collected in his thoughts. "The tranquil Emperor was not moved in anger and looked at the young man as he made these boasts with eyes peaceful with piety, and said this in calm speech." (III. 305-310). This confidence is founded on Justin's position in the world, "The Imperial palace with its officials is like Olympus" (III. 178). This may be a classical turn of phrase but we are left in no doubt that power comes from Christianity. "They [the Avars] believed that the Roman palace was another Heaven". (III. 243). Corippus has created orderly and overtly Christian panegyric with occasional recourse to the style of Menander. Justin

II has all the necessary virtues because he is pious. Once he is made Emperor he assumes all the power that that office carries with it. He is in the image of God and on earth is as powerful. As far into his reign as we see him Justin is the ideal Emperor, because he has all the necessary virtues to assume power there is no questioning of his authority, when he ascends to the throne. In the short space of time that Corippus describes we are left in no doubt that the great power that Justin wields comes from God. Once again the Emperor has to be judged as a personality, the intrinsic power of the office is made explicit by Corippus' description of the throne room and the Avars' reaction to it. How the Emperor wields this authority depends upon the variable factor of his personality, which is the only factor that is open to criticism as well as praise. Though the importance of the personality of the Emperor is still essential to the writing of panegyric the format of the genre has changed. Sabine MacCormack sees the role as becoming more institutionalised:

"We see the Emperor in these later panegyrics less as an individual with particular characteristics and more as the focal point of a complex courtly ritual".⁷⁰

The content of the panegyric has come to coincide with the content of the ceremony. So, like the ceremony the panegyric is not merely propaganda, how the Emperor wants to be seen, but a token of the legitimacy of his rule.

Corippus' view is Constantinopolitan. For a provincial view

⁷⁰ MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* p. 6.

of imperial power we must turn to Dioscorus of Aphrodito who also wrote a panegyric on Justin II.⁷¹ Like Corippus, Christianity at work was one of his main themes but in contrast to Corippus he does not dwell on the centre stage - the palace, the Hippodrome and the throne room - but instead on the benefits to the provinces (especially Egypt) that Justin II can bring. Dioscorus like Corippus does not use Menander's framework, but neither is his a narrative account. The Emperor's place in the empire is defined in Christian terms: "Much praised Emperor who loves Christ which delightful gift God has granted to the world".⁷² He does have some of Menander's virtues, "big with statutes of glorious wisdom", but it is primarily a Christian role that Dioscorus marks out for him, "You exalt the divine faith which glorifies mankind." Constantinople is still seen as the centre of the empire, and so Corippus' view is not challenged but supplemented. "From the many sceptred palace....the rays of your beautiful voice flash out".⁷³

Theophylact continued the approach of criticising individual Emperors without questioning the system that they represented, and yet he adds two extra dimensions that we have seen before but in separately defined contexts: these are the inclusion of religious affairs and personages as an integral part of his history, rather than writing a secular history and making apologies for their inclusion, and the interweaving of a contemporary panegyric into an account of past events.⁷⁴ Theophylact still discusses what makes a good

⁷¹ MacCoull, 'Dioscorus', p. 575-585.

⁷² tr. MacCoull, lines 8-9.

⁷³ tr. MacCoull, line 7.

⁷⁴ Whitby, *Maurice* for a full discussion.

Emperor. Justin II gives Tiberius advice when he becomes Caesar (III.11.8-11), and Tiberius lectures Maurice on his responsibilities and objectives before he dies (I.1.15-20). Whilst this is no different from the attitudes of Procopius, or the Anonymous and Agapetus, Theophylact is breaking new ground in giving greater prominence to religion in secular history. The Patriarch, bishops and religious ceremonies are depicted as an integral part of Byzantine society. Procopius only mentions the Patriarch twice (*Wars* III. 12.2 and *Secret History* VI. 26) and Agathias does not mention him at all. Maurice's actions on the other hand are closely linked with the Church, before he sets out on campaign he visits S. Sophia and marks a Roman victory by a vigil there. Theophylact even composes two speeches for Bishop Domitian of Metilene (IV. 16 and V. 4). Both are full of religious terms but are made for secular ends. Roman victory over the Persians is a victory for Christianity which brings us back full circle to the work of Eusebius, where Christianity and order in the Empire were inexorably linked.

The writing of this history as contemporary panygeric has been asserted by Frendo.⁷⁵ The introductory dialogue between History and Philosophy fulfills "the pressing needs of the new regime's official political propaganda" (p. 149). In his history Theophylact must deal with the reign of Maurice the last legitimate Emperor, and the usurpation of Phocas whose reign Heraclius brought to an end. Thus, writing under Heraclius, he has to praise Maurice, criticise Phocas and legitimise Heraclius. However, if as seems probable the composition of the History is to be dated to the late 620's then it was not a "new regime" that it was written for and

⁷⁵ Frendo, 'History', p. 143-153.

the panegyrical thrust of Theophylact's presentation had longer-term relevance.⁷⁶ The speech of Tiberius to Maurice emphasises the importance of the passing on of legitimate power and the need to surpass the achievements of the preceding emperor:

"for the struggle is not only to preserve the power that has already been entrusted, but also to pass on the inheritance to others in the proper manner. For successors must be better than preceding leaders, so that they may introduce their personal correction for earlier errors, or else, in, short, the entire dominion must slip away, when a weaker foundation supports the kingdom".⁷⁷

This is a legitimisation of the usurpation of Heraclius in 610, justifying a change in ruler who did not have any blood ties or personal association with the throne. Phocas had proved the illegality of his usurpation by failing to live up to the standards set by Maurice, whereas Heraclius had demonstrated the rectitude of his coup by correcting Phocas' mistakes. Further to this end Theophylact accords with panegyrical tradition by praising Heraclius' family, when he details the exploits of the Emperor's father. Here he is sometimes guilty of misrepresenting the facts. For example Comentiolus' victory at Sisarbanon in 589 is put down to the

⁷⁶ There is a danger of circularity in Frendo's argument since some of our best evidence for Heraclius' needs in terms of political propaganda is in fact provided by Theophylact.

⁷⁷ Th. Sim. i. 1. 10-12.

initiative of the Elder Heraclius:

"Comentiolus turned his back on the engagement,
and after his flight had become lengthy and his
escape had culminated at Theodosiopolis,
Heraclius the father of Heraclius the emperor,
with exceptional courage won distinction for
valorous deeds, and was conspicuous through his
glorious achievements with the spear".⁷⁸

Evagrius does not describe Comentiolus' actions as cowardly and no name is attached to the hero who saves his life during the fighting.⁷⁹ Whitby believes that this account may have come from a lost source, possibly in the form of a panegyric written to celebrate the accomplishments of Heraclius' family or from oral tradition,⁸⁰ and he also points out other contemporary themes that Theophylact has incorporated into his history.⁸¹ The speech of Domitian the bishop of Melitene illustrates the sense of ascendancy that Heraclius' victory over Persia in 628 must have brought to the Empire, and reflects the tone of the imperial dispatch that announced this triumph with its biblical presentation.⁸² Being couched in biblical terms it is also similar to other seventh-century writers' styles, such as George of Pisidia and Theodore Syncellus. Theophylact also criticises the populace, especially the circus factions, and the Jews. These might have been two commonly held opinions, since the

⁷⁸ Th. Sim. iii. 6. 1.

⁷⁹ Evagrius, vi.15. 5-10.

⁸⁰ Whitby, *History of Theophylact Simocatta* tr. p. xxiii

⁸¹ Whitby, *Maurice* p. 334-335.

⁸² For Heraclius' dispatch see *C. P.* p. 727-734.

former had exacerbated civil unrest in the capital during Heraclius' coup, whilst the latter had collaborated with the Persians after the capture of Jerusalem in 614.⁸³

Throughout this chapter the Emperor's legitimacy, relationship with the Church, and responsibility for the internal and external well-being of the Empire have been stressed by historians and panegyricists alike. Heraclius' reign was no different in this respect. We have seen the stance of the orator change depending upon his personal circumstances as in the cases of Themistius and Chrysostom, or remain consistent as Eusebius does in a positive vein throughout his work. Procopius was conceptually consistent in each of his accounts of Justinian's reign and yet not in the overall picture of that reign that his *oeuvre* projects. Corippus combined the pagan theory of panegyric with Christianity, and Theophylact's history includes both secular and religious affairs. It is in this continual adjustment of style that we see a development in the depiction of emperors. The parameter of autocratic rule was not constrictive to style. In the following chapters we will examine the emperor's role in relation to those who wrote about Heraclius in a similar vein to their predecessors. They will not criticise the institution of Imperial government, but rather the personal role of the man who represents that ideology. It is to how he was represented, and to how he presented himself, that we must now turn.

⁸³ Dagron, 'Juifs', p. 170-246, for a discussion of the Jews in the Seventh century.

Heraclius The Usurper.

The coup that put Heraclius on the throne in 610 was indicative of his reign as a whole, for the consequences were felt empire-wide. The revolt began in Africa and spread in two directions, Nicetas went east into the province of Egypt, whilst Heraclius sailed north to confront Phocas in Constantinople. This chapter will examine not only how Heraclius achieved his success but also how his coup compares in the sources to that of Phocas in 602. For neither Phocas nor Heraclius were legitimate emperors, they were both the victors of bloody military revolts. However, as Heraclius is never seen as anything other than legitimate an examination of his course to the throne will reveal how an emperor was legitimised.

Heraclius' coup falls into three geographically distinct parts; Nicetas' capture of Egypt from Bonosus, Heraclius' own triumphant entry into Constantinople and his execution of Phocas, and the defeat of Comentiolus the following winter in western Anatolia. Sources from each of these areas are extant along with the poems of George of Pisidia, who extols his hero throughout the first two decades of his reign, to provide detail that is used by the later historians Nicephorus and Theophanes, who themselves provide supplementary information from non-extant material. All the sources for this revolt are unfavourable to Phocas, regardless of whether or not they praise the reign of Heraclius. We are thus left with varying extremes of

bias from a dry reporting of events, though with no exaggerated praise of the new ruler conducive to propaganda.

The most detailed account of the capture of Egypt comes from the contemporary John of Nikiu. Nicetas' campaign preceded that of Heraclius and John emphasises the importance of its victory to the overall success of the revolt. John begins with the inception of the revolt, listing its supporters; Bonakis the general of Nicetas, and Tenkera and Theodore plotters in Alexandria. John of Nikiu attaches importance to the role of the factions even if their allegiances seem to be confused. For events in Constantinople John of Nikiu is more brief: the rivalry between the Blues and the Greens is mentioned but no specific action in the revolt is recorded although the Blues are accused of a pro-Phocas stance. Priscus the son-in-law of Phocas is not mentioned but the execution of other officials of Phocas is. John of Nikiu places the coronation of Heraclius in the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle before returning immediately to provincial events, although he does indicate that Heraclius' problems are far from over when he notes Phocas' sinking of the state treasure in the harbour.¹

The contemporary Constantinople-orientated sources are John of Antioch and the *Chronicon Paschale* of which the latter is the fuller. This provides very little information on anything other than events in the capital, Nicetas' capture of Egypt is ignored, and it is only when Heraclius' fleet comes into sight at Constantinople that his involvement is narrated. The attitude of the *Chronicon Paschale*

¹ John of Nikiu CX 5.

towards Heraclius is a positive one throughout his reign and this is apparent at the outset. The revolt is seen as the triumph of good over evil and for this reason the attention centres on the actions of Phocas and his general Bonosus, who is made a scapegoat for the emperor's policies and the firing of the Caesarion harbour. Presumably the grave nature of their crimes is reflected in their humiliating executions. Bonosus is cowardly enough to die attempting to desert his emperor's cause whilst Phocas is treated like a common criminal, dressed in black, and is mutilated before execution. Their bodies, together with those of Phocas' other servants Leontius and Domentiolus, are burnt at the Forum of the Ox. Heraclius' coronation is now dealt with before the chronicle's account for the year ends, not with any information on the revolt by Comentiolus or even Persian successes in the east but with a report of an earthquake that affected the city.

The fragmentary source John of Antioch ends with the death of Phocas and can be dated to a point no later than the reign of Heraclius himself.² His perspective is a little wider than that of the *Chronicon Paschale* but its focal point remains the same - Constantinople. From John of Antioch we learn of Heraclius' voyage from Egypt via Abydos, Heracleia and Selymbria, but it is for events within the city that John reserves his detailed description. Phocas' preparations are listed with the factions assigned to protect the harbours. Indeed the Green faction plays a significant role in the narrative. It is they who rescue Heraclius' mother and his fiancée and create the decisive confusion which ends resistance by setting fire to the Caesarion harbour. This is a different account from that of

² Mango, *Nikephoros* intro. p. 14.

the *Chronicon Paschale* which blames the fire on Bonosus and does not mention the factions. This illustrates the chronicle's more official line which is reluctant to give any role to the turbulent factions, preferring to blame Phocas' government for any misdeeds and to hand all the credit for victory to Heraclius. John of Antioch like the *Chronicon Paschale*, dwells on the mutilation of Phocas and also preserves an exchange of insults between Heraclius and Phocas about whether Heraclius will be able to reign any better than the man he has castigated as a criminal. John's account ends with the burning of the bodies in the Forum of the Ox, Domentiolus, Phocas' brother being added to the list of punished culprits.

George of Pisidia is writing in praise of Heraclius rather than detailing every step of his hero's path to the throne. Heraclius' achievement has destroyed the serpent of tyranny that was Phocas.³ In *In Heraclium Redeuntem* George celebrates "the divinely-inspired wisdom of your spiritual energy" rather than Heraclius' martial success.⁴ George goes on to praise Heraclius' personal qualities; his peaceable nature, strength of reason, and piety.⁵ This is a list that reads more like a panegyric than an account of a successful coup. This is George's aim, since he is attempting to legitimise his hero's success. Heraclius comes to the aid of the empire even though he is not responsible for the troubles that it is suffering. In doing so he was brave and courageous, scorning personal safety for the sake of the empire.⁶ Heraclius'

³ G. P. Bell. Av. line 50.

⁴ G. P. H. Red. line 5.

⁵ G. P. H. Red. lines 14 - 39.

⁶ G. P. H. Red. lines 40 - 55.

noble actions have legitimised his claim to the throne that Phocas does not deserve. Now that Heraclius is on the throne stability will return to the empire, the influence of the Theotokos will again be felt after the evils of Phocas' reign:

"For lately, I think, she was modestly hidden,
blushing to look on illegitimate slaughter".⁷

So Phocas' reign had alienated divine favour. Whilst Heraclius, by his personal qualities, will usher in a new period of piety and legitimacy that will lead to a return for the city to the protection of the Theotokos.

The accounts of Nicephorus and Theophanes both include the story of a race to the throne between Heraclius and Nicetas.⁸ This can only represent a means of legitimising the eventual coronation of Heraclius, for the account of John of Nikiu combined with elementary logistics illustrate that there could have been only one winner of such a race. Nicetas was fulfilling a vital role in his seizure of Egypt, a province whose importance Heraclius and his two advisors, Heraclius the Elder and Gregorias, father of Nicetas, would not have been unaware of as they resided in Africa. Theophanes, unlike Nicephorus, mentions the revolt as being incited by the Senate and Priscus and he includes detail of Heraclius' route to the capital, though the notion of the rivalry between Phocas and Priscus over the latter's statue in the hippodrome is also in Nicephorus.⁹ Nicephorus does have more detail on the actual fighting in the city

⁷ G. P. H. *Red.* line 70.

⁸ Niceph. 1, and Theoph. p. 297.

⁹ Theoph. p. 294 and Nicephorus 1.

and this may come from John of Antioch. He includes Priscus' deceitful attitude towards Phocas and the activity of the Greens in firing the Caesarion quarter. Nicephorus also credits Photius with the capture of Phocas in the palace, before including the exchange of insults between Heraclius and Phocas which is in John of Antioch and preserves the same list of the executed notables as John. All this detail is missing from Theophanes' account which merely states that Phocas was burnt in the Forum of the Ox and that Heraclius was crowned in the oratory of St. Stephen, before remarking that the Persians had captured Apamea and Edessa, and defeated a Roman army outside Antioch.¹⁰ Though Theophanes ends his account of the revolt with an indication of Heraclius' immediate problems he is not as specific as Nicephorus. Nicephorus first has Heraclius urge Priscus to accept the throne before taking it himself, and then goes on to narrate the quarrel between Heraclius and Priscus, who had been appointed commander of the eastern armies, outside the Persian held city of Caesarea.¹¹

The tonsuring of Priscus and his replacement by Philippicus solved this problem of personalities for Heraclius and finally allowed him undisputed power, but there was one other threat to his position that is only hinted at in John of Nikiu but which threatened to erase all that he had achieved. "Now great uncertainty prevailed in the churches because of the long duration of the war".¹² This was not due merely to events that John had described. From the monk George's *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, written in 611, we have

¹⁰ Theoph. p. 299.

¹¹ Niceph. 2.

¹² John of Nikiu CX 12.

details of a bid for the throne that came from beyond the environs of Constantinople and which had significant military backing.¹³ The revolt was led by a brother of Phocas, Comentiolus, who had been commanding an army in the east. His ambitions were ended by his assassination, by an Armenian on his staff, before he could do any more than threaten the new regime. This, like the references in John of Nikiu is a rare detail about any pro-Phocas support. There is no indication of the extent of support for Comentiolus and George says that Theodore considered the insurrection foolish, though it is not possible to say whether this pronouncement was made on a careful evaluation of the military situation or the biographer merely inserted the statement in the light of Heraclius' success.

Although none of the sources are pro-Phocas it is still possible from the information that they give us to make a comparison between his revolt and that of Heraclius in order to investigate how Heraclius legitimised his image. This requires us to go back to the reign of Maurice and to use the most detailed source for that reign the *History* of Theophylact Simocatta. The importance of this source is two-fold: it provides a full narrative of the revolt of Phocas yet it was written in the reign of Heraclius and not Phocas. So it enables us to see two different views of the usurpation of an emperor, the condemnation of a pretender written from the viewpoint of the regime which had in turn replaced him. Heraclius' revolt was just as illegitimate as Phocas'. Theophylact

¹³ *The Life of Theodore of Skyeon*, Chp. 152 translated by Festugière. The translation by Baynes in *Three Byzantine Saints* does not include details of the revolt. For further discussion of the source and the revolt see Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 137-14.

describes Phocas as a tyrant even before he has been crowned whilst John of Antioch calls Heraclius *basileus* before he sets foot in the capital.¹⁴ Clearly the sources have two distinct attitudes to the two revolts, but the real difference lay in the reigns themselves rather than their violent inceptions. Both the practical and abstract nature of usurpation must be discussed: how the revolt was precipitated, its development from dissatisfaction to open rebellion, what gave opponents the right to depose a ruler, and how the new ruler justified his newly won power. This does not only take in the military campaign to establish material dominance but also the use of ceremony and ritual to emphasise that new authority. The major problem with the sources now becomes apparent: because the revolt of Phocas preceded that of Heraclius by only eight years there is no extant source sympathetic to the regime that Heraclius overthrew. We can see the processes that Phocas used only in the light of unfavourable reporting but we can do no more than conjecture what their effect might have been by a study of Heraclius' similar actions.

Both aspirants to the throne faced problems in justifying their opposition to the existing regime. The revolt of Phocas was a result of spontaneous disobedience. Military discontent on the Danube was excited in order to further his personal ambitions. At the start of the revolt the sources denigratingly call him a centurion. However, he was one of the ambassadors that went to the general Peter, and to Maurice himself in 600 A. D. to complain about Comentiolus. This embassy was objecting to what was commonly seen, even by Peter, as Maurice's worst fault, his avarice.¹⁵ Phocas'

¹⁴ Th. Sim. viii. 8.1. and John of Antioch frg. 218 f.

¹⁵ Th. Sim. viii. 7, 2-3.

rise to prominence is not clearly explained, John of Nikiu writes:

"They cast lots and the lot fell upon Phocas and marked him out as emperor".¹⁶

That is the only reason that is advanced for his rise to pre-eminence. We have more detail on how this new-found power was depicted. Theophylact says that he was proclaimed emperor by being raised on a shield after a meeting of the troops.¹⁷ This shield-raising ceremony would have been for the benefit of the troops whom he expected to fight for him, and would have been as far as he could go in terms of pageant until he arrived in Constantinople. Then he could hold a full coronation ceremony that would help to legitimise him in the eyes of the empire rather than just his assembled troops. A Nestorian history preserves what Phocas saw as a legitimate reason for his revolt, the weakness of Maurice that was threatening to result in parts of the empire being lost.¹⁸

Although Phocas had been raised on a shield his destiny as emperor was not assured. Maurice fled the city in the wake of public disturbances, but Stratos believes that he could have saved his throne had he abdicated in favour of Theodosius.¹⁹ Since Theodosius was Maurice's son he may well have been accepted by the army which had been trying to get in touch with the emperor.²⁰

¹⁶ John of Nikiu CII 11.

¹⁷ Th. Sim. viii. 7,7.

¹⁸ Nau, 'Maurice', Chp 6 (p. 776).

¹⁹ Stratos, *Byzantium* I p. 48.

²⁰ Th. Sim. viii, 8,5.

But Theodosius fled with his father, and his father-in-law Germanus, whom the army also considered a suitable candidate, had his chances reduced to naught by the vehement opposition of the Green faction which protested about his partisan support for the Blues.²¹ Thus Phocas entered the capital with little opposition. He was at the head of the Thracian army, the populace had opened the gates for him and the Senate had no other candidate. The only role the factions had in the whole affair was a passive one. The Greens may have vetoed the candidature of Germanus, but Maurice either trusted them sufficiently or was sufficiently desperate to place both Factions on the walls to defend his throne. Phocas' command of the army was the decisive influence in the confusion of the capital. He reinforced his position by appealing to all sections of society in his coronation ceremony. He was again raised on a shield but he was also crowned in a church, that of St. John at the Hebdomon, by Patriarch Cyriacus, after the Patriarch and the Senate had been invited out to the army's camp. The formal setting for the coronation gave an air of legitimacy to the occasion that Phocas built upon on his entry to Constantinople.²² The coronation of the Augusta Leontia took the form of another ordered ceremony, although the impression of good order was marred by the Blues and the Greens actually fighting for the Ambelion, the forecourt of the Palace, traditionally reserved for the Blues. Phocas' final act in assuming power was less ceremonial and yet equally effective. According to John of Antioch the Greens chanted "Maurice is not dead, learn the truth", to which Phocas retaliated with his execution.²³

²¹ Th. Sim. viii. 9, 14-16.

²² The Church of St. John at the Hebdomon was outside the city walls to the west. See Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine* p. 408 - 411.

Heraclius' revolt for all its greater degree of preplanning was no less confused or bloody. He was incited to rebellion by a widespread and deep-rooted resentment of Phocas' government of the empire. How the revolt began is impossible to decipher as there is no one action of Phocas' that we can pinpoint as being the catalyst, similar to Maurice's order for the troops to winter north of the Danube. John of Antioch and Theophanes have the Senate and Africa in communication before the revolt breaks out and mention Priscus as a prime mover in this correspondence.²⁴ However, John of Nikiu and Nicephorus do not cite correspondence as the reason for the revolt, and they suggest that the revolt was conceived in Africa by the Exarch there, Heraclius the Elder, and his brother and subordinate commander Gregorias. Heraclius the Elder had been successful as a general under Maurice who had appointed him Exarch. It is quite conceivable that he was in touch with his Senatorial colleagues in Constantinople and after the tonsuring by Phocas of Philippicus he may well have felt insecure about his family's future.²⁵ Nevertheless Heraclius the Elder had no choice but to wait since the logistics of attacking Constantinople from Africa would require careful planning.

It is from John of Nikiu that we learn most about this preparation. At the time Africa had no real fleet, and the western Roman fleet was controlled by the Exarch of Ravenna. The garrison army was also small, about 18,000 men according to Stratos.²⁶

²³ John of Antioch frg. 218 d.

²⁴ Theoph. p. 295.

²⁵ Theoph. p. 293.

Heraclius solved this lack of manpower by hiring recruits from the barbarians of Tripolis and Pentapolis.²⁷ Negotiations were also conducted with Leontius, Phocas' prefect of Mareotis, who provided troops for the expedition against Egypt. Heraclius unlike Phocas was able to issue coinage before he was crowned. Even at the beginning he was aware that he needed to give his enterprise as legitimate an image as possible. He did not strike coins in his name as emperor for he had not yet been crowned, and to have done so would have offended the Senate and populace of Constantinople where he most needed to cultivate support. The bronze and silver coinage used within Africa had one bust with Heraclius the Elder as consul, but the gold coinage that circulated outside of Africa had two busts, of father and son, with Heraclius the Elder as consul again to show that it was not he who aspired to the throne.²⁸ Even this striking of consular coinage was irregular, but then again so was revolt and Heraclius must have hoped to profit from the respect that his father had earned in his career.

Heraclius' attack was two-pronged. This has given rise to the historical fallacy of the race to the capital between Nicetas and Heraclius. This story is preserved by both Theophanes and Nicephorus because it is of anecdotal interest. Nicetas left Africa well before Heraclius but he did not sail directly for Constantinople even after capturing Alexandria, since John of Nikiu tells us that he remained in Egypt to reorganise that province.²⁹ This suggests that Egypt was crucial to Heraclius' cause. Heraclius needed Nicetas to

²⁶ Stratos, *Byzantium* I p. 25.

²⁷ John of Nikiu CVII 2.

²⁸ On the coinage of Heraclius see Grierson, 'Catalogue'.

²⁹ John of Nikiu CIX 17.

secure it in order protect the province of Africa from invasion, put pressure on Phocas in Constantinople by withholding the grain supply and prevent a fleet from Alexandria opposing his own expeditionary force.

Nicetas was encouraged by insurgents in Alexandria who were plotting against the Patriarch there even before he had set off, and he was well supported by the Egyptians during his campaign. John of Nikiu gives a balanced account of the fighting in Egypt which also shows substantial support for Phocas. The governor of Alexandria did not desert Phocas as quickly as his populace and that of Constantinople did,³⁰ and indeed the duration and intensity of the fighting was greater than that in Constantinople. This included a full-scale siege of Alexandria, a pitched battle outside it and various mass executions. Victory against Bonosus did not end Nicetas' problems. He was confronted with a province that had been given over to faction fighting during a civil war.³¹ The appointment of prefects to cities and repression of plundering calmed any lingering civil strife and the reduction of taxes for three years further smoothed the transition of from one regime to another.³² These actions allowed Nicetas to consolidate the gains that he had made on behalf of Heraclius.

Heraclius' journey to Constantinople was broken by visits to islands in the Sea of Marmara where he received material aid and moral support. As Phocas had been raised on a shield before

³⁰ John of Nikiu CVII 16 - 21.

³¹ John of Nikiu CIX 16.

³² John of Nikiu CIX 17.

marching on Constantinople Heraclius was crowned before he entered the capital. This took place at Heracleia and was performed by Stephen, the bishop of Cyzicus. Here too Heraclius was able to learn of the civil unrest in Constantinople and he may well have delayed his advance in order to allow this to escalate. Any amount of consternation in the capital would be bound to impede Phocas' preparations for its defence. While Heraclius was at Abydus he received exiles from the government of Phocas as his support and repute grew.³³

Heraclius did not have to face the skilled and enthusiastic manoueverings of Bonosus in the field, for although the general was in Constantinople his presence was neutralised by the chaotic public behaviour that was brought on by the appearance of Heraclius' fleet in the Bosphorus. Heraclius had icons of the Theotokos on the masts of his ships, an exploitation of that cult that was to develop throughout his reign.³⁴ This was supplementary to his earlier imagery which although still religiously-orientated looked back to the tradition of Constantine. Heraclius' coinage at Carthage (the follis and half-follis) had the same legend that Constantine used at the Milvian Bridge when he too was attempting to win an empire that he had no legitimate right to. This legend was *ἐν τούτῳ νίκα*, and the reverse M or K with three crosses.³⁵ So Phocas became Maxentius, opposed by Heraclius' devotion to the cross and the image of Constantine, and a form of proto-crusade is evident in his earliest imperial actions.

³³ John of Antioch frg. 218 f.

³⁴ Theoph. p. 298.

³⁵ See Grierson, 'Catalogue'.

Phocas, like Maurice in 602 was to lose control of the populace of Constantinople. Like Maurice too Phocas placed the Factions in positions of defensive responsibility, and it was the Greens around the Caesarion Harbour that deserted him. He had no fleet to oppose Heraclius who thus had the initiative, since all Phocas could have mustered were some Alexandrian corn ships that he had confiscated, no match for Heraclius' small navy. The crucial event in the attack upon the capital was the firing of the Caesarion harbour. This turned the defenders' confusion into panic and Heraclius won the day. The *Chronicon Paschale* blames Bonosus for the fire: presumably the general believed that act would keep the Greens obedient.³⁶ John of Antioch says that the Greens were responsible for the fire, and started it as a deliberate act of aggression towards Phocas. We have already seen that the *Chronicon Paschale* is loath to see any blame attached to Heraclius' allies or any credit given to the Factions. John of Nikiu does not mention the fire but does say that the confusion was increased by inter-faction aggression.³⁷

This confusion seems to have been so great that Heraclius was carried along by events rather than directing them. However, he was in control when Phocas is brought before him. According to Nicephorus Phocas was removed from the palace by Photius. Photius had suffered at the hands of Phocas' personal government as his wife had been seduced by the emperor. This personal crime was not the only one which Phocas had committed, for he is immediately stripped of the imperial insignia and dressed in the black clothes of a common criminal. This was the first in a series of very public and

³⁶ C.P. p. 700.

³⁷ John of Nikiu CX 25.

overt humiliations which graphically illustrated his downfall. Phocas was brought to Heraclius who, seeing him as a criminal, asked him if that is how he has governed the state. This story is in John of Antioch and repeated in Nicephorus, and serves to show why Heraclius thought that he was justified in removing an emperor from his throne. Phocas is then mutilated before being burnt. The same summary execution was also meted out to Leontius, Domentiolus and Bonosus. All four corpses were then dragged through the streets to the Forum of the Ox which was a common site for public burnings. So Phocas ended his life not as a vanquished emperor but as a private citizen convicted and punished for crimes that he had committed during his illegal tenure of government, part of this point being that Phocas had no right to the throne.

Heraclius was now in a position to assume the throne that the punishment of Phocas had left vacant. However, John of Nikiu says that Heraclius was loathe to accept the crown and Nicephorus writes that he offered it to Priscus saying that he had come to punish Phocas not to take the throne, but Priscus would not accept it.³⁸ This attitude does not accord with the image of legitimate candidature for the throne that Heraclius had employed throughout his campaign, and does not explain why he was at so great pains to secure Egypt. It may well have been no more than an appeal to the public for their consent, for Priscus must have known that he was not acceptable to the populace. His attitude to the revolt had been ambiguous throughout. Phocas had appointed him Count of the Excubitors in 602.³⁹ In 607 he had become Phocas' son-in-law, and

³⁸ John of Nikiu CX 9, Niceph. 2.

³⁹ Theoph. p. 292.

it was only because of a quarrel between the two on his wedding day that he turned against the emperor, as Germanus had done in 602.⁴⁰ Although Count of the Excubitors was the position from which both Tiberius and Maurice had risen to become emperor, it is unlikely that the people of Constantinople would accept someone with such close links to the old emperor, especially when they could choose the man who had done most to oust that emperor. Regardless of these facts Heraclius was the man who controlled both Egypt and Constantinople by force as much as public approval, and in the last analysis he was the only strong candidate because there was nobody in the city to stand against him.

The sources do not agree upon where Heraclius was crowned. John of Nikiu has St. Thomas', Theophanes places it in St. Stephen's and S. Sophia is the location for the *Chronicon Paschale*. All the sources give the ceremony performed by the Patriarch Sergius a cursory mention and add that Heraclius married his fiancée Eudocia on the same day. The speed at which all this was implemented illustrates not only the complete nature of Heraclius' success in the capital but also ease with which ceremonies could be staged. On the day on which a battle had been fought within the walls of the city Heraclius was able to be proclaimed emperor by the Senate and people.⁴¹ Heraclius legitimised his authority further by assuming the consulship.⁴² He did not have the resources for as lavish an affair as that of Justin II, and he did not even parade in a chariot,⁴³ though he could make donations to all and sundry.

⁴⁰ Th. Sim. viii. 9,14-16.

⁴¹ Niceph. 2, Theoph. p. 299, C.P. p. 701 and John of Nikiu CX 9.

⁴² See Cameron and Schanes, 'The Last Consul', p. 126-145.

Important though the opportunity was for imperial largesse another advantage accrued to Heraclius with the taking of the consulship. Justin II had taken the consulship to usher in a new age and proclaim new confidence after the bleak last years of Justinian. Heraclius would have been attempting to do the same. It did not matter that all the emperors since Justin II had taken the consulship; what was important for Heraclius, as it had been for Phocas, was the opportunity to legitimise his rule through the taking of the title. This was because chroniclers worked out their chronology on the basis of consular years, and another ceremony celebrating the personality of the new emperor was bound to emphasise his right to rule. By the same token there is nothing more in Heraclius' giving of offices to members of his close family, Theodore his brother and Nicetas his cousin, than there had been in the same practice by Tiberius, Maurice or Phocas. It was expected that the emperor would associate power with his family. This was not a sign of domestic insecurity, although the situation in Anatolia was not yet secure.

Theophanes mentions the Persian menace immediately after dealing with Heraclius' coronation,⁴⁴ and this was to plague Heraclius for the next twenty years of his reign. However, in 610 he was not able to do anything about it immediately, since John of Nikiu refers to "great uncertainty" in the churches due to the long duration of the conflict, and the nature of this internal conflict is revealed in the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* which shows that, although Heraclius was crowned emperor in Constantinople, he had not yet extinguished all opposition to his claim. The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*

⁴³ C.P. p. 701.

⁴⁴ Theoph. p. 299.

shows that Comentiolus began a rebellion after he had brought his army from the east to winter at Ancyra.⁴⁵ Comentiolus held the rank of *patrikios* and was the last member of Phocas' family still at large. The *Life* reveals that Theodore wrote to Heraclius asking him to spare Domentiolus the younger brother of Phocas whom Theophanes places in Constantinople at this time,⁴⁶ and whom according to John of Antioch and Nicephorus was executed there with his brother. Whatever the fate of Domentiolus, Comentiolus must have thought that his own future was more than uncertain if he surrendered. There is no evidence that he was moving to aid Phocas when he reached Ancyra, for Theodore of Sykeon heard of Phocas' deposition on the 7 October, only two days after it had happened. Comentiolus probably heard the news as quickly, but may well have believed that he had some chance of success; for Heraclius' army was not that strong, as is revealed by his later problems against the Persians, and he was newly established on the throne. Revenge for his brother's death would only have served to strengthen Comentiolus' resolve, and his army remained loyal to him just as Bonosus' had in Egypt. This may have been out of loyalty to Phocas or their to own commander, or even more materially, out of the opportunity to capture the spoils of empire by a swift attack on a newly occupied throne.

The collapse of the revolt was not based upon military exploits. Comentiolus was unexpectedly assassinated by the Armenian Prefect Justinus.⁴⁷ It does not appear that Heraclius had

⁴⁵ *Th. Syk.* Chp. 152, 19, Festugière's edition. For a discussion of the revolt see Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 141-143.

⁴⁶ *Theoph.* p. 298.

been expecting this turn of events for he sent a number of embassies, the first of which was the monk Herodianus who visited St. Theodore on his way to Comentiolus. He was followed by Philippicus who had been tonsured by Phocas, and who was arrested by Comentiolus when he was found in Bithynia. Comentiolus clearly presented Heraclius with a threat to his authority, and the *Life* says that he fully intended to march on Heraclius.⁴⁸ However, this was not the only threat to Heraclius. Comentiolus had been commanding on the eastern borderlands, presumably as a replacement for Domentiolus who had suffered a defeat at the hands of the Persians.⁴⁹ His choice of Ancyra as his winter headquarters shows that he was concerned about the Armenian front, for Caesarea would have been a more convenient headquarters for a campaign in northern Syria. We do not know how much of Anatolia Comentiolus controlled directly but if his power extended to the environs of Sykeon and if he could arrest Philippicus in Bithynia, then Heraclius' own area of authority must have been small, and any prolonged resistance by Comentiolus could have resulted in whole of Asia Minor going over to his cause. This was the greatest risk to Heraclius, but the empire faced an even greater threat.

The revolt of Comentiolus cut Heraclius' communications with the east. The murder of Maurice in 602 had been the pretext that Chosroes II had been awaiting to attack the Roman empire with which he had been on friendly terms since Maurice had restored him to his throne in 591. The gains of the Persians were rapid; Dara fell

⁴⁷ Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, p. 141-143.

⁴⁸ *Th. Syk.* Chp. 152 49-52.

⁴⁹ *Theoph.* p. 293.

in 606, between 607-609 Mardin and Amida were captured and in 609-610 Edessa was lost. The Persians also held the initiative in Syria. Shahbaraz crossed the Euphrates in 610 and took Aleppo and Hierapolis. It was the same story in the north, where prominent locals like Sembat Bagratuni were appointed as satraps.⁵⁰ In 607 the Persians won a decisive victory at Dwin in Armenia, and in 610 Caesarea fell. It was now crucial that Heraclius be able to begin diplomatic correspondence with the Persians to limit the scale of their conquests by a peace treaty. The revolt of Comentiolus prevented not only this but also imperial organisation of resistance in the east, as the eastern army was pointing in the opposite direction, towards Constantinople. This breakdown in communications with Persia is preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale* :

"When he who is now piously ruling over us together with his father of eternal memory discovered what had been done by that corrupter they planned to liberate the Roman state from the great duress of that man. This in fact they achieved though they found that state humbled by your might. On account of the disturbance prevailing between the two states and in addition because of the intestine strife, he did not have an opportunity to do what ought to have been done, to present by means of an embassy the honour that was owed to the superabundant might of your serenity".⁵¹

⁵⁰ Sebeos Chp. 14.

⁵³ C.P. p. 701.

This is evidence from a letter written in 615 to Chosroes by the Senate, apologising for not having sent an embassy earlier. The eastern nexus of sources maintain that Heraclius did indeed send such an embassy immediately upon ascending the throne, but Theophanes first mentions a Roman embassy in 613-614 and Nicephorus does not record any communication with the Persians until Shahin is on the banks of the Bosphorus (dated by Theophanes to 615 - 616).⁵² Heraclius had been able to avoid a costly civil war in terms of military resources but had failed to translate his prestige in Constantinople as the avenger of Maurice into tangible diplomatic gains, as Chosroes chose not to recognise his rule. This is the greatest significance of the revolt of Comentiolus. It prevented the diplomatic and military action that was needed quickly on the eastern front.

This was not the end of Heraclius' internal problems and they continued to hamper his dealings with Persia. Although Kaegi treats his tonsuring of Priscus in 612 as the end of a series of revolts that had looked to use the eastern army as a means to the throne,⁵³ I would prefer to see the relationship between Heraclius and Priscus in the light of the former's revolt against Phocas. This is because Heraclius' confrontation with Priscus shows his success in consolidating power since 608. The quarrel gets most attention in Nicephorus, whereas Theophanes does not mention it, and the *Chronicon Paschale* only preserves the day (December 5) on which Priscus became a monk.⁵⁴ Nicephorus provides us with details of

⁵² Theoph. p. 300 and Niceph. 6.

⁵³ Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 147.

⁵⁴ *C.P.* p. 703.

the relationship before Heraclius is crowned. Theophanes last mentions Priscus in 607-608 when he asked the Elder Heraclius for aid.⁵⁵ John of Antioch does preserve the jealousy of Phocas towards Priscus when he married the emperor's daughter. John of Antioch and Nicephorus agree that the attitude of Priscus during Heraclius' revolt was ambiguous. Priscus had owed his rise to prominence initially to Maurice, but he had also benefitted from Phocas' need to associate his repute with his own newly won power. It may be that Priscus believed that he was in a position to ascend the throne. Nicephorus has the story of Heraclius offering the throne to Priscus, and John of Nikiu says that Heraclius was carried into the church against his will to be crowned. However, this imperial feigning of worthiness is a trait that goes back all the way to Tiberius in A.D. 14, and is in fact a contradiction of Nicephorus' own statement that Nicetas and Heraclius were involved in a race for the crown. Indeed it does seem unlikely that Heraclius would stake his life and those of his family on a bid to put someone else on the throne. The coinage that he minted backs up this impression. On the two bust series the unbearded figure (that is Heraclius) is on the spectator's left when the senior colleague is normally represented on that side; Theodosius II and Valentinian III, Leo I and Leo II, Leo II and Zeno, Justin II and Sophia, Tiberius II and Anastasia, Maurice and Constantina and Phocas and Leontia. To his African subjects Heraclius not Priscus was the potential ruler of the Roman empire.

Priscus was not forgotten by Heraclius. In 611 he was given Comentiolus' command in the east. He was immediately unsuccessful as the Persians escaped his encirclement at Caesarea, a situation from

⁵⁵ Theoph. p. 296.

which the *Life of Theodore* says the public expected a Roman victory.⁵⁶ This failure was the opportunity Heraclius needed to establish his own personal prestige and authority outside of Africa, Egypt and the capital. Priscus saw the arrival of Heraclius at the front as a personal slight and feigned illness to avoid an audience. Nicephorus says that Heraclius realised that Priscus was acting, noted the insult to his majesty and returned to the capital to concentrate on other affairs. If Heraclius was prepared to let the matter rest Priscus was not. He told Heraclius that the place for an emperor was in the palace not on the front line and that the fighting should be left to more able men.⁵⁷

Heraclius was only just to avoid a problem that Phocas had faced in 603. There was a real need for an emperor to assert his authority in the east. It was along this frontier that the majority of Roman forces were concentrated, and in 603 Phocas was confronted with a revolt by his general Narses.⁵⁸ Narses had been a general of Maurice and now he was prepared to side with the Persians in order to overthrow the man who had murdered his former emperor. This revolt, like that of Comentiolus, had the result of preventing any effective imperial action in the east, and dissipated valuable men and money. The underlying need therefore was for an emperor to impose himself upon the army in the east. Phocas had won his throne by the volition of the Thracian army and its influence in the capital, not by the consent of the whole empire. Narses was

⁵⁶ *Th. Syk.* Chp. 153 lines 13-16.

⁵⁷ *Th. Sim.* v. 2-4. for similar opposition to Maurice going on campaign.

⁵⁸ *Theoph.* p. 291. Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 140 - 141.

questioning his right to rule by testing the military forces of the east against those of the west. Heraclius had defeated Phocas in Egypt and Constantinople, and had diffused the reprisal of Comentiolus, but he had still to impose his personal will on the eastern army. That he was able to do this shows how far he had progressed in his assumption of power. In neutralising the threat from Priscus he was surmounting the threat of a revolt by the general in the east, which Kaegi believes had already happened.⁵⁹

The arrival of Nicetas from Egypt and the birth of a son were the pretexts that Heraclius used to recall Priscus from Caesarea. Now it was Heraclius' turn to play-act. He pretended to want Priscus to be the god-father of his son, named Constantine in a return to earlier imagery, and on account of this Priscus came to the palace, having already journeyed to the capital to welcome Nicetas. Heraclius had assembled the Patriarch and the Senate and asked them "When a man insults an emperor, whom does he offend?" They answered that he offends God who has appointed the emperor. Priscus was then asked to give his opinion, and as he did not understand that it was his behaviour at the centre of the debate said that such an offender should be severely punished. Heraclius then reminded him of his attitude at Caesarea, and commented that Priscus had not made a good son-in-law (for Phocas) so how could he hope to make a good friend (for Heraclius). Priscus was tonsured and Heraclius immediately went out to face Priscus' soldiers; having received their usual allowance they acclaimed him, and Heraclius assigned them to other commanders. Heraclius had achieved his objective, to impose himself over the eastern army and its

⁵⁹ Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 147.

commander.⁶⁰ Heraclius took a very public role in the degrading of Priscus and the winning of his army. He was prepared to use his new authority to the full even if it was against the Count of Excubitors and a member of the Senate. The Senate was involved to demonstrate the legality of what Heraclius was doing, to give legitimacy to what was already a relatively public humiliation. Heraclius needed the Senate to validate his actions not to give him authority.⁶¹ The removal of Priscus was the end of domestic opposition to Heraclius, although the ease in which he was able manoeuvre in internal politics was not mirrored externally. Yet it was by imposing his own personality and methods upon the army at the beginning of his Persian campaigns that Heraclius was not only able to prevent the recurrence of any unrest in the east, but also to further not only his own cause but that of the empire as a whole.

The revolt of Comentiolus and the quarrel with Priscus give Heraclius' usurpation not only a longer duration but also a wider perspective than is to be found in any one source. The consequences of his victory were not immediately of obvious benefit to the empire. We have already seen how Comentiolus' revolt led to an aggravation of the problems that the Persians were creating on the eastern frontier. This is not to blame Heraclius for usurping the throne at an inopportune moment, for Phocas had already been having problems with the Persians. Indeed Heraclius could claim that any short-term damage that his revolt may have caused would be far less than the effects of a longer period of rule by Phocas, and at least now the

⁶⁰ Niceph. 2.

⁶¹ Contra Herrin, *Formation* p. 192 who states that Heraclius needed Senatorial aid at this point.

empire was united. Africa was no longer estranged from the throne so all the resources of the empire could be exploited towards a more secure domestic and international future.

It is this empire-wide perspective that holds the key to the explanation for the success of Heraclius' coup. He was successful in two theatres of war and had the ability to combine military strength with political awareness to consolidate these gains. Indeed it was not only military muscle that brought him victory, since he had small forces at his disposal. What comes across from all the sources is not only the strength and courage of Heraclius' generals and soldiers but also their communal zeal that also manifested itself in the local populace. In both Egypt and Constantinople the battle was almost over before it had begun. Heraclius took his time to move north, and gave Phocas time to prepare the defence of the capital because there was sedition in the city and he wanted to give it time to ferment.⁶² If Phocas' revolt was spontaneous and direct then Heraclius' was planned and circuitous. He correctly identified Egypt as the key to his strategy: defeat there would have jeopardised the whole campaign, and yet it was vital that he himself go straight to the capital. By taking this course he was ensuring that his homeland was protected and its power-base extended, whilst he sailed into the midst of the confusion hoping that his opponents' reputation would count as much against him, as his father's repute would count for his own pretensions.

There was already support for him in Constantinople. The

⁶² John of Antioch frg. 218 f.

revolt may have begun militarily in Africa but Theophanes tells us that the Senate were at least in touch with the rebels. This would explain further why Heraclius the Elder did not sail to the capital. His prestige could be represented by his son and his son's backers in Constantinople, the Senate. Both Phocas and Heraclius had an army and a faction behind them in 610. Heraclius' advantage lay in the depth of aristocratic support that Phocas had never managed to develop.⁶³ This prevented other aristocrats from stealing his limelight, and allowed for maximum disruption in the days and hours leading up to his arrival in the harbour. Heraclius' coup was successful because it was based on the three main struts of Roman society; the senate, the army and the people. All three traditionally took part in proclaiming an emperor, in the case of Heraclius they all took part in making one.

⁶³ Theoph. p. 293-295 has an extensive list of executions of aristocrats (or at least senior officials) under Phocas.

The Avars, the Slavs and Heraclius.

The Avars and the Slavs posed very different long term threats to the Roman empire, and yet it was the continued military menace of both peoples that was most keenly felt in the reign of Heraclius. This diversity of long term interests amongst the barbarians was a product of their contrasting societies. The Romans had been struggling to contain barbarian pressures on their frontiers since before Valens' defeat at Adrianople in 378. The Goths had sought land, Attila's Huns had demanded tribute, but now the empire had to deal with both types of demand at once. Nor were the Balkans the only sphere of Roman military activity in the first decade of Heraclius' reign. The threat from Persia was ongoing and considerable, necessitating the commitment of resources of men and money that were needed equally as badly in the west.

The Avars first came to the attention of the Romans in 558 when they sent an embassy to Constantinople asking for gifts, yearly payments and fertile land.¹ They were a nomadic people from Central Asia who had moved west due to pressure from the expansion of the Turk federation in the mid-sixth century. The Turkish Chagan reasoned that the Avars that had fled were in fact fugitive slaves, and sought to destroy them.² They themselves

¹ For the information on the background to Heraclius' dealings with both the Avars and the Slavs I am indebted to Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* Chp. 2.

² Men. Prot. frg. 4. 2.

were warlike and ambitious, and may well be the remnants of the Juan-Juan, who were the the most powerful Central Asian grouping before the rise of the Turks. This aggression saw them conquer tribes living north of the Black Sea, including the Cotrigurs. Their federation hinged upon the personality of their monarch, the Chagan, since it was he alone who united the various tribes that made up the federation. The Avars' military proficiency was to be well appreciated by the Romans. They used an irregular battle line consisting of various sized units, that was a single line in appearance only. This was more flexible than the rigid single line favoured by both the Romans and the Persians.³

In 558 Justinian received an embassy from them.⁴ The envoy boasted of the Avars' military might and their ability to destroy the Romans. The Avars' diplomatic tactic was to offer the Romans the opportunity to avoid this menace by entering into an alliance with them that would guarantee the Romans protection, in return for valuable gifts, annual payments and fertile land. These were the consistent objectives of the Avars. Land to inhabit and income for the Chagan to distribute to maintain his prestige within his federation. Justinian decided to avoid any conflict, and so sent them gifts and entered into an alliance with them. However, he also encouraged the Avars to make war on the Avar's own enemies, for as Menander points out, both an Avar victory or defeat would suit the Romans equally well.⁵ At an early juncture in their dealings with the Romans Menander emphasises their predeliction for

³ *Strategicon* XI. 2 (Dennis, p. 117).

⁴ Men. Prot. frg. 5. 1.

⁵ Men. Prot. frg. 5. 2.

treachery.⁶ Justinian won the confidence of Kunimon, one of the embassy sent to Constantinople to ask the emperor to settle the Avars in Scythia Minor. Kunimon told Justinian that although the Avars appeared reasonable and friendly this was only a mask for the treachery that they hoped would be instrumental in enabling them to cross the Danube. Justinian was careful to fortify the Danube and ordered Justin, the commander on the Danube, to remove any weapons from the returning envoys. This caused an outbreak of hostility between Romans and Avars that Menander says had been growing for some time. By this time, 562, the Avars had crushed and subjugated the Utigurs, Kutrigurs, Antes and Sabiri in the region north of the Black Sea, and were threatening the Danube and Dobrudja. 565 saw a complete change in Roman policy towards them with the beginning of the reign of Justin II, who refused them the tribute demanded in a diplomatic encounter which is described by Corippus and Menander.⁷ Both writers show the Avars as possessing diplomatic skills, referring to the "ambiguous speech , now pleading, now threatening". This is the same tactic as the one they used in attempting to cower Justinian. The technique was unsuccessful as Justin II dismissed the embassy; with a blunt refusal according to Menander, or by a sophisticated justification of Roman power and influence in the work of Corippus. However, there can be no doubting their political acumen as an alliance with the Lombards saw the subjugation of the Gepids which left them in control of the Pannonian plain,⁸ and in 568 the Lombards themselves felt the Avars were becoming too aggressive and moved into Italy. The Avar

⁶ Men. Prot. frg. 5. 4.

⁷ Corippus, *In Laud. Just.* III. 271-307, and Men. Prot. frg. 8.

⁸ Men. Prot. frg. 12. 1-2.

Chagan appeared just as deceitful to the Lombards as he had to the Romans. "Now he claimed that he could not join them, now that he could but was unwilling".⁹ In that year, the Avars turned against the empire once more, besieging Sirmium for the first time. The Chagan showed his hostility immediately by imprisoning the Roman interpreter, Vitalian, and the Roman envoy, Comita. Menander says that this was "in contravention of the universally recognised rights of ambassadors".¹⁰ The Avar negotiations outside Sirmium were aimed at producing some gifts that the Chagan could distribute amongst his followers so as not to lose face after his withdrawal from the city. However, the Romans on the spot would do nothing without the approval of Justin II and the Avars retreated in anger to continue the ravaging of the Gepids. The Avar Chagan continued diplomatic wrangling for Sirmium: he claimed this former Gepid possession as his inheritance, through his conquest of the Gepids, and also asked for the annual payments that the Kutrigurs and Utigurs had received from the emperor.¹¹ Justin II gave a bellicose reply that not only asserted Roman strength, but also reminded the Avar envoy that he was aware of the nature of the Avars. "It is more painful to be the friends of the Avars - nomads and foreigners - than their enemies, since their friendship is treacherous".¹² Two more such exchanges took place without resolution and the Avars mounted an attack and defeated the Roman general Tiberius.¹³ In 570-571 a treaty was made but the extant fragments of Menander do not detail its terms.

⁹ Men. Prot. frg. 12. 2.

¹⁰ Men. Prot. frg. 12. 4.

¹¹ Men. Prot. frg. 12. 6.

¹² Men. Prot. frg. 12. 6.

¹³ Men. Prot. frg. 15. 5.

Thereafter since they were at war with Persia, the Romans intended to turn the Avars' military proficiency to their own advantage in the West. In 578 Tiberius II ferried 60,000 Avars across the Danube and through Roman territory to attack the Sclavini of Wallachia. This was a punitive raid as the Slavs had been ravaging Greece. Tiberius also calculated that the Avars would be keen to reprimand the Slavs for their independent attitude towards them.¹⁴ However, it only served to show up the Romans' military weakness, and the Avars took full advantage. In 579 when the Avar envoy, Targitius, had collected the annual payment of 80,000 *nomismata* the Chagan again showed the treacherous side of his nature. "Without seeking an excuse or a pretext or even troubling to invent a false charge against the Romans, suddenly with a most barbarous lack of shame broke the treaty which he had made with Tiberius immediately after he had become Caesar".¹⁵ The Avars wanted to capture Sirmium to give them a bridgehead from which to raid into Thrace, but the Chagan continued to aver that he intended to cross the Danube in order to attack the Slavs whom he presented as the mutual enemy of the Avars and the Romans. He continued to build a bridge over the Danube, and threatened that the Romans would be guilty of breaking the treaty if they attempted to prevent this. The Chagan swore barbarian and Roman oaths that he was not about to use the bridge to attack the Romans. This he did "treacherously concealing his intent".¹⁶ Tiberius attempted to put off an Avar attack by feigning that the Turks were at Cherson but

¹⁴ Men. Prot. frg. 21.

¹⁵ Men. Prot. frg. 25. 1.

¹⁶ Men. Prot. frg. 25.1.

the envoy saw through this bluff as easily as Tiberius had spotted the Chagan's deception. Tiberius had believed in the treaty that he had made with the Chagan and so did not have any supplies laid up in Sirmium. Sirmium held out until 582, but peace was then made on the basis of the city's surrender and a back-payment of 80,000 *nomismata* for each of the last three years.¹⁷ The possession of Sirmium allowed the Avars to cross the Danube at will and they began to play a significant role in internal Roman affairs.¹⁸ However, this peace was not a permanent settlement as the Chagan took advantage of Roman weakness: whilst the Slavs raided Thrace in 583/584, the Avars took Singidunum and advanced through the Danube provinces, capturing Viminacium and Augustae.¹⁹ Roman envoys to the Chagan reminded him of his faithlessness.²⁰ The Chagan continued in this vein, demonstrating his anger towards the envoys by putting one of them, Comentiolus, in chains.²¹ The peace that the Romans gained the next year saw their payments increase from 80,000 *nomismata* to 100,000 *nomismata*.²² Though the Avars now vacated the empire the peace was not complete as the Slavs raided Thrace as far as the Long Walls. Comentiolus managed to defeat the invaders and by a series of victories pushed them out of the Astike (in the vicinity of Philippopolis and Adrianopolis).²³ Yet again the Avars regained the initiative, devastating the provinces of Lower Moesia and Scythia in 586/587.²⁴

¹⁷ Men. Prot. frg. 27. 3.

¹⁸ See Men. Prot. frg. 12.1. 14-20 for the Avars' awareness of the strategic importance of Sirmium.

¹⁹ Th. Sim. i. 4. 1-5.

²⁰ Th. Sim. i. 5. 5, 7 and 9-10.

²¹ Th. Sim. i. 6. 1-4.

²² Th. Sim. i. 6. 4-5.

²³ Th. Sim. i. 7. 3-6.

In 590 Maurice himself led an expedition to Anchialus. Theophylact records opposition to the personal involvement of the emperor by senators, the Patriarch John Nesteutes, and the imperial family.²⁵ This was the beginning of a Roman offensive that began at the eastern end of the Stara Planina and continued westwards along the Danube. In 594 Peter and in 595 Priscus marched armies along the north bank of the Danube in order to cower the Slavs and disrupt the Avars' attempt to take Singidunum.²⁶ The Avars now seem to have turned their attention to the west temporarily, raiding the Frankish kingdoms, but in 598 a surprise attack left Priscus blockaded in Tomi, on the Black Sea.²⁷ The Avars then advanced south and only withdrew from Drizipera after a large payment had been made.²⁸ However, by the terms of this new treaty the Romans were allowed to cross the Danube to attack the Slavs. This was a sign of Avar weakness that the Romans were keen to exploit. In 599 Priscus and Comentiolus crossed the Danube and the Avars suffered a series of defeats.²⁹ The Avars had to make a perpetual alliance with the Lombards and the Franks, such was the pressure that the Romans were now exerting on the Avar federation. The decline of the Avars was such that their attack upon the Antes, allies of the Romans, caused them to suffer desertions as their prestige and power were seen to ebb.³⁰ This achievement was brought to

²⁴ Th.Sim. i. 8. 10.

²⁵ Th. Sim. v. 16. 2-4.

²⁶ Th. Sim. vii. 10. 1-11. 9.

²⁷ Th. Sim. vii. 13. 1-2.

²⁸ Th. Sim. vii. 15. 14.

²⁹ Th. Sim. viii. 2. 7-3. 15.

³⁰ Th. Sim. viii. 5. 13-6. 1.

nothing by the mutiny of the Roman army in 602, which was caused by Maurice ordering his army to winter north of the Danube. This was the season that the Slavs were most vulnerable to attack, and was a tactic recommended by the *Strategicon*.³¹ This escalation of military activity was designed to break up the Avar federation by reducing their prestige, and to impress upon the Slavs that unless they respected the Danube as the frontier then the Romans would not leave the territory north of the river in peace. The Roman army did not take on board these military considerations, believing instead that the order was an economising measure. Phocas was raised on a shield and the army marched towards Constantinople rather than north against the Slavs.³²

The *Strategicon* of Maurice is our best source of information on the Slavs. The outer limits for the work's composition are 575 when war with the Persians restarted and the 630's when the Arabs emerged as a serious Roman enemy. Evidence from the text suggests a date in the latter part of the reign of Maurice or the reign of Phocas. There are probably references to Chosroes II ordering the Persians to poison barley for the Romans' horses in 591, the siege of Aqbas in 583, and an Avar tactic at Heracleia in 592. The identity of the author is unknown, though there have been various proposals. Aussaresses believed that the evidence pointed to the emperor Maurice himself, although there was no clear proof.³³

³¹ *Strategicon* xi. 4.

³² Th. Sim. viii. 7. 8.

³³ Aussaresses, 'L' auteur de *Strategicon*', p. 23-40, as cited by Dennis, *Strategicon* p. xvii.

Wiita has put forward a theory that Philippicus, the brother-in-law of Maurice was the author:³⁴ from 583 he was the *magister militum per orientem* and had a reputation for his appreciation of history and interest in other nations; he even had the opportunity to write the work as Phocas banished him to a monastery from 605/6.³⁵ The date of the composition, probably within the decade 595-605, and the author's knowledge of warfare on the Danube frontier, which is clear from discussions of Avars and Slavs in Book xi, are of greater importance than a specific name.

The Slavs were quite capable of coordinating military ventures with the Avars, and yet their movements and ambitions were also influenced by a fear of the Avars. They were forced to move south as much as encouraged to migrate by the Avars. Unlike the Avars they were seeking land inside the empire and not tribute, they were competing with the empire for agricultural resources, not political hegemony. In Slav society each community was little more than an extended family group independent from the next. The Slavic family groups could coalesce for military purposes but Roman diplomacy in peace-time was hampered by the lack of one recognised Slav leader with whom to deal. They were effective fighters, preferring to engage their enemy in woods to maximise their skills in close combat. Above all their society seems to have been flexible: they could live in swamps and woods away from Roman society, or they could adapt to that society, such as when they took over the corn-producing lands of Thessaly in the early seventh century.

³⁴ Wiita, 'Ethnika', p. 30-49, as cited by Dennis, *Strategicon* p. xvii.

³⁵ Theoph. p. 293.

Despite this less than coherent political structure the Slavs were successful in their invasion of Greece. They may have been militarily less powerful than the Avars but they were far more numerous, and the effects of their conquests were far more lasting. The main Slav invasions took place from 570 onwards when Tiberius II was defeated by the Avars.³⁶ Their raids were facilitated by the Romano-Persian war and would also have been encouraged by the Roman-sponsored Avar attack upon their homeland in 577. This was a period of Roman weakness, and if the Avars took full advantage in the northern Balkans then the Slavs did likewise further south. Coin-hoards suggest the extent of their ravaging: these have been found in Dalmatia, in what is now modern Bulgaria, and as far south as the Peloponnese. On the Saronic gulf there are two hoards from Corinth's port, Kenchreai, that can be dated to 578-580. Athens suffered more than one attack at this time, since three coin-hoards are dated by Metcalf to the reign of Tiberius, or possibly early in Maurice's reign, and it is suggested that the lower city was overrun.³⁷

Whilst the extent and effect of the Avar invasions are reasonably clear in the sources, those of the Slavs in the Balkans and Greece are not. There is a paucity of source material for events in the Peloponnese from 572 onwards, which has led to modern authors making strong claims concerning the extent of Slav conquests and the involvement of the Avars. An examination of the sources will not only show up the extent and whereabouts of Slavic settlement but

³⁶ Evagrius, V. 11.

³⁷ Metcalf, 'The Slavonic Threat', p. 146-147.

also whether or not the Avars did anything more than provide the catalyst for this. Evagrius states that the Avars, "reduced Anchialus, Singidunum and all Hellas as well as other cities and fortresses, enslaving the inhabitants and laying everything waste with fire and the sword".³⁸ Allen believes that this is a conflation of Avar exploits, and that Evagrius has in part mistaken Slav raids for those of the Avars.³⁹ Menander on the other hand says, "With Hellas being plundered by the Slavs, and a succession of dangers was threatening there on every side", and only mentions the Avars in the context of Tiberius sending an embassy to their Chagan, intending to persuade him to attack the Slavs in Wallachia.⁴⁰ John of Ephesus also credits the Slavs with the invasion and settlement of Greece. "The invasion of an accursed people, the Slavs, who overran the whole of Greece and the country of the Thessalonians and all Thrace...And even to this day they still encamp and dwell there, and live in peace in the Roman territories".⁴¹ Charanis, who made a study of the usages of the word Hellas in the writings of Procopius and his successors up to and including Theophanes, has found that only Theophanes is imprecise in his use of the word. "To Procopius Hellas meant the regions of classical Greece, more especially the country south of Thermopylae, including, of course, the Peloponnesus".⁴² This shows us the extent of the invasions.⁴³

³⁸ Evagrius, VI. 10.

³⁹ Allen, *Evagrius*, p. 253-254.

⁴⁰ Men. Prot. frg. 21.

⁴¹ John of Ephesus, vi. 25.

⁴² Charanis, 'Hellas', p. 164.

⁴³ Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, p. 622-631, has used Vasmer's place-name evidence in *Die Slaven in Griechenland* to show the extent of Slav settlement in the Balkans. However, this settlement may only be relevant to the extent of permanent

"When Menander, Evagrius, and John of Ephesus speak of the devastations of Greece by the Avars and Slavs, it is of Greece proper, including the Peloponnesus that they speak".⁴⁴

To decide whether it was the Avars, as well as the Slavs, that made these settlements we must have recourse to a supplementary source, The *Chronicle of Monemvasia*. This *Chronicle* was written in the Peloponnese after 806 when the Oecumenical Patriarch Tarasius died, since it mentions him as being no longer alive, and before 1082/1083 the year in which the see of Lacedaemon was raised to metropolitan status. There are only a hundred lines of primary text, but the different versions of this, and its origin and reliability have been much discussed and defended by Charanis.⁴⁵ The author says that Evagrius was one of his sources,⁴⁶ and he may well have used Theophanes and Theophylact. The *Chronicle* provides unique information on events in the Peloponnese, although it would seem that it has confused the Avars with the Slavs, perhaps having been misled by Evagrius' description of the Avars' invasion of Thrace.⁴⁷ According to the chronicler, the result of the invasion of the Peloponnese was that many inhabitants who escaped massacre left the mainland: the people of Patras fled to Rhegium, the Argives to the island of Orobe, the Corinthians to the settlement in the seventh century.

⁴⁴ Charanis, 'Hellas', p. 173.

⁴⁵ Charanis, 'Chronicle', p. 141-166, 'Question', p. 54-258 and 'Slavic Settlement', p. 91-103.

⁴⁶ 'Chronicle', tr. Charanis lines 14-15.

⁴⁷ Evagrius, vi. 10.

island of Aegina, and the Lacedaemonians to Demena, whilst others chose the rocky peninsula of Monemvasia. However, the *Chronicle* raises controversial issues; not only does it say that it was the Avars who invaded the Peloponnese, it also claims that they held it for 218 years beginning in 587/588 (the sixth year of Maurice's reign). It is possible to dispute both that the settlement was so complete and so permanent, and when this settlement took place. We know from archaeological evidence that both Corinth and Argos were subject to raids in the 580s, but Pope Gregory, from the evidence of a letter written in 591, believed that Bishop Anastasius of Corinth was not in an isolated exile on Aegina. Similarly, Patras does not seem to have been out of imperial control for as long as the *Chronicle* suggests, since there is an account in Constantine Porphyrogenitus of a Slav revolt and attack on Patras by Slavs living in the Peloponnese during the reign of Nicephorus I.⁴⁸ However, rather than implying that the city had only recently been regained by the Romans, it would seem that the Slavs are acting out of character in assailing the city. Whitby believes that the chronicler may have combined the raiding tactics of the Slavs in the 580s with the fact that there were campaigns against the Slavs in Nicephorus' reign to assert that the Peloponnese had been out of Roman control throughout the intervening period.⁴⁹

The dating of this permanent settlement has also excited controversy. Bon, Stratos, and Lemerle have stated that it took place only after the collapse of Roman opposition to the invaders in 602.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ DAI, Chp. 49.

⁴⁹ Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice*, p. 126.

⁵⁰ Bon, *Le Peloponnese*, p. 54, Stratos, *Byzantium I* p. 66 and 119,

However, although it is difficult to credit the precision that Schreiner attributes to the chronicle, as he dates the founding of Monemvasia to 582/583,⁵¹ the process of settlement after 602 is more likely to be one of reinforcement rather than pioneering on the part of the Slavs.⁵² The campaigns led by Priscus, Comentiolus, and Peter in the reign of Maurice had the objective of fighting the Slavs on their own territory, that is north of the Danube. This is not to say that there were no Slav settlements south of the Danube at this time. Maurice could well have left such settlements in the far south of the Balkans undisturbed in order to concentrate on removing them from Thrace and discouraging them from coming back. Maurice's first thought would have been to make Constantinople secure and to reassert the Roman frontier after the ravagings of recent years that had reached as far as the Long Walls;⁵³ the Peloponnese and other distant parts could be recovered more slowly.

The value of the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is similar to that of the *Miracula S. Demetrii* which focus on the saint's protection of his city, Thessalonica, in that both sources provide us with unique evidence of events in Greece. Lemerle has emphasised the point that were it not for these two sources we would have no information about the Peloponnese.⁵⁴ This is because the Constantinople-orientated writers, like the emperors and generals that campaigned from there, were primarily interested in the capital's hinterland. However, the evidence of the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* has been

and Lemerle 'La Chronique', p. 35.

⁵¹ Schreiner, 'Note', p. 471-475.

⁵² Charanis, 'Ethnic Changes', p. 36-37.

⁵³ Evagrius VI. 10.

⁵⁴ Lemerle, 'La Chronique', p. 33.

valued differently by various scholars. Charanis believes that "the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is absolutely trustworthy and constitutes one of the most precious sources on the Avar and Slav penetration of Greece during the reign of Maurice".⁵⁵ There is an opposite extreme to this credulous approach. Kyriakidhes has sought to show that the Slav infiltration of Greece was no more than a peaceful movement that can be dated to the eighth century.⁵⁶ His argument is biased in the cause of Greek nationalism, attempting to disprove Fallermayer's theory that the native Greeks were wiped out by the arrival of the Slavs, so that modern Greeks have "not a single drop of pure Hellenic blood".⁵⁷ Neither of these extreme views should be taken seriously. The *Chronicle's* evidence, like that of archaeology, can be used if not too fine a point is made on the strength of it. Both types of evidence can complement each other, but because of the paucity of the sources, the corroboration gives us a theme rather than hard facts. We have evidence to suggest that the Peloponnese was repeatedly raided from 571 until 626, and that this led to emigration of the local inhabitants of some cities, whilst other cities were left isolated but still Greek.

In 602 the Romans had two wars to fight, as Chosroes invaded the Roman east on the pretence of defending the honour of his one-time benefactor, Maurice. Heraclius inherited both these wars from Phocas, and his military resources were not enough to

⁵⁵ Charanis, 'Chronicle' p. 163.

⁵⁶ Kyriakidhes, *Σλάβοι* p. 94, as cited in Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus* p. 643.

⁵⁷ Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1830), I, iii-xiv, as quoted by Vasiliev, *History* I p. 213-214.

allow him to pursue warfare on two fronts. As yet there was no evidence of a formal Avaro-Persian alliance, but each protagonist was in a position to take advantage of the misfortunes which the other might cause to befall the Romans in Europe as well as Asia. The first decade of Heraclius' reign saw him on the defensive. His diplomatic and military overtures towards the Persians were rebuffed, and in the west the Slavs increased their grip on Greece. Isidore of Seville says that in the fifth year of the reign of Heraclius the "Slavs took Greece from the Romans".⁵⁸ This is an exaggeration as cities like Thessalonica still held out, but the siege of that city may have been the reason for Isidore's statement. Thessalonica was besieged three times between 586 and c. 615. The first two sieges are not mentioned by any source other than the *Miracula S. Demetrii*. The first book of the *Miracula* was written by John the Archbishop of Thessalonica in the first decade of the reign of Heraclius. It is a collection of fifteen miracles that were performed by Demetrius for the city, all but two of which took place during the reigns of Maurice and Phocas. Both books illuminate the beliefs and society of Thessalonica,⁵⁹ but it is the Slavic threat that concerns us here. The first siege took place during the decade of Slav incursions in the Balkans of 578-588, and is described in miracles 13-15. A siege of Thessalonica would therefore fit in well with their actions and intentions, although Vryonis has argued for 597.⁶⁰ It would also fit in with Avar ambitions in Moesia and would have served as a distraction to the already stretched Roman army. Despite the lack of defenders the siege only lasted a week: the praetorian prefect was

⁵⁸ Isidore of Seville, *Chronicon*, PL, 83, col. 1056.

⁵⁹ Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, Chp. 2.

⁶⁰ Vryonis, 'Evolution', p. 378-390.

absent in Greece, many of the notables were in Constantinople to register a protest against him, and many of the city's inhabitants were isolated outside the city walls because they had been harvesting. Demetrius' role in the repulse of the besiegers is enhanced through an act of personal heroism, as he spears the first attacker to scale the ramparts (120), while John stresses the complete confusion that the arrival of the Slavs engendered in the inhabitants (124). Another miracle records a Slav raid of 5,000 fighters which relied upon the element of surprise for its success. A night attack was timed to coincide with the festival of St. Demetrius on 26 October, but the assault was beaten off by the inhabitants at daybreak. The date of this attack is unknown. Lemerle believes that it took place in 604, since this is one year when the the festival fell on a Monday, but Whitby has doubted this interpretation of § 102.⁶¹ This is on the grounds that Lemerle has manipulated the text in order to produce this translation; "on the Monday of the festival", rather than, "on the second day following the festival".⁶² Furthermore, the translation suggested by Lemerle does not solve the problem as 26 October fell on a Monday in 582, 593, 599 and 610 as well as 604.

The third siege of Thessalonica is described in the second miracle of the second book of the *Miracula*. We have no means of dating this siege. Stratos argued for 626 as he believed that the Avars only made incursions this far south twice in the reign of Heraclius, in 623 and 626. However, an earlier date of 614/615 is compatible with the archaeological evidence, since coin finds become

⁶¹ Whitby, *Maurice*, p. 119-120.

⁶² The Greek reads τῇ δευτέρῃ ἡμέρῃ τῆς ἑορτῆς ἁφνω μέσης νυκτός.

scarce in the Peloponnese even on the Acrocorinth: this suggests that both minting at Thessalonica and patterns of coin distribution from this city as administrative capital of Illyricum had been disrupted. By this time the hinterland of Thessalonica was controlled by the Slavs (197), though the citizens still had some agricultural land outside the city walls (212). This siege was conducted by both Avars and Slavs, and the Chagan was present. The city's position once more is presented as hopeless in order to emphasise the power of St. Demetrius, and so the Slavs describe the city to the Chagan as being isolated and depopulated (197).⁶³ Once again the siege was successfully repulsed with the help of St. Demetrius, which is described in section 206-209. This is the only example we have of the Avars and Slavs acting in concert in the reign of Heraclius before the siege of Constantinople. It shows the ambiguous position and ambition of the Slavs. The Avars are consistent in their demands for tribute and territory, which they continually upgrade, in order to increase their political hegemony over their federated tribes and subsequently the empire itself, whilst the Slavs seek land on which to settle, in order to be free from Avar influence. However, it would seem that the Slavs were not in a position to achieve this independence without Avar aid.

It was only in 619, when Sergius loaned him the Church plate, that Heraclius felt strong enough to attempt to take the fight to one of the empire's two aggressors.⁶⁴ At that point, he seems to have been determined to fight Persia. George of Pisidia wrote, "Persia is the source of all evil".⁶⁵ A war against the old enemy was

⁶³ Howard-Johnston, 'Urban Continuity', p. 245-246.

⁶⁴ Theoph. p. 303.

easier to justify, and indeed was a far more pressing concern than the barbarian invasions in the Balkans which the Romans had experienced before, and which they may have believed to have been containable and transient. So if Heraclius was adopting an aggressive attitude towards the Persians, his dealings with the Avars had to be far more conciliatory.

It is the end of this diplomatic sequence that we will be interested in for the remainder of this chapter. Heraclius' only direct encounter with the Avar Chagan is an incident known, for the sake of convenience, as the "Avar Surprise", a moment of great historical debate and yet correspondingly little significance. Heraclius was seeking to conclude a treaty with the Avar Chagan in order to transfer his attentions to Asia Minor as he began campaigning against Persia. He must have felt that this treaty was of crucial importance to the furtherance of his eastern objectives because in 623 he was prepared to meet the Chagan personally. Heraclius travelled with his full imperial retinue to Selymbria, on his way to the meeting place at Heracleia. However, the Chagan arrived at Heracleia three days before Heraclius and set up a trap for the emperor. It was only by chance that Heraclius' party was alert to the ambush and the emperor was forced to flee to the capital, while the Avars captured his baggage train as they pursued him as far as the Hebdomon.

Despite being no more than a lucky escape for the emperor, the "Avar Surprise" is seminal to a study of the image of Heraclius before 626, as it is a rare example of personal and imperial

⁶⁵ G. P. *Heraclius II* 107.

humiliation that is described at length, even in sources that are wont to gloss over such unfortunate occasions. However, it is first necessary to discuss the various dates proposed by ancient and modern authors. Only two of the ancient writers date the event. Theophanes places it under 619 and the *Chronicon Paschale* in 623. Nicephorus sandwiches it between the fall of Roman Egypt (619) and the outbreak of the Persian war (622), but he organised his work on the basis of Heraclius' reversals and successes, and so this arrangement may not have any chronological significance. However, modern scholarship has not left us with a clear-cut choice between 619 and 623, as Baynes added 617 as another possibility.⁶⁶ He set out to repudiate Gerland's advocacy of 623, which was based on the evidence of the *Chronicon Paschale*.⁶⁷ Baynes believed that the *Chronicon Paschale* had the day, date and month correct, that is Sunday, 5th June, but not the year, and for him 617 was the nearest year that fitted these criteria. Scholars have had a problem in accepting the date of the *Chronicon Paschale* because of the difficulties that it presents for the chronology of Heraclius' Persian campaigns. If 623 is to be accepted for the Avar incident then it is necessary to explain Theophanes' date of 15 March 623 for Heraclius' second departure to the east, for which the *Chronicon Paschale* has 25 March 624. This, however, may be explained by an error which occurs in Theophanes' dating of the later stages of the war, in that he places the battle of Nineveh in A. M. 6118 (A. D. 626) and not A. M. 6119 (A. D. 627). Once this error is corrected then it is possible to count back the campaign years to leave 624 as the year in which the

⁶⁶ Baynes, 'The Date', p. 110-128.

⁶⁷ Gerland, 'Feldzüge', p. 330-373.

initiative against the Persians was renewed. In turn, this suggests that Heraclius did not campaign against Persia in 623, and was thus free to be in Thrace. He would have had good reason to have been, for he had just begun preliminary manoeuvres against the Persians in what was likely to be a long struggle. He needed to secure his western front, and furthermore, the Avars had been restless and their Chagan was also eager to come to an agreement for he had suffered a Slavic revolt in his loosely-bound confederacy. This was instigated in about the year 623 by Samo, a Frankish trader, who had led a resistance movement in Bohemia and Moravia.⁶⁸ Although the breakaway state that Samo formed did not last beyond his death, the Moravian Slavs continued to remain independent from the Avars. The Chagan may have suspected Roman complicity in this revolt and desired either revenge, or a stabilisation of the situation.

The dual nature of the Chagan's behaviour is apparent in all the sources for the "Surprise".⁶⁹ For example George of Pisidia describes him as, "having outwardly shaped his countenance as if for peace, while inwardly raging to surprise in battle".⁷⁰ However, their attitude towards Heraclius varies according to their approach to their subject. The contemporary *Chronicon Paschale* has the least amount of personal criticism of Heraclius. Indeed, its report does not detail the flight of the emperor, which is found in the other sources, but concentrates instead on the extent and degree of the Avars' plundering: " All whom they found outside the city from the west as far as the Golden Gate together also with the men and animals present, for whatever reason, in the suburbs".⁷¹ This is a

⁶⁸ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* p. 59.

⁶⁹ *C.P.* 713, Niceph. 10 and Theoph. p. 302.

⁷⁰ *G. P. Bell. Av.* 115.

completely different perspective from that of Nicephorus, who dwells on the precipitate nature of Heraclius' flight, which is described in degrading terms.⁷² Here, though Heraclius is astute enough to sense the ambush and sufficiently collected to remove his trappings of office in order to escape detection, he still appears as a comic and pathetic figure. Nicephorus calls him "pitiable and needy", with his crown under his arm "basely" turning to flight towards his capital that he had left with such pomp. Speck has called such narrative "naive" and "novel-like",⁷³ but it makes Nicephorus' point. A dry reporting of the incident would not create the air of despondant failure that the historian sees as applicable to this stage of the reign. Theophanes takes a more balanced line than the other two sources. His account is firmly based on the work of George of Pisidia,⁷⁴ but leaves out the eulogising. The emperor's flight as well as the seizure of his baggage train are mentioned, as is the plundering of Thrace. But Theophanes ends his account with what must have seemed most significant to him, that the Avars had "unexpectedly cheated the hopes of peace". Heraclius is still seen as God-favoured and in the right. It was only the unChristian deceit of the Avars that led to the near disaster, so Theophanes is able to forgive the emperor. However, Theophanes has failed to consider that Heraclius ought not to have trusted the Avars. They had a reputation for treachery in the Roman historical tradition and we have seen many instances of the Chagan behaving deceitfully. Nonetheless, Theophanes' next entry has Heraclius again at the forefront of affairs, and this time the

⁷¹ *C.P.* p. 713.

⁷² Niceph. 10.

⁷³ Speck, *Dossier* p. 261-266.

⁷⁴ Chp. 9.

diplomatic manoeuverings are successful as a treaty with the "reformed" Chagan is made. The implication perhaps is that it is necessary to run the risk of failure in dealing with the faithless Avars in order to achieve peace.

The personal nature of Heraclius' rule is important to Nicephorus who sees his misfortune as being a result of the sinful marriage that the emperor contracted with his cousin Martina. Heraclius had turned against divine law, and so God did not save him from pitiable and base behaviour. Personal criticism of Heraclius is only justified in Nicephorus' moral terms. Heraclius could not conduct a war on two fronts, neither could he bring his army all the way back from Asia Minor in order to conclude a peace treaty that he believed could be sealed by a show of opulence. That is not to say that he was unprepared, for he had with him the factions and "a considerable throng of others".⁷⁵ Moreover, his general strategy was sound. Instead of inviting the Chagan into Constantinople, which would have shown the Avars the vulnerable and yet wealthy state Heraclius was leaving it in for the east, he chose Heracleia as the rendezvous point. Heraclius had calculated in advance that wealth and extravagance in the form of clothes and horse races would influence the Chagan. This was all in evidence, but what Heraclius did not foresee, until it was almost too late, was the Avar treachery, an attempt by one leader to capture another, not in the context of war but in negotiations for peace. The Chagan was not a figure to be trusted, and favourable ancient historians made a habit of excusing emperors for being deceived by him, without criticising them for not

⁷⁵ C.P. p. 712.

learning from the mistakes of their predecessors.⁷⁶ If Heraclius' surprise shows him to be naive, his flight does at least show him to be a man of action, even if it is evasive action. What is more illustrative of Romano-Avar affairs is the conclusion to the episode. The Avars did not attempt to besiege Constantinople until 626, and their aim in 623 was a peace treaty. That was all Heraclius wanted, though he may have hoped to buy it more cheaply than its eventual price. Nicephorus says 200,000 *solidi* a year and the surrender of hostages to the Avars including the illegitimate sons of Heraclius and Bonus, and Heraclius' nephew, Stephen. He had got what he had come for and was free to return to the east. The personal humiliation that he had suffered in the west was about to be transformed into massive acclamation for results in the east.

Though the rest of Heraclius's reign was to be concerned with events in the East, he continued to weaken the threat to the empire from the Avar federation by undermining its authority over subject tribes. This took place both to the north-east of the Black Sea, and to the west amongst the Serbs and Croats. Our sources for these acts of diplomacy are very vague and incomplete, but they concern the establishment of independent tribes at the eastern and western fringes of territory previously controlled by the Avars. We must examine Heraclius' role in these events as the affairs of the Avars had long been a concern for the empire. Nicephorus uniquely preserves a description of the arrival in Constantinople of the leaders of a Hunnic tribe, who were there to be baptised.⁷⁷ Discussing this incident Runciman has made two assumptions that are not

⁷⁶ Men Prot. frg. 2. criticises Tiberius for being unprepared when Sirmium was demanded in 579.

⁷⁷ Niceph. 9.

substantiated by the sources.⁷⁸ He identifies the leader of the Huns in Nicephorus as Kubrat the Bulgar, who is mentioned in John of Nikiu as being in alliance with Heraclius' widow, Martina.⁷⁹ However, Mango notes in his commentary to Nicephorus' text that the names Kubratos and Organa are emmendations on the part of the translators of the Ethiopic text of John of Nikiu.⁸⁰ These Huns could equally well be the Khazar tribes settled near the Caucasus to whose land Heraclius withdrew in 625.⁸¹ The date of this visit to Constantinople is unknown: there is no proof for 619, a date which Runciman assumes, but which is merely based upon a marginal note of De Boor's. Later we learn from Nicephorus that Kubratos rebelled against the Avars and made his tribe independent.⁸² This account is unique to Nicephorus who implies that although Kubratos was reigning near the Sea of Azov he rebelled against the Avars of whose influence that far east we have no other evidence for this part of the seventh century. It may be that Roman diplomacy was at work here, but the sources do not allow any specific connections to be made.

The use of the Serbs and Croats to undermine Avar power in the west is documented in the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Administrando Imperio* which was composed between the years 948 and 952. This was a manual for monarchy, and was addressed

⁷⁸ Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, p. 13-16.

⁷⁹ John of Nikiu, CXX. 47.

⁸⁰ Mango, *Commentary*, p. 177-178. Organa was taken to be the chief of the Onogundurs, and Kuvrat to be his uncle, by Gy. Moravcsik, 'Byzantinische Mission', *Proc. XIIIth Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 1966* (London, 1967) p. 21. Mango points out that the Ethiopic text of John of Nikiu has Qetrādes and Kuernāka.

⁸¹ Mango, *Commentary*, p. 178 and Theoph. p. 310.

⁸² Theoph. p. 310.

to the emperor's son Romanus. The Serbs and Croats are held to be Sarmatian nomads from the Eurasian Steppe,⁸³ and the Serbs had been located by Pliny between the Volga, Caucasus, and the Sea of Azov.⁸⁴ When the Serbs and Croats were forced to move west by the arrival of various Hun tribes they must have split into two groups, one travelling south of the Carpathians, and one to the north of the Carpathians. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Croats who were living in Belo-Croatia, and acting on their own initiative, took the interior of Dalmatia from the Avars, and became the overlords of the Slavs who had moved there previously.⁸⁵ These Croats were led by a family of five brothers and two sisters. The rest of the Croats stayed near Francia where they were subject to Otto, the king of Francia and Saxony.

The role of Heraclius concerns his involvement with the migration of the Serbs and Croats into the Northern Balkans.⁸⁶ This must be dated after 626 for the process could not have started until after the siege of Constantinople in 626, as it was only then that the Romans regained the initiative in the west from the Avars, whose defeat had resulted in a loss of prestige for their Chagan and a consequent loosening of the federation. Heraclius was continually looking for allies in the west. He obtained a treaty with the Frankish king Dagobert around the same time that he enlisted the help of the Serbs and Croats.⁸⁷ Having defeated the Avars, they lived in

⁸³ Dvornik, *Commentary*, 61 ff, p. 115-116.

⁸⁴ Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book vi, chp 2 (7), § 19.

⁸⁵ *DAI*, Chp. 30.

⁸⁶ *DAI*, Chp. 31 and 32.

⁸⁷ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, Book iv, 62.

accordance with their treaty with Heraclius. That they were his subjects has been doubted by Dvornik, who believes that Byzantine suzerainty only came with the expansion of the Frankish kingdom under Charlemagne.⁸⁸ However, Constantine Porphyrogenitus alludes to this Roman suzerainty earlier, when he states that during the reign of Michael (820-829) the Serbs and Croats refused to acknowledge this Byzantine supremacy.⁸⁹ There is no reason why the Serbs and the Croats in the seventh century should not have accepted this relationship. It must have been preferable to subjection to the Avars, for the Romans only asked that they defend the territory from the Avars, so the Serbs and Croats did not have to fight outside their newly won land. Because of this responsibility the Serbs and Croats did not have to pay tribute. They were doing the Romans a service, and indeed were in a position to ask for financial aid themselves. There is no evidence in Constantine Porphyrogenitus that the Romans ever thought of regaining the territory for themselves. Both the Serbs and the Croats agreed to be converted to Christianity, but there is no mention of a direct role of Heraclius in this conversion in *DAI* 30, only in *DAI* 31.⁹⁰ In the latter chapter Heraclius is credited with the initiative of sending for priests from Rome. He brought these men to the Croats, and set them up in the hierarchy of archbishop, bishop, elders and deacons that was instrumental in the baptism of the Croats. This was possible because Heraclius had a good relationship with Pope Honorius who had helped him work out his compromise formula of monergism, and was

⁸⁸ Dvornik, *Commentary*, 30/78-88 p. 118.

⁸⁹ *DAI*, Chp. 29, line 58.

⁹⁰ According to Dvornik, *Commentary*, 30/61ff, p. 114, this double account is explained by two different sources; one located in Dalmatia and familiar with the Croat traditions and one source based on the records of the archives of the foreign ministry at Constantinople.

necessary because both parts of Illyricum were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the See of Rome.

Heraclius had turned the barbarian threat to the western part of his empire on its head by the end of his reign. Instead of having passively to accept the infiltration of Avars and Slavs into imperial lands, and having to answer Avar demands for tribute that became ever more taxing he was able to regain the initiative. The repulse of the siege of Constantinople was crucial in undermining the personal prestige of the Chagan, upon which the coherence of his federation hung. However, this was only the first step for the Romans towards regaining control of the Balkan peninsula. Heraclius went on to divide the Avar federation, so that it ceased to be a threat to his empire, and to construct alliances with splinter groups which could be won over to Christianity and in the longer term perhaps brought more fully within the control of the empire. Heraclius himself was never in a position to organise an offensive to reassert Roman control in the Balkans, and the only Balkan incident in which he was personally involved was the "Avar Surprise" of 623, a misfortune which did not contribute positively to his imperial reputation. It was to be left to Constans II to follow up this work by a military campaign against the Slavs in the Peloponnese.

Heraclius and the Persians.

Heraclius' major problem in the first two decades of his reign was the threat of the Persian Empire to his own realm. This problem was inherited from Phocas and had associated with it difficulties over the economy and relations with the Monophysite Church. Heraclius' relationship with the Persians took a variety of forms; diplomatic, aggressive, and supportive, and saw both the nadir and zenith of his reign. The geographical scope of this subject is vast: from Heraclius' capital at Constantinople to the mountains of Azerbaijan and south to Ctesiphon. This is reflected in the sources which, though all Christian, range from the eulogising George of Pisidia through the capital-orientated *Chronicon Paschale*, to the *Chronicle of 1234*, and include the Armenian historian, Sebeos. Despite this there are certain themes that emerge from each source. There is a discernible preoccupation with the cult of personality and how it affects leadership qualities and thus an army's success. This incorporates the piety of a general which in turn leads to events being depicted in a Christian versus pagan light. There are heavy religious overtones in all of the sources. Heraclius is seen in varying Christian roles from mere military victor, through pious commander, to a general of God, and the Persians by contrast become evil non-believers. These are not merely abstract themes. Heraclius saw his Christian role as a very real one, never more so than in the aftermath of his victory in 628, when he was able to restore the True Cross to Jerusalem, and celebrate not only the deliverance of his empire from the Persian menace, but also the triumph of Christianity that he himself wished to embody. Indeed he took another title, βασιλεὺς, to

symbolise this new-found superiority. How Heraclius acted after he had defeated the Persians is as important to our examination of his image as his conduct during the war. After a discussion of his role as both general and Christian leader in war, we must look beyond his victory to see what it meant for him and how it was portrayed by others. In order to put all this into context a brief outline of events will precede an examination of the imagery of Heraclius the general and Heraclius the Christian emperor.

A summary of events can be broken down into three time bands.¹ The first is a catalogue of Roman defeats from the outbreak of hostilities in 602 until Heraclius' first campaign in 622. Then follow the successive years of campaigning that led to eventual success at the battle of Nineveh and Persian capitulation. Finally, Heraclius begins to build on his victory, supervising the succession to the Persian throne and negotiating the return of the True Cross.

War broke out in 602 when Phocas' murder of Maurice gave Chosroes II the excuse to invade Roman territory on the pretext of avenging the emperor who had restored him to his throne. Phocas was in no position to respond effectively, as in 603 his most successful general, Narses, rebelled and looked to the Persians for support. Narses had refused to acknowledge Phocas as emperor, but fell to the cunning of Phocas' brother, Domentiolus. Theophanes noted the significance of his death for the struggle to come:

"Since Narses had caused the Persians such great

¹ See Stratos, *Byzantium* I for a narrative account of this period and an examination of some of the controversial issues.

fear that Persian children shivered when they heard his name, the Romans were greatly distressed at his death, but the Persians joyfully exulted".²

Chosroes took his opportunity and pressed his advantage to the full. He captured Dara, and all of Mesopotamia and Syria, and by 610 he had crossed the Euphrates into Syria.³ Heraclius was to suffer a defeat outside Antioch in the first year of his reign, but if things were dire in 610 they became catastrophic four years later when the Persians captured Jerusalem, its Patriarch and the True Cross. All of Syria and Palestine fell to the Persians, and in 616 Egypt too was attacked and completely lost by 619. The loss of Egypt was a far-reaching economic disaster, for that province was responsible for feeding the capital.⁴ Morale in the city could not now have been any lower as its Holy City, and its food supply were lost to an enemy who was now across the Bosphorus at Chalcedon.⁵ Indeed, we are told that Heraclius even considered moving the centre of his government back to Africa.⁶ Chosroes was not satisfied merely to raid Roman territory, but success led him to aim at permanent conquest. This would explain why he did not content himself with the capture and plunder of eastern towns such as Dara and Apamea. This behaviour is in direct contrast to that of Chosroes I who captured Apamea twice (in 540 and 573) but did not attempt to retain control after he had exacted a substantial ransom. The

² Theoph. p. 293

³ Theoph. p. 299.

⁴ *C.P.* p 711, and Teall, 'Grain Supply', p. 87-141.

⁵ Theoph. p. 301.

⁶ Niceph. 8.

conquests that he had made by 610 would have gained enough disposable wealth to fulfill his royal duty of patronage and to strengthen his image as a successful general. In 506 peace had been made for this very end, when Kabadēs returned the Roman towns of Theodosiopolis and Amida which he had captured in exchange for money. However, Chosroes was in a stronger position by 610/611, since he had been able to take advantage of two separate moments of Roman usurpation and their resultant chaos. In doing so Chosroes may have developed greater ambitions than he had at first thought possible. Between 602 and 622 he had suffered few reversals: he may have been defeated outside Dara in 603/4 and in 611/612 the Persians were forced to flee from Caesarea but otherwise success was unbroken. It had not been an even fight, since without ever taking a positive part in the conflict, the Romans' best general, Narses, was executed for treason and from that point Chosroes' own generals had experienced little opposition to their designs.

So when Heraclius was in a position to begin an eastern campaign his objective was clear cut, to remove the Persians from the parts of the empire that had been Roman under Maurice. Moreover, he was not campaigning along a border which only moved a hundred miles or so as Justinian had, rather Heraclius was fighting to keep the throne that he had won in 610 and which had been under threat ever since. The revolt of Phocas' brother, Comentiolus, had prevented Heraclius from taking the fight to the Persians in 610 and throughout the first decade of his reign he had seen one province lost after another. In order to attempt to turn the tide Heraclius made a treaty with his western enemies, the Avars, and transferred his Thracian army to Asia Minor.⁷ There he retrained

his troops before setting out on a short campaign that brought the first Roman victory over the Persians since 611/612. Oikonomides has dated this campaign to 622 using the evidence of George of Pisidia, material which Theophanes corrupted in the process of copying George.⁸ From these two sources Oikonomides also postulated that the actual fighting was far less important than the training and organising of the Roman army, and that the greater part of Asia Minor was still held by the Romans at this time as Heraclius' army was dispersed when he tried to assemble it.⁹ From 624 Heraclius intensified his efforts all over the eastern borderlands, from Armenia to Syria, which led to a string of victories culminating in the battle of Nineveh that allowed him to pursue the fleeing Chosroes. Chosroes was then overthrown and killed by his eldest son, Siroes, who entered into diplomatic correspondence with Heraclius. Upon Siroes' death Shahbaraz occupied the vacant throne with the material aid of Heraclius who received the True Cross for his assistance.

This narrative can be put into context by a synopsis of the relationship between the Romans and the Persians in the latter part of the sixth century. During the negotiations for peace in 561 Peter the Patrician stressed the value to both empires of a stable relationship:

"While men are clearly prevailing over their

⁷ Theoph. p. 3318-319.

⁸ For the nature of the campaign see, Oikonomides, 'A Chronological Note', p. 1-9.

⁹ Oikonomides, 'A Chronological Note', p. 8.

enemy, their courage is nurtured. But when it is obviously failing to destroy their opponents, they dissipate their own resources and consequently are conquered by those who ought not to defeat them".¹⁰

At this time the two states were intermittently either at war or in dispute over the provision of garrisons for the Caucasian passes.¹¹ It was only in 590 when Chosroes II had his throne usurped by Vahram that Maurice was able to engineer a peace. This was achieved by aiding the reinstatement of Chosroes, who was thereafter too occupied asserting his authority to restart the war.¹² However, in 602 he had an opportunity to do just that, when his benefactor, Maurice, was murdered by Phocas.¹³ Theophylact is perhaps echoing the sentiments of Heraclius when he criticises any breaking of an accord between Romans and Persians. He scolds Justin II for his aggression in 572:

"The fifty-year agreement [561] which had been concluded between Romans and Persians was destroyed and cut short by the folly of the king, and hence came the evil procession of Roman misfortunes".¹⁴

Theophylact also preserves Chosroes' letter to Maurice as an example

¹⁰ Men. Prot. frg. 6.1

¹¹ Blockley, 'Subsidies and Diplomacy', p. 62-74.

¹² Th.Sim. iv. 10.8-v. 15.2.

¹³ Th. Sim. viii. 15.7.

¹⁴ Th. Sim. iii. 9.5.

of how these two great states should interact.

"For by these greatest powers the disobedient and bellicose tribes are winnowed and man's course is continually regulated and guided".¹⁵

A discussion of the image of Heraclius in the diplomacy and the campaigns now has a context. For him the first decade of his reign was predominantly a period of diplomacy after his brief appearance on the eastern front at Caesarea in 611. The sources are divided as to whether or not Heraclius sent an embassy to Chosroes immediately after he was crowned. *I234* and the eastern nexus say that Heraclius was in contact with Chosroes in the first year of his reign.¹⁶ Heraclius saw himself as the legitimate heir of Maurice and tried to use this to secure Chosroes' goodwill, for Maurice had enabled Chosroes to regain his throne in 591. Michael the Syrian quotes Heraclius' ambassadors as saying "Phocas killed the emperor Maurice who was your friend, we have put him to death", and goes on to say, "he hoped by similar flattery to produce a reconciliation".¹⁷ The extent of Heraclius' failure can be measured by Chosroes' behaviour. Instead of a peace treaty the Persians take Antioch and massacre its population. Chosroes did not see Heraclius as Maurice's heir. Indeed he turned Heraclius' argument on its head and claimed for Persia the right to intervene in Roman affairs on the basis of his own relationship with Maurice. Bar Hebraeus says that

¹⁵ Th. Sim. iv. 11.3.

¹⁶ *I234* p. 226, *Seert*, p. 527, and Bar Hebraeus, IX. 94 (Wallis Budge p. 87).

¹⁷ Michael the Syrian, XI. i (Chabot, p. 400).

when Chosroes heard of Maurice's death "he and his nobles put on black apparel, and they made a house for weeping in".¹⁸ This may be Persian propaganda, but it still illustrates their view that a crime had been committed against them and that they were justified in acting against its perpetrator. Bar Hebraeus says that Chosroes concocted a plot in order to rule over the Romans,¹⁹ and so it is not surprising that he rejected Heraclius' attempts at diplomacy. It was the Persian belief that the gifts that Heraclius sent to their court were in fact their property already, and that Heraclius was just as much a usurper as Phocas. Sebeos includes a letter from Chosroes to Heraclius which illustrates this attitude. "You call yourself master and king and you exhaust my treasure which you have your hands on....you give me no rest".²⁰ The plot that he concocted, referred to in Bar Hebraeus, was to press the claim to the Roman empire on behalf of Maurice's son Theodosius, who was believed by some to have survived the slaughter of the imperial family that Phocas had ordered on his accession, since his head was not displayed alongside those of his family at the Hebdomon. Whether the story was authentic or not Chosroes believed that it had enough credibility to justify his aggressive approach to diplomacy. Just as it would have suited Chosroes' purpose to react positively to the story of Theodosius' escape, Theophylact, writing for the court of Heraclius, shows us how the story was played down as a myth. He preserves the story only in order to discredit it: he says that Theodosius escaped successfully with a companion, Constantine Lardys, and reached Nicaea,²¹ but having described the murder of Maurice and

¹⁸ Bar Hebraeus, IX. 93 (Wallis Budge p. 86).

¹⁹ Bar Hebraeus, IX. 93 (Wallis Budge p. 86).

²⁰ Sebeos, Chp. 26.

his children, Theophylact continues the story by relating that a certain Alexander slew Theodosius and Lardys. Theophylact emphasises that this is the correct version of events, as he goes on to explain away the alternative version that Alexander killed a man who resembled Theodosius. Theodosius was said to have made his way to the land of the barbarians, that is Persia, where he died. Theophylact concludes "after laboriously investigating this matter" that:

"This story re-echoed throughout the whole inhabited world, but it was some barbarian error that gave it birth".²²

Theophylact ends his history on the same note. The strength of the unfounded rumour so worried Phocas that he had Alexander put to death, a fate which Theophylact thought was well-deserved because Alexander was a partner in the evil of Phocas' coup.²³ Theophylact is keen to play down the authenticity of the escape of Theodosius because of the importance of legitimacy to Heraclius, who was himself a usurper.

The first diplomatic correspondence of the reign recorded by a Greek source is in 613-614, when Theophanes says an embassy went to Chosroes from Heraclius.²⁴ This may well be the second round of negotiations, in which case the Greek and Syriac sources are complementing each other. For Theophanes mentions a second

²¹ Th. Sim. viii. 9. 9-13.

²² Th. Sim. viii. 13. 5.

²³ Th. Sim. viii 15. 8-9.

²⁴ Theoph. p. 300.

embassy from Heraclius in 616-617, which was rebuffed by Chosroes.²⁵ This second embassy of Theophanes may well be the one that is described in the *Chronicon Paschale*, which preserves a letter written by the Senate to Chosroes under the year 615.²⁶ The Senate, rather than Heraclius, may have written this letter for two reasons. Herrin suggests that they did so because Heraclius needed senatorial help and advice,²⁷ but Heraclius had solved the problem of Priscus' imperial aspirations without their assistance and must have believed in his own authority thereafter. It is more likely that the first round of negotiations had completely failed and the letter from the Senate was a means of achieving what Heraclius had earlier attempted. The Senate apologises for the failure of the earlier embassy:

"On account of the disturbance prevailing in the two states and in addition because of the intestine strife, he did not have an opportunity to do what ought to have been done, to present by means of an embassy the honour that was owed to the superabundant might of your serenity".²⁸

Superficially, this might seem to imply that there had been no prior diplomatic contact, but probability as well as the evidence of the eastern sources suggests otherwise. It is more likely that the Senate

²⁵ Theoph. p. 301.

²⁶ C.P. p. 707-710.

²⁷ Herrin, *Formation* p. 192.

²⁸ C.P. p. 708.

was desperately trying to gloss over a previous diplomatic reverse by presenting it as diplomatic impropriety in a crisis: Heraclius might have done something but he had not followed the correct protocol, what "was owed to the superabundant might of the Persian king". However, there is no doubt in the letter that the Senate views Heraclius as the legitimate emperor, and its objective, like his, is a peace treaty:

"We beg of your clemency to consider Heraclius
our most pious emperor as a true son".²⁹

This is the same approach that Chosroes had used to Maurice when in a precarious position himself in 590:

"These words which I write, do I, Chosroes,
address to you as if I were in your presence, I,
Chosroes, your son and suppliant".³⁰

Of course by the mid 610's Chosroes was in such a dominant position that it was not in his interests to consider a treaty, and Theophanes makes his attitude quite clear:

"Chosroes sent the ambassadors away
unsuccessful. He held no discussions with them,
since he hoped totally to conquer the Roman
Empire".³¹

²⁹ *C.P.* p. 708.

³⁰ *Th. Sim.* iv. 11. 11.

³¹ *Theoph.* p. 300 for 613-614, and p. 301 for the reply in 617-618.

By 620 the situation was desperate for the Romans, who lost Ancyra that year, and Heraclius was forced to take a gamble. He removed his Thracian army to Asia Minor, and here he began the task of revitalising the morale and technique of his soldiers. According to George of Pisidia the troops were full of disorder.³² In order to improve their fighting abilities and to try to give them some experience of combat Heraclius arranged mock battles between the detachments, which George described thus:

"The simulation of battle showed swords saturated with much blood, and all was terrors, fear and confusion, and an inclination to slaughter without bloodshed".³³

George goes on to describe the very personal involvement of Heraclius with his army. He does not just devise training exercises for them but also encourages them with speeches:

"And how with your word smiting in rhythmic tone so many races and variations of manifold

Niceph. 7 says that these envoys were imprisoned in Persia where some perished.

³² Theophanes points to the magnitude of Heraclius' problem when he relates an anecdote from 611/612: Heraclius had looked for experienced soldiers from Phocas' veterans and found only two. Trombley accepted Theophanes' dating, in a communication at the 26th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, which has been relocated by Whitby in a translation of the *Chronicon Paschale* to 626 p. 230, n. 73.

³³ G. P. *Exp. Per. II* 140-145.

account the counsels and laws of command said that it was necessary for the power of the emperor to be present at the necessity of battle".³⁸

Heraclius may have taken the command because he had already experienced both revolt (Comentiolus) and truculence (Priscus) from generals in the field. Furthermore Heraclius himself was an example of what a general might achieve against an insecure emperor.³⁹ By taking command Heraclius was preventing this form of threat to his authority. He must have believed that Bonus, Sergius, and his son, Heraclius Constantine, could handle affairs in the capital well enough to prevent the opportunity for a coup from arising there. Indeed he may have calculated that the position was so desperate that inactivity on his part, rather than absence from the capital, would have precipitated a revolt.

The Greek sources leave us in no doubt as to what they thought of his generalship. Indeed, Heraclius has enjoyed a reputation for military strategy in both ancient and modern sources. He has been credited with the authorship of the *Strategicon*, a claim which Dennis dismisses in favour of Philippicus.⁴⁰ For George of Pisidia, Heraclius had a reputation for military strategy that stood comparison with Scipio Africanus.

³⁸ G. P. *Exp. Per. I* 113-116.

³⁹ See Kaegi, *Military Unrest* p. 120-154 for a full discussion of the issue of disloyal generals in this period.

⁴⁰ Dennis, *Strategicon* p. xvi-xvii.

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"O Scipio, be silent; a law has been drafted that Scipios be called Heracleions. It is a decree of the people; now alone is it possible for slaves to make laws for their masters without danger. Ratify the law, master, with an edict; you have witnesses who do not have suspicion, you have innumerable arrows testifying for you, you have wounds as innate assistants, you have combats as eloquent advocates, you have combats as noble draftsmen, who draft the law in no spurious document, but in scarlet letters, as is fitting, for your blood will suffice for the scribes".⁴¹

Bury saw this as recognition that Heraclius' conquest of the Asiatic Sassanid empire surpassed the defeat of the "Asiatic" empire of Carthage by Scipio.⁴² Shahid has questioned this interpretation, arguing that the passage does not refer to Scipio and his descendents at all but to 'scepters'.⁴³ Shahid comes to this conclusion by insisting that Σκιπωναs should be spelt σκιπωναs as in two manuscripts of George's poem (*codices* VP), which allows him to translate as "sceptres" not "Scipiones". This argument is shaky since capitalisation, or lack of it, in the manuscripts has little weight. Shahid also maintains that because George of Pisidia saw Heraclius as a paradigm of Christian piety and chivalry he would not have considered such a comparison with the pagan Scipio.⁴⁴ But this

⁴¹ G. P. *Herac.* 97-110.

⁴² Bury, *HLRE* II p. 244-245.

⁴³ Shahid, 'ΠΙΣΤΟΣ', p. 225-237.

should come as no surprise since there are numerous other comparisons in George between Heraclius and pagan myths and history, for example Orpheus (mentioned above). Furthermore, writing around the same time, Theophylact is prepared to compare Philippicus' strategy on the eastern front in 585 to that of Scipio:⁴⁵ this may be another instance when Theophylact has presented his *History* of Maurice's reign in the terminology of the 620's. Shahid's dismissal of the Scipio reference is ingenious but unnecessary. Its underlying purpose was to substantiate his separate theories about kingship and the date when Heraclius formally adopted the royal title Βασιλεὺς, but his kingship theory is weakened rather than strengthened by the addition of this argument.⁴⁶

The narrative of the years 622-628 is not one of warfare between the Romans and the Persians, but of a personal struggle between Heraclius and the various generals that Chosroes sends to oppose him. The *Chronicon Paschale* does not provide any detail on the campaigns until Heraclius is successful in 628, when it preserves Heraclius' victory dispatch. However, for George of Pisidia and Theophanes Heraclius is very much the warrior-king. This personal activity on campaign was not new to the Heraclian family. Heraclius' father was the only Roman general in Theophylact's narrative to take part in actual fighting:

"Heraclius, the father of Heraclius the emperor,
with exceptional courage won distinction for

⁴⁴ Shahid, 'ΠΙΣΤΟΣ', p. 226.

⁴⁵ Th. Sim. i. 14.2-5.

⁴⁶ See further the appendix to this chapter below.

various deeds and was conspicuous through his glorious achievements with the spear".⁴⁷

This is another possible example of contemporary touches appearing in Theophylact's work. Heraclius in George of Pisidia and Theophanes was both a calculating tactician and an action man from the outset:

"Thus as a general you alone succeeded in a clever device and a clever pretence; and this complexity of purpose threw the barbarians the more into heedlessness".⁴⁸

Theophanes follows George for this laudatory analysis of Heraclius' first victory over the Persians in 622, adding: "For before they had never thought to see Persian dust; now they had found and plundered their still-pitched tents. Who could have expected the invincible Persian race ever to show its back to the Romans?"⁴⁹ Thus, the nature of his achievement is all the greater because it was gained against all expectations.

Heraclius returned to his capital that winter, but having made another treaty with the Avars in 623, he marched out again in 624 for what was to be the final confrontation with Persia. Heraclius threatened Chosroes with a march on his own kingdom if he did not treat for peace and backed this up with direct action. A march

⁴⁷ Th. Sim. II vi 2.

⁴⁸ G. P. *Exp. Per.* II 274-278.

⁴⁹ Theoph. p. 305.

through Persia led to the sack of Canzacon and Therbarmais,⁵⁰ and the capture of 50,000 Persians, before Heraclius decided to winter in Albania.⁵¹ Here he freed the Persian prisoners from their bonds as an act of clemency and was acclaimed as the saviour of Persia. Theophanes presents his personality as being in direct contrast to that of his opponent, Sarablangas, whom he calls arrogant and conceited.⁵² He is defeated in the most humiliating way, being killed by a sword in the back as Heraclius routs the Persians once more.⁵³ This humiliation of the Persian generals continues as the corpse of Shahin, who was defeated by Theodore in 626, was subjected to insults by Chosroes upon its return to Persia.⁵⁴ Rhazates is the only Persian general to come out of the narrative with any distinction. He is introduced as being brave and warlike and his defeat is not due to any cowardice on his part, or even superior tactics on the part of Heraclius, but to God alone according to Theophanes, who maintains that at Nineveh, "No-one remembers such a battle taking place between Persians and Romans".⁵⁵ Chosroes' performance is related with nothing but contempt by Theophanes. The comparison with Heraclius is marked. Chosroes does not move far from his base, his role is limited to appointing generals and collecting armies. While he is doing this Heraclius is pillaging his land. This is symbolised by the sack of Dastagerd.

⁵⁰ Therbarmais is in fact a metathesis in Theophanes for Berthamais, i.e. Beth Aramaye, or the region of Lower Mesopotamia near Ctesiphon. See the discussion in Hoffman, 'Auszüge aus syrischen Akten', p. 252, n. 1997.

⁵¹ Theoph. p. 307-308.

⁵² Theoph. p. 308.

⁵³ Theoph. p. 310.

⁵⁴ Theoph. p. 315.

⁵⁵ Theoph. p. 319.

Heraclius captures the spoils of war that were once Chosroes' and torches them to remind the Persians of what the Romans had once suffered, as the Persian emperor is in full flight. Theophanes disdainfully remarks that Chosroes who could not make five miles a day previously now flees at a rate of twenty-five, without his family and stays in the house of a humble farmer, so low has he sunk.⁵⁶ This contrast between Heraclius who risked his life for his state, whilst Chosroes neglected his empire was, according to Nicephorus, one factor in the revolt of the Persian nobles.⁵⁷ Throughout the campaigns Heraclius is the heroic figure both in thought and deed. When the army fails to follow his advice it is outmanoeuvred as two Persian armies threaten to coalesce, and it is repentant in giving the initiative back to Heraclius.⁵⁸ This might be interpreted as an apology for Heraclius having made a tactical error, whereby the blame is transferred to his army and the eventual credit attached to the emperor.⁵⁹ It was an initiative that Heraclius was never to lose. When the Lazicans and Abasgians deserted the alliance that Nicephorus describes him forging on a personal basis,⁶⁰ he responded by attacking Shahbaraz unexpectedly and the Persian escaped naked.⁶¹ His actions spoke as loudly as his words. When his army pursued the fleeing Persians in disregard of his orders he led a counter-attack to aid the ambushed men and struck down a giant of a man in the middle of a bridge. He was fighting in "superhuman" fashion and even Shahbaraz was impressed:

⁵⁶ Theoph. p. 323.

⁵⁷ Niceph. 15.

⁵⁸ Theoph. p. 309.

⁵⁹ Men. Rh. p. 373 lines 14-27.

⁶⁰ Niceph. 12.

⁶¹ Theoph. p. 310.

"Look at the Caesar, Cosmas; see how boldly he stands in battle, struggling alone against such a multitude: like an anvil he spurns their blows".⁶²

This was not the only noteworthy occasion of such bravery. At the battle of Nineveh Heraclius himself kills three Persians and is in the thick of the fray as his horse, Antelope, is wounded in the thigh.⁶³ Indeed, Nicephorus has him remove the head of the dead Rhazates.⁶⁴ Victory was achieved through this physical and mental superiority, and Theophanes has Heraclius engineer the breakdown of the Persian hierarchy as he turns Shahbaraz against Chosroes by means of a forged letter.⁶⁵ This kind of military cunning and psychology had been evident before. Heraclius must have gained the respect of his army by marching with them and exposing himself to the same dangers that they faced. For George of Pisidia he was a soldier first and an emperor second:

"For when holding his lance he is more fair than when he holds the sceptre of power; he bears this shield with dexterity, more gladly, as I see, than the diadem; and having quenched slaughter on our account, he arms again for slaughter on

⁶² Theoph. p. 314.

⁶³ Theoph. p. 318

⁶⁴ Niceph. 14.

⁶⁵ Theoph. p. 323-324.

our account".⁶⁶

Likewise he knew how to make the most of any gains that he made at the expense of Chosroes. His razing of towns and cities and countryside was designed to show the Persian emperor how impossible his position was and to persuade the Persian people that it was their own ruler and not their Roman enemy who was really responsible for the destruction, as he had failed to come to terms with their invader.⁶⁷ So, the Greek sources show Chosroes as a humiliated cowardly leader, in comparison with whom Heraclius' bravery and initiative are magnified.

Yet Chosroes had not been inactive in the campaigning. Although we do not have any evidence for him being near the front after he was nearly lassoed in the vicinity of Dara,⁶⁸ he was consistently aggressive in his strategy. This led to the Persians reaching the Bosphorus twice, and in 626 he was prepared to put three armies into the field in order to achieve the decisive victory. Chosroes should not be faulted for overstretching Persian resources in capturing both Armenia and Egypt because this had been accomplished by 618, whilst the outcome of the war was still in the balance in 626. The gravity of Heraclius' plight is illustrated by a dream of his recounted in the *Chronicle of Seert*, in which Chosroes seems indestructible on his elephant.⁶⁹ Chosroes did not fail his people, he was simply up against a more ambitious and determined

⁶⁶ G. P. *Exp. Per.* III111-118.

⁶⁷ Theoph. p. 324.

⁶⁸ *Guidi* Chp. 10.

⁶⁹ *Seert*, p. 541.

state, which at the onset of the campaigning had nothing to lose, and which at the end of the war had everything to gain.

The Syriac nexus of sources shows a different perspective. The *Chronicle of 1234* describes the rapacity of the Persians as it must have seemed to local people in the east, rather than as insulting comparison with Heraclius' behaviour:

"Chosroes became harsh, arrogant and overbearing as a result of his victories. Who is there now to lament, as Jeremiah would have done, the distress and loss of life that people suffered at this time? Who can count the tragic deportations, the pillagings and deprivations, the cruel requisitions, the harsh taxations? How many blocks of stone slabs and pillars of marble and pedestals of gold and silver from the churches were carried off to Persia?"⁷⁰

Chosroes is the villain purely because of his actions, not in order to exaggerate Heraclius' merits and achievements. Indeed, the Syriac sources explain the Roman victory by a different means from the Greek traditions. For them the turning point of the war was the plot of Chosroes against Shahbaraz which took place in 626, when Shahbaraz and Kardigaran were besieging Constantinople. The city, according to Michael the Syrian, was without hope when the siege was abruptly lifted.⁷¹ Michael explains that this reprieve was due

⁷⁰ 1234 p. 230.

⁷¹ Michael the Syrian, XI. iii (Chabot, p. 408-410).

to Persian division. Chosroes ordered Kardigaran to send him the head of Shahbaraz, because the general had been boasting of his own achievements to the detriment of Chosroes. This directive was intercepted by the Romans and Heraclius showed the letter to Shahbaraz who changed its wording so that three hundred notables were to be killed along with the general. The army was enraged by Chosroes' behaviour and disavowed its allegiance to him. Shahbaraz made peace with Heraclius who was then free to attack Persia without his capital being threatened. Much the same story is told by Theophanes but he dates it later, to 627, at the end of the war and does not cite it as a reason for the collapse of the siege of Constantinople. Theophanes attributes the forging of the letter not to Heraclius but to his son, Heraclius Constantine.⁷² Nicephorus puts this incident in 624, and places a different emphasis on it. In Nicephorus, Heraclius alters the letter in order to keep Shahbaraz at Chalcedon. Nicephorus' version of Chosroes' dispatch to his northern army does not make any mention of executing Shahbaraz. Indeed, Chosroes attempts to recall Shahbaraz in order to aid the defence of Persia: Chosroes is still relying on Shahbaraz not sentencing him to death.⁷³ *The Chronicle of Seert* provides another reason for a dispute between Chosroes and Shahbaraz, attributing the quarrel to the behaviour of Yazdin Chosroes' finance minister, who insulted the daughter of Shahbaraz;⁷⁴ the religious and political significance of the affair is discussed below. What was important for Heraclius at the time was that Chosroes had lost a talented general and a whole army just when Heraclius was about to go onto the offensive, and at

⁷² Theoph. p. 323-324.

⁷³ Niceph. 12.

⁷⁴ *Seert*, p. 540-541.

the point when the Persians had been in sight of Constantinople under siege. Chosroes had sought to break the stalemate of five years campaigning by using three armies against Heraclius. Now Heraclius had the initiative and after the battle of Nineveh the result was never in doubt. Chosroes had no more loyal generals, and no more troops for himself to command. The price he was to pay for his failure to defend his kingdom was removal and execution by his disaffected son, Siroes.

This signalled Heraclius' triumph, which the Greek sources saw as a triumph for Christianity, and indeed religion had formed an integral part of Romano-Persian relations, as they were depicted by these sources. Like the military affairs there were two chronological divisions, the period up to the first campaign of 622 and then the years of campaigning until victory in 628. Diplomacy, the fall of Jerusalem and Heraclius' preparations for war and his training of his troops are the main issues in the first period. The second period is exclusively concerned with his campaigning. An examination of George of Pisidia and Theophanes will show how the religious vein ran all the way through Heraclius' campaigns, and this can be supplemented by the *Chronicon Paschale* which provides extra details on preparations before the campaigns and the concluding diplomacy. An alternative Christian view was advanced by Michael the Syrian/1234, whose Monophysite beliefs prevented them from depicting Heraclius as the champion of Christianity, and instead they are quick to castigate the emperor for an incestuous marriage to Martina and a persecution of the Monophysites, two issues that Heraclius was to address in the aftermath of his victory.

Theophanes follows George of Pisidia for much of his information and imagery on Heraclius' early campaigns but he also includes some details on earlier events. The capture of Jerusalem is described in drier, more factual tones than the account in the *Chronicon Paschale*. Theophanes records the number of dead, "some say 90, 000", and the capture of the Patriarch Zachariah and the True Cross,⁷⁵ whereas the *Chronicon Paschale* has a more emotional description of the loss of the Holy City and the efforts that the Church went to in Constantinople to raise morale, by the introduction of new liturgies to celebrate relics still in Roman possession.⁷⁶ The Christian-pagan confrontation is also apparent in the diplomatic correspondence of the time. Theophanes writes that Chosroes refused to treat with Heraclius:

"I will have no mercy on you until you renounce
Him who was crucified and worship the sun".⁷⁷

The *Chronicon Paschale* also records a similar religious emphasis in diplomatic exchanges, this time in the Senate's letter to Chosroes:

"securing for us the peace which is pleasing to
God and appropriate to your peace-loving
Might".⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Theoph. p. 301.

⁷⁶ C.P. p. 705, see Whitby tr. n. 440.

⁷⁷ Theoph. p. 301.

⁷⁸ C.P. p. 709.

Heraclius' preparations for a lengthy campaign were bound up with religion. We have already seen in an earlier chapter that the emperor was short of money. Heraclius had also to be dissuaded by Sergius from returning to Africa, according to Nicephorus.⁷⁹ This close relationship with the Patriarch solved his most pressing non-military problem, the treasury's lack of resources. Sergius lent the emperor the church plate in Constantinople in order to finance his Persian campaign.⁸⁰ This is not used by the historians to illustrate Heraclius' Christian standing, and instead it is held up as an example of his dire financial straits, and the desperate situation for the empire as a whole. It was, however, also an illustration of the close relationship that Heraclius enjoyed with his Patriarch, which enabled the emperor to leave his capital to Sergius' administration,⁸¹ and allowed the Patriarch the opportunity to solve the ecclesiastical division in the empire.⁸² The use of Church funds to finance a campaign is the first in a series of examples of the idea that Heraclius' war was in the form of a proto-crusade. This is a combination of the ancient imagery of Constantine who defeats his pagan opponents and reunites the empire through the efficacy of God, and the Medieval notion of God's soldiers restoring the Holy Land and in particular Jerusalem, to its rightful owners, the Christians.

Christianity is at the forefront of preparations as Heraclius celebrates Easter before departing for Asia Minor.⁸³ He took with

⁷⁹ Niceph. 8.

⁸⁰ Theoph. p. 303.

⁸¹ See Chp 7.

⁸² See Chp 5.

him the Camulian image, which was a portrait of Christ that had been brought to the capital in 574,⁸⁴ which might suggest a change of emphasis from his earlier adoption of icons of the Theotokos on his ships when he arrived in the capital in 610,⁸⁵ since the Theotokos was of special relevance to Constantinople, whilst Heraclius was preparing to avenge the loss of Christ's Cross. Such exploitation of an icon of Christ marked the culmination of the growth of image worship that had been developing since the reign of Justin II.⁸⁶ Philippicus and Priscus had adopted such an icon for military purposes (victory in battle and restoring calm to a mutinous army) when they used the acheiropoietos image in 586 and 588 respectively.⁸⁷ George of Pisidia leaves us in no doubt as to the Christian nature of Heraclius' task:

"In the likeness of Moses you campaign against
the second Pharoah, if one would not err in
calling 'second' he who is truly first in sin".⁸⁸

George justifies the war and its consequent carnage by a biblical quotation, "Blessed is he who has dashed to the ground the children of Persia and beaten them upon the rocks".⁸⁹ This message is repeated by Heraclius to his troops as he tries to add Christian zeal to accompany their newly forged fighting skills. George says that

⁸³ Theoph. p. 302-303.

⁸⁴ G. P. *Exp. Per. I* 139-151 and, Ced. p. 685 for the image's arrival in Constantinople.

⁸⁵ Theoph. p. 298.

⁸⁶ Kitzinger, 'Images', p. 97-98.

⁸⁷ Th. Sim. ii. 3. 4 and, iii. 1. 11.

⁸⁸ G. P. *Exp. Per. I* 136-139.

⁸⁹ G. P. *Exp. Per. II* 114-116, from Ps. 136.9.

Heraclius "knew how to master the enemy easily, training your army in piety".⁹⁰ Theophanes quotes the following Christian approach to motivation:

"Brothers and children, you see that God's enemies have overrun our land, laid waste our cities, burned our altars, and filled the tables of sacrifice with bloody murders. They take great pleasure in defiling our churches, which should not suffer".⁹¹

The Christian message is equally strong during the actual warfare, for, according to George, whilst the Persians "held fire in awe, but you, master, held aloft the word".⁹² The Persian religion is clearly inferior, as the elements that they worship ironically cost them military advantages.⁹³ The moon prevented them from surprising the Romans and "stealing victory", causing Shahbaraz to "curse the moon that he had formerly worshipped because it did not set until the night was done",⁹⁴ and the sun blinded them during the major battle of 622:

"still more did it sting them to look at the sun,

⁹⁰ G. P. *Exp. Per. II* 202-203.

⁹¹ Theoph. p 304-304.

⁹² G. P. *Exp. Per II* 252.

⁹³ See Th. Sim. iii. 14. for the general Justinian's disparaging remarks about the Persians' religion, which may be another contemporary resonance in Theophylact.

⁹⁴ Theoph. p. 305. Shahbaraz was in fact a Christian but it was inappropriate for George to mention this fact, which may in any case not have been known to the Romans.

which they worship as the god of Persia,
confronting them in the alignment of battle".⁹⁵

Nature prevailed against the Persians later as well, when hail fell in the face of the army of Shahin as he was defeated by Theodore in 626.⁹⁶ Heraclius' personal piety is illustrated by his speeches to his troops at crucial points in the campaigns. He exhorts them to follow his example of fighting for Christ to defeat the pagan oppressors of Christians, a struggle that God supports even though they may think it hopeless:

"Brothers, let us keep in mind the fear of God and struggle to avenge insults to Him. Let us nobly oppose our enemies, who have done terrible things to Christians".⁹⁷

"Brothers, do not be troubled by your enemies' numbers for, God willing, one will chase thousands".⁹⁸

"Brothers, you know that no-one wants to ally with us except God and She who bore Him without semen. This is so He can reveal His power, since salvation does not lie in masses of men or arms. Rather He sends down His aid to those who believe in His mercy".⁹⁹

⁹⁵ G. P. *Exp Per. II* 302.

⁹⁶ Theoph. p. 315.

⁹⁷ Theoph. p. 307.

⁹⁸ Theoph. p. 310, from Deut. 32:20.

⁹⁹ Theoph. p. 317.

In saving his empire Heraclius is a servant of God, to whose labours the emperor's are compared in the *Hexaemeron*, and the comparison is given a classical resonance with an allusion to the labours of Heracles, an obvious mythical prototype for Heraclius.¹⁰⁰ Theophanes borrows this parallel when he sums up the emperor's campaigning, from a passage that links God's creation of the world with Heraclius' creation of secure peace:

"In six years the emperor had overthrown Persia; in the seventh he returned to Constantinople with great joy, and in that year performed a mystic celebration".¹⁰¹

In the aftermath of victory Christianity was still at the forefront of events.¹⁰² In Persia it was a divisive influence which aided Heraclius' statesmanship, whilst in the newly reconquered provinces it hindered his attempts at stabilisation. Heraclius was party to the Persian plot which saw the overthrow of Chosroes, whose successor, Siroes, was depicted by the Chronicle of *Seert* as a crypto-Christian. According to that account, after a barren eight years Siroes' wife was blessed with children by St. Babai of Nisibis.¹⁰³ He was not only a just ruler remitting taxes for three

¹⁰⁰ See also, G. P. *Her.*I. 65-79, and *Her.* II. 5-33.

¹⁰¹ G. P. *Hexaemeron* 1425-1578, Theoph. p. 327. See Olster, 'Date', p. 159-172 for the latest analysis of that poem.

¹⁰² Spain Alexander, 'Plates', has argued that the plates found in Cyprus that depict events in the early life of David from I. Samuel 16-18, date to the year 628. Spain Alexander goes on to draw parallels between both sovereigns, such as their need to legitimise their rule, and their youthful vigour.

years, but he was also a secret believer in Christianity, who wore a crucifix after having being influenced by his mother, Marie, allegedly a daughter of Maurice who is only mentioned by the Syriac chroniclers.¹⁰⁴ Upon deposing his father, whom he treated like a criminal, Siroes immediately curried favour with Heraclius. Chosroes was kept in his own "house of darkness" and starved, whilst Siroes sent his enemies to insult him, and slew his children in front of him. Siroes wrote to Heraclius to make peace. The letter is partially preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale* and Oikonomides has attempted to reconstruct part of Heraclius' reply.¹⁰⁵ Heraclius was appeased, and indeed his campaign justified, by an apology by Siroes on behalf of the Persian people. This blamed Chosroes for all the suffering of the last two decades and even saw Siroes invoke the unique God in his appeal to Heraclius, unlike his father who had scorned the deity of the Christians.¹⁰⁶

"From Chosroes Roman soil has suffered many evils, and because of the king's ingratitude you may not believe me [Siroes]".¹⁰⁷

"Through the protection of God, we have by good fortune been adorned with the great diadem" ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *Seert* p. 551-552.

¹⁰⁴ Bar Hebraeus, IX. 92 says that Christianity spread throughout Persia due to the marriage of Marie to Chosroes, (Wallis Budge p. 85). For Marie as a daughter of Maurice see, Eutychius, *Annals P.G.* CXI, 1083.

¹⁰⁵ *C.P.* p. 735-736 and Oikonomides, 'Correspondence' , p. 269-281.

¹⁰⁶ Oikonomides, 'Correspondence', p. 272.

¹⁰⁷ Theoph. p. 328.

¹⁰⁸ *C.P.*p. 735.

Siroes' address to Heraclius as his brother and his use of Christian vocabulary is similar to the approach of Chosroes II to Maurice from an equally weak position in 590, Chosroes' appeal is treated at length in Theophylact, and provides another example that the impact of events of the 620s had on his narration of Maurice's reign.¹⁰⁹ Heraclius would have demanded more proof than a letter of Siroes' Christian stance. Siroes allowed the Nestorian church in Persia to elect a *catholicos* after a period of years without a formal leader, and the *Chronicle of Guidi* says that at this time there was "peace and tranquility for all Christians".¹¹⁰ The *Chronicle of Seert* adds "may God sanctify his soul", when he died after a reign of six or eight months.¹¹¹

It was on his death that Heraclius' ambitions concerning the relationship of the two states became clearer. Though this was primarily on a political level the influence of Christianity was pervasive. During the plotting against Chosroes Heraclius had moved his army north to Canzacon where he spent the early months of 628, cut off by heavy snowfalls in the Zagros mountains from events in lower Mesopotamia. Though happy to acknowledge the Persian monarchy he saw himself as superior to it, calling Siroes "son".¹¹² He intervened more directly in the Persian succession after the death of Siroes despite having returned to the Roman empire by now.¹¹³ For even if Siroes was a crypto-Christian, acceptable to

¹⁰⁹ Th. Sim. iv. 11. 1-11. Whitby, *Maurice* p. 297.

¹¹⁰ *Giudi*, Chp. 29.

¹¹¹ *Seert*, p. 555.

¹¹² Niceph. 15.

Heraclius, the religious affiliation of his son was unclear, and in any case he may have been too young to be judged reliable for a position that was made most unstable by the recent military defeat. There was also a need for Heraclius to dislodge the Persian general Shahbaraz, now virtually an independent warlord, from his strong position in Egypt and Palestine. The emperor saw the opportunity to resolve the problems both of regaining control over Roman territory and of placing a strong but friendly ruler on the Persian throne by encouraging Shahbaraz to act and providing him with military support according to the *Chronicle of Seert* and Sebeos.¹¹⁴ Heraclius had defeated Shahbaraz when the emperor had first begun his campaigns against the Persians in 622, and in 626 Theophanes tells us that Shahbaraz admired the emperor's courage in combat.¹¹⁵ Later in that year Shahbaraz advanced to Chalcedon where Mango believes a profound change in his actions took place, partly through the intervention of Heraclius who thwarted Chosroes' attempt to kill the Persian commander.¹¹⁶ Whenever Shahbaraz decided to change sides it was not until the end of the war that the two generals met, at Arabissos in Cappadocia, where they "built a Church of Irene and decided that the Euphrates was to be the frontier".¹¹⁷ Heraclius went on to provide Shahbaraz with an army under the general David.¹¹⁸ Whether or not Heraclius was in a position to "give" Shahbaraz the

¹¹³ Niceph. 17.

¹¹⁴ *Seert*, p. 556 and Sebeos Chp. 28.

¹¹⁵ Theoph. p. 314.

¹¹⁶ Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 106-107, and the discussion in Chp. 5 below.

¹¹⁷ Sebeos, 88.

¹¹⁸ *Seert*, p. 556, on the relationship between Heraclius and Shahbaraz see Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 105-118.

throne, he was certainly able to influence Persian politics to the extent that Shahbaraz had little difficulty in removing the incumbent Ardashir, the young son of Siroes, and, having done so, to promise to return the True Cross. Heraclius asked for no more than a return to the frontiers of Maurice's reign.¹¹⁹ Mango sees this relationship in terms of a reconciliation between Rome and Persia that had strong Christian overtones. For only if Heraclius was dealing with a fellow Christian can Mango understand why Shahbaraz did not return the provinces that he was occupying until July 629, one year after the end of the war against Persia, unless Shahbaraz was governing them as a quasi-representative of the emperor, and why Heraclius did not demand the return to Rome of Nisibis, settling instead for the frontiers of the reign of Maurice.¹²⁰ However, Heraclius' grip on Persian affairs was not as tight as the ease of Shahbaraz's coup may have suggested. For within forty days he had been murdered by his fellow Persians and a woman, Boran, was on the throne. Persian politics were so unstable that Heraclius did not honour his pledge to support Shahbaraz's son,¹²¹ whom Mango also believes to have been a Christian. The evidence for this, potentially Christian, ruling dynasty in Persia comes from Nicephorus, who has an account of Heraclius honouring Shahbaraz's son Nicetas with the rank of patrician and marrying his second son from his marriage to Martina to Shahbaraz's daughter Nike. The link with the house of Heraclius is intensified by the adoption by Shahbaraz's family of the Roman names Nike and Nicetas (victory) which were closely associated with that family.¹²² Boran was the first woman to reign in Persia, and

¹¹⁹ Niceph. 17.

¹²⁰ Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 111-112.

¹²¹ Sebeos, 88-89.

¹²² Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 105, and Niceph. 17.

Heraclius was quite happy to conclude peace with her, after receiving an embassy of Nestorian bishops who seemed amenable to imperial attempts to reunite the Roman and Persian churches. He had failed to place a Christian on the throne of Persia, in much the same way as Maurice had, when, in 591 he sent Domitian of Melitene and Gregory of Antioch to accompany Chosroes during his stay in Roman territory; by 592 Domitian acknowledged his failure to achieve anything lasting in correspondence with Pope Gregory.¹²³

Within his empire Heraclius found Christianity to be an obstacle, since the Monophysite/Chalcedonian split had been accentuated by the loss of the eastern provinces to Persia. Heraclius' efforts to resolve this conflict are discussed in another chapter,¹²⁴ but before Heraclius could bring together these divergent Christological opinions he first had to increase his Christian standing in the eyes of all his subjects. This was because his second marriage was to Martina, his niece, and was thus judged to be incestuous by Monophysites and Chalcedonians alike. That Heraclius was prepared to go through with such a marriage has led Mango to speculate that he may have been of northern-Mesopotamian descent. Heraclius was certainly not opposed to the idea of such marriages for he arranged a similar one between his son Constantine and the daughter of his cousin Nicetas, Gregoria.¹²⁵ There is further controversy surrounding the date of the marriage, which is not recorded by the *Chronicon Paschale* that otherwise consistently records details of imperial events in the capital. Theophanes places the marriage in

¹²³ Gregory, *Register* iii. 62.

¹²⁴ Chp. 7.

¹²⁵ Niceph. 17 and Mango, 'Deux Études' p. 114.

615, but Mango has questioned the accuracy of Theophanes' dating of both the marriage and the birth of Martina's son Heracleonas.¹²⁶ The choice of 613/614 or 628 for the date of the marriage is not important for the image of Heraclius after the end of the Persian war, for his marriage was only part of that image during the victory celebrations.¹²⁷ It is possible to introduce a compromise theory. Heraclius may have married Martina in 613/4, or certainly before he left for the Eastern front with Martina by his side in 622, but the couple may not have had any offspring until the end of the war. This might explain the silence of the *Chronicon Paschale*; the author, probably a member of the Constantinopolitan clergy, may well have shared official ecclesiastical disapproval of the marriage but found it possible to ignore the relationship as long as there were no children as tangible proof of the sin. It is only after the end of the war that the sources are scathing about the marriage, when Martina produced a series of offspring. If the evidence of Theophanes is interpreted as a collation of notices involving the imperial family whose common denominator was the marriage to Martina, then this explains why the chronicler has also inaccurately dated the birth of her children. Heraclius already had an heir before 629, Heraclius Constantine, from his previous marriage to Eudocia. His marriage to Martina was most probably frowned upon by the Patriarch Sergius, since in Nicephorus' account Sergius had tried to persuade Heraclius not to go through with the marriage, but the emperor had insisted and the Patriarch reluctantly performed the ceremony.¹²⁸ Indeed, the fact that the *Chronicon Paschale* only mentions Martina once, in the context of

¹²⁶ Mango *Commentary*, p. 179-180.

¹²⁷ Speck, *Dossier* p. 35 ff. dates the marriage to 622.

¹²⁸ Niceph. 11.

Heraclius' departure for the east, may be illustrative of popular feeling about the marriage at the time.¹²⁹ However, this feeling would have been exacerbated in 629 when Heracleonas was born. The birth of a son to Martina created a problem for the succession that was only solved by civil strife after Heraclius' death.¹³⁰ Since it was the offspring of the marriage to Martina, rather than the marriage to Martina itself, that caused this instability it may be that the sources only started to criticise the union when it began to create a succession crisis. Nicephorus blames the marriage for the problems at the end of Heraclius' reign and the eastern chroniclers, who do not mention Martina until Heraclius is victorious in 628, also adopt this line, though they are obviously independent Nicephorus.¹³¹

The means by which Heraclius sought to reconcile his subjects to the union has also caused controversy amongst modern scholars. The Restoration of the True Cross has been pinpointed by Ferber as being a significant event in the balance of Theophanes' account of Heraclius' reign.¹³² Ferber believes that in the first part of Theophanes' account of the reign, that is up until 629, Theophanes is positive in his judgement of Heraclius. During this period Heraclius is portrayed as the ideal Emperor by Theophanes because he is piously orthodox and he is associated with the Theotokos during the period of his invincibility. Ferber argues that the restoration of the True Cross is the final Christian triumph for Theophanes because this is the last event in which the emperor behaves as an orthodox

¹²⁹ *C.P.* p. 714.

¹³⁰ Theoph. p. 341-432 and Niceph. 28.

¹³¹ Niceph. 28 and Bar Hebraeus, X. 100 (Wallis Budge p. 93), 1234 p. 233, and Michael the Syrian, XI, iii (Chabot, p. 410).

¹³² Ferber, 'Theophanes', p. 32-42.

believer.¹³³ He mentions the return from Persia of the Cross in the year 627, that is two years earlier than other writers.¹³⁴ Theophanes details Heraclius' triumphant return to Constantinople in the year 628, and in 629 he describes the restoration of the Cross to Jerusalem.¹³⁵ From this point onwards Theophanes does not make a positive reference to Heraclius, who is now seen as the initiator of the Monothelite heresy, which is blamed for the Roman defeats at the hands of the Arabs. However, there are problems with Ferber's argument, and Theophanes may not have knowingly "set up a dichotomy" for his account of the reign of Heraclius, as Ferber asserts.¹³⁶ It is true that Theophanes was using different sources for the periods 610-629 and 629-641, but that is not synonymous a positive/negative divide in his account since Theophanes in fact had nothing positive to write about Heraclius from the time when he ascended the throne to the point where he defeated the Persians for the first time (610-622). The disparity in his account is partly explicable by his contrasting source material for the years 622-629 and 629-641: Theophanes was using Greek sources, including George of Pisidia, until 629 when, in the absence of a decent Greek narrative of the early Islamic conquests, he began to use an Eastern source that Conrad has postulated may have been Theophilus of Edessa.¹³⁷ This Eastern source was not favourable to Heraclius, because of the

¹³³ Ferber, 'Theophanes', p. 37.

¹³⁴ Theoph. p. 327. On the date of the Restoration see Mango, *Commentary* p. 185.

¹³⁵ Theoph. p. 327-329.

¹³⁶ Ferber, 'Theophanes', p. 39.

¹³⁷ Conrad, 'Arwād', p. 322-340. Note the paucity of information on these events in Nicephorus (Niceph. 18, 20, 23 and 26), who did not have access to the eastern source.

emperor's complete failure to defend the provinces. Theophanes was not sympathetic to the emperor as much because of his failure to hold on to the Eastern provinces as his religious policy, and most of what Theophanes narrates after the Arab invasions have begun is concise: the Romans experienced a fresh round of catastrophic military failures and there was little opportunity to laud the emperor. It is too simplistic to say that Theophanes split Heraclius's reign into two parts because the emperor lapsed into what Theophanes believed to be heresy after 629.

Heraclius was aware of the problem caused by his relationship with Martina and combined his attempt to solve it with another political gesture,¹³⁸ which was also heavy with Christian imagery. Heraclius demonstrated the extent of his victory, to both Persian and Roman alike, by ceremonially restoring the relic of the True Cross to Jerusalem.¹³⁹ He performed the ceremony with Martina at his side to legitimise their union once more in both the eyes of God, and his subjects. In order to show that relations between Persia and Constantinople were peaceful the Cross was depicted as having been returned intact, though this was merely a propaganda exercise to show that the Persians had not abused the relic.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ For the restoration as a political gesture, see Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 113-115.

¹³⁹ On the restoration of the Cross, see Frolov, 'La Vraie Croix', p. 88-105, esp. p. 99.

¹⁴⁰ A hint of this conciliatory attitude to the Persians is contained in Nicephorus' account of Heraclius' reaction to the news of the death of Chosroes: "Even though he had inflicted innumerable woes upon Romans and Persians, I would have hastened, were he to have survived, to restore him to his own kingship, complete though my victory over him may have been". Niceph. 15.

Antiochus Strategus says that the Christians captured from Jerusalem were forced to defile the Cross by trampling on it one by one,¹⁴¹ and only contradicts himself at the end of his account when, like Nicephorus, he maintains that the casket was unbroken.¹⁴² This is evidence to support the new political propaganda in the aftermath of Heraclius' victory. In 614 the Persians were the defilers of the Holy Places and Heraclius the defender of Christianity. In 629 Heraclius was the victor who had built a Christian world that might embrace Persia, not just the defender of his Christian realm, and so the Persians were no longer portrayed as the enemies of the faith: indeed, they were even seen to have preserved the casket intact, and in doing so have displayed their respect for the new order that Heraclius' military victories and Christian piety had secured. Heraclius' subjects were left in no doubt that it was through his military endeavours and Christian piety that this had been achieved.¹⁴³ Above all, the act was a microcosm of the performance that Heraclius had been giving over the previous six years; he was the victorious general who had avenged earlier defeats and regained lost possessions, and at the same time he was the embodiment of a Christian emperor in the image of Constantine, whose mother had originally discovered the fragments of the Cross. Heraclius was not simply celebrating his victory over the Persians but invoking images of earlier Christian glory:

"Appear, Constantine, again to Rome, applaud

¹⁴¹ Conybeare, 'Antiochus', p. 511.

¹⁴² Conybeare, 'Antiochus', p. 516 and Niceph. 18.

¹⁴³ G. P. Rest. *Crucis* 5-15.

your son, for how after receiving it in confusion,
he has again shown that your substance is
saved".¹⁴⁴

The best indication that we have of how Heraclius saw his own achievement is a victory dispatch preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale*,¹⁴⁵ which was recited in the capital in 628. This blamed Chosroes and not Persia for the war, and Heraclius represented the death of Chosroes, whom he compared to Judas Iscariot, as one of his principal triumphs despite the fact that it was engineered from within the Persain court. Heraclius saw this as a victory for Christians everywhere, presumably including Siroes, when he wrote:

"And let all we Christians praising and glorifying,
give thanks to the one God, rejoicing with great
joy in His holy name. For fallen is the arrogant
Chosroes, opponent of God".¹⁴⁶

This note of Christian triumph was taken up in another contemporary text, the *History* of Theophylact, which included a speech put into the mouth of Bishop Domitian to celebrate the Roman recovery of the frontier city of Martyropolis.¹⁴⁷ Heraclius' appeal to all Christians to celebrate the victory is an instance of the emperor in his role as proto-crusader. This Christian image is consistent with the way in which Heraclius was presented in both the *Heraclias I*

¹⁴⁴ G. P. *Rest. Crucis* 49-52.

¹⁴⁵ C. P. p. 727-734 and Oikonomides, 'Correspondence', p. 269-281.

¹⁴⁶ C. P. p. 728.

¹⁴⁷ Th. Sim. iv. 16. and, Whitby, *Maurice* p.334-335.

and *II*, which can be elucidated by an examination of the historical characters used by George to extol the virtues of his hero. We have noted the use of this device of *amplificatio* in the panegyric blueprint of Menander Rhetor.¹⁴⁸ George put this into practice by a *syncrisis*, where Heraclius is compared to Hercules, Noah, Elias, Alexander, and Timotheus. Though Hercules, Noah and Elias are not military commanders George uses them to extol Heraclius' other virtues. He has completed his labours for the empire and so he is greater than Hercules, "among mortals one man is with justification Hercules the deliverer of the world".¹⁴⁹ Noah began a new era in the history of the world after troubled times and he did so with the help of God. So, in comparison with Heraclius' achievement, the emperor is "The Noah of the new universe has found as an ark his own heart, and after storing up his entire nature inside, has sent it into the armed ranks, preserved from Chosroes' flood".¹⁵⁰ The religious theme is maintained when Heraclius' military achievement is praised. Heraclius "imitating Elias of old and making the deserts your haunt, you were nourished not on food ...but on cares; for of military treatises there was no work which you did not pursue in your studious reflections".¹⁵¹

It is not just Heraclius' military skills that are praised in comparison with the pair of Alexander the Great and Timotheus. They are both Greek commanders one of whom was a general the other an admiral, and both of whom were operating in the same part

¹⁴⁸ See Chp 1.

¹⁴⁹ G. P. *Herac. I* 69-71.

¹⁵⁰ G. P. *Herac. I* 84-88.

¹⁵¹ G. P. *Herac. II* 133-137.

of the world as Heraclius. However, Heraclius is superior as a person, he built his army up to be organised, well trained and brave, whereas Alexander inherited his from his father. Heraclius had to battle against fortune whilst Tyche smiled on Timotheus' endeavours: "Timotheus sleeping amidst battles, then Fortune handing over the cities on this side and on that".¹⁵² These comparisons serve to summarise the virtues of Heraclius that George wants to extol. He is compared with biblical figures to illustrate his piety and the manner in which he has served God, whilst his military skills that are always in evidence, are complemented by the aid of God, which raises him above his pagan predecessors, thanks to that piety. The achievement of Heraclius is never underestimated. He changed the world that his subjects lived in and it was maybe due to this feeling of a Roman political renaissance that Heraclius felt the need to adopt a new title that illustrated not only his newly won hegemony but also its sponsor, *πίστος ἐν Χρίστῳ βασιλεὺς*.¹⁵³ Shahid has argued that in 629, March 21, Heraclius formally adopted this new title for his imperial position, a title that was intended to look both to the past and the future for its significance.¹⁵⁴

Heraclius was at the centre of all the celebrations to mark his victory. Even though he was absent for the reading of his victory dispatch in the capital, the narrative shows him to be at the centre of events in the East.¹⁵⁵ He was a hero to his people even if he was not

¹⁵² G. P. *Herac. I* 133-135

¹⁵³ This may be a break from the image of Constantine, for though Constantine was associated with the Cross and the triumph of Christianity, Heraclius is not compared to him in this work.

¹⁵⁴ See further the appendix to this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ C.P. p. 727-734.

amongst them. He had masterminded and inspired the series of campaigns that had led to the decisive defeat of his empire's bitterest rival. This was not achieved by a single campaign, nor by one individual. George of Pisidia's point that Heraclius laboured for six years is not mere biblical allusion. Though he had been campaigning since 622 Heraclius did not accomplish anything of moment until 627, because as late as 626 he was on the point of losing his capital to the Avars, so that there were several years of hard labour. The escalation of success culminating at the battle of Nineveh is a testimony to his personal endeavour and involvement in all aspects of the war. He was influential in the training of his newly collected forces, and though the campaign of 622 achieved little in terms of regaining territory, it was a morale-boosting trial run for a series of expeditions that kept the Persians out-manoeuvred for long periods of time. Heraclius took the Romans onto the offensive for the first time in twenty years, and in doing so he was putting his reputation and, by association, his throne on the line. It was a considerable personal achievement that was rewarded by popular acclaim in Constantinople.¹⁵⁶ He appointed able lieutenants, Sergius and Bonus in the capital, and his brother Theodore in Asia Minor. For such delegation and the numerous instances of initiative and courage Heraclius deserved credit. He was the moving force behind the Roman offensive and in the final analysis he must be seen as the ultimate victor despite the victories of others elsewhere. He was more than just a military commander, since after the victory he had the statesmanship to see that it was time for a period of accord between Romans and Persians. He may have failed to take this to the extreme of securing a Christian monarch for Persia but it must be

¹⁵⁶ Theoph. p. 328.

acknowledged that he had the foresight to make the attempt and then accept a compromise that looked likely to stabilise the situation. That his policies had no time in which to come to fruition was due to the speed of the Muslim invasions, rather than his own tardiness. Heraclius' victory instigated a policy of conciliation and unification which, since he had won the throne in 610, he had earlier been unable to implement. There was no vicious revenge on his former enemies:¹⁵⁷ he was looking forwards rather than backwards when his achievements were brought to naught by the rise of a new nation, with fresh aggression, the Arabs.

Appendix.

Heraclius' adoption of the title βασιλεὺς at the end of his Persian campaigns, ignored by our sources, has been much discussed by modern historians following its discovery by Bréhier. Bréhier believed that the document signified the actual date of the first official assumption of the title.¹⁵⁸ Bury upheld the belief that Heraclius was the first official βασιλεὺς, but he stated that the reason for this was the fact that Heraclius had defeated Chosroes. As the

¹⁵⁷ Th. Sim. v. 15 has an eschatological prophecy of a period of prolonged peace: another notice in Theophylact with contemporary relevance.

¹⁵⁸ Bréhier, 'Le protocole impérial', p.177-182 and 'L' origine', p.172-173. And with a subtle change of emphasis in *Les Institutions de l' Empire Byzantine*.

Persian ruler was the only monarch to whom the Romans were prepared to accord the title of king, then it was only with the defeat of Persia that Heraclius was in a position to assume that position uniquely.¹⁵⁹ Ostrogorsky explained the adoption of the title as a result of the Hellenisation of the Byzantine state and argued that it was a simplification of the imperial title.¹⁶⁰ The same view had already been mooted by Stein,¹⁶¹ but Ostrogorsky swapped the sequence of the two factors around. This is the opposite view to that of Bury, since Bury had looked to Sassanid Persia for the origins of the title, whereas Ostrogorsky preferred to attribute it to Hellenisation within the empire.¹⁶² Both of these arguments have been criticised by Shahid.¹⁶³ Refuting Bury, he has pointed out the Persian monarchy did not disappear in 629 and that Persia did not become a vassal state: it was still an independent monarchy even if it was exhausted. Shahid invokes John Lydus to disprove Ostrogorsky's opinion that the title was a simplification of the other, Roman, titles, such as *imperator*, *caesar* and *augustus*.¹⁶⁴ Shahid goes on to argue that the title is related to the war between the Romans and the Persians, to the Armenian background of Heraclius, and, most importantly for this chapter, to the date 629. The peace that Heraclius achieved by his victories was comparable to that of

¹⁵⁹ Bury, 'Constitutions', p. 99-125.

¹⁶⁰ Ostrogorsky, *Byzantine State* p. 89.

¹⁶¹ Stein, 'History', p. 353.

¹⁶² Chrysos, 'The Title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ', p. 31-75, made a study of the evidence for imperial titles collected from official documents. He too concluded that the adoption of the title was symbolic of the Hellenism of the seventh century.

¹⁶³ Shahid, 'Iranian Factor', p. 295-302 .

¹⁶⁴ Shahid, 'Iranian Factor ', p. 301, and John Lydus *De Magistratibus* I, sec. 4.

Genesis and the title βασιλεὺς was appropriate for such a comparison. Because Shahid, following Diehl,¹⁶⁵ believes Heraclius was an Armenian, and because the emperor resided in Armenia frequently from 624-629, the Armenian tradition of kingship was supposedly an element in the adoption of the title βασιλεὺς. Shahid believes that the Romano-Persian war which ended in 628 was the last of a quartet of wars which led to Roman constitutional change, the first three being the Second Punic War, The Civil Wars and the military crisis of the second century A. D. It was a combination of the successful conclusion of the war with the progression towards absolutism and the Christianisation of the dignity of the imperial office that now allowed Heraclius to assume the title of βασιλεὺς.¹⁶⁶ However, such speculations are unprovable and it is more constructive to focus on the Christian element in the new title, and the words πιστος ἐν χριστῳ which could not have been associated with either of the old Roman titles, Caesar or Augustus.

¹⁶⁵ Diehl, *L' Afrique Byzantine* p. 517.

¹⁶⁶ Shahid, 'Iranian Factor', p. 312-313.

The Mother of all Sieges.

The chronological midpoint of Heraclius' reign, the 626 siege of Constantinople, brings together many of the themes that we have examined in earlier chapters. It was the ultimate Avar challenge to Byzantium and the nearest the Persians came to the capital. But it was more than just an episode in Byzantine military history. The siege saw the escalation in importance of the cult of the Theotokos which had been growing since the mid-sixth century,¹ and which was seminal to the defence of the city in terms of morale. It was also an important event in the reign of Heraclius but one at which the emperor himself was not present.² This absence allows us to ask questions pertinent to his whole reign on the individual culpability or responsibility of the emperor for actions and results. A review of the sources describing the siege gives us a further insight into what contemporaries saw as the role of the emperor.³

The siege must be considered in an empire-wide context. It was not solely a drama that concerned the capital, but was part of a broader struggle to free the Eastern and Western territories that had been over-run by Persians and Avars respectively. It came about not only through their acquisitiveness but also as a response to the new initiative of Heraclius, which were aggressive militarily in the East and diplomatically in the West. The siege was not the result of

1 Cameron, 'Theotokos', p. 79-108.

2 Heraclius was also not present at the battle of the Yarmuk which resulted in the loss of Syria to the Arabs, and was the greatest defeat of his reign.

3 Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 371-395, for a narrative of events using the sources discussed in this chapter, and Speck, *Bellum Avaricum*.

many years of Byzantine backpeddling which had now reached all the way back to the Bosphorus, but a sign that it was ready and able to reassert itself even if that meant leaving its capital Emperor-less and vulnerable.

The ancient authors leave us in no doubt as to why the siege was unsuccessful. George of Pisidia opens his *Bellum Avaricum*:

"if any of the painters wishes to show the trophies of battle let him range in front of She who bore Him without seed and depict her image, for She alone knows how to conquer nature, first in childbirth then in battle".

The *Chronicon Paschale* says that the Avars were defeated "at God's command, through the intercession of our Lady The Mother of God, in a single instant calamity at sea came to him".⁴ Theophanes writes that victory was achieved "by God's power and the intercession of his immaculate Virgin Mother".⁵ This intercession may even have been accepted as physical rather than just a matter of faith, since Cedrenus reports the Virgin fighting on the battlements,⁶ whilst the *Chronicon Paschale* has the Chagan say "I see a woman in stately dress rushing about on the wall alone". This martial assistance is featured in Theodore Syncellus' sermon which was probably delivered on August 7 to commemorate the first anniversary of the success. Theodore was a colleague of George of

⁴ C.P. p. 725.

⁵ Theoph. p. 316.

⁶ Ced. p. 328. 23 - 329. 18.

Pisidia, a presbyter of S. Sophia and syncellus of the Patriarch Sergius. His account of the siege is complete and although it is couched firmly in terms of religious rhetoric it gives us a most vivid description of events. The Theotokos is responsible for the sinking the Slav fleet at Blachernae (p. 311.17-35), as she is in George of Pisidia,⁷ while the language is similar to that used by Theophanes in his descriptions of battles in the Persian campaigns.⁸ This dedication to the Virgin was not new nor was it to be short-lived. It led to a new preface to the Akathistos hymn "I your city commemorate the victory festival".

This devotion to the Virgin had been growing ever since her cult had been recognised at the Council of Ephesus, and by the middle of the sixth century there were many churches in her honour in Constantinople although there are few references in contemporary literature to corroborate this. Corippus, in his panegyric to the new emperor Justin II in 566, introduced a mention of the Virgin, into the prayer of Sophia on behalf of her husband, though he does not go so far as to credit the Virgin with the protection of Constantinople since elsewhere he says that the city was guarded by God.⁹ The reign of Justin II saw a continuation of the association of the Virgin with the imperial family. Leo I and his family had honoured her at Blachernae and Justinian did so at S. Sophia.¹⁰ Justin II continued this trait at Blachernae and

⁷ G.P. Bell. Av. 450 - 455.

⁸ Theoph. p. 314.

⁹ Corippus, II 50 - 70. For the early history of the cult of the Theotokos and especially the impact on it of the writings of Corippus, see Cameron, 'Theotokos', p. 82-86.

¹⁰ Paul Sil. *Ecphrasis*. lines 802-4 (From a translation by Mary

Chalcopratea. In his reign she also appears on a bronze weight (but only on coinage after the defeat of Iconoclasm), and on seals in the reign of Maurice, who initiated the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin on 15 August, and was participating in the Candlemass procession in 602 at the time of a food riot.¹¹

The Emperors sought to incorporate their imperial role into the religious life of the city, not as a capitulation to popular demand but as a way of adding strength to their imperial position. Imperial ceremony became more complex and more religiously-orientated. They encouraged and institutionalised the cult of the Theotokos which conveyed a sense of divine aid,¹² and Heraclius was to exploit this to the full. Even before the siege the Virgin had been prominent in events of his reign. Theophanes tells us that in 610 he sailed into the harbour of Constantinople with "icons of the Mother of God" as well as reliquaries on his ships.¹³ At another significant juncture, when he had been surprised by the Avars who threatened Blachernae briefly in 623; the Virgin's Robe was removed to S. Sophia for safe keeping. The deposition ceremony is described by a contemporary anonymous author who shows the Emperor fully involved in the liturgical life of the capital. Heraclius prays as a private citizen on his escape from the Avars then walks alongside the Patriarch to deposit the Robe at Blachernae.

"Then the worthy patriarch, again taking as his

Whitby).

¹¹ Theoph. p. 265.

¹² Cameron, 'Elites', p. 3-35, and 'Theotokos' p. 79-108.

¹³ Theoph. p. 298.

assistant our most pious emperor, again filled all the sacred place with greater care. He restored all the treasure contained therein, and appointing a fixed, or rather a named holy day, on which he nobly decided to restore the holy treasure to its own place, he called together in a lofty decree all the the assembly of patriarchs, the clergy and the laity, men and women and those holding offices and ranks, and all who lived in private life. 'Here, priests and people,' he said, ' see the greatness of Christ our God. Come and see the treasure till now hidden; here, prostrate yourselves before the most holy gift which the Theotokos has given the city for its safety".¹⁴

It is no suprise then, when Theophanes tells us that Heraclius took the Camuliana image with him to the East but left his family and capital to the care of the Virgin.¹⁵

Cameron writes that the siege of 626 "marked one of the most complete moments of unity ever realised in Constantinople".¹⁶ Heraclius was constantly in the minds of the people and was represented to them by Sergius. There was an intimate connection between Emperor, Patriarch and people all under the protection of the Virgin, which cemented the late sixth - century ideal of

¹⁴ Cameron, 'Robe', p. 599-600.

¹⁵ Theoph. p 303. See also G. P. *Exp. Per. I* 140-150.

¹⁶ Cameron, 'Elites', p. 6.

government. The Emperor was seen as an intercessionary between his people and God, but in order to do this effectively he is presented as familiar with the other important intercessionary, the Virgin. As Theodore Syncellus writes:

"For the Lord himself will fight for us and the Virgin Mother of God will be the defender of the city".¹⁷

Her role is a very real one for the populace. Sergius tells the Avars that her image over the Golden Gate means that "A woman the Mother of God will quell all your boldness and boasting with one command for she is truly the mother of him who drowned Pharoah with all his army in the Red Sea",¹⁸ an anticipatory analogy with the naval battle in the Golden Horn. He then adapts the prophet Isaiah(Isaiah XXXVII.35) "I will defend this city for me and my servant David", "For our emperor is a new David".¹⁹ Heraclius may have been absent from the capital but through his link with the Virgin he remains the prominent individual in the minds of the people, at least as much as Sergius or Bonus. He is at the centre of the religious and political loyalties of his people. George of Pisidia does not exclude Sergius from an important role in the invocation of the Virgin, "by giving and dispensing much on every side you first persauded her and she immediately persuaded the Son, and almost before the trial pronounced a judgement of victory for us".²⁰

¹⁷ Anon. Mai, p. 427 (trans. Cameron, 'Elites', p. 20).

¹⁸ Anon. Mai, p. 427 (trans. Cameron, 'Elites', p. 20).

¹⁹ Anon. Mai, p. 437 (trans. Cameron, 'Elites', p. 21).

²⁰ G. P. Bell. *Per.* 375.

If Heraclius was not out of mind he was certainly out of sight. His absence has been given various explanations. Amantos maintains that he was unable to reach Constantinople in time, but this is unconvincing as the reinforcements that Heraclius sent back from the East experienced no such difficulties. Bury, Pernice and Lambros' view that he was unwilling to give up all he had won in the past four years of campaigning against the Persians was dismissed by Stratos on the grounds that Heraclius had won back only Byzantine Armenia,²¹ but Stratos' objection misses the point. Heraclius did not return to the city because there was equally important fighting to be done elsewhere, and he was unwilling to risk being shut up in the city in whose defences and defenders he had faith. Indeed to have done so would have demonstrated success for the Persian strategy. This issue of the emperor's absence is presented in various ways in the ancient sources. His absent protection may be stressed, or his success in having able subordinates, or the whole issue may be minimalised by a concentration on the eastern theatre where Heraclius was directly involved. George of Pisidia describes his actions thus:

"In truth the most acute nature of our Lord did not neglect, though absent, to be present at our toils, but to such a degree was he near our cares as he was meantime distant from the area"(*Bell. Av.* 245)."He inflamed us by the carrying of letters" "sent out a multitude of an army and was neglectful of safety on his own part"(296).

²¹ Stratos, *Byzantium* I p. 175.

Heraclius' absence is not not so marked in George of Pisidia or George the Monk. George of Pisidia ends the *Bellum Avaricum* with Heraclius in the East.

" after enlisting fiery-bright allies (the Khazars)
he ranged them against the barbarians of
darkness in order that he might show the Tigris
and the Istrian Strait bloodied as before was the
stream of the Nile".²²

George is linking the two great victories of the Persian campaigns - at Nineveh on the Tigris over the Persians and in the Bosphorus over the Avars - the one achieved by Heraclius in person, the other by proxy, but both equally credited to the emperor and his guardianship of the new children of Israel by the allusion to Exodus. George the Monk begins his own brief section on the siege with Heraclius' reconciliation with the Avars and his advance East; the siege of Constantinople is then mentioned, while the next paragraph returns to describe Heraclius' great eastern campaigns. So he is at the centre of the story with the siege a (retrospective) side issue to the main glory. No personality gains a mention during the siege, we learn only that the citizens were troubled. Once more Heraclius is the flagbearer for his people carrying the fight to the enemy as a Christian, and building on glories of the recent past.

Theophanes also describes Heraclius' actions as having a

²² G. P. Bell. Av. lines 525-530.

constructive purpose. The emperor not only divides his army to ensure the defence of his capital but also to facilitate the full implementation of his overall strategy. His brother is sent to intercept Shahin and achieved a victory whose significance is confirmed by Theophanes stating that Shahin's corpse was subjected to indignities on Chosroes' orders upon its arrival in Persia.²³ In the meantime Heraclius himself marches to Lazica with the rest of the army to conclude a treaty with the Khazars, which will enable him to make further attacks upon the Persians.²⁴ Heraclius was engaged in an empire-wide struggle, as has already been emphasised, and hence required able assistants to achieve his various objectives.²⁵ This strategy was accepted by the inhabitants of the capital, at least according to George of Pisidia.

"it was necessity I think that so great a master should have such great servants for necessity who on learning the dispatch of wise counsels showed forth his words as deeds".²⁶

Accounts of the siege illustrate the significance of religious and imperial imagery to Heraclius, yet in the first instance it was a military threat, one which might cast doubt on the strategy and diplomacy of Heraclius that had allowed the Avars considerable leeway in the West in order to give the emperor the opportunity to

²³ Theoph. p. 315.

²⁴ Theoph. p. 315.

²⁵ Indeed, in Leo the Grammarian's presentation of the siege there is no mention of the Theotokos, and Bonus and Sergius are presented as leaders as the people were in their time of despair.

²⁶ For the contribution of Sergius see G. P. Bell. *Av.* 140-165 and 370-390, especially 380-390.

confront the Persians in the East. By 622, for his first Persian campaign, Heraclius had moved the majority of his Thracian forces to the East, so that he had to rely on Avar integrity and the strength of his land defences to protect what was left of the western Empire. The treachery of the Chagan is dwelt upon in all the sources that describe the Avar Surprise of 623 and the siege. This attitude has the effect of transferring the emphasis of their accounts away from Heraclius' improvidence and focusing it instead on the unscrupulous nature of the Avar commander. Heraclius' aim was to concentrate his forces on the defeat of the Persian threat, but in 626 the propensity of the Avars to surprise him was again realised and Constantinople faced a war on two fronts just as it had before the Avaro-Roman treaty of 623. The Avar Chagan mobilised his confederation of tribes including Slavs, Huns and Bulgars,²⁷ and after an unsuccessful attempt to take Thessalonica the Avar vanguard, numbering 30,000 men, arrived before the capital on 29 June,²⁸ to be followed by the Chagan a month later with the "whole of his horde".²⁹ This was the greatest immediate threat to the city, but not the only one. According to the *Chronicon Paschale* Shahbaraz was awaiting the Chagan, and George of Pisidia and Theophanes endorse this preconceived alliance.³⁰

This has been disputed by Barisic and Mango for different reasons.³¹ Barisic believes that the arrival of Shahbaraz at

²⁷ G. P. Bell. Av. 200.

²⁸ C. P. p. 717.

²⁹ C. P. p. 719.

³⁰ C. P. p. 716, G. P. Bell. Av. 195, and Theoph. p. 316.

³¹ Barisic, 'Le Siège', p. 390-391, and Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 107.

Chalcedon was only a diversion which was to paralyse Heraclius' offensive in Armenia and to show to the Constantinopolitans that that offensive was of no importance. He had with him no siege engines or fleet, so he could not take part in the siege. The Avars on the other hand were attracted by the opulence of the capital, with greed as their motivation since they were not satisfied by the wordly goods and treasures which they had received from the peace of 623. Barisic sees 626 as the synchronisation of two separate actions and not a military alliance. The Persian army was symbolic, no more than spectators. Mango also believes that the Persians were not there to fight, but offers a different explanation. He believes that Shahbaraz had already been turned against Chosroes II by the Roman diplomacy that Theophanes relates later.³² However, in 626 Shahbaraz was clearly seen by the Romans as a leading figure of opposition. He had burnt Chalcedon and its suburbs and sent envoys to the Chagan to deflate Roman morale; these had exchanged insults with George the Patrician and the Romans had later seen fit to mutilate them. It has also been argued that the earliest point for the betrayal of Chosroes by Shahbaraz to have been initiated would have been the return of the Roman army from the East under Theodore.³³ Also neither Barisic nor Mango explains why the Avar vanguard made almost immediately for Sycae to light fires that would signal their arrival to the Persians if the latter had no idea that they were to be arriving at all.³⁴ Furthermore neither takes into account the significance of the Bosphorus as a barrier to Persian aggression: the Persians had no fleet and all available craft would probably have been removed from the eastern shore by fleeing refugees or the

³² Theoph. p. 324.

³³ Whitby, tr. *Chronicon Paschale*, p.177 n.471.

³⁴ C. P. p. 718.

Roman navy. The Avars realised this problem and lost many men trying to solve it by ferrying the Persians across in the Slav *monoxyla*.

The aims of the besiegers were clear cut. In all earlier dealings with the Romans the Chagan had been happy with material concessions which never went as far as Constantinople. Now it was Constantinople, the spiritual and administrative centre of the Empire that he demanded. He wanted to dominate all of Thrace, he had already tried to take Thessalonica, and now he wanted the citizens of Constantinople to leave for Persian-controlled Asia with only a shirt and a cloak.³⁵ The Chagan seems to have had no doubts as to the inevitability of his victory, and the Persian position is emphasised by the silk shirts of their envoys whilst the terms offered to the Romans concern one shirt and a cloak. The Persian emissaries say that no Roman relieving army will arrive, and the Chagan echoes this belief in the desperate position of the Romans by asserting that they can only escape if "you can become fish and depart by sea or birds and ascend to the sky".³⁶ The Romans on the other hand were desperate for a peaceful end to the siege. They readily complied with more than one demand to victual the Chagan, and the deputation that they sent to him contained the three Patricians George, Theodosius and Athanasius, and Theodore the syncellus of Sergius the Patriarch (one of the narrators of the siege). However,

³⁵ C. P. p. 721-722.

³⁶ C. P. p. 721. The nomadic nature of the Chagans phrase is very similar to that of the Turkish Khagan when he talks about Avar fugitives (Men. Prot., frg. 4.2, 4-7). " They are not birds that can take to the sky to escape the swords of the Turks, nor are they fish that they can take to the water and hide in the depths of the sea".

they were equally determined not to surrender

"we will never relinquish the city for we came out to you in the expectation of discussing something material".³⁷

In the psychology of warfare Sergius is the equal of the Chagan, whose attempt to intimidate the population by a display of force on 29 July is met by a religious parade organised by Sergius,³⁸ although the Chagan was an impulsive violent and brutal man when the Persian emissaries are caught by "the efficacy of God" one of them is instantly beheaded one is mutilated and returned to the Chagan while another is executed later in front of his own people. The Romans can match the brutality of the barbarians, especially when it is calculated to have a dramatic psychological impact.

That their plight was serious but not yet desperate can be seen in the response of the notables to the return of Athanasius from a diplomatic mission to the Chagan before the siege had begun.³⁹ After he had given his report on the Avar's preparations for war Athanasius was accused of being in fear of the Chagan and of being prepared to conciliate him, an attitude which he defended:

"these had been his instructions from the most

³⁷ *C. P.* p. 722.

³⁸ *C. P.* p. 716.

³⁹ Contra Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 378, who believes that Athanasius was sent only after the Avars had arrived at Constantinople.

glorious officials at the time when he was dispatched on embassy, thereafter he had not learnt that the defences had been strengthened and that an army was present here".⁴⁰

This strengthening of the defences was the work of the Patrician Bonus and the Patriarch Sergius who had been left in joint command of the city. They were, however, guided in their actions by Heraclius' missives which he sent with a detachment of his army, and which instructed them to provision the city, repair the walls and overhaul the fleet. The Romans were preparing for a defensive strategy which would rely on the strength of their walls and the superiority of their fleet, to keep the Avar land forces at bay and to prevent an Avaro-Persian co-ordinated land and sea attack.

The initial Avar tactic was to pound the walls, concentrating their forces on the short (1 km) section between the Pempton Gate and the Polyandrion Gate.⁴¹ Their siege engines were obviously greatly feared by the Romans for the *Chronicon Paschale* preserves a story of a sailor who earned a personal reward from Bonus for utilising a mast and sail in such a way as to inconvenience the besiegers seriously.⁴² After the last round of negotiations with the four Roman ambassadors the Avars tried to make use of the potential of the Persians. Their attempt to ferry them across the Bosphorus was an unmitigated disaster. The Persians lost 4,000

⁴⁰ C. P. p. 718.

⁴¹ Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 380, and Theodore Syncellus p. 937-938. For a map of the walls of the city see Tsangadas, *Fortifications Maps* I-IV, and p. 80-106 for a discussion of the siege.

⁴² C. P. p. 720.

men,⁴³ and the Avars were forced to begin the final land assault with only the resources available to them on the Western shore. Due to a lacuna in the text of the *Chronicon Paschale* details of their preparations are unknown to us but it seems that Bonus was not so ignorant.⁴⁴ In the opinion of Theodore Syncellus the Chagan's objective for the assault of the 11 July was to breach the walls of the city with his land army while the canoes massed in the Bay of Keras allowed him access to the city itself.⁴⁵ It was not to be. Bonus stole the initiative by lighting the flares that the Slavs took to be the Chagan's signal to begin the attack. The mobility of the Slav canoes was restricted by their being roped together in order to present a firmer front to the heavier Roman vessels, and as a consequence many were sunk by a combination of the intrinsic superiority of the Roman ships and a gale.⁴⁶ The battle soon became a rout, so that although the Avars managed to capture the church at Blachernae on the 6 August they were in no position to maintain the siege. The heavy losses to the Slavs persuaded them to withdraw, a decision which must have been encouraged when the Chagan ordered the slaying of Slav fugitives from the naval battle and the Romans displayed decapitated Slav corpses from their ramparts.

The Slavs' retreat signalled not only the end of the siege but also the end of the Avar threat to Heraclius. The Chagan blamed his retreat on a lack of provisions and vowed to return.⁴⁷ Barisic

⁴³ Sebeos, Chp. 26.

⁴⁴ The account breaks off just before the description of this first naval engagement.

⁴⁵ Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 386.

⁴⁶ Niceph. 14.

⁴⁷ C. P. p. 725.

accepts that the Chagan may have arrived at the capital too soon to have made adequate preparations for the feeding of his men,⁴⁸ but Stratos is quick to refute this theory on the grounds that the Avar army could have been fed from Thrace, though he also says that the Avars did not have any organised supply system.⁴⁹ Stratos believes that the Avars withdrew because of the proximity of the Roman relieving army. Although the *Chronicon Paschale* does preserve the remark of Bonus to the Chagan that Theodore is coming and that he will speak to him on his own territory there is no evidence for a pursuit of the Avars and according to Nicephorus it is not until later that decade that the hostages which the Chagan had received in 623 were returned.⁵⁰ The Chagan had a large number of men in the field concentrated into a very localised area the resources of which are likely to have been harvested in advance by the besieged. Indeed some harvesting may have been going on when the Avars arrived.⁵¹ It is not inconceivable that famine and disease were not far from the minds of those in the Avar camp, and with every day the army of Theodore would have been getting closer whose arrival would have swung the advantage in favour of the Romans. However, the crucial factor in the immediate nature of the Avar retreat was the attitude of the Slavs to the defeat of 7 August. They had suffered heavy losses and seen their countrymen inhumanely treated by the Chagan.⁵² This reduced their morale to such a state that disorderly withdrawal seemed the best policy for survival. The

⁴⁸ Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 392.

⁴⁹ Stratos, *Byzantium* I p. 193.

⁵⁰ Niceph. 21.

⁵¹ As there had been at Thessalonikia, *Miriacula S. Demetrii* secs. 198-199.

⁵² For an opinion of the personality of the Chagan see Theodore Syncellus, Anon. Mai p. 5 and p.10.

Chagan now had to deal with the fragmentation of what had always been a loosely knit federation of subject tribes. If dispirited Slavs compelled him to retreat from Constantinople, discontented tribes further north made sure he never came back. The rebellion of the Moravian Slavs was now encouraged by the Franks to weaken their powerful neighbours. In Chapter 3 we discussed the effect that the rebellion of Samo may have had on the mind of the Chagan, and the Romans themselves were active diplomatically in attempting to induce the Serbs and Croats to move against the Avars.⁵³ According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the *De Administrando Imperio* Heraclius invited the Croats into the Balkans and settled them between the Drava and the Adriatic when they defeated the Avars. A little later the Serbs also sought Roman protection and were settled east of Croatia. Both peoples were converted to Christianity by missionaries sent from Rome at Heraclius' request.⁵⁴ However, it is difficult to regard this story as authentic since Heraclius was militarily occupied in the east for the remainder of his reign and there is every chance that the Serbs and Croats were able to take advantage of this and of the vulnerability of the Avars after 626 to claim land for themselves. Heraclius can more justifiably claim the credit for the diplomacy that saw the emergence of the Onogur Huns in the North Caucasus. An embassy of Huns to the Constantinopolitan court is documented in Nicephorus, who also reveals that they were successful against the Avars later in the reign.⁵⁵

Military reverse, shattered morale and long range diplomacy

⁵³ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* p. 59-60.

⁵⁴ *DAI*, Chp. 31 and 32.

⁵⁵ Niceph. 9 and 22.

were combining to weaken the power and prestige of the Avar Chagan, whereas the absent Heraclius could be accorded credit for these and eastern successes. The significance of what had happened in Constantinople had an empire-wide effect. Heraclius had answered critics of his decision to take personal command of the campaigning army, and had seen his faith in his strategy, and the defences of his capital, justified. The Chagan on the other hand now had to fight for his own political power-base, having failed to capture Constantinople. Barisic sees the whole episode as the triumph of weaker civilisation over stronger force.⁵⁶ It was more an example of a militarily disadvantaged city being reinforced by imagery and icons whose origins were firmly rooted in Late Roman history, and in which its emperor and population believed. Roman ideology and iconography, through their figurehead Heraclius, had been vindicated in their three essential senses; religion, politics and warfare. Heraclius' image could only benefit from this as he went on to consolidate and then supplement it in his final campaigns against Persia. His association with the Virgin and the effect of his dispatches from the east had strengthened Heraclius' personal image. The weakening of Avar power in the west was paralleled in the east as the emperor engineered the political divorce of Chosroes from his leading general Shahbaraz. Shahbaraz's defection and the subsequent neutralisation of his army allowed Heraclius to consolidate and then augment his achievements during the final years of his war against Persia.

⁵⁶ Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 394.

Heraclius and the Churches.

Heraclius' return of the True Cross to Jerusalem in 628/629 was the climax of his Persian campaign and a turning point of his reign. For the significance of the restoration should not be seen only in military terms. The cross had been taken from Jerusalem after its capture by the Persians in 615, and its return underlined the decisiveness of the Emperor's victory. However, in religious terms Heraclius' victory only returned him to square one in the imperial effort to reconcile the various Churches of Eastern Christendom. Heraclius had portrayed himself as the leader of Christendom during his campaigns for religious propaganda as much as to lift morale, but was now taking the earliest opportunity to heal the kind of rift that had involved Emperors since the Arian and Donatist disputes of Constantine's reign. This chapter will proceed bearing in mind the fact that Heraclius was facing an old problem and his solution must be compared with the earlier imperial attempts of Zeno, Justinian, Justin II and Maurice. This chapter will avoid a detailed discussion of the Arab invasions because I believe that Heraclius' religious problem was merely exacerbated by these, as it was between 610-629 when the Persians occupied much of the Eastern Empire. The Arabs will be seen as an external force in the dispute, not initiators but beneficiaries of a religious conflict which began before their invasion of 632. The dispute concerned the different beliefs of the Monophysites and the Chalcedonians, but it was not between them. Heraclius' attempts to find a common creed acceptable to all his

Christian subjects provoked the opposition of leading Chalcedonian clerics. It was their refusal to bow to imperial directives that began an argument that the Monophysites did not see the need to enter. The Monophysite historians *The Chronicle of 1234*, Michael the Syrian, John of Nikiu, and Sebeos, and the Nestorian texts the *Chronicle of Guidi* and the *Chronicle of Seert* do not mention it. The Monophysite interest in the religious affairs of Heraclius' reign concerns his personal life - they considered his second marriage to Martina to be incestuous - and allege that he persecuted them. Before we consider Heraclius' policy and reactions to it, it may be useful to summarise earlier Emperors' similar attempts, to illustrate some of the general problems Heraclius faced in his search for a solution, before moving on to the specifics of his case.

We have already mentioned the controversies of Constantine's reign, the Donatists and Arians, which were dealt with by an imperially convened church council whose decisions were backed up by imperial legislation.¹ The Council of Chalcedon (451) in the reign of Marcian which tackled the Nestorian dispute had decreed that Christ was consubstantial with both God and Man, and had two natures that were not confused or divided. This council also exiled Dioscorus, the main influence on the Monophysite synod of Ephesus (449). The Emperor Zeno tried a compromise policy, using an imperial decree, in his Henotikon in 482.² The problem now was not Arians, or Nestorians, but Monophysites whose cause had been aided by the coup of Basiliscus (475) who issued a decree

¹ See Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* p. 224-244.

² See Chadwick, *Church*, for a general narrative of Church history.

against the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo which was the basis of that council's decisions. However, this policy was not popular in Constantinople, and was opposed by the Patriarch Acacius. Basiliscus, realising his error, tried to retract by issuing the Anti - Encyclical but this did not end the problem. It simply bought him time which was to no avail as Zeno reoccupied the capital. Zeno then implemented a new policy for bringing peace to a divided Church. His advisers were from each side of the quarrel, the Patriarch of Constantinople and Peter Mongus the assistant to Timothy Aelurus, the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria. Compromise was the order of the day. Zeno hoped that by ignoring but not contradicting Chalcedon, the Monophysites and Chalcedonians would agree to differ, and that a common acceptance of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople would suffice to bind the two together. The Henotikon (481) was a letter from Zeno to the Church of Egypt.³ It condemned by anathema Nestorius and Eutyches, it stressed the acceptability of doctrines formulated by Nicaea and Constantinople and anathematised anybody who made doctrinal innovations "at Chalcedon or elsewhere".⁴ It was not a success. The mention of Chalcedon seemed to allow Monophysites the licence to denounce that council and the Tome of Leo, and whilst it conciliated the moderates amongst them it did nothing to reconcile the extremists. All this was achieved at the cost of a schism with Rome. Both Basiliscus and Zeno had asserted the right of the Emperor to dictate to the Church on matters of doctrine. This was a power the Pope himself had not yet assumed, and Pope Simplicius excommunicated Acacius and Peter Mongus (now Patriarch of Alexandria).

³ Chadwick, *Church*, p. 205-208.

⁴ Bury, *HLRE* I p. 430.

The reign of Justinian saw another attempt to reconcile Monophysites with Chalcedonians. He was an Emperor who "took his responsibilities as head of the Church more seriously than any emperor had hitherto done, and asserted his authority in its internal affairs more constantly and systematically...".⁵ Procopius says that he was determined "to close all the roads which lead to error and to place religion on the firm foundations of a single faith".⁶ Persecution was the first means to achieving this. Heretics, especially the Montanists of Phrygia and the Manichees were deprived of some rights of citizenship and the Jews and Samaritans too were discriminated against. Paganism was finally extinguished in Justinian's reign through a series of inquisitions at Constantinople, and the profession of orthodoxy being made compulsory for public teaching. According to Maas, Justinian was acting on political and ideological principles.⁷ Justinian believed in the uniformity of worship. He was prepared to persecute not only pagans, but heretics and homosexuals. In doing so Justinian was seeking to avoid the wrath of God that he thought he would invoke if he did not rigorously enforce the law. Maas links the three purges of the reign with relevant events. The first purge in 529 was made to ensure that the rest of the reign was a success. The second purge was conducted after the plague of 542, and was an attempt to purify the empire and in doing so restore God's favour to it. The final purge of 561 was a response to political instability, both in the capital, and in

⁵ Bury, *HLRE* II p. 360.

⁶ Procopius, *Buildings* i 1.

⁷ Maas, *John Lydus* p. 73-82. See also Chuvín, *Last Pagans* p. 113-148.

Thrace, where the Huns were raiding. Justinian was also prepared to exploit the charge of "paganism" for political ends. Maas uses Phocas as an example of a highly distinguished civil-servant who was a victim of the purges of 529 and 545-6 because he did not meet Justinian's requirements for his absolutist government.

The Monophysite problem was more complex. Zeno's attempt at reconciliation had led to a schism with Rome. This had been healed during the reign of Justin I when Pope Hormisdas had succeeded in holding a synod in Constantinople where all Monophysite bishops were expelled from their sees and the names of Zeno, Acacius and Anastasius amongst others, were removed from the diptychs of the Church. All that was left for Justin I to do was to carry out a general persecution of Monophysite believers, which led to the expulsion of more than fifty bishops including Severus of Antioch. Justinian decided against a continuation of this policy and in 529 recalled Monophysite bishops from exile. Yet a conference at Constantinople in 531 yielded no results, nor did his attempt to unite the Church via the doctrine of the Theopaschite formula that God suffered for mankind, and which, dealing as it did with the Holy Trinity, touched, but did not tackle, the main bone of contention between Monophysites and Chalcedonians, whether or not Christ was of one or two Natures. After a persecution conducted by Ephrem of Antioch, which was as unsuccessful as that of Justin I, Justinian looked for a compromise solution. This time he sought to unite Monophysites and Chalcedonians against a common enemy, Nestorianism and one of its leading proponents, Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). In 543-544 Justinian drew up an edict which condemned Theodore, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the

separate authors of treatises which for the sake of convenience became known as the Three Chapters; the latter two bishops had in fact been cleared of heretical tendencies at Chalcedon. In acting against these individuals Justinian was removing a serious Monophysite objection to Chalcedon, for Chalcedonians would no longer seem to countenance Theodore who was in disagreement with their great thinker Cyril. The four eastern patriarchs signed the edict but the procrastinating Pope Vigilius had to be removed to Constantinople forcibly in 545 to condemn the Three Chapters (548), having convened a council to discuss the issue. Justinian continued to dictate to the Church. In 551 he issued a statement of True Faith and in 553 he summoned an Oecumenical Council to Constantinople.

However, he was to be opposed. The established doctrine of the Western Church was being called into question and the western bishops were not about to meekly accept an alteration to it. Balkan bishops denounced Justinian's scheme in 550 as being against the faith. The African bishops attended Constantinople in order to combat the imperial plan. There were no Italian bishops save from Milan and Rome, and none from further west. Vigilius had to issue a document of support for the Oecumenical Council even though he had not been in attendance, having remained under house arrest. Justinian's achievement was minimal. In the west the papacy was out of communion with Milan for nearly twenty years and in Africa Justinian's religious policy was unpopular and resented. In the east the Monophysites were unimpressed by the condemnation of the Three Chapters and so the main objective of the council was not achieved. Indeed a council of the Syriac church of Persia in 554

added new life to the Nestorian outlook of that church. Justinian had only been successful in his attempts to force Patriarchal and Papal ratification for a policy whose impotence can only be evaluated by what it meant to the church at large and not to a group of coerced ecclesiastics. The Fifth Oecumenical Council broke new ground in that the question that it pronounced upon was one which had been artificially created.⁸ It is more important for its political implications than its result, since Justinian had successfully made a claim to the theological guidance of the church. Zeno had looked in this direction but he had only sought to suppress controversy, not to take a new step in formulating doctrine.

Justin II continued to look for a non-coercive solution to bring about reconciliation.⁹ He and his wife Sophia (like Justinian's Theodora before her) were sympathetic to the Monophysite cause, though, as Cameron points out, this information comes from a Monophysite source, Michael the Syrian.¹⁰ Corippus included part of the creed that Justin II had decreed should become part of the liturgy, in his poem to celebrate the emperor's assumption of the consulate.¹¹ Nevertheless, in 566 a three-way conference met to try and find a permanent Christological middle ground. It was made up of Tritheists, conventional Monophysites and Chalcedonians. A reconciliation was achieved between the two groups of Monophysites and they themselves put forward proposals for compromise; "out of two natures one", Cyril's Twelve Anathemas to be canonised, the

⁸ Herrin, *Formation* p. 116-127.

⁹ See Cameron, 'Early Religious Policies', p. 51-67.

¹⁰ Cameron, 'Early Religious Policies', p. 52-53.

¹¹ Corippus, *In laudem Iustini* Bk. IV lines 290-311.

acceptance of Zeno's Henotikon and the restoration of Severus of Antioch to the diptychs. In return they were prepared to drop the current Patriarch of Antioch, Paul, and accept Anastasius.¹² In order to accommodate these demands Justin II removed the discussions away from the Chalcedonian stronghold of Constantinople to the East. However, the extremist monks present at the assembly in the convent of Mar Zakai upset this premise for discussion by a riot, demanding a complete rejection of Chalcedon, not merely the aspects of it that could be implied from the Henotikon, and a complete rejection of the Tome of Leo. The chaotic end to the conference did not weaken Justin II's resolve.¹³ A series of discussions were held at Constantinople in 569-570, and their result, the Henotikon of Justin II, did not condemn Chalcedon explicitly, but it still proved acceptable to most Monophysite moderates. However, Justin II's attitude had changed and he began a persecution of the Monophysites that is chronicled in John of Ephesus, but not in any of the Chalcedonian sources.¹⁴ Unfortunately for Heraclius this policy was continued by Justin II's successors.

John of Ephesus writes that this persecution continued into the reign of Tiberius, although the emperor was constrained to issue an edict of toleration in order to maintain his alliance with the Monophysite Ghassanid Arabs.¹⁵ Maurice was to continue a strict Chalcedonian policy in his own reign, when the population of Syria was persecuted under the aegis of Domitian, bishop of Miletene.¹⁶

¹² Evagrius V.4.

¹³ Allen, *Evagrius* p. 22-25.

¹⁴ John of Ephesus ii. 5-7.

¹⁵ John of Ephesus iii. 15-16 on the persecution, and iv. 42 on the edict.

Another anti-Monophysite incident concerning the bridge at Ctesiphon, not only lost the Byzantines their vital alliance with the Ghassanid Arabs, which was crucial to the security of the Empire, but also the trust of the local people who not only benefited from their military presence which kept at bay Lakhmid raids but who also identified with their religious cause. Maurice was to have made an attack upon the Persians with Ghassanid aid but was prevented from doing so by the bridge over the Tigris being down. Maurice blamed his allies and had their leader al-Mundhir exiled to Sicily.¹⁷ These actions left the Monophysite historian John of Nikiu in no doubt that the heresy of the Emperor Maurice "was responsible for every evil in his reign".¹⁸

The reign of Phocas did nothing to close this widening rift. The campaigns of Chosroes II and the religious policy that followed in their wake only strengthened the Monophysite cause. Monophysites did not actively aid the Persians as the Jews and Samaritans did but they did benefit from their victories. Chosroes made it his policy to replace Chalcedonian bishops with Monophysite ones. The Monophysites and Nestorians were given the status of a majority religion in their own spheres of influence.

So, if Heraclius' triumphant arrival in Constantinople in 610 was not representative of the political realities of the time, for we have seen in an earlier chapter how precarious his military position was both internally and externally when he ascended the throne, his

¹⁶ 1234 p. 218.

¹⁷ John of Ephesus iii.40-41.

¹⁸ John of Nikiu, CI. 5.

religious problems were no less great. However, he could not even begin to formulate a solution to these until he had extinguished the military threat to both his eastern and western borders. Until then his relationship with the Church would have to be made secondary to his military endeavours. The two were not, however, entirely separate preoccupations. The panegyrics of George of Pisidia always strive to show Heraclius the soldier as a Christian warrior defending the Faith. "In likeness of Moses you campaign against the second Pharoah".¹⁹ In Theophanes the cause of Christianity is never far away, either in the diplomatic exchanges or for inspiration before a battle. "I will have no mercy upon you until you renounce He who was crucified and worship the sun" threatens Chosroes.²⁰ Heraclius on the other hand exhorts his troops with a description of the Persian atrocities: "They take great pleasure in defiling our churches which should not suffer".²¹ The link between military campaigning and religion was not solely one of propaganda and morale-boosting since there was a far more material angle to the relationship. Heraclius had ascended the throne only to find himself very short of money, as an anecdotal story of lost treasure in Nicephorus reflects.²² With the military pressure on his eastern border increasing annually he is said by Nicephorus to have considered a move back to Africa, only to be dissuaded from this by Sergius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Sergius had already shown himself to be a shrewd judge of character when in 612 he made every objection and yet still blessed the marriage of Heraclius and Martina which, in common with much of the Empire, he deemed to be incestuous. Sergius was to illustrate his

¹⁹ G.P. *Exp. Per.* 135.

²⁰ Theoph. p. 301.

²¹ Theoph. p. 304.

²² Niceph. 8.

confidence in Heraclius' fitness to rule by his offer in 619 to loan the state the church plate in order that it might supplement its dwindling resources in an attempt to boost the war effort. This extra source of bullion seems to have been the spur that Heraclius needed to switch from diplomacy to all-out attack in the East.²³ The church treasure was made available only as a loan and there was an express obligation to repay it once the war was over. The Patriarch's involvement was to go even further, for when Heraclius departed for the east he left Sergius and the Patrician Bonus in dual charge of the city.²⁴ The role the city of Constantinople played in the Persian campaigns and the importance of new liturgies in that role will be discussed in a separate chapter concerned with the siege of 626. What we are interested in here is the relationship between Heraclius and Sergius that is crucial for developments in the 630's, the date which we can establish as the beginning of a concerted religious policy by the emperor. Until that point Heraclius' interest in the church was confined to Asia Minor and expressed by acts of personal devotion rather than statesmanship.

His victory in 629 was to change his approach, but this change was not a sudden one which can be put down to personal devotion. It was a political as well as a religious gesture. Heraclius in 629 was able for the first time to rule over a fully restored empire. However, this in itself threw up new problems which he had not had to face in the first nineteen years of his reign, since until 629 Heraclius had only dealt with the Chalcedonian church. This was a result of the Persian invasions whose extent meant that the main

²³ Theoph. p. 303, Niceph 11-12.

²⁴ Theoph. p. 303.

centres of Monophysite belief were out of Byzantine control. We have already seen how Chosroes II adopted a policy of encouraging the Monophysite church, which gave that church renewed vigour for it now controlled all the sees under Persian rule save those formerly held by the Nestorian Church. Whilst Heraclius could not allow this state of affairs to continue once he had regained control of the provinces, being under pressure from the Chalcedonians of Asia Minor, he would also be aware of the delicate nature of the situation. Monophysite or not, the provincials were the subjects his proto-crusade had come to save. In the poems of George of Pisidia we have no Chalcedonian rhetoric, only staunchly Christian themes. It seems that from the very beginning of Heraclius' relations with the Eastern Christians he was in no mood to ride roughshod over them. This is, however, at variance with a Monophysite source, the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian. In his narration of the relationship between Heraclius and the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius, Michael maintains that after Heraclius had sent a confession of faith to Athanasius he met the prelate at Hierapolis. Their discussions came to naught whereupon Heraclius grew frustrated and ordered the persecution of the Monophysites.²⁵ This attitude would appear to be out of step with Heraclius' attitude to the religious problems of his time. If he resorted to force almost instantaneously why do we have the *Psephos* and the *Ecthesis* from later in the decade, documents which caused determined opposition from Sophronius, a hard-line Chalcedonian. Furthermore the see of Antioch (Chalcedonian Church) was left vacant until 639. Unless an agreement had been reached, or no solution seemed possible,

²⁵ Michael the Syrian, XI. iii (Chabot, p. 412).

Heraclius would have filled it. What seems more likely is that discussions were under way that were terminated by the death of Athanasius in 631, and not by an inflexible stance by either party. That Heraclius left the Patriarchate of Antioch open for so long is testimony to his determination to create a unified Church in his Empire.

However, in his dealings with the Jews Heraclius was far less diplomatic. The *Chronicle of 1234* has one example and Theophanes another of the emperor showing magnanimity towards the people who had taken part in the slaughter of the Christians of Jerusalem in 614. Heraclius prevented his brother Theodore from massacring the Jewish inhabitants of Edessa,²⁶ and then progressed to Tiberias where he is said by Theophanes to have converted the Jew Benjamin to Christianity.²⁷ However, Theophanes is not telling the full story. The *Doctrina Jacobi* tells of a persecution of the Jews that involved their forced conversion to Christianity.²⁸ This makes sense of Theophanes' remark that Heraclius "warned" (he was presumably threatened with physical violence) Benjamin before he converted him. Dagron believes that this is an example of an individual forced conversion before the collective one began. Indeed Eutychius says that Heraclius massacred all the Jews that he could find in Jerusalem and Galilee.²⁹ The extent of the forced baptisms is not known, Michael the Syrian only says that the Jews fled the edict all over the empire.³⁰ Evidence of the persecution in general comes from the

²⁶ 1234 p. 235-236.

²⁷ Theoph. p. 329.

²⁸ Dagron, 'Juifs', p. 28.

²⁹ Eutychius, *Annales*, p.107-109.

³⁰ Michael the Syrian, XI, iv (Chabot, p. 414).

poem of Qilir which, composed from a Jewish perspective, was written between the reconquest of Heraclius and the Arab invasions. The head of the Jewish community in Palestine is murdered by a Persian general but then Heraclius arrives and begins a persecution and a programme of forced baptisms.³¹ As we hear of no pro-Jewish sentiment from the Monophysite writers that were normally quick to criticise Heraclius we may assume that his policy was only resented amongst the Jewish community. Heraclius may have found it easy to cow that sector of the population with coercion but more subtle methods were necessary if he was to find a lasting solution to the Christian divisions within his empire.

In 629 he used what had been the only unifying force in the East for the last twenty-seven years, war against the Persians, to make an impression on the minds of Chalcedonians and Monophysites alike. The Christian struggle versus Persia ended in 628 and since Heraclius had placed himself at the forefront of it to a very personal degree his prestige was very high. Heraclius must have believed that if he could unify the Christians in the Empire to fight the Persians he could use his personality to do the same in the search for a united Church. For Heraclius then, the restoration of the Holy Cross was not only a means of celebrating the end of a war but also of signifying to his Monophysite subjects a new approach of conciliation and assimilation by the Emperor. The capture of Jerusalem and the loss of the True Cross to the Persians in 615 had been a disaster for all the Christian communities of the Empire, so that in celebrating its restoration Heraclius was symbolising by his

³¹ Dagron, 'Juifs', p. 27.

success the benefits of a united Church and his own suitability for the task of creating one. The restoration also had a personal significance for Heraclius, since he was aware that his marriage in 612 to Martina was considered incestuous by both Monophysites and Chalcedonians alike. The restoration took place with Martina at his side in order to demonstrate the Christian legitimacy of the marriage. This did not stop Monophysites criticising the marriage, but it must have gone some way to develop its credibility in the minds of his sceptical subjects.³²

So in 629 Heraclius was a suitable emperor to attempt a policy of religious unification, having personal prestige and the sound advice of Sergius who was himself highly acclaimed by the population of Constantinople for his role in the siege. That someone so aptly suited to the task managed to spark off a long running dispute is an indication of the strength of feeling of the extremists with whom it was always necessary to deal if the proposed solutions were to have any validity whatsoever. Zeno had managed to convince the moderate Monophysites of the value of his policy. Heraclius was to experience something of the same but in his case the opposition came from Chalcedonian extremists, as it had done in the reign of Justinian. Heraclius could not afford to ignore the Monophysite Church for it was in a commanding position in his newly reconquered territories. The only Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria were Monophysite, as was the Catholicus of Armenia. Fortunately Sergius was not a narrow thinker. Indeed he was a Syrian of Monophysite parentage.

³² See Chp. 4.

The policy that he and Heraclius worked out over a period of time was a positive notion, not a condemnation of an earlier theology which the Fifth Oecumenical Council had been. Heraclius' tactic was to superimpose a new creed which was acceptable to both churches because it did not condemn the beliefs of either but instead added to their theology. The first of these new creeds was monenergism, which was the doctrine of one energy in Christ. This doctrine avoided any discussion of His nature, for if it could be commonly accepted that Christ had one energy then Heraclius would have circumvented the need to debate the issue of Christ's nature to establish a common creed. It had convinced ecclesiastics before 630; Paul The One-Eyed, the leader of the "headless" Armenian Monophysites in Cyprus (623), Cyrus of Lazica in 626, and in 625 the Catholicus of Armenia; this led to a synod at Theodosiopolis in 633 that ended in union with Constantinople being agreed. Further steps seemed to have been taken in Egypt in 633 when the bishop of Phasis, Cyrus, who was the leader of a group of moderate Monophysites (Theodosians) won his flock over to monenergism with the help of a (forged) patristic florilegium attributed to the sixth century Patriarch Menas. Union was celebrated in June of 633.

However, this time the opposition was to come from the Chalcedonians. It was led by Sophronius who was at the outset of the dispute one of the last of the monks who practiced *xeniteia* (wandering).³³ He was a native of Damascus but had a deep feeling of gratitude towards the Church of Egypt whose saints Cyrus and John had cured his ophthalmia. Nevertheless he was a staunch

³³ See von Schönborn, *Sophrone*, and Chadwick, 'Sophronius', p. 41-74 for a discussion of his career.

Chalcedonian in an area where it had few supporters. When John the Almsgiver arrived in Alexandria from Cyprus in c.604 he supposedly found only seven Chalcedonian churches.³⁴ Sophronius was present in Alexandria when the union between the Theodosians and Constantinople was made. He was disconcerted at this compromise and went to Constantinople to plead his case before Sergius. This defence of a strict Chalcedonian position attracted considerable popular support in the capital and Sergius felt compelled to issue a new formulation that stressed the unity of the word (*logos*) as the force responsible for directing both the spiritual and human natures of Christ, and forbade debate over his energies or energy.

This brief document is known as the *Psephos* and also included the theory of Monothelitism, that is Christ's one will. This was a doctrine that could also be acceptable to Monophysites. Sergius was not abandoning Monenergism, but after the opposition of Sophronius, he must have felt it necessary to extend areas of compromise in order to embrace more Monophysites with a theory that was also acceptable to Chalcedonians. He was now attempting to resolve the problem created by the Gospel stories of the Gethsamene prayer. As Jesus said "Not My will but Thine will be done" there might seem to be a difference between his human and the divine will of God. Sergius offered the same interpretation of this prayer as St. Athanasius and John Chrysostom, that Jesus manifested an instinctive movement of his body in a moment of weakness which created opposition between human desire and his divine will. Thus Sergius could claim that Jesus had only one will which was in line

³⁴ Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints, Life of John* Chp. 5.

with the hypostatic unity of his person. The whole incident was held up as evidence of the one divine will in the Trinity.

Sergius circulated this formulation to all the eastern patriarchs and to the Pope, Honorius I (625-638), with a letter describing the union achieved at Alexandria. By respecting the Chalcedonian wording in "two natures" and by supporting the idea of Christ's single energy taken from the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius Sergius got general acceptance for his *Psephos*. The Pope stated his agreement for the need to end discussion and also his belief in Christ's one will. Maximus the Confessor also praised Sergius and Sophronius was satisfied by the withdrawal of the Alexandrian statement on Monenergism. The vacant see of Jerusalem was filled by Sophronius who almost immediately created division after his recent acquiescence in the argument. In a letter announcing his election he issued a dogmatic statement outlining the weakness of the Monothelite argument. It was not sent to Antioch or to Alexandria for Sophronius was not a man interested in compromise, and he had already seen the stubborn nature of the Egyptians. "The Egyptians are not a race to change their minds".³⁵ The Patriarch of Antioch was a Monophysite and Sophronius, unlike Sergius, had no wish to involve the Monophysites in what he saw as a purely Chalcedonian dispute. Honorius was bound by his statement on Christ's one will and so with no other church leader on his side Sophronius could either keep silent or open a new schism, which would effectively further retard steps to unify the Christian church. He did not remain silent, but instead tried to get the whole issue discussed at a church synod. However, he must have realised that

³⁵ In Sophronius, 'Laudatio SS. Cyri et Joannis', p. 3573B.

his own influence was not enough to convene a sufficient number of bishops for he wrote to Arcadius, bishop of Cyprus, asking him to organise the gathering.³⁶ This met in the mid-630's under the cover of discussing the Trisagion - a doxology which subordinated the Son and the Spirit to the Father,³⁷ a cornerstone of Monophysite belief - but Sophronius' Chalcedonian views were debated. Sophronius was far from carrying the day. The forty-six bishops present could not decide and referred matters to Heraclius. Sophronius realised that he was not going to make any headway in the east and so sent his envoy Stephen of Dora to Rome. Honorius was still immovable in his belief in Christ's one will, whilst Heraclius and Sergius were not inactive.

They added a further elaboration to the *Psephos*, an imperial edict issued in 638 by Heraclius. This *Ecthesis* was thus to be observed by all Byzantine subjects Monophysite and Chalcedonian alike, and rather than answering Sophronius' criticism of the *Psephos* the new document rebuffed him by ignoring him. Heraclius and Sergius chose instead to produce a general compromise for Christians rather than a precise definition of faith for Chalcedonians. The compromise was, however, a failure because it did not go far enough in what it said, only in what it wanted to achieve. It was a brief three page definition in which too little was said and too much was left out. There was inevitable opposition from Sophronius and the Papacy was equally unimpressed, although monks such as the abbot of the monastery of Philippicus, were Chalcedonian supporters of the *Ecthesis*. Indeed that abbot, Pyrrhus was to become Patriarch

³⁶ Albert and Von Schonborn, 'La Lettre de Sophrone', p. 189-243.

³⁷ Frend, *Monophysite* p. 167-168.

of Constantinople when Sergius died in 638.

The *Ecthesis* was a new definition of Christ's one will, based on the hypostatic union of Father and Son and was an elaboration on the *Psephos* as a development of Monothelitism. But now Sergius had a new opponent. Maximus the Confessor had welcomed the *Psephos* in 633-634, but he had since reconsidered Monothelite theology.³⁸ Sophronius had compiled a list of six hundred citations against it and Maximus too criticised Sergius' analysis of the Gethsamene prayer. Sergius had denied Christ's human will and so reduced his saving role in the redemption of mankind. Maximus preferred to stress the full humanity of Christ, and who therefore possessed a human will: but his human will did not operate in opposition to his divine will, even if the two wills were distinct they would always cooperate. Maximus only began to argue his point after the death of Sergius, that is in the 640's when a growing number of Monophysites were causing consternation in the west having fled there as refugees from the Arab invasions.³⁹ The African and Italian churches were unsure and unwilling to assimilate them, seeing them as heretics, and reluctant to compromise their position further. Honorius also died in 638, without formulating a response to the *Ecthesis* and whilst Imperial forces controlled the Lateran Palace to ensure the election of a compliant successor, Maximus' defiance in Africa was illustrative of the weakness of the *Ecthesis* as a unifying edict. The new Pope John IV condemned it out of hand and Heraclius died before he could attempt to revitalise a flagging position.

³⁸ Brock, 'Maximus The Confessor', p. 317.

³⁹ See Haldon, 'Maximus', p. 87-91 on the end of his career.

What we have seen so far is the refusal to compromise of a few hardline Chalcedonians. It makes similar reading to Justinian's problems surrounding the Fifth Oecumenical Council. Neither he nor Heraclius were allowed to toy with the tenets of the Chalcedonian faith. The opposition to Heraclius like that for Justinian was from high-ranking prelates, including the Papacy, but the boundaries of the dispute went further than the minds of a handful of learned men. It is now necessary to expand the limits of our perspective and take in what exactly the dispute meant to the people whose lives Heraclius was trying to enhance, the provincials of the east. Their participation in and reaction to the dispute is important for an evaluation of its significance before we try to take on board the implications of the Arab invasions with which the dispute is often closely linked.

Throughout the dispute there is no mention of any Monophysite prelates' involvement in the argument. It is true that the Tome of Union (633) came out of a synod attended by Coptic, Theodosian and Julianist bishops but that was only the signal for the beginning of Chalcedonian opposition. The reaction of the Coptic church was symbolised by its patriarch Benjamin. Before the defeat of the Persians he had, with their support, dominated the Christian communities of Egypt. However when Heraclius appointed Cyrus as Patriarch of Alexandria in 631 Benjamin's position was effectively undermined. Not only had he been passed over in the candidature for patriarch but Cyrus was a Chalcedonian with a role that united both Imperial administration and religious policy. Benjamin was left

in no doubt as to his future role and retired to the desert monasteries. There was no attempt to take from him his purely Monophysite title, it was simply made obsolete by the renewed dominance of a Chalcedonian church led by Cyrus. The dispute between Chalcedonians could only have a negative effect on the church of Egypt. This was a region where division and separation were never far away. During the invasions of both Nicetas and the Persians we have examples in John of Nikiu of varying stances of political support. The most important comment on the Arab invasions comes from John, when he mentions the behaviour of Cyrus towards the Arabs. This is only in the context of local resistance to the invasions and has nothing to do with Cyrus' position as head of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt.⁴⁰ Cyrus was trying to buy peace and the people would have none of it (CXX. 26) and, indeed, John only mentions two Coptic defectors to the Arab cause and also recounts their speedy return to the Byzantine side (CXIV. 6-7, 9-11). He does not say the Arabs fought against the Chalcedonians but instead that they warred "against the Christians" (CXV. 1). John gives us no reason for asserting that the Copts welcomed the arrival of the Arabs as a matter of religious particularism, he does state that half the inhabitants of Lower Egypt rushed to join the Muslims (CIX) but not because they were or were not Copts, and it is more likely that Cyrus' harsh administration had more to do with local dissatisfaction and reluctant resistance, than his Chalcedonian beliefs.

The other Monophysite stronghold of Syria was equally

⁴⁰ Frend, *Monophysite*, p. 349 -353 for the view that the appointment of Cyrus was "a far-reaching and ultimately disastrous decision".

unaffected by the Monenergist/Monothelite dispute. The Syriac chroniclers do not dwell on it even if they mention it. Neither 1234 nor Michael the Syrian, nor the chroniclers outside the empire, the *Guidi Chronicle* and the *Chronicle of Seert* mention the Monothelite dispute. This may be because they had only a broad conception of Chalcedonians and any disagreement between them did not stop the Monophysites being inveterate enemies of the "orthodox faith". Indeed this would explain Michael's assertion that following an argument between Heraclius and Isaiah the metropolitan of Edessa, the emperor began a persecution of the Monophysites.⁴¹ As this is Michael's (misguided) line of argument it would not make sense for him to include details of a dispute that concerned exactly how far Heraclius could go in compromising with the very people that Michael would claim he is persecuting. Bar Hebraeus is only concerned with the Arab invasions when narrating the events of Heraclius' reign. Religion is only mentioned when he relates Heraclius' knowledge and opinion of Islam, that it was "an early cloudy dawn". The marriage of Heraclius and Martina is presented as a transgression of the law, but Bar Hebraeus does not mention the restoration of the Cross, only the inevitability of Arab victory directly after his comment on the Imperial marriage. This marriage which is dated to 613/614 is mentioned by other chroniclers when they discuss the events of 629-630. The greatest significance of the silence of Monophysite authors is that it underlines Heraclius' lack of success in achieving any widespread unification - the people whom he was attempting to conciliate preserved no mention of his initiative.

⁴¹ 1234 p. 236, and Michael the Syrian, XI. iii (Chabot, p. 408) for a similar version.

By advancing a creed that all Monophysites could embrace Heraclius would have attracted attention if he had been successful. As it was he could not even get his compromise past Chalcedonian opposition. It is true that Heraclius may have only attracted such opposition because of the extent to which he was prepared to go to find a permanent common ground between the two churches, but equally such opposition could be inspired by the slightest alteration to Chalcedonian belief. Theophanes voiced Chalcedonian fears when he says of the Monophysites:

"when the party of Severus read it [the *Ecthesis*] they dragged the reputation of the Catholic Church through the taverns and bathhouses saying "The Chalcedonians formerly were pro-Nestorian then they turned toward the truth, joining us in the one nature of Christ through his one energy".⁴²

Nicephorus does not mention the religious problems of the reign in terms of a divided Chalcedonian church. He is content to blame Heraclius' incestuous marriage for the ills that befell the empire.⁴³ The *Chronicon Paschale* only mentions Martina once, and that is in a notice of who accompanied Heraclius on his campaign of 624.⁴⁴ This implies that this Constantinopolitan source did not approve of the

⁴² Theoph. p. 330.

⁴³ Niceph. 11.

⁴⁴ C.P. p. 714.

marriage, for it otherwise would have given its usual amount of attention to an event concerning the imperial family in the capital.⁴⁵ This is not surprising as the *Chronicon Paschale's* text ends in 628 and so would have no occasion to refer to Heraclius' efforts at doctrinal compromise.

Heraclius' need for a successful compromise is often exaggerated by the effect on the Empire of the Arab invasions. His policy of religious reunification was well underway by 636 and the Battle of the Yarmuk. The invasions of the Arabs were no more than an additional harassment to a policy that was itself beset with problems from the outset. A tradition of beligerence in opposition to Imperial attempts at reconciliation made Heraclius' initiative unlikely to succeed. Theophanes with hindsight can only say about the *Ecthesis* "thinking he was doing something great he promulgated the edict" (p. 330). The need to pay back the Church so soon after the final military victory prevented Heraclius from making concessions to the provincials he had just liberated from Persian rule, and so negated the high personal prestige that he had accrued over the past six years. The Arab invasions destroyed any hope of the *Ecthesis* achieving any more than the *Psephos*. Heraclius himself admitted that Syria was lost in 636. The church that he left behind there would no more follow his religious lead than it could his political directives. That is the importance of the Arab invasions. They were a hindrance to the success of Heraclius' religious policy but they did not instigate it, nor were they the cause of its failure.

⁴⁵ For example the death of Eudocia, *C.P.* p. 702-703.

"A CLOUDY DAWN."¹

The Arab invasions which saw the loss of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia during Heraclius' reign, and the whole of Egypt shortly after his death, brought to nought all attempts to reunify the empire. The sweeping nature of the conquests questions his statesmanship after the Persian campaigns, as the provinces that he had recently won back quickly fell from his grasp once more. That the Romans went from a position of dominance to one of retreat in such a short space of time would seem to indict the actions of Heraclius. Stratos wrote that had Heraclius died in 630 "he would have been regarded as one of the greatest leaders of history" but "alas for him, for Byzantium and Hellenism he survived",² with the implication that a different ruler could have done better. The Arab conquests are often discussed as a distinct historical phenomenon, opinions about why they began, and why they succeeded being based on an Arabian view that looks outwards, north and east. A brief chronological outline of events will provide us with a historical washing line upon which we can hang an analysis of the sources that to varying degrees play the part of Heraclius' dirty washing.³

The first Arab incursions of the reign were in 611-612 according to Theophanes.⁴ The next attested confrontation between them and the Romans came in 629 when the Romans

¹ Bar Hebraeus X. 96 (Wallis-Budge, p. 90).

² Stratos, *Byzantium* I p. 352.

³ The most recent discussion of the Arab invasions is by Kaegi, *Invasions*.

⁴ Theoph. p. 300.

repulsed a raid at Mu'ta.⁵ Ma'ab was the first city to fall to the Arabs and the Romans suffered their first defeat in 634, when the governor of Caesarea, Sergius, was defeated and killed at Dathin near Gaza. The battle of Adjnadayn in July 634 was a crushing defeat for the Romans, and that Christmas Christians were unable to travel to Bethlehem from Jerusalem. After another defeat at the battle of Fahl, Damascus was besieged, and despite Heraclius sending reinforcements in an attempt to break the siege and a victory by Vaanes both that city and Emesa eventually fell. The battle of the Yarmuk in 636 was the decisive Romano-Arab confrontation of Heraclius' reign and the Romans' defeat signalled their loss not only of Damascus but of the whole of Syria and Palestine. Jerusalem and Gaza were captured in 637, and that year a truce was agreed in Egypt. By 638 all of Syria had been lost apart from Northern Mesopotamia, which was taken for Islam in 639/640 by Iad. Fresh from their victories the Arabs were free to pursue two distinct courses, the stabilisation of the newly won territory, and the conquest of Egypt. Whilst the Caliph Umar was busy in his new domains conducting a census, his general Amr was attempting to add to them at further expense to the Roman empire.⁶ The invasion of Egypt began in 639 according to Arab sources.⁷ Pelusium fell in 640 and Babylon just after the death of Heraclius in 641, by the end of which year Alexandria was the last bastion of Roman rule in Egypt and that too was under siege.

The sources fall into three main categories; the Chalcedonian

⁵ Theoph. p. 335.

⁶ Theoph. p. 341.

⁷ Theoph. p. 338 says that it began before the Yarmuk, in 635.

tradition of Theophanes and Nicephorus, the Monophysite tradition of the *Chronicle of 1234* and the Arab historians Baladhuri (d. 890) and al-Tabari (d. 920), none of whom are contemporary. It is possible to add to these the Coptic writer John of Nikiu who was contemporary with the conquest of Egypt and various ecclesiastical works, including the sermons of Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The sources will be examined in order to gain an impression of Romano-Arab relations prior to the conquests. This will allow us to see exactly how much Heraclius may have known about the nature of his opponents and their ambitions, the necessary criteria upon which to judge his culpability for what was to follow. This culpability depends upon his reaction to the invasions, how far he was responsible for the defeats that saw him lose all the provinces that a decade ago he had won back from the Persians.

Before we analyse the events it is necessary to examine the sources. Although Theophanes has already been discussed in the context of his writings on the Persian campaigns and the doctrinal dispute, his treatment of the Arab invasions requires a special investigation. This is because Theophanes can be shown to be using a non-Greek source and this raises different problems from those in other sections of his narrative, so that this example of intercultural transmission merits a brief review. Conrad has shown that this source had a detailed knowledge of the Arabs and their religion, which is reflected in the work of Theophanes, but is not present in the history of Nicephorus.⁸

Theophanes' knowledge of Islam is

⁸ Conrad, 'Theophanes', and more specifically in 'Arwād'. See also the earlier postulations of Brooks, 'Sources', p. 578-587.

evidenced by his reproduction of the genealogy of the Arab tribes when he describes the ancestry of Mohammed.⁹ Conrad also states that this account participates in the "most prominent fictions" of the Islamic tradition.¹⁰ Further evidence of Theophanes' knowledge of Arab attitudes is to be found in his account of the battle of Mu'ta.¹¹ Here Theophanes states that the Arabs planned to make their raid "on the day of their idolatrous sacrifice". If the raid depends upon the element of surprise for its success then the "idolatrous sacrifice" must have been being carried out by the Christian Arabs of the village, which would account for them being off guard. Conrad asserts that Theophanes would not use "idolatrous" to describe Monophysite Arabs, and so explains its appearance by the fact that Theophanes was careless in the editing of his material. This carelessness is a mistake that Theophanes also makes later in his chronicle; when he calls the emperor Leo III "pious" despite the fact that Leo was the first iconoclast emperor, and that Theophanes was vehemently opposed to that doctrine.¹²

Conrad describes how this transmission of information took place.¹³ Syria was the region where Melkite (i.e. Chalcedonian Christians under Arab rule) authors used languages other than Greek in their work. The Pseudo-Methodios of the late seventh century wrote in Syriac although his tone was Melkite. Theophilus of Edessa was a bilingual Maronite historian, Bar Hebraeus says he made an eloquent translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into Syriac.

⁹ Theoph. p. 333.

¹⁰ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 14-15.

¹¹ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 21-26.

¹² Theoph. p. 396.

¹³ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 30-44 and 'Arwād' p. 322-348.

Further evidence of this bilingualism in the Near East is provided by an extant fragment of Psalms from a bible that was written in Arabic, though in Greek letters, and by the career of Stephen of Ramla (late ninth century) which shows the emergence of Arabic speaking clergy.¹⁴ In Syria people were multi-lingual and texts might well be hybrid, or derived from sources in more than one language, so that the constraints of linguistic tradition were removed: hence it is inappropriate to talk of a specifically eastern or western source tradition for material of Syrian origin by the time of Theophanes. Theophanes could not have relied on the Greek historical tradition for his information because there is no evidence of Arabic material in Nicephorus, and sources such as Cedrenus and Leo the Grammarian who do have Arabic material also depend upon Theophanes. On the other hand the material used by Theophanes has close parallels with the Syriac tradition, and this has recently been investigated by Conrad: for example, the *Chronicle of 1234* has a more detailed, but related, genealogical account of Mohammed's ancestry than Theophanes,¹⁵ and Conrad give examples of Theophanes' use of Syriac vocabulary in his description of internal Islamic history.¹⁶ If Arab accounts became part of Syriac historical literature by the eighth-century, then Theophanes could borrow from a source that was able to use both Arab and Greek narratives. Conrad goes on to postulate that Theophilus of Edessa may have been Theophanes' source, but also stresses the the need for a fuller examination of all the literature that pertains to the text of his

¹⁴ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 32-33.

¹⁵ *1234* p. 227-230.

¹⁶ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 38.

chronicle.

The later extant Syriac sources also pose a historiographical problem, which stems from the fact that the work of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, the earliest and most reliable of the Syriac historians dependent on Theophilus, is not extant. However, much of his work has been preserved by other chronicles. Michael the Syrian tells us that Dionysius wrote a history of the period 582-842 AD, one part of which was devoted to the Church and one to the World. Although the history of Michael the Syrian (Jacobite Patriarch, 1166-1199) was written before the *Chronicle of 1234*, it is the latter that more closely retains the narrative structure of Dionysius. All three authors were Monophysite, and in Michael's abridged version of Dionysius' introduction to his history he warns the reader of the fraudulent presentation of events by the Chalcedonian historian, Theophilus of Edessa.¹⁷

The Arab sources are also not without problems of historiography. Modern historians appear to be taking one of two stances. Kaegi is prepared to use all the Arabic sources available to broaden the view we have of the invasions, and to bear out some of the more obscure points.¹⁸ This is to ignore completely the work of Crone concerning the historical veracity of the Islamic tradition which describes the life and career of Mohammed.¹⁹ Crone argues

¹⁷ For the examination of the image of Heraclius we shall refer to the *Chronicle of 1234*. Michael the Syrian will only be quoted if he preserves material not found in *1234*; these passages are either an example of Michael's Monophysite views, or an account from Dionysius that *1234* has chosen to omit.

¹⁸ For example his discussion in *Invasions* Chp. 1.

¹⁹ Crone, *Meccan Trade* p. 203-230.

that the sources for the life of Mohammed are unreliable as history, and are more concerned with preserving an account of the inception and spread of the Muslim faith. This examination can afford to implement a compromise. The early Arab sources can be used because this study is concerned with the image of an emperor and not with the verification of chronology. So, even if we accept Crone's point that all Arab historical writing is flawed because it is about religion and not events, we can still use the sources to give us an idea of how the Arabs saw their opponents. In doing so we still must be careful in our selection of source material. It is important to use the more contemporaneous material available, for not to do so would be to use historians who merely borrow from early authors and embellish their accounts with anecdotal or confused evidence. The Arab historians used in this chapter are Baladhuri (d. 890) and Tabari (d. 920). Though Tabari is concise on the conquests, Baladhuri's is a fuller account of the Arab invasions that is divided up by geographical regions. This was done because the author was interested in the fiscal state of the conquered lands, and this could vary from city to city depending on the precise nature of Arab capture - whether the invading Arabs were welcomed at the onset or compelled to mount an attack on a city that might negotiate a surrender or be vanquished by a violent assault. Hence details of the conquest were relevant to Baladhuri.

The Arab campaigns of 634 had their beginnings in the plundering raids of 632, and the more organised incursions which followed these *razzia* were merely an extension in terms of scope and size of earlier Romano-Arab confrontations. Their motivation

has been ascribed to various factors which are a subject of modern historical controversy and do not concern us here. However, the withdrawal of the *rogia* to Arab tribes beyond the Roman border is cited as a cause by both Theophanes and Nicephorus,²⁰ namely that the Arabs formerly in receipt of these subsidies would now have to look elsewhere for their livelihood and would naturally turn to raiding Roman territory which they knew to be prosperous. In order to do so they would need aid - presumably because Heraclius had correctly judged them to be incapable of widespread destruction on their own - and so looked to their southern counterparts for an alliance.

Heraclius' relationship with the Arabs in, and on the margins of his empire took two distinct forms after the defeat of the Persians, and had its roots in the past relationship between emperors and the tribesmen. In 523 and 527 the Romans had suffered at the hands of Mundhir, ruler of the Lakhmid tribe who were clients of the Persian king. He had devastated territory around Apamea and Emesa in 523. Justin I sent an embassy to secure a peace and release of prisoners at the conference of Ramlah. This treaty was not observed for long, since in 527 Mundhir raided as far as Antioch. Justinian's response was to combat this insecurity on his eastern border by the recruitment of an equally disruptive client, the Ghassanid tribe. That Justinian made Harith supreme phylarch is evidence that the tribe, or at least part of it, had a close connection with the Roman administration before this date. The tightening of this relationship also brought Romano-Persian aggression further to the fore.

²⁰ Theoph. p. 336 and Niceph. 20.

Mundhir was immediately involved in campaigning. Procopius twice accuses him of cowardice. In 531 Harith is alleged to have deserted his post at the battle of Callinicum, and in 541 during the campaign in Armenia. However Shahid has found fault with Procopius' allegations:²¹ Harith had already shown his loyalty by helping to quell the Samaritan revolt of 529,²² and at the battle of Callinicum Malalas says that it was the Phrygians that began the flight.²³ The Endless Peace, which was agreed upon in 532, only lasted until 539. It was broken by a dispute over the Strata territory between the Ghassanids and the Lakhmids.²⁴ The Roman envoy, Sumnus, offered Mundhir terms that were incompatible with his relationship with the Persian court, and which led to a renewal of full-scale hostilities, culminating in the fall of Antioch in 540. The Romans obtained peace only through the payment of 500 pounds of gold to the Persians which was to provide for the garrisoning of another unstable border, the passes on the Caucasus.²⁵ An interim arrangement was made in 545. Chosroes I received 500 pounds of gold from Edessa and 400 pounds of gold per year from the Roman government for the upkeep of the Caucasus garrisons. The reign continued to be unstable. In 554 Mundhir was killed by Harith, and although the Romans and the Persians signed a five year truce at Dara in 556, the first major attempt to stabilise the area permanently, and to define the relationships in and around it, was made in the Fifty Year Treaty of 561. This was the first Romano-Persian treaty to specifically include their client kings and the wider problems they were capable of

²¹ Shahid, 'Procopius and Arethas', p. 39-67.

²² Malalas, p. 445-447.

²³ Malalas, p. 464.

²⁴ Procopius, *Wars* ii. I. 1-11, and Th. Sim. viii. I 1-8.

²⁵ Procopius, *Wars* ii. I. 5-14.

embroiling the states in. From Menander we learn that "the Saracen allies of each state should abide (they also) by the treaty, and that neither those of the Persians should arm themselves against the Romans, nor those of the Romans against the Persians".²⁶

The treaty was broken in 572 by Justin II, who was as keen to demonstrate Roman might in the East as he was in the West.²⁷ His attitude was hardened further by a revolt against Persian rule in Persarmenia and the offer of an alliance from the Turkish Chagan.²⁸ His aggressive attitude saw the beginnings of a process by which the recently established relationship between the Romans and their Arab client kings was slowly dissolved. However, Justin II had misjudged the value of his relationship with the Ghassanids. He refused to continue the payments to them because Justinian had made the payments of his own free will and so they had ended on his death.²⁹ By way of response, Mundhir allowed the Persians safe passage through his territory to attack the Romans, and he himself withdrew from the war (573).³⁰ John of Ephesus, unlike Procopius, is not biased against the Ghassanids. Indeed, he attempted to absolve Mundhir and put the blame on Justin II. Mundhir is portrayed as a Christian conciliator in the doctrinal dispute between Paul and Jacob.³¹ Justin II was reconciled with Mundhir 575. The Romano-Ghassanid relationship continued until 581 when Maurice led an

²⁶ Men. Prot. frg. 6.1.

²⁷ Men. Prot. frg. 12.5. See above Chapter 1.

²⁸ Men. Prot. frg. 13.5.

²⁹ John of Ephesus vi. 3-4.

³⁰ John of Ephesus vi. 4.

³¹ John of Ephesus iv. 21 and iv. 39.

expedition with Mundhir against the Persians. Here a second breakdown of relations occurred as Mundhir was made the scapegoat for a Roman failure.³² The bridge over the Tigris at Ctesiphon was down and Maurice was forced to retreat, whilst the Persians raided as far as Callinicum on the Euphrates. Mundhir was arrested even though he had attacked the Lakhmids.³³ Whitby sees the reason for the failure of Maurice's expedition not in the terms of Mundhir's actions but as a result of Maurice pursuing an overreaching strategy that led to the empire being left vulnerable in Upper Mesopotamia.³⁴ The arrest and exile of Mundhir to Sicily meant the breakdown of the Ghassanid federation. The fifteen tribes that had constituted it either deserted to the Persians or followed Numan, the son of Mundhir, in an anti-Roman revolt. However, Numan was arrested in due course, and there were Saracens in the Roman army at Solachon in 586, which reveals that some allies remained loyal. Heraclius' victories over the Persians did not restore the situation of Maurice's reign. There was no longer a balance of power to be maintained between two Arab tribes, Roman relations with the Arabs no longer revolved around the Ghassanid/Lakhmid conflict. Instead the threat to his authority came from the south, from Arabia and tribes with which the Empire had had only occasional contact and the sources for Heraclius' reign reflect this new state of affairs.

Before the Arab campaigns of 634 Heraclius had been given no reason to view the Arabs in Arabia as a threat to his empire. He may well have been keen to reestablish relations with the

³² John of Ephesus vi. 16

³³ John of Ephesus vi. 18.

³⁴ Whitby, *Maurice* p. 274.

Ghassanids as part of his attempt to restore Roman authority in the provinces that had been under Persian rule for over a decade. Although he may have been paying the *rogae* to the tribes on his southern border earlier in his reign, as Theophanes implies, by 634 he would have had enough confidence in his new military strength and diplomatic arrangements to be able to redirect these payments, as a concentrated sum, to the Ghassanids. This policy would have benefitted both parties. The Ghassanids could once more be used by a Roman emperor as a police force on the eastern margins of the empire. This would allow Heraclius to reassert his authority in regions that were either directly or indirectly controlled by the Ghassanids. Receiving a regular payment from the Romans would give the Ghassanids status, and the opportunity to influence other tribes by distributing Roman bounty, which in turn would allow them to be more effective in their role as preservers of the newly regained Roman territories. If the arrangement suited both parties it was not in the interests of the Arab tribes that were directly excluded from the Roman client system. Heraclius would have presumed that these tribes would be brought under the sway of the newly restored Ghassanid influence, and so he would have no reason to pay them any *rogae*. Whether or not the southern tribes cited by Theophanes as having become disaffected by the new arrangements had been receiving the *rogae* at the start of the seventh-century, they would not have been after c. 629, and so they would have had every opportunity and motivation to invite their more southerly neighbours northwards to ravage the empire that had alienated them. This is not to say that the Arabs of Arabia would not have moved north without the incitement which Theophanes describes. Mohammed himself was familiar with

Palestine and, moreover, the military success of the Arabs throughout the reign of Heraclius suggests that the Arabs who may have formerly received stipends for the protection of the southern frontier would have been no match for the invaders. Theophanes and Nicephorus were looking for a reason to explain why the Arabs invaded at the particular time that they did, and why they were so successful when they did so. Both writers see the reason from the Roman point of view and ignore any factors that may have motivated the Arabs to move north. These motivational factors have been discussed by various modern scholars, but for the purpose of an investigation into the image of a Roman emperor it is sufficient to examine only those factors that are advanced by the writers describing his actions. The social, economic and political climates of the newly formed Muslim state did not concern Heraclius before 634 and will not detain us here. We can afford to relegate a synopsis of the modern views, which rely on a speech of Abu Bakr from Baladhuri, to a footnote.³⁵

³⁵ The speech of Abu Bakr in Baladhuri (tr. Hitti p. 165), on the eve of their campaign, points toward Arab greed. Abu Bakr talks of "the obtainable booty from the Greeks" and so "people actuated by greed as well as those actuated by the hope of divine remuneration hastened to Abu Bakr from all quarters". However, this speech also introduces other motivational factors that have been stressed by both Becker and Donner. Becker saw greed as an important motivator (*C. M. H.* II. xi.). "Hunger and avarice, not religion, are the compelling forces, but religion supplies the essential unity and central power". Donner's is a more sophisticated analysis (*Islamic Conquests*). Whilst he acknowledges the importance of plunder and religious fanaticism, he looks for a factor to explain the grand nature of the enterprise. For Donner religion and greed were personal motivations that were channelled by the Arab elite to energise a powerful force for their own ends. He believes that the new political hierarchy, which Mohammed's teachings and political career had established, saw their continued preeminence as dependent upon a

The development of the Arabs in Arabia into a nation state happened in a relatively short period of time. On the surface the "Muslim" raids of 632 were no different from the Arab raids that the empire had been suffering for centuries, so that Heraclius cannot be held responsible for not realising that by 632 political development in Arabia had shifted the emphasis of the Arab raids. It is unlikely that Heraclius knew of the teachings and political machinations of Mohammed, and there is only anecdotal evidence from later writers to suggest the opposite. The Arab historian, al-Asakir, writes about a gift from Heraclius being robbed on route to Medina (I. 417-420), and that Heraclius met Arab merchants to inform himself of events in Arabia (I. 471-472), whilst Bar Hebraeus has a story concerning Heraclius' perception of the entire situation. Heraclius, having listened to the opinions of bishops and priests concerning the nature of the Muslim people, described them as "an early cloudy dawn in which there is no absolute darkness and yet it lacketh the light which is perfect and clear".³⁶ That is to say that they are remote from darkness as they worship only one God and are not idolators, and yet as they are not Christians they do not have perfect light. None of these stories are to be found in any of the Greek sources; these are not interested in the Arabs, let alone worried about their ambitions until 634. Whether or not Heraclius knew of Mohammed's aspirations he would have seen little danger to his empire which was vindication of their new regime, that is Arab success. The southern borderlands of the Roman empire were a convenient and familiar sphere in which to indulge this quest for plunder and its political reward, power. As Donner writes, Islam gave the Arabs a political structure and its justification was conquest.

³⁶ Bar Hebraeus, X. 96 (Wallis-Budge, p. 90).

newly restored to its former boundaries after the defeat of its old Persian adversary.

That Heraclius was ignorant of such developments is not surprising, Hitti has said that only a "lunatic" in the first third of the seventh century would have predicted the speed and scope of the Arab conquests.³⁷ In 634 Heraclius was recently returned from a series of campaigns that had brought about the decisive defeat of the Persian empire, which not ten years earlier had threatened to absorb his throne. The repercussions of the Avar defeat at the siege of Constantinople had reduced their threat, whilst an Arab raid into Roman territory had been defeated at Mu'ta, so that all his borders seemed secure. Heraclius could therefore concentrate on problems, the most pressing of which was the reunification of the Churches. A settlement of this problem would allow him to establish order in the newly regained provinces. In such a secure position Heraclius cannot be accused of being short-sighted in his dealings with the Arabs. The problem for Heraclius was that he was working on the basis of criteria that were not permanent. Had he been reigning thirty years earlier there would have been little to criticise in his approach to government, following his victories over his external enemies. Now, however, times had changed, because Mohammed and his successors were changing them. Yet there was no point where Heraclius could have identified a significant change in the *status quo* which would have allowed him to react accordingly. We should not ask why Heraclius did not realise that the 632 incursion was anything more than the irritation that such events normally were, but instead we must concentrate on how effective his response was once it became

³⁷ Hitti, *A History of the Arabs* p. 142.

apparent that there was a new threat to his empire. Criticism of Heraclius cannot begin with the early aims and objectives of the Muslims, for that was when the nascent nature of the problem was only evolving slowly. We must start at the point when the empire realised that it had a problem.

In order to defend Syria and Palestine Heraclius had to do two things. He had to maintain the defence of the fortified cities and towns in order to control the surrounding countryside, and he must put an army in the field to limit the destruction of the life-blood of these centres, the agricultural land.³⁸ Heraclius' tactics were exactly that. It is difficult to determine the manpower available to each side, and both Greek and Arab sources are prone to exaggerate the strength in numbers of the opposition. Theophanes says that there were two Roman contingents each of 40,000 men at the Yarmuk.³⁹ Kaegi has estimated that Heraclius had 20-30,000 men available to fight in the field, the rest of the empire's army being on garrison duty.⁴⁰ He also paints a gloomy picture of the size of the garrisons in the east. Caesarea was the largest garrison in the provinces of Palestine I, II, III and Arabia, but contained 200-300 men with little experience of fighting in open combat. It was not the size of its garrison that enabled Caesarea to hold out for so long, but the fact that it could be supplied by sea (c. 635-640). Size was not the only problem that the garrisons faced. It was difficult for them to communicate with one another and so coordinated action was hampered. Heraclius may have initially have believed that the

³⁸ Smail, *Crusading Warfare*, p. 24-25.

³⁹ Theoph. p. 337-338.

⁴⁰ Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 40-41.

superior techniques and better discipline of the Romans, and their possession of fortifications would allow a smaller force to triumph. So we must examine Heraclius' role before we turn to the effects the conquest had on the population that experienced them.

Heraclius was much less active personally against the Arabs than he had been against the Persians. At no time do we hear of him engaging in personal combat as he did in the decisive battle against Rhazates.⁴¹ Similarly, there was no opportunity to celebrate achievements for a poet like George of Pisidia. By now Heraclius was an old man, worn out by constant campaigning and politicking, with his great accomplishments in the past. He was again about to see whole provinces fall from his grasp, just as he had been forced to in the first decade of his reign. Then literature had centred upon his heroism in regaining those territories, but Heraclius was not to be able to repeat the same trick for his court poets. He was still involved in the defence of his empire, though not in the overtly personal role of the 620's: in the late 630's he moved from Emesa to Damascus and thence to Antioch before being forced across the Taurus by one defeat too many. And yet if his personal involvement was limited his personal culpability in the sources does not seem to have been. Nicephorus has a confused account (20) that begins with banishment of Heraclius' brother, Theodore, back to Constantinople for suggesting that Martina's presence is the reason for the Roman's lack of success. Nicephorus (like Theophanes) blames the ending of the *roga* for the Arab invasions and mentions the death of a Sergius. He then goes on to provide a garbled version of the battle of

⁴¹ Theoph. p. 318 and Niceph. 14.

Gabitha, where he says Heraclius' commander, Theodore, was rebellious and so attacked the Arabs contrary to the emperor's orders. Nicephorus provides no further information about the fall of Palestine and Syria, instead moving on to the occupation of Egypt (23). In Nicephorus Heraclius is presented as a delegator of military commanders, though the specific inclusion of Theodore's disparaging remarks about Martina shows that he is not favourable to Heraclius at this juncture; the emperor's marital situation dooms to failure his military arrangements and renders less relevant to Nicephorus Heraclius' handling of the Arab threat, which is consequently neither recorded in detail nor assessed. As far as Nicephorus is concerned the non-payment of *rogae* may have sparked off the invasions, and the insubordination of the general Theodore may have made defeat more rapid, but the result was never in doubt because of Heraclius' marriage to Martina.

Theophanes has a far more detailed account than Nicephorus, in which Heraclius does not escape criticism. Though the narration of Roman defeats by "the desolate Amalek" is erroneously blamed upon Constans II and his religious policy (p. 332), there are certain parallels between the defeats of Heraclius and Chosroes II. Their main military role is the appointment of commanders,⁴² and after failure they both retreat in despair, from Syria in Heraclius' case or to Dastagerd in Chosroes'.⁴³ The Roman defeat at the Yarmuk is sealed because a southerly wind blows dust in their faces at the crucial moment, as similar phenomenon that precipitated Persian defeats when Heraclius was a hero (p. 305). In Egypt too,

⁴² Theoph. p. 317, 320 and 336-337.

⁴³ Theoph. p. 323 and 337.

Heraclius is seen as a meddler, he replaces Cyrus with Manuel (p. 338) and then reappoints Cyrus, and his role is repeated when he replaces John with Ptolemy as commander at Edessa because John had tried to buy peace from Iad (p. 340). This is a similar depiction to that of Chosroes, who is portrayed as a meddler when he tries to dismiss Shahbaraz.⁴⁴ However, it is at the fall of Jerusalem that Theophanes' passive criticism becomes active. Here the champion of Chalcedonian beliefs against Heraclius' new *Ecthesis*, Sophronius the Patriarch, is held up as a pious hero of the empire, a role that Heraclius had filled against the Persians, but has now patently failed to maintain (p. 339).

Theophanes provides a detailed description of Mohammed's life and teaching, which is even more extensive in Cedrenus, who otherwise followed Theophanes for most events in the East. This is a biased and derogatory view of the man and his new religion, one that stresses its supposed wantonness and sinfulness.⁴⁵ Although aware of its novelty, Theophanes does cite this as an excuse for Heraclius' lack of an early response to the crisis; he says nothing about the effect of the new religion or the unexpected nature of the invasions.

The Syriac writers are even more hostile to Heraclius in their description of events.⁴⁶ Whilst they are quite happy to provide lengthy detail on the ferocity of the Arabs this is in no way an excuse for Heraclius' failure. They may not have liked him as emperor, but he was still expected to save the empire. Thus it was

⁴⁴ Theoph. p. 323-324.

⁴⁵ Theoph. p. 333-334.

⁴⁶ Moorhead, 'Monophysite Response', p. 579-591.

possible to be both anti-Heraclius and anti-Arab. As late as 636, when the Roman position was desperate, *1234* is scathing about Roman military attitudes: it provides the story of Theodore, the brother of Heraclius, advancing against the Arabs full of arrogance despite the recent background of the crushing defeat for the Romans at Dathin. This piece of narrative also brings another factor into the historiographical discussion.⁴⁷ *1234* was a Monophysite chronicle and believed that Heraclius persecuted those of that persuasion. As proof, it has Theodore, while preparing for battle, promise a stylite that he will persecute the followers of Severus of Antioch. Thus the Roman chain of command is depicted in an impious light before its first significant defeat: persecution of Christians is expected to follow a Roman victory. *1234* is not so blinkered as to ascribe the Roman defeat solely to arrogance and the "wrong" Christian doctrine. In an earlier report it says that Arabs were a better and stronger army (p. 241-242, the defeat of Sergius of Caesarea). However, after the Yarmuk there is personal vilification of the emperor. *1234* has him leave Syria with the words "Remain in peace Syria", so that the energetic campaigner of the 620's has become lethargic and withdrawn. *1234* says that Heraclius wrote to Mesopotamia, Armenia and Egypt with instructions that his citizens should stop raiding and thus provoking the Arabs. "Not to fight against the Arabs nor to stand against the decree of the Lord. He said that each should guard his post whether city or region until the matter surpassed his strength".⁴⁸ There was no noble exit. Although the chronicle preserves an account of Arabs murdering monks (p. 245), *1234* also comments upon the ravaging of the retreating Greek

⁴⁷ *1234* p. 243-244.

⁴⁸ *1234* p. 251.

army. "After that he raised the rod in his hand and gave his army leave to ravage indiscriminately, as if Syria was already enemy territory".⁴⁹ We are left in no doubt as to where blame must be apportioned: failure due to the doctrine of the Chalcedonians which is epitomised by the emperor, whose mistaken beliefs are the reason for the decimated state of his empire.

1234's accusation that Heraclius authorised widespread ravaging in retreat is exploited by Kaegi to attribute to Heraclius a scorched earth policy.⁵⁰ He believes that Heraclius did not flee as 1234 narrates, but instead had been withdrawing north slowly ever since the Romans were defeated Ajnadayn, when he moved to Antioch from Emesa. However, Kaegi's theory on Heraclius' strategic decision-making is based on a tenuous link with the emperor's as yet unproven Armenian ancestry.⁵¹ Kaegi twice refers to Heraclius' Armenian background. He says that Heraclius could rely for recruits on his Armenian "kinsfolk", and that he cut the roads leading north after the Yarmuk simply in order to "protect his homeland".⁵² Kaegi misses the point here, for he dismisses a simple explanation for Heraclius' steady retreat north in search for a strategy that will continue his contrived theme of Heraclius' Armenian roots. Kaegi devotes a lot of space to the Roman objective of holding on to the province of Upper Mesopotamia, but the reasons that he gives for the Romans doing this could have applied to Heraclius' overall strategy. Kaegi sees the retention of Upper Mesopotamia as a diversion for the

⁴⁹ 1234 p. 251.

⁵⁰ Kaegi, *Invasions*, p. 237-238.

⁵¹ See Mango, 'Deux Études', p.114 where he argues that Upper Mesopotamia may have been Heraclius' birthplace.

⁵² Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 52 and p.187.

Arabs who are moving north, as a preservation of an advanced Roman position and a means of protecting the recruiting grounds of Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia itself.⁵³ Whilst one can accept the point that Heraclius knew how strategically important Upper Mesopotamia was to his empire, because he was the first emperor since Julian to have visited the area (though Maurice had been there before ascending the throne), this should lead to a broader perspective on Heraclius' defensive strategy: he held Upper Mesopotamia because he was attempting to hold a line north of Antioch which would be difficult for the Arabs to penetrate, a line which would prevent them from ravaging Anatolia and provide the Romans with a base to launch campaigns to recover their possessions further south.

The only balanced presentation of Heraclius by an eastern source is contained in the Nestorian *Chronicle of Seert*. It does have an unsympathetic picture of a beaten man, "plunged into despair" and records that "the majority of the inhabitants of the region took refuge in the interior of the Greek empire leaving their homes".⁵⁴ However, the explanation for the defeats is not merely Heraclius' failings, since there is also a tone of divine intervention. The *Chronicle* has a report of Heraclius asking why God had given the empire which had belonged to the Romans for a thousand years, to a people who came from the desert and lived a nomadic life. The explanation for change was known only to God, while Heraclius, like any mortal, has to cope as well as he may with the changing fortunes

⁵³ Kaegi, *Invasions* p.157-159 and refs. to Theoph. p. 337-338, Tabari 2347, 2394 and Baladhuri 135, 164, 183-5.

⁵⁴ *Seert* CVI.

that afflict humanity.

The histories of Baladhuri and Tabari focus upon different aspects of the conquests, but are no less scathing in their appraisals of Heraclius. Baladhuri is keen to stress the humaneness of the Arabs. At Damascus they impose a poll tax of one dinar and one jarib of wheat per adult in return for "lives, property and children", which must be contrasted with Michael the Syrian's assertion that the population of Dara was massacred for resistance,⁵⁵ though it is quite possible that different places were treated in different ways. When news of Adjnadayn came to Heraclius, "his heart was filled with cowardice and he was confounded. Consequently he took flight to Antioch from Emesa". However, Baladhuri reports that Heraclius was still actively reinforcing his troops to continue the struggle at Fihl (Chp. 5) and Marj as Suffar (Chp. 7). Despite this energy Heraclius was not popular with the local people, and in Tabari he seems to be equally unpopular with the army, since Roman soldiers are portrayed as being chained together in groups of ten in order to stop them fleeing.⁵⁶ The Roman state is seen by Baladhuri as a legitimate enemy and Heraclius is cast in the role of villain in order to justify this. But these are not traces of Monophysite propaganda in his work, since his real emphasis is on the sweeping nature of the Muslim conquests rather than Roman internal politics.

The belief that the Arab invasions were a sign from God is to be found in all the sources, and is used to explain at least their coming if not also their success. This explanation eschews any

⁵⁵ Michael the Syrian, XI. vii (Chabot, p. 426).

⁵⁶ Tabari, *Tarik* i. 2089.

analysis of the economic problems of the empire, its exhausted military state or the fanatical zeal of its opponents. It is a more simple and yet deep-rooted explanation that has apocalyptic overtones. It is to be found in both Chalcedonian and Monophysite sources: Theophanes and Michael the Syrian both have a description of a comet in the shape of a sword which was visible in the heavens for thirty days before the coming of the Arabs, a clear divine portent of the disaster to come.⁵⁷

This apocalyptic mood dominates the literature of the time. The contemporary Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, best embodies this feeling of a need for repentance and reconciliation with God in order to recover the lost territories.⁵⁸ In 634 he was optimistic, believing that imperial troops would quickly repulse the foolish arrogance of the Arabs and humble them once more, whilst bemoaning the fact that Christians in Jerusalem would be unable to visit Bethlehem that year because of the Arab presence. However, by 637 he seems in awe of the Arabs' success which by now was decisive, and describes their effect upon Syria and Palestine, without hope of reprieve, as a punishment inflicted because of the moral decline of their Christian inhabitants. A source attributed to Methodius, bishop of Patara, depicts the success of the Arabs as being only temporary as the end of the world will shortly follow it.⁵⁹ Like Sophronius he ascribes the success of the Arabs, not to God's favour, but to the sinfulness of the Christians. According to the

⁵⁷ Theoph. p. 336 and Michael the Syrian XI. iii (Chabot p. 414).

⁵⁸ On the sermons of Sophronius see, Constantelos, 'Moslem Conquests', p. 328-330.

⁵⁹ Constantelos, 'Moslem Conquests', p. 330-332.

Pseudo-Methodius God has allowed all this to happen in order to separate true Christians from the imposters. This may well be a comment on the morality of the empire as a whole rather than an attack on the person of the emperor, but St. Anastasius Sinaites, in a sermon in the second half of the seventh century, and a Greek text of the *Life of Theodore of Edessa* (eleventh century) attribute the invasions to the anti-Monophysite policies of Constans II.⁶⁰

The *Chronicle of 1234* also has a belief in the power of divine intervention. "However, God who exacts his due and who determines sovereignty among people on the earth, will give power to whom he chooses. He may even appoint the dregs of mankind to be their rulers. When he saw that the measure of Roman sins was overflowing and that they were committing every sort of crime against our people and our churches, bringing our confession to the verge of extinction, he stirred up the sons of Ishmael and enticed them hither from their southern land".⁶¹ Because of these sins Divine Providence deserted the army of Theodore, but even then the army continued to commit unspeakable crimes. This meant that God deserted the imperial cause with the result that the city of Damascus is said to have welcomed the Arabs "joyfully" after the Yarmuk (p. 251), though it is hard to see how much the city could have done to resist occupation when Heraclius' strongest army, its only hope of salvation, had just been slaughtered. The Arabs are in no way seen as perfect saviours, but they are nonetheless seen as saviours.

⁶⁰ Constantelos, 'Moslem Conquests' p. 333 from Anastasius of Sinai, Sermo No. III *MPG* 89, 1156C and from B. G. Vasilievskji's publication of a *Life of Theodore of Edessa* in *Pravoslavni palestinskji Sbornik* 11 seu IV. 2 (1886) p. 264-265.

⁶¹ 1234 p. 237.

Conrad had argued that this type of reaction has been written into accounts of the Arab conquests in order to preserve rights of towns that were captured,⁶² whereas the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine had a long tradition of employing passive resistance against invaders: thus Procopius tells of cities locking their gates against the Persians in the 540's, and then negotiating the terms of their surrender.⁶³ Indeed, it is difficult to see what else the indigenous population could have done in a military context. They were not in a position to form a local militia, for under a law of Justinian (*Nov. 95*) private citizens had been banned from owning weapons, and their experience of warfare in the seventh century would have accustomed them to the necessity and practicalities of coming to terms with invading armies.

The morale of the local population can be variously interpreted in as an element in Heraclius' failure to hold on to Syria and Palestine. Monophysite writers are willing to blame the emperor simply because he followed a different Christian creed. However, the two most disaffected religious communities, the Samaritans and the Jews, were also the smallest. As for the question of the Monophysites refusing to aid Heraclius, it is difficult to see how local citizens of any religious creed could have taken part in the defence of their homeland when they were barred from owning weapons and the imperial army was garrisoning their town for them: their main contribution would be to assist soldiers defend the walls during a siege, but they were less likely to resist when no soldiers were present.⁶⁴ The placement of military commanders in towns by

⁶² Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 26-27.

⁶³ Procopius, *Wars* ii. v.12-ii. vi.25, ii. vii.3-9 and ii. xi.14-ii. xii.2.

Heraclius has led Kaegi to postulate that this was the beginning of a new administrative system. He believes that Heraclius' motivation for this was his desire to prevent towns from capitulating to the Arabs, and in so doing so lose the empire not only a defensive position but also tax revenue.⁶⁵ However, it is possible to diffuse Kaegi's theory without bringing in the controversial subject of the themes. The placement of military commanders in cities was not a new phenomenon in the 630's.⁶⁶ Indeed, Kaegi constructs his theory that Heraclius came from Armenia on the basis that Theophylact says Heraclius the Elder went back to his city (Theodosiopolis) to winter.⁶⁷ If there were few purpose-built military camps, and if the towns of the region were important strategic positions in the Roman defensive policy, then it is not surprising that the military commanders were to be found in the towns.

The problem of whether the Monophysites betrayed Heraclius is an ambiguous one for all their sources are hostile towards him. We will discuss their role in the defence of Egypt below, but here it is sufficient to reiterate Conrad's point that surrender was often a legal device, asserted for tax reasons after the

⁶⁴ Procopius, *Wars* ii. v. where Sura on the Euphrates capitulated to Chosroes as soon as its military commander was killed.

⁶⁵ Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 279-285. For an examination of Shahid's argument that this was the beginning of the theme system is more relevant to the general treatment of Heraclius and the themes which is discussed in the next chapter.

⁶⁶ Malalas p. 441-442 concerning the fighting in 528 when Senators were sent out to protect eastern cities. Isaac, *Limits of Empire* p. 252-255 on the garrisoning of armies in eastern cities.

⁶⁷ Th. Sim. I. 1

conquest, not necessarily a tactic in the 630's. Furthermore, many Monophysite Arabs fought in Heraclius' armies during the campaigns. Kaegi estimates that there were two to five times as many Arabs as other provincials in the ranks.⁶⁸ Evagrius had noted that it was good military policy to use Arabs against other Arabs.⁶⁹ At Mu'ta the tribes of Bali, Judham, Lakhm, Bahra B. Kalb and B. al-Qayn fought alongside the Romans.⁷⁰ Furthermore, there is no sign in cowardice in Roman ranks at the Yarmuk. Though Tabari alleges that the Roman infantry were chained together, Kaegi points out that this was common Roman practice, and is to be found in the *Strategicon*.⁷¹ Indeed, Baladhuri and Tabari comment upon the bloodiness of the battle that was by no means a foregone conclusion, as testament to the determination of the Christian opposition.⁷² The only note of treasonable behaviour towards Heraclius at this battle concerns the proclamation of Vaanes as emperor. This may be a pro-Heraclius tradition, an apology that the decisive defeat of his reign cannot be blamed on him because his soldiers were far from following his instructions.⁷³ Even after his defeat and the loss of Upper Mesopotamia there were still Arab tribes, such Iyad b. Nazir tribe, who were eager to remain under his rule.⁷⁴

Certainly it is not possible to overlook the attitude of the local population when attempting to determine why Heraclius lost his

⁶⁸ Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 43.

⁶⁹ Evagrius v. 20.

⁷⁰ Tabari i. 1611-12.

⁷¹ Tabari i. 2089. *Strategicon* 12.7, Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 127.

⁷² Baladhuri 135 and Tabari i. 2097-2099.

⁷³ Theoph. p. 338 and for a similar reason for a Roman defeat earlier in the reign see Theoph. p. 313-314.

⁷⁴ Tabari i. 2507.

eastern provinces to the Arabs. Though it has been necessary to discuss their attitude in military and religious terms, there is one other local reason to add to this indigenous explanation for the defeats. Kennedy has called for a drastic altering of our perception of the economy of the region by the 630's.⁷⁵ He examines Syria and Palrstine in the preceding century to see if the sources and archaeology might provide any other reasons for Heraclius' defeats, and concluded that the sources paint a picture of a depressed economy at this time. According to Baladhuri the ship-building industry was located only in Egypt and many urban centres had to be repopulated and rebuilt.⁷⁶ Kennedy ties this decline in prosperity with the outbreak of plague in 540, the point to which he ascribes "the transition from antique to Medieval Syria".⁷⁷

Kaegi sees the loss of the eastern provinces in a purely military context. For him Heraclius' effort was a "strategic failure", and his retreat only prolonged the fighting and surrendered more resources to the Arabs.⁷⁸ This opinion is blinkered by the narrative that the sources provide. They are chronicling the invasions, so it is not surprising that the set-piece battles in those campaigns loom large. Neither do any of the sources say that Heraclius lost his eastern provinces because he lost three battles. When any blame is apportioned to the emperor it is in the form of vilifying him for his religious creed, not for his abilities as a general. It seems that the

⁷⁵ Kennedy, 'Last Century', p. 141-183.

⁷⁶ Kennedy, 'Last Century', p. 148.

⁷⁷ Kennedy, 'Last Century', p. 182 but see Durlait, 'La Peste', p. 107-119 for the argument that the role of the plague has been overplayed.

⁷⁸ Kaegi, *Invasions* p. 237.

triumph of Heraclius just half a decade earlier is forgotten by Kaegi and the sources alike. Heraclius retreated over the Taurus mountains never expecting a Roman emperor to have to wait centuries to make the return journey. He was falling back on his next most defensible position, and in doing so was preparing for a long contest, not a quick capitulation. That retreat may have lost him Syria and Palestine, but it avoided another major defeat which could have cost him Anatolia as well. When we discussed Heraclius' relationship with the Ghassanids it was clear that in the early 630's he was attempting to reestablish Roman authority that had been missing from those regions for over a decade. He must have been aware that his empire was exhausted, and his policy was to avoid the danger that Peter the Patrician had predicted almost a century earlier: a Romano-Persian conflict that left the two sides so weak that they were both taken advantage of by another nation.⁷⁹ The Arabs had seized territory from which Shahbaraz had only withdrawn his Persians in 629/630.

The Arab invasion of Egypt is covered by all the sources that we have used earlier and involves the same issues of Heraclius' personal responsibility for the loss of the province and how he is depicted in these sources.⁸⁰ There is one notable addition to the sources, the contemporary account of John of Nikiu, a Coptic bishop, which allows us to resolve a controversy on which Hitti pronounced: "The native Copts of Egypt were instructed from the very beginning by their bishop of Alexandria to offer no resistance to the

⁷⁹ Men Prot. frg. 6.1

⁸⁰ Butler, *Conquest* Chp. 13-18.

invaders...in view of the religious persecution to which they as Monophysites had been subjected".⁸¹ Hitti based his statement on a text later than the seventh century John of Nikiu, namely that of Ibn al-Hakam (d. 871). The evidence of John of Nikiu can be adduced to contradict the proposed Greek/Coptic division in attitudes to the Arab invasions. John sees the conquest as a calamity not a deliverance. He, like Sophronius believes that it was a judgement by God on the empire but he blames Heraclius for persecuting the Coptic Church through the figurehead of Cyrus the Patriarch of Alexandria. His view of the Arabs is the conventional Greek one, " they put to the sword all that surrendered, and they spared none whether old men, babes, or women".⁸² Many Copts fled the invasions (CXIV. 1) and others apostasised and "embraced the faith of beasts". Antinoe may have cooperated with the invaders because of hostility towards Heraclius and Cyrus (CXV. 9), but Alexandria fell at the death of Heraclius, and many fled rather than become Arab subjects (CXIII. 6). The Copts were praying for deliverance from "the enemies of the Cross who plundered the country and took captives in abundance". They did not see the Arab invasion as a relief rather it was a yoke "heavier than the yoke which had been laid on Israel by the Pharoah", and they wanted God to do "unto them as He did aforetime unto Pharoah" (CXX). Heraclius may have not got his religious policy right in John's eyes, but it was still imperial policy that the population of Egypt wanted, all be it one which was sympathetic to their doctrinal beliefs.

If modern historians are interested in the Coptic/

⁸¹ Hitti, *History* p. 165.

⁸² John of Nikiu CXI. 5-10. Compare this list with that of Baladhuri for those spared by the Arabs upon capturing Damascus.

Chalcedonian divide and the question of local disloyalty,⁸³ ancient writers were more concerned with the machinations that brought about the end of Roman rule. 1234 has the story of Cyrus being replaced by Manuel because Cyrus was prepared to treat for peace to the tune of 2,000,000 dinars a year.⁸⁴ Even at this late stage, with most of Egypt lost to the Arabs Heraclius was too aggressive. Manuel typifies this at a meeting with Amr "I am not Cyrus who used to give you gold. He did not wear armour, but a wollen tunic. But I, as you can see, am armed". This type of approach was too bellicose unless Heraclius had imminent plans for the reconquest of his former provinces. Indeed, it was soon to be replaced by an attempt at appeasement, Manuel was withdrawn and the more flexible Cyrus reinstated, but to no avail. The fall of Alexandria may have been hastened by the confusion following the death of Heraclius but it was not any the more surprising. Heraclius had not even attempted to increase his chances of holding on to Egypt. He did not appoint one military commander as soon as he was aware of the threat to the province.⁸⁵ Had Heraclius done this he would have succeed in coordinating a defence force who might have acted together instead of bodies of troops haphazard, localised and confused. Heraclius can take far more of the apportionable blame for the loss of Egypt, for by then he knew the nature of his opposition and still had the resources to combat it. Neither surprise, nor a passive indigenous population,

⁸³ Especially the Marxist historians, see de St. Croix, *Class Struggle* Chp. 8 for an attempt to prove the unpopularity of the empire and the exploitation of its masses.

⁸⁴ 1234 p. 252.

⁸⁵ Presumably this would have been in 636 after the Yarmuk, and Heraclius would have known from his own (Nicetas') successful attempt to capture Egypt how important it was to organise its defensive resources.

can be cited in his defence.

Heraclius' control of events surrounding the Arab invasions was never complete. He tried every conventional military tactic available and in the case of Syria he stayed on the scene as long as it was safe to do so in order to aid the recruitment of reinforcements. Perhaps his choice of commanders was not as astute as it might have been, but he had led his army from the front against Persia and this may have been out of expedience. Heraclius had accomplished all his major achievements by personal involvement, and it would be too simplistic to say that when his empire needed him he was too old to save it. In 616 the Persians were at the Bosphorus yet by 628 he was the all conquering hero. However, circumstances combined to put a tired emperor of an exhausted state up against a nation with nothing to lose, energised by a new religion. There could be only one short-term winner. The subsequent Roman failure to contain the Arabs should be analysed in the context of developments after 641, for all that Heraclius had failed to do was to avoid defeat. He had lost the first round, but he better than anyone would have known that he had merely taken part in the beginning of the fight and not its whole.

Heraclius the Reformer?

The economy gave the emperor certain responsibilities and advantages. Only the emperor had the authority to mint coins which provided one vehicle for the circulation of his image around the empire, but it was also his duty to provide for the provisioning of the capital. The supply of corn to the capital had influenced the image of the prominent nobles of the Roman empire even before the Principate.¹ For Heraclius the maintenance of a constant supply to Constantinople was crucial in order to avoid a famine which would reflect badly upon the image of the emperor as benefactor and provider for his people: without a centrally organised supply system Constantinople might not have survived long enough to be preserved by the Theotokos in the 626 Avar siege. On the other hand, a consideration of the image of Heraclius has to take on board the suggestion that he was an economic reformer. The two reforms ascribed to him are not equally controversial: the reform of the coinage is attested in the *Chronicon Paschale* as well as the numismatic evidence, whereas the introduction of the themes as a system of military organisation is not so clear cut, and it cannot be convincingly attributed to Heraclius' reign. The evidence for their introduction in his reign comes from Theophanes but the impetus for making Heraclius responsible for their formation comes from the secondary sources, modern historians who have seen the importance of the themes to Byzantine society and have used Theophanes' evidence as a means to date their genesis. The reign of Heraclius has

¹ Rickman, *Corn Supply*, for a discussion of the period up to 476. Teall, 'The Grain Supply', p. 89-139, discusses the case of Constantinople.

been credited with equal importance by some modern historians, on the grounds that the destruction of cities in his reign signified the end of the Roman empire and the beginning of the Byzantine age.²

In Heraclius' reign Egypt was still the major source of grain for Constantinople. However, in 616 that province was invaded by the Persians and Alexandria fell in 619. It was to remain under Persian control until 628. In 618 the disruption that this invasion must have caused forced Heraclius to rescind the grant of free corn that Constantine had made to the people of Constantinople.³ The recipients now had to pay the price of three *folles* a loaf, the same price as they had been asked to pay during the famine of 463.⁴ This did nothing to alleviate the shortage and in August the distributions were suspended. It is no surprise then that Nicephorus relates that after the fall of Egypt the capital suffered plague and famine, and that the situation had made Heraclius so despondent that he contemplated a return to Africa.⁵ This mention of imperial despair is the furthest towards criticising Heraclius that Nicephorus goes on the subject. Theophanes simply ignores the problem.

However, the corn supply was to be an ongoing problem for Heraclius. In 626 we hear from the *Chronicon Paschale* that John Seismos encountered the wrath of the people for attempting to raise the price of a loaf to eight *folles*;⁶ John had also attempted to

² Whittow, 'Ruling', p. 20-28.

³ C. P. p. 711 and on Constantine see, Malalas, p. 322 17-323.2.

⁴ C. P. p. 593.

⁵ Niceph. 8.

⁶ C. P. p. 717.

remove the bread ration from the *scholae*, who garrisoned the capital, in favour of the newly arrived soldiers, who were there to counter the Avar threat. Eriksson has sought to transpose this incident to 615,⁷ a move supported by Haldon,⁸ but criticised by Whitby on the grounds that there is a plausible increase in price from three *folles* in 618 to eight in 626, when Avar and Persian invasions would have seriously disrupted supplies from Europe and Asia; thus it is unnecessary to assume that the public rations for the *scholae* had been terminated and, as Whitby points out, they had resisted any removal of their privileges before and may well have done so again successfully.⁹ The *Chronicon Paschale* ends the account of the disturbances with the summary "And God destroyed his plan".¹⁰ To give the final credit for the termination of the dispute to the Divine Power was an effective way of attaching the blame to John. He implemented a reform that must have been discussed (at least through correspondence) with Heraclius. Invoking the Divinity put the matter on a higher plane and thus avoided any close examination of how much official support John may have previously received. The *Chronicon Paschale* explains the final defeat of the Chagan to the intervention of the Theotokos for a similar reason.¹¹ The Emperor may have been absent but the Divine order, with which he was associated, still worked in his interests. As the departure of the Avars and Slavs, and the Persians automatically corrected the situation, the problems of the corn supply are not said to have been solved by Heraclius, and yet the

⁷ Eriksson, 'Date', p. 17-28.

⁸ Haldon, *Praetorians*, p. 442-443 n.354.

⁹ Whitby, *C. P.* n. 456.

¹⁰ *C. P.* p. 715.

¹¹ *C. P.* p. 726.

sources do not portray their effects in a way that is critical of the emperor.¹² The Constantinopolitan-orientated *Chronicon Paschale* does not judge him harshly despite the fact that it would have had a first-hand view of the consequences that the emperor's short-term failure to address the problem provoked. This is explained by its contemporary nature which made it a propagandist journal for the imperial family.

The minting of coinage was also a very important propaganda device, as we have seen in the revolt of Heraclius.¹³ Minting was an imperial prerogative although the mint was not centralised, so that Heraclius the Elder could draw upon the resources of the mint at Carthage for his revolutionary ends. Heraclius continued to bolster his image as he reverted to the practice introduced by Tiberius, which Maurice had partially abandoned, of using the symbol of the Cross on his coins. Grabar saw this as a "pathetic" action, since for much of Heraclius' reign the True Cross was in Persian hands.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this did continue to emphasise the close link between God and emperor in all Heraclius' undertakings that he had stressed from his arrival in Constantinople. Heraclius' reform of the coinage was two-fold. He introduced a new silver coin, the hexagram, and he centralised the mint at Constantinople. The hexagram was introduced during a lowpoint of Heraclius' reign, when the Persians had advanced as far the

¹² Teall, 'Grain Supply', p. 133-134 concludes that the loss of Egypt caused a severe short-term problem. In the longer term the dramatic fall in population and the organisation of alternative supplies from Thrace and Asia Minor replaced the Egyptian supplies.

¹³ Chp 2.

¹⁴ Grabar, *L' Iconoclasme* p. 35-36.

Bosporus.¹⁵ The *Chronicon Paschale* says that in 615 "there was made by law a six-gram coin and imperial payments were made with it, at half their old rate".¹⁶ No further information is volunteered by the chronicle, but the reason for its introduction can be inferred from the next paragraph. "And the Persian commander, who was called Saen came as far as Chalcedon itself and to the regions of Chrysopolis and Cerconium, and he looked across to the other side".¹⁷ The imperial treasury's lack of money would explain why it was necessary to pass a law to introduce the new coinage, to meet the pressing needs of defence, at a time when Persian armies were preventing the collection of taxes from the empire's richest provinces. The valuation of the coin was a false one, for although as bullion (i.e. a specific weight of silver) it had credibility, as coin hoards from outside the empire prove, it had the effect internally of halving the real amount of imperial expenditure. Thus, internally it contravened the gold-silver ratio of the *Codex Theodosianus* viii 4.27, and the *Codex Justinianus* x 78.1. The savings made on internal expenditure could be used to finance diplomacy with the Persians, and to defend against the Avar threat in the Balkans, and so it may be relevant that there was an embassy to Persia in 615.¹⁸ The coin itself had an obverse design of Heraclius and his eldest son, Heraclius Constantine. The reverse design of cross on steps and the appropriate inscription *Deus Adiuta Romanis* (O God, help the Romans) was not a new one.¹⁹

¹⁵ Morrisson, 'Monnaie et Prix', p. 239-260, esp. p. 249-250.

¹⁶ *C. P.* p. 706.

¹⁷ *C. P.* p. 706.

¹⁸ *C. P.* p. 706.

¹⁹ Hendy, *Studies*, p. 494.

It is difficult to see any reason other than financial necessity for Heraclius issuing this coin. If he had been attempting to impress upon the empire the new and innovative nature of his rule he would not have issued a coin that was tarified at double its intrinsic value. Indeed, if he was coining purely for the sake of propaganda he would surely have used gold, and it is hard to see how a new coin would have had a greater effect than regular issues of the *solidus*. Heraclius used silver either because he had run out of gold, as Nicephorus hints at in his anecdotal story of an imperial shipwreck off Africa,²⁰ or because he could not tamper with the gold coinage because of the image of security that it portrayed for the emperor and the need to use it as bullion. It had been the cornerstone of the economy since the standardisation of the *solidus* by Constantine.²¹ Whatever the reason Heraclius was responding to an emergency with a stop-gap measure. Another abnormal measure that reflects financial stringency is the story that Heraclius melted down the statue of the Ox, that stood in the forum of that name, to produce copper coins for the army.²²

The only controversy that surrounds the introduction of silver coinage is its date. Eriksson argued for 626, which has been disputed by Hendy.²³ Hendy relies on the evidence of Theophanes, who under A. M. 6113 (622-623) states that Heraclius coined large numbers of *nomismata* and *miliarisia*.²⁴ If large amounts of silver

²⁰ Niceph. 8.

²¹ Jones, *L.R.E* I p. 107-109.

²² Cameron and Herrin, *Parastaseis* Chp. 42 and accompanying note, p. 229-230. The date is unknown but it is assumed to be during recruiting for the 620's campaigns.

²³ Eriksson, 'Date' p. 17-28, and Hendy, *Studies*, p. 495.

coin were struck in 622 the only place that they can be found amongst the numismatic evidence is in the issues of hexagrams. The hexagram could therefore have first been issued in 615, with substantial supplementary issues in 622 when the Church made available to Heraclius its treasures. It could not have been issued first in 626 because the gap of at least four years from the Church's loan is an unaccountably long one at a time when the need for coinage was so acute. This reform was not a lasting one, since although the hexagram was issued by Heraclius and Constans II in large numbers, by the end of the reign of Constans II these declined and remained at a minimal level. Thus, the significance of this reform lies not in its durability but in its inception. Heraclius was so short of money that he halved the internal expenditure to be able to maintain external expenditure.

Heraclius' drastic and simplistic measure shows how desperate his financial situation was and also how the sources did not understand the problems and complications of the economy. There is no criticism of Heraclius' economic stringency which suggests that it may well have been merited. Economic policies of emperors were seen in black and white; Tiberius II was popular because he was generous, Maurice fell because his solution to rising military expenditure was seen as avarice by the soldiers. Economic difficulties were seen in the same terms; both John of Nikiu and Nicephorus have stories of lost imperial treasure, which serve as an explanation for why the state was impoverished at a given time.²⁵ The remedies for such situations were equally simple, treasure was

²⁴ Theoph. p. 303.

²⁵ John of Nikiu CX 4 and Niceph. 8.

essentially bullion so Heraclius could convert the Church plate into *solidi* or hexagrams with which to finance his expeditions. This interchangeable use of treasure as bullion explains why the Statue of the Ox in the Theodosian forum was melted down for soldiers' needs if not their actual pay.²⁶

Heraclius' second reform concerning the coinage was a far less drastic measure. It was the centralisation of the mint at Constantinople. The copper coinage of Phocas had come from Thessalonica, Cyzicus, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage, Catania and Ravenna. There was also a mint at Jerusalem that struck coins between c.608-c.615, which reflected the appointment of Bonosos as *comes Orientalis* in 608; in its later stages the mint would have been used by Heraclius during his abortive attempts to defend the city against the Persians. The war against Persia influenced coinage production by more than just the introduction of the hexagram, since the location of the mints was rendered unstable. A mint was set up at Seleucia in Isauria in 615/616 to produce copper for military needs. This also explains its transfer to Isaura itself in 617/618. Its suppression there was no doubt due to Persian activity. Conversely when Heraclius carried the war to the Persians in 626/627 he set up a mint on Cyprus at Constantia.

Not only were extraordinary mints set up but regional mints were also disrupted during the Persian war. No coinage is known for Nicomedia between 617/618 and 625/626, and for Cyzicus 614/615 and 625/626. There was no minting at Antioch after 609/610 and at

²⁶ Cameron and Herrin above n. 22. See also the disagreement of Kaegi, *Byzantium* p. 34 n. 24 with Haldon, *Praetorians* p. 627-628.

Alexandria from 619/628. The loss of regional mints, combined with the use of extraordinary mints, has led Hahn to argue for a co-ordinated copper minting system being in operation. Hahn believed that the process began in Cyprus in 610/611 and went via Seleucia (615-618), Isaura (618/619), Antioch (618-626) and Cyprus (626-629):²⁷ the intention was to prove that there was a regionalised co-ordination of copper minting. However, in Hendy's view this theory of a planned development relies upon the interpretation of what he calls "barbarous and derivative" copper *folles* (*folles* which are minted locally by inhabitants who have the equipment and the base metal and who require coins), and upon a totally unknown recapture of Antioch by Heraclius in 618.²⁸ In truth the empire was in crisis and change may have been haphazard.

When Heraclius did regain Antioch in 628 he was in a position to restore the pattern of production to the pre-610 format. Indeed coinage is once more known for both Nicomedia and Cyzicus in 625/626 or 626/627, but this restoration did not last long. It may well have been due to the need to pay the soldiers who had taken part in the defence of Constantinople, or because Shahbaraz was still in command of a renegade Persian army at this time and Heraclius was in no position to scale down his military obligations.²⁹ However, the latest known coins from Thessalonica, Nicomedia, Cyzicus and Constantina are all 629/630 and the mint at Antioch in fact never reopened. These closures can all be explained

²⁷ Hahn, 'Minting Activity', p. 307-308.

²⁸ On the mints in the period 602-627 see, Hendy, *Studies* p. 414-417.

²⁹ Chp. 4.

individually. Thessalonica had been isolated by the Slavs and Avars for a long time,³⁰ Nicomedia and Cyzicus had been devastated by the Persians and Antioch had suffered internal disruption even before the Persians sacked it in 614.³¹ Constantia had only been set up recently and it had now served its military purpose. There is however, an underlying consistency to these closures, since they come at the time of the doubling of the weight standard for the metropolitan copper coinage: in 630 the *folles* had a brief revival when it reached 11g as compared to 5g in 624/ 625. Furthermore, there is a definite chronological compactness about the changes' timespan, and Constantinople was left as the sole source of copper for the East. Apart from Alexandria, all the regional mints outside the exarchates of Italy and Africa were shut. For an example of the consequences of this, between 628 and 631 the source of copper coinage in Sicily was switched from regional (Catania) to central (Constantinople).³² These various coinage developments reflect the crisis through which the empire passed and reveal this relative weakness, at least when compared with its condition in the sixth century, of the victorious Roman state on the eve of the Arab invasions.

It was not only coinage production that was affected when Heraclius returned to his capital after a six year absence. The regional bias of the fiscal administration underwent modification. The *officium* of the prefecture of the East was divided up for it had become too unwieldy, and the various *secreta* fulfilled functions

³⁰ Chp. 3.

³¹ Theoph. p. 296 and 301.

³² Hendy, *Studies*, p. 417-421.

that had previously been within the prefecture's sub-departments. Officials who earlier had headed fiscal institutions disappear, whilst others appear who were to lead later institutions.³³ The last mention of the Prefect of the East is in 629,³⁴ and that of a *comes sacrarum largitionum* in 605.³⁵ Meanwhile the *sakellarios* increased in significance,³⁶ and the first notice of a *logothetes* with the standing of a *sekreton* is in the context of 602, "Constantine Lardys the former praetorian prefect, *logothete* and curator of the palace of Hormisdas".³⁷ This was a consistent movement towards centralisation and is reflected in the next part of our investigation of Heraclius' economic reforms, the themes. For although they came to have territorial and administrative implications, as well as military ones, they never had a fiscal structure that was independent of the capital, since their fiscal controllers were responsible to the *sakellion* and the *stratitikon*, and their taxation controllers to the *genikon*, all of which were the central bureau.³⁸ Were it not for a line in Theophanes modern historians would have seen the development of the themes in a post-641 light. Theophanes however, in describing Heraclius' departure from the capital for the east in 622 says:

"After he left the imperial city he sailed to Pylae.

When he had reached the land of the themes he assembled his troops and added new forces to

³³ Haldon, *Byzantium* p. 180-194.

³⁴ Heraclius, Novel XXV. 10.

³⁵ C.P. p. 696.

³⁶ Bury, *Imperial Administrative System* p. 84-85.

³⁷ C.P. p. 694.

³⁸ Hendy, *Studies* p. 410-414.

them".³⁹

This inclusion of the word 'theme' in the account of Theophanes for the reign of Heraclius has been important, since it has been seized on as a means of dating the inception of the thematic organisation.⁴⁰ By the eighth century, when Theophanes was writing, the themes were an established military institution which had developed administrative functions. Theophanes' use of the word in the context of 622 has led Ostrogorsky to argue that they were already in existence, and consequently to give Heraclius the credit for their instalation.⁴¹ In this chapter we will argue for a date in the second half of the seventh-century, following the line of Haldon and Hendy, showing why a date in the reign of Heraclius is untenable.

Hendy uses the association of the *apotheke*, state warehouses for the selling of surplus state goods especially luxury items, with the provision and sale of arms and equipment to the military to place one element of the thematic system in the period 654-659,⁴² when the seals of the *genikoi kommerkiarioi*, who were responsible for their operation quite suddenly became more common.⁴³ That *apotheke* came to be connected with the supply of arms is shown by two references in Theophanes to *apotheke* and Slav troops.⁴⁴ These concern Justinian II in 688-693, by which time

³⁹ Theoph. p 303.

⁴⁰ See Hendy, *Studies* p. 626-640, and Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 28-40.

⁴¹ Ostrogorsky, 'Thèmes', p. 31-66.

⁴² Hendy, *Studies* p. 626.

⁴³ Hendy, *Studies* p. 626-634.

⁴⁴ Theoph. p. 364 and 365-366.

apotheke were a practice rather than a fixed institution.⁴⁵ The settlement of armies on land was a process forced upon the state by the series of defeats from 636-642. Hendy has shown that the losses of Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt meant that half of the budget had been lost, even three-quarters if figures from the Ottoman empire for the reign of Suleyman I (1520-1566) are used.⁴⁶ Moreover, although much territory had been lost, in the seventh century the armies were still by and large intact. As a result the army which previously took up over half of the imperial budget exerted an even greater proportional demand on the empire's resources after the withdrawal into Asia Minor. Now the only major resource that was available to the state was land. Anatolia had suffered a demographic decrease due to plague, civil disorder and foreign invasion, so that there was probably empty land available for military settlement in a region where, according to Hendy, the crown owned 15-18% of territory, though it is hard to believe that the distribution of imperial land corresponded to the needs of the troops. The army was ultimately transformed from one based on service for pay into one where a land grant provided basic support, with payment perhaps only for periods of active campaigning. The consequences of this shift would be severe but still only one of degree rather than kind: it was not a movement from a "monetary" economy to a "natural" economy, for the "monetary" economy had only existed in order to provide for the army. When that was achieved by other means, such extensive use of money was no longer necessary, but gold was still used (for the payment of official salaries) and hoarded but on a reduced scale. But one consequence of the

⁴⁵ Hendy, *Studies* p. 634.

⁴⁶ Hendy, *Studies* p. 613-619.

change in the financial base for the army was a need for an overhaul in the nature of the public provision, or supervision, of equipment, hence the development in the activities of the *genikoi kommerkiarioi* in the late 650's. If this theory is true then the thematic structure only began to emerge after Heraclius' death.

When Heraclius came to the throne military reorganisation was clearly necessary; the revolt of Comentiolus, the escape of the Persians from Caesarea and the impotence of Heraclius to deal with the Avar threat all point to a lack of resources. Only after 621/622 was Heraclius in a strong enough financial position to do anything to rectify matters. When he had a loan from the Church, he transferred his troops in Thrace across to Asia Minor. In Cappadocia and Cilicia and from other scattered garrisons troops flocked to his standard, attracted by the magic of the abnormal presence of the emperor in the provinces and at the head of an army. It is at this point that Theophanes mentions the themes. Baynes has proposed that Theophanes uses the term anachronistically: "surely Theophanes was only using the geographical term for his day, the ninth-century".⁴⁷ He goes on to attribute the system to Heraclius' successors, using evidence from Constantine Porphyrogenitus.⁴⁸ Oikonomides has questioned the first point, as he follows Ostrogorsky,⁴⁹ believing that the themes were military districts based upon new recruitment procedures.⁵⁰ However, if this were to

⁴⁷ Baynes, 'Military Theme System', p. 380.

⁴⁸ Baynes, 'Military Theme System', p. 380 and Con. Porph. *De thematibus praef* 20.

⁴⁹ Ostrogorsky, 'La Date', p. 49 from *De thematibus* c. II, 3 and c. I, 48.

⁵⁰ Oikonomides, 'Themes' p. 1-8.

be the case then Heraclius would have had to have made a tour of Asia Minor to assemble his army and Theophanes says that he went straight to Caesarea. Haldon has dismantled Oikonomides' argument that was based upon a connection between the occurrence of the word *thema* in Theophanes' account of 622 and that of a *logothete* in the *Chronicon Paschale's* entry for 626:⁵¹ according to Oikonomides recruitment was to be based on land-holdings and the *logothete* was supposedly established to supervise them. However, a *logothete* is mentioned as early as 602/603,⁵² and the reference in 626 may only show that the centralisation of military finances had taken place. Haldon continues by questioning whether Heraclius would have had the time necessary to organise and administer the distribution of the holdings that Oikonomides has suggested. Heraclius' first decade was the most confused period of his whole reign, and confusion was still in evidence when he reached Caesarea in 622. According to George of Pisidia he had to collect his scattered troops before beginning his new training regime, a cumbersome process which was seen by George as a weakness.⁵³ Had the reform envisaged by Oikonomides been in place there would surely have been less of this confusion. Indeed, would George of Pisidia not have mentioned such a sweeping reform, for he could have portrayed it as an example of Heraclius' organisational skills?

In Haldon's words the most that the term 'theme' can mean

⁵¹ Theoph. p. 303 and C.P.p. 721. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 31-35. Haldon's views originate with Lilie, 'Themenorganisation', p. 27-39, 190-201, and 'Provinzorganisation', p. 7-47.

⁵² C. P. p. 694.

⁵³ G. P. *Exp. Per. II* lines 55-60.

in Theophanes' context is a military unit,⁵⁴ and he seeks to explain the use of the term through the nature of recruitment.⁵⁵ From Theophanes we might assume that Heraclius recruited and trained a new force,⁵⁶ but if his account is compared with George of Pisidia we find no mention of these new recruits, only the reassembly of disorganised ones.⁵⁷ Haldon removes this discrepancy by arguing that Theophanes, when he uses the word *στρατεία*, means the exercise of certain military duties rather than new soldiers, in this case a stricter re-application of hereditary enlistment.⁵⁸ Heraclius would have seen this obligation as being necessary to maintain the strength of the army in the future, and this would account for the *νέα στρατεία* being imposed on those already enlisted; it also explains why George of Pisidia does not mention new recruits. This reform would alleviate the recruitment problem that had resulted from the loss of the Balkans, and Heraclius could justify the change in the light of the impending Persian campaigns. In order to implement the new regulations lists of those to be affected would have to be drawn up: "It is not unlikely that a relatively new term was employed to describe them, a term which, as Dölger suggested, soon came to be applied to the corps or divisions registered in the lists, and ultimately to the areas where the troops were stationed".⁵⁹ If the *logothete* of 626 was a military official then he may have supervised these lists. So, all that Heraclius was doing was

⁵⁴ Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 30.

⁵⁵ Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 35-40.

⁵⁶ Theoph. p. 300 10-13.

⁵⁷ G. P. *Exp. Per.* II 44.

⁵⁸ Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 35-39.

⁵⁹ Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription* p. 38. The reference to Dölger is 'Zur Ableitung des Byzantinischen Verwaltungsterminus Thema' *Historia* 4 (1955) 189-198.

reintroducing an old regulation not creating new military and administrative districts. However, recently Whitby, and Haldon himself, have argued against this thesis. Whitby reasons that hereditary service had always existed and so cannot be used as a definition for νέα στρατεία. The explanation may be even simpler than Haldon has suggested; Heraclius raised a new army, and because circumstances were very difficult the presence of an officer in charge of supplies is not surprising.

It would appear that in 621/622 Heraclius was dealing with a severe military problem rather than making use of the fruits of a military reform. We have already seen how long a reform of the coinage took to implement and how dependent it was upon the success of the eastern campaigns. The Thracian army was only transferred to Asia Minor in 619, so if Heraclius had planned to assign lands in Anatolia to these troops from Europe, then he would have had less than three years to institute a far wider reform than that of the coinage, in far less settled conditions. This suggestion is most implausible. The only time that Heraclius could have contemplated a reform of the kind proposed by Ostrogorsky and Oikonomides would have been after 636 when it would have been necessitated by the Arab success. Before 636 there would have been little to be gained from effectively concentrating Roman forces in Anatolia, in areas away from the eastern front. Are we to believe that a system that came into operation by 621/622, and was utilised in the Persian campaigns, was subsequently made obsolete by the eastward extension of the frontier and then left as a relic of a previous crisis until it was justified once more in the wake of Arab

success? We know that Heraclius did not expect to be attacked by the Arabs as a nation, so why did he plan for such an eventuality after 628? If the themes that Theophanes was talking about are considered solely as military units we have no difficulty in establishing an approximate chronology for their metamorphosis into financial and administrative units in the seventh-century: this indicates a chronology whose starting point is post-641 rather than 621.

Nevertheless, the view of Ostrogorsky has continued to be accepted in a diluted form. Shahid, whilst accepting that Ostrogorsky may have exaggerated the innovations that Heraclius made, has recently advanced evidence from the Arab sources of the Arab organisation of Bilād al-Shām (Syria and Palestine) in the early Umayyad period.⁶⁰ He argues that the themes were introduced by Heraclius between his defeat of the Persians and the invasion of the Arabs, in order to prevent another Persian attack on the scale of the 610's. He bases his argument on the assumption that the four *Ajnād* (the plural form of *Jund*, the Umayyad administrative unit in Bilād al-Shām) were Byzantine divisions that the Arabs simply adopted, in what Shahid calls "the most outstanding example of institutional assimilation" in Arab-Roman history.⁶¹ Shahid advances five points to substantiate his theory. (1) Tabari "explicitly" states that Syria was divided into four districts in Byzantine times. (2) The strategy of the Arab invasion was that of an attack upon a region divided into four parts. (3) Umar wrote the administrative history of the area but he is not credited with its

⁶⁰ Shahid, 'Theme System', p. 391-403, and 'HTS Observations', p. 208-243.

⁶¹ Shahid, 'Theme System', p. 391.

division into a region by the Arab historians, as he would have been if he had indeed been responsible. (3) The *Ajnad* themselves were arranged to repulse a threat from Persia, to counter a naval attack, and the Arabs did not build any cities in these districts; two of the *ajnad* have biblical names not found in the Koran, Jordan and Palestine. (5) The last point he adduces concerns the monetary administration of the Arab districts which he claims was a preservation of the Roman system.

Shahid then goes on to try to show that these districts were the original themes and were conceived between Heraclius' final defeat of Persia and the Arab invasions. Shahid has contrived an argument from coincidences such as the fact that Heraclius was brought up in Africa, whose defence Maurice had provided for by dividing it into two military provinces, and the militarisation of provinces in Bilād al-Shām. His argument relies upon what he himself calls a "rare, a very rare, conjunction of events and circumstances".⁶² The major weakness in his argument is that he believes because the districts were aligned to withstand an attack from the north and north-west they must have been set up after Heraclius had defeated the Persians.⁶³ Shahid believes that the Persian threat would have been uppermost in Heraclius' mind and so he reorganised his provinces to prevent a repeat invasion. However, we have already seen that Heraclius was not unduly worried about an immediate threat from Persia: indeed, he was keen to establish firmer links with that monarchy on a Christian basis.⁶⁴ Instead of

⁶² Shahid, 'HTS Observations', p. 235.

⁶³ Shahid, 'Theme System', p. 395 and 399-401.

⁶⁴ Chp. 4.

Persia being the perceived enemy for these districts, it is as easy to see the threat coming from the north and north-west in the form of Roman emperors attempting to win back what had been lost to the Arabs at the end of the reign of Heraclius. The Arabs had a fleet by 649, for Theophanes tells us that Muawiyah attacked Cyprus with 1,700 ships.⁶⁵ This then would explain why the districts were organised by the Arabs to facilitate their maritime power at a time when they felt threatened from the north.

It would be appropriate to conclude this examination of administrative and economic matters under Heraclius with a short review of theories about the state of urbanisation within the Roman empire. The cities of Syria are cited by Shahid in an attempt to prove that the Arabs merely took over the existing Roman administrative system. What has been of more interest to modern scholars is the continued existence of these cities and their counterparts in the rest of the empire. The theory of Kazdan that the Byzantine empire experienced its nadir between the seventh and ninth centuries is based upon a severe decline, if not complete disappearance of the cities.⁶⁶ The agrarianism of the economy that this led to was only ended by an upturn in the fortunes of Byzantium. The theory of Mango takes on board a greater span of history and includes the prevalence of natural disasters, epidemics, social conflicts and the strain of Justinian's wars of reconquest to explain a demographic decrease that limited the ability of cities to survive.⁶⁷ The few that did not disappear became socio-economic

⁶⁵ Theoph. p. 343-344.

⁶⁶ Kazdan, 'Byzantium' p. 324, and Kazdan and Cutler, 'Continuity and Discontinuity', p. 429-478.

contractions of their former selves. Foss saw this decline as being a result of the invasions of the Persians.⁶⁸ His is the only theory that specifically attributes the decline of urbanisation to events within the reign of Heraclius. He believes that cities such as Caesarea, Ancyra, Rhodes, Sardis and Ephesus never recovered from the Persian raids that they suffered: for example the main road of Sardis was rebuilt in c. 660 but this time the material was not marble as before, but cobble-stones, and the lime for its bedding was made in one of the rooms of the abandoned gymnasium. Foss dates this destruction and subsequent contraction of the cities to the reign of Heraclius on the strength of the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* which ends in 613 without having reported any Persian ravaging in Asia Minor, and on the evidence of coin hoards. However, it would seem that this is far too exact an approach. Howard-Johnston, discussing the Balkans, believes that the "process of urban decline was gradual, uneven and in several cases, never completed",⁶⁹ since sources are prone to distort the effects of the invasions of the Avars and the Slavs for their own ends. In the case of the *Miracula St. Demetrii* the dangers the city faced are exaggerated to emphasise the achievement of Thessalonica's patron Saint. Kennedy addresses the subject of cities of the East in a similarly circumspect manner.⁷⁰ He does not see any evidence for abrupt change, rather a process during the sixth and seventh centuries of gradual metamorphosis of town-plan from classical grid to Arab souk. There were many reasons for this transition; the Islamic legal attitude to property allowed for the

⁶⁷ Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 60-87.

⁶⁸ Foss, 'Persians', p. 469-486.

⁶⁹ Howard-Johnston, 'Urban Continuity', p. 242-253.

⁷⁰ Kennedy, 'From Polis to Medina', p. 3-27.

escalation of private building, the decline of imperial patronage of secular buildings from the fifth century, and natural disasters which, meant for example, that Beirut was not rebuilt until after the Arab conquests after an earthquake in 550. Even before the Arab conquests there were signs of the modification of urban plans. Gerasa and Apamea had streets built over by private houses. This gradual transition was typical of the progression of the late antique economy. As with the other controversial developments that have been assigned to Heraclius' reign, it is only possible to see them as an ongoing process, whose chronological boundaries exceed those of any one ruler. Heraclius deserves neither praise nor blame for these long-term changes; he receives none in the ancient sources which tended to ignore such economic or administrative developments.

Sources In Context.

The events of the reign of Heraclius were enacted upon an empire-wide stage and we have already seen that this is reflected in the contemporary accounts of his reign. The *Chronicon Paschale* and John of Antioch have a profound Constantinopolitan bias, John of Nikiu and the author of *The Life of Theodore of Sykeon* a more provincial outlook, whilst George of Pisidia was concerned with the deeds of his hero rather than an accurate catalogue of all the events of his reign. The importance of these sources for an interpretation of the reign has already been discussed in earlier chapters. What this chapter sets out to do is to evaluate these sources in relation to those later ones to which we have already devoted many words in analysing Heraclius' actions. The patchwork of information that the range of sources gives us will be looked at from another angle, not how the sources relate to the emperor but instead how they relate to each other. For this the contemporary sources must be the starting point but, as we shall see, not all the contemporary sources are extant. In order to approach the subject with some degree of clarity we shall first put into context the roles of Theophanes and Nicephorus in formulating conceptions of Heraclius' image. An examination of their sources and influence upon later writers will widen the discussion to include other historians who followed either or both of their accounts.

The *Chronicle* of Theophanes which ends in 813 was written by a monk in the monastery near Sigriane on the eastern shore of the Sea of Marmara. Unlike most Byzantine chronicles it

does not begin with the creation, starting instead with the accession of Diocletian in 284, and running up to the death of Leo V in 813. This is because he continued the account of George Syncellus which ran from the Creation to 284. Mango has argued that Theophanes was no more than the final editor of a chronicle that he believes to have been written by George.¹ Turtledove disputes this in his introduction to his translation of the chronicle.² He believes that the chronicle was written with the effects of the second period of Iconoclasm in mind and so it must be dated to 815; this would give Theophanes enough time to compose the work before his death in 818, whilst being far enough removed from the death of George Syncellus to allow Theophanes' contributions to be original rather than merely editorial. Besides, Turtledove adds, the chronicle does not include some information found in Nicephorus' history, material which George would have been aware of, he argues, for he was the *syncellus* of Patriarch Tarasius whom Nicephorus succeeded, whilst Theophanes was in relative isolation at Sigriane. For our purpose this discussion is purely academic. In this chapter we shall be less interested in determining the bias of historians' work - attributable or not - and shall concentrate instead on the texts and the relationship between them, not the authors themselves. Thus I propose to study Theophanes and Nicephorus first and try to establish how much extant source material they have utilised, adding to the discussion the Chronicle of 1234 which shared Theophanes' eastern source. Then I will progress to investigate first Theophanes' and Nicephorus' influence on the later writers George the Monk, Leo the Grammarian, Cedrenus and Zonaras. The discussion can be

¹ Mango, 'Theophanes', p. 9-17.

² Turtledove, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* p. xii.

concluded with a look at the shorter accounts of Joel, Michael Glycas and Constantine Manasses. An author by author discussion will inevitably lead to a certain amount of repetition, but a chronological analysis of the events of the reign would repeat much of what has been discussed in earlier chapters whilst also obscuring the historiographical evidence.

Mango believes Nicephorus' history to have been written in the 780's when Nicephorus was a young layman.³ The history forms a series of bulletins that are Constantinople orientated. These range from momentous events involving Heraclius and the security of the Empire, such as the Avar Surprise, to undocumented or anecdotal stories, for example the account of the affairs of Boutelinos (4) and the shipwreck of imperial treasure (8). Often Nicephorus provides obscure detail for events in the capital, for example the story of the servant girl unwittingly spitting into Eudocia's open coffin (2). In common with the format of *Chronicon Paschale* Nicephorus does not have a detailed account of Heraclius' early eastern campaigns, and the first decade of the reign concentrates upon life in the capital. However, Nicephorus did not borrow from the *Chronicon Paschale*. Nicephorus has more detail on events in the east after the Avar Surprise: after the confusion of the Persian wars he concentrates upon the Arab invasions; and his only attention to any ecclesiastical event is the succession to Sergius (26).

Nicephorus' history can be compared with John of Antioch and Theophanes for it shares some similarities with both.⁴ The

³ Mango, *Nikephoros* intro. p 12.

⁴ See Speck, *Dossier* p. 213-423, for a discussion of Nicephorus'

start of Nicephorus' account of the reign of Heraclius shows affinities with the fragment we have of John of Antioch which records the involvement of Photius in the deposition Phocas, and Phocas, dressed in black, being condemned by Heraclius (1). Nicephorus then mentions Heraclius' offer of the throne to Priscus (2) which is hinted at later in the *Chronicon Paschale* (p.708). This is followed by the tonsuring of Priscus, who also suffers by Heraclius' comparison of his actions to Phocas and himself in the roles of respectively son-in-law and friend. The funeral of Eudocia has the extra detail of the servant girl. Other details or notices preserved by Nicephorus alone are the story of Boutelinos (4), the shipwreck of imperial treasure (8) - probably fictitious and similar in its overtones to the story of Narses' shipwrecked treasure in John of Nikiu,⁵ an embassy of Huns (9), the exchange of earrings and the betrothal of Eudocia to Ziebel (12), the ransoming of Avar hostages by Heraclius' sister Maria (21), a Hunnic revolt against the Avars and a peace treaty with the Huns (22), and finally the bridge of boats with screens made of trees constructed by the court to ferry Heraclius across the Bosphorus (25).

Nicephorus also retains information not found in Theophanes. The birth of Constantine is not dated in Nicephorus (it is in Theophanes), but he tells us that he was betrothed to Gregoria the daughter of Nicetas, and that he erected a statue to Nicetas in the Forum (5). Nicephorus (6) has the speech of Shahin to Heraclius which is not found in any other source, but the reply attributed to Heraclius may well be a version of the message to Chosroes from the Senate found in the *Chronicon Paschale* for 615.⁶ The names of

treatment of Heraclius' reign.

⁵ John of Nikiu CX. 4.

the ambassadors are in both Nicephorus and the *Chronicon Paschale*. According to Nicephorus, Shahin dies on his return to Persia, but Theophanes dates this later to 626.⁷ In (8) Heraclius is in despair due to the loss of the Egyptian corn supply, which the *Chronicon Paschale* implies was in 618 when Egypt was lost.⁸ After the Hunnic embassy and the Avar surprise Nicephorus condemns the marriage of Heraclius to Martina (11) saying that Heraclius' state affairs are in a mess and he cannot even manage his personal ones. Theophanes places the marriage much earlier (in 613) and does not have the detail that Martina had two handicapped sons Fabius and Theodosius. In chapter 12 Nicephorus has Heraclius go east because of the capture of Jerusalem. This is another chronological error as Jerusalem fell in 614, well before the Avar Surprise. Nicephorus makes a further chronological mistake in dating the alliance with the Khazars to the time when Heraclius first crossed into Asia (12). and Nicephorus says the church plate that Heraclius borrowed was to pay the barbarians and not necessarily for the Persian wars, which is the purpose in other sources:

κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν διεπιπράσκοντο τὰ τῶν
ἐκκλησιῶν κειμήλια καὶ εἰς ὑπαγωγὴν φόρων τοῖς
βαρβάροις ἐξενεμήθη.⁹

ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡράκλειος τὴν ἑορτὴν τοῦ πάσχα εὐθέως τῇ
δευτέρᾳ ἑσπέρας ἐκίνησε κατὰ Περσίδος. λαβὼν δὲ τὰ τῶν

⁶ C.P. p. 707.

⁷ Theoph. p. 315.

⁸ C.P. p. 711

⁹ Niceph.11. 21-23.

εὐαγῶν οἴκων χρήματα ἐν δανείῳ, ἀπορία κατεχόμενος
ἔλαβε καὶ τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας πολυκάνδηλά τε καὶ
ἕτερα σκεύη ὑπουργικά, χαράξας νομίσματα τε καὶ
μιλιαρίσια πάμπολλα.¹⁰

Nicephorus also differs from the narrative of Theophanes in having the letter of Chosroes to Shahbaraz written for a different purpose, that is to keep Shahbaraz at Chalcedon and not return to counter Heraclius in Persia. On the actual siege of Constantinople Nicephorus has more detail than Theophanes. Nicephorus (14) like Theophanes has Heraclius in personal contact with Rhazates and has Heraclius actually kill the Persian general, whilst Theophanes merely records the injuries to his horse, when describing the personal involvement of Heraclius. The Persian political machinations before the fall of Chosroes are not mentioned in Nicephorus, but the role of Siroes is similar to that in Theophanes and his words to his father are in the same vein. Like Theophanes too (p. 327) Nicephorus has Siroes write to Heraclius, but Nicephorus also has Hormisdas write to the emperor without listing the intermediary Persian monarchs. In (17) Shabaraz requests the Persian crown, which is not in Theophanes, and Nicephorus notes that he and not Siroes (Theoph. p. 327) returned the True Cross and that his son become a Patrician.¹¹

Nicephorus' first mention of the Arabs only includes details of their original country (18), and then he deals with the breakdown of the betrothal of Eudocia to Ziebel and the return of the Holy Cross to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Modestus: this is incorrect as Modestus

¹⁰ Theoph. p. 302. 32-303. 3.

¹¹ Mango, 'Deux Études', p. 105-117.

was not ordained until after 1 September 630.¹² The details of the return of the Cross are not in Theophanes. The return of Heraclius from the east follows the chronological schema of the other sources, but differs in the details. There are none of the olive branches or lanterns that are described in the account of Theophanes, instead in Nicephorus Heraclius brings four elephants, holds horse races and distributes largesse. He also returns the property that he had borrowed from the church and makes a provision for the rest of the debt to be repaid in an annual subsidy. Nicephorus then again differs from Theophanes' narrative format, as he leaves out any mention of religious disputes and without naming the Yarmuk chastises Heraclius, through the mouthpiece of his brother Theodore, for Roman defeats caused by his marriage to Martina. The death of a Sergius by suffocation in a camel skin at the hands of the Arabs might on superficial grounds be associated with the Sergius whose defeat near Caesarea is recorded by Theophanes, but this is unlikely: instead it is another example of Nicephorus differing from Theophanes.¹³ Roman division in the ranks is mentioned, but Nicephorus lays no stress on religious failings. Nicephorus having detailed the ransoming of Avar hostages and the Hunnic revolt against the Avars (21/22) then deals with Egypt. He has more names than Theophanes. John of Barkaina may, or may not, be the John who is named in John of Nikiu as commander of the local levies but Marinus is not mentioned in any other source, nor is the fact that when Cyrus is put in charge of Egypt he attempts to have Eudocia betrothed to the Arab commander al-Amr.

¹² Mango, *Nikephoros*, p.185.

¹³ Mango, *Nikephoros*, p.187.

The detail of Heraclius sending his sons to and from Hieria to attend ceremonies in his stead and the bridge of boats and trees is unique to Nicephorus. The plot he describes in (25) is not found in any other Greek source. Nicephorus says that Heraclius' son Atalarichus and Theodore the son of his brother of the same name were conspiring, discovered and exiled. The death of Sergius is noted in (26) and the appointment of Pyrrhus, and Nicephorus provides more information about the latter's friendship with Heraclius than Theophanes. Heraclius then finally punishes Cyrus for using "pagan" tactics in attempting to marry Eudocia to an Arab general. Cyrus defended his policy of paying the Arabs from trade profits to stay out of Egypt. This is not in Theophanes, but Theophanes unlike Nicephorus has Cyrus sent back to the province to try to resurrect the deal with Amr. In Nicephorus Heraclius rejects Cyrus' protests and hands him over to the city prefect for punishment while Manuel, his temporary replacement according to Theophanes, does not even gain a mention. Heraclius' death from dropsy is due to his marriage to Martina but there is no mention of Monothelitism. Nicephorus says that he named his sons Constantine and Heraclius as his successors with a special place reserved for Martina. He adds that he died at the age of 66 having reigned thirty years and four months, ten days. Nicephorus' account of the reign represents an individual compilation, definitely distinct from that of Theophanes; the only significant overlaps are with John of Antioch's narrative of events in 610.

Theophanes has the same details as John of Antioch for

Heraclius' route to the capital via Abydos but also refers to George of Pisidia (p. 298) "as George of Pisidia says they had reliquaries and icons of the Mother of God on their masts and carried a large army from Africa and Mauretania".¹⁴ As Theophanes is very brief on Heraclius' actions at Constantinople, he does not use John of Antioch's full report. Consequently there is no mention of the death of Bonosus, or Photius. Theophanes has Phocas burnt at the Forum of the Ox, but he does not list the others cremated there - Leontius the Syrian and Bonosus and Domentiolus brother of Phocas.¹⁵ He then goes on to mention the Roman defeat by the Persians near Antioch.

The first decade of Heraclius' reign is very concisely reported by Theophanes.¹⁶ He has only the funeral date for the death of Eudocia, and the date of Constantine's coronation and the fact that Sergius crowned him. Then Theophanes has a year by year list of Persian successes, incorrectly dating the fall of Jerusalem one year late, to A.D. 615 (A.M.6106), and making a similar mistake with the capture of Egypt, dating it to 616 when modern scholarship suggests 618. After an account of the Avar Surprise Theophanes begins to follow the contemporary George of Pisidia very closely. In 622 he describes Heraclius training his army and its first victory in the autumn, characterizing the army as lazy, disorderly and careless, exactly the same adjectives as George employs.¹⁷ Theophanes even borrows phrases from the *Expositio Persica II*.¹⁸ Both writers

¹⁴ G. P. *Herac. II*.10.

¹⁵ All of whom are named in John of Antioch.

¹⁶ For an account of the sources of Theophanes see Proudfoot, 'Theophanes', p. 367-437

¹⁷ Theoph. p. 303.24-25, and G.P. *Exp. Per. II*.45.

¹⁸ G. P. *Exp. Per. II* lines 125 and especially 145-150 are in

stress the personal role of the emperor: Theophanes, p. 303.23-24 "for he did not want his power to be that of fear but that of love", comparable to George (*Exp. Per.* II.90) "for we declare that power does not shine out so much in fear as in affection". The training is described in exactly the same terms as well:

καὶ πρὸς φόβος συννεύσεις ἀψάτων δίχα.¹⁹

καὶ πρὸς φόβος συννεύσεις ἀψάτων δίχα.²⁰

And whilst Theophanes has Heraclius motivate his troops by listing Persian atrocities (p. 303.29-304.3) George mentions this as well in the quotation of a speech (*Exp. Per.* II. 105-110). The detail of the first campaign is also similar, (*Exp. Per.* I. 225-305, Theoph. p. 304.18-306.1) including the use of the moon and the sun in Heraclius' tactical manouvings and the final comment of Theophanes (p. 306.6-7) is the same as *Expedition Persica III* 298.²¹ For the campaigning years from 624-628 Theophanes may also rely on George's information merely distilling it into a more easily accessible form although this hypothesis cannot be proved because any poems by George that dealt with these events have not survived. He does not give much detail on events in the capital in these years, and the siege of 626 is all but ignored as Theophanes prefers to deal with Heraclius' actions in the east, in line with the emphasis that George

Theoph. p. 303.16-17.

¹⁹ Theoph. p. 304.9.

²⁰ G. P. *Exp. Per.* II 144.

²¹ The final comment being that the Romans had not expected the Persians to turn their backs and run.

gave in his earlier writings.

The discussion of Nicephorus has already highlighted the ways in which he is different from Theophanes, an indication that Theophanes did not use the contemporary account of John of Antioch. Another contemporary source that Theophanes did not use was the Constantinopolitan *Chronicon Paschale*.²² Thus he does not include the seizure of Phocas from the imperial palace by Photius and Probus that is in the *Chronicon Paschale* (p. 700), and unlike that source he has Heraclius crowned and married on the same day as Phocas' execution. The *Chronicon Paschale* has more information than Theophanes on both the funeral of Eudocia and the coronation of Constantine. Eudocia died at Blachernae, her body went by boat to the palace, and the next day she was buried in the Church of the Apostles. The *Chronicon Paschale* has Constantine crowned not by Sergius but by Heraclius, then take the obeisance of the Senate in the Hippodrome and having been acclaimed by the factions there, he is carried to the Great Church by Philaterus (p. 703-704). Empire-wide events show the same emphasis. The *Chronicon Paschale* has an emotive account of the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the True Cross, mentioning the suffering of monks, clerics and nuns, whilst Theophanes has 90,000 dead, the Patriarch Zachariah carried off to Persia and the vengeful role of the Jews against the defeated Christians (p. 301). Whereas the *Chronicon Paschale* follows this up with the use of the precious spear to restore morale in the capital and continues in this vein in 615 with the description of a new liturgical chant, Theophanes has the Persians take Egypt in A.M.6107.

²² See Speck, *Dossier*, p. 51-155 on the period covered by the *Chronicon Paschale*.

The two accounts may well supplement each other when Shahin arrives at Chalcedon. For Theophanes mentions an embassy to Chosroes in 613 - 614 (A.M. 6105), whilst the *Chronicon Paschale* has a letter from the Senate on behalf of Heraclius to the Persian emperor in 615 and the dispatch of ambassadors. Theophanes has a Roman embassy in 617 - 618 (A.M. 6109) to which Chosroes was unreceptive though he did not mistreat the ambassadors, merely sending them away once more (a reference to the previous embassy in Theophanes 613-614, p. 300).

Both Theophanes and the *Chronicon Paschale* detail the Avar Surprise and have a similar account. That of the *Chronicon Paschale* is lengthier and both emphasise the Avar treachery. The real divergence in the two accounts concerns the dating of the event. Theophanes has 619 (A.M. 6110) and the *Chronicon Paschale* 623. This controversy has already been discussed in an earlier chapter,²³ whereas here we are more concerned with the action rather than the date and there is little discrepancy about the actual event. The *Chronicon Paschale*, unlike Theophanes, does not describe Heraclius' preparations for his first eastern campaign, but it does detail Heraclius staying in Nicomedia to celebrate Easter in 624 before moving east (p. 714). The *Chronicon Paschale* provides more detail on events in the capital during Heraclius' absence. It includes the detail of the riot against John Seismos (p. 715-716) and has a far more extensive account of the siege of 626 (p. 716-726). In 628 the *Chronicon Paschale* preserves Heraclius' letter to his subjects that is not to be found in any other source, and also uniquely, the letter of

²³ Chp. 3.

Siroes to Heraclius (p. 735-736) at which point the chronicle breaks off. For Heraclius' reign the *Chronicon Paschale* offered a wealth of information that Theophanes did not exploit: the most obvious explanation for this failure is simply that Theophanes did not know this source.

A further contemporary, or near contemporary, account that can be mentioned at this stage is the Coptic account of John of Nikiu. Not surprisingly this was quite unknown to Theophanes so that its unique details on affairs in Africa were not incorporated into the Greek chronicle tradition. Heraclius the Elder's preparations in Africa for the revolt, as well as details of Egyptian affairs during the Arab invasions written from a Coptic rather than imperial-orthodox point of view. In chapter CVII. 2 he spends money on the barbarians of Tripolis, Pentapolis and Mareotis to effect an alliance and the rest of the chapter details both sides' preparations for war, the capture of Alexandria and Bonosus' actions in Egypt. In chapter CVIII. 4 Theophilus the Confessor predicts that Nicetas will be successful and that Heraclius will become emperor - another legitimisation story to add to the alleged race of Heraclius and Nicetas to the capital (in both Theophanes and Nicephorus). Alexandria is successfully defended by Nicetas (11), the fall of Manuf (12) leads to the submission of all Egypt to Heraclius' cause, and Bonosus leaves for Constantinople (13). John then returns to the prediction of Theophilus (14) before relating that Nicetas stabilised all of Egypt (17). It is only in CVIII. 25 that Heraclius' manoeuvres are mentioned. The senator Theodore the Illustrius (26) deserts Phocas, a point not noted elsewhere, before Phocas prepares to use the grain ships at Constantinople against Heraclius (29). There is a lack of

clarity in the unique information in chapter CX where Africa and Alexandria accept Heraclius, but we are not told if it is the Elder in Africa or his son on board ship who is about to begin the naval engagement at Constantinople (CX. 2). The Greens in ships (unlike John of Antioch) pursue the Blues (3) who make for S. Sophia, and Phocas and Leontius sink the imperial treasure (5). Phocas is then seized but there is no mention of the role of Fabius or Photius (6), though Photius' wife comes into the narrative (7, of Niceph.1). The bodies of Phocas, Leontius and Bonosos are burnt but there is no mention of the Forum of the Ox. Heraclius is crowned against his will (9, Niceph. 2) and in (13) there is a brief mention of the death of Heraclius the Elder. The account of John now has a gap until the Arab conquest of Egypt due to loss of part of the manuscript. His account adds a few extra details, for example he names Theophilus as the commander-in-chief of Egypt after John, the commander of the local levies in Nicephorus (23), dies. Chapters CXII, CXIII, CXIV and CXV describe Arab movements in Egypt to a degree not found in any other source. In CXVI Heraclius dies grieved at the death of the commander of the local levies, though he also reports the allegation that his death was due to his stamping images of himself and his two sons on the coinage, which left no room for the Roman empire. There is no mention of Martina or of Monothelitism as the cause of his demise unlike the Byzantine writers' explanation of his end.

Nicephorus' and Theophanes' accounts have very little in common. This might be due in part to Theophanes being a chronicler progressing through the events of Heraclius' reign year by year whilst Nicephorus is content to write a history proper concerned with

themes and issues rather than cataloging data. However, they also used different sources, since Nicephorus made use of John of Antioch whilst Theophanes followed George of Pisidia. It is proposed that Nicephorus wrote his history earlier than Theophanes and in Constantinople,²⁴ which is reflected in his more capital-orientated narrative of events. He could not have had recourse to Theophanes' work, but for whatever reason was unaware of the *Chronicon Paschale* which, as we have seen, had an analogous Constantinople orientation.

The main overlaps between Nicephorus and Theophanes occur in Nicephorus (1) and (10). Describing the revolt of Heraclius Nicephorus and Theophanes legitimise Heraclius' right to be Emperor by providing the mythical story of the race to the capital, between Heraclius and his cousin Nicetas - the winner to claim the throne, since Phocas had seemingly forfeited his right to rule by misgoverning the empire. Nicephorus, unlike Theophanes, does not mention the role of the senate or of Priscus in inciting the governor of Africa to rebel, but he does have more detail than Theophanes on the battle for Constantinople. This is parallel to and may be derived from the fragmentary account of John of Antioch, from which also comes the germ of the rivalry between Phocas and Priscus over Priscus' statue in the hippodrome (1). Nicephorus also has Priscus' ambiguous attitude during the revolt and the Greens firing the Caesarion harbour. Unlike Theophanes, Nicephorus has Phocas seized by Photius whose wife he had dishonoured, and beheaded. The list of victims of Heraclius' newly gained power; Domentiolus, Leontius, Bonosus, and Phocas is from John of Antioch. So too is the repartee

²⁴ Mango, 'Theophanes', p. 9-17.

between Heraclius and Phocas, that Theophanes also fails to record. The real similarity between the two accounts concerns the race to Constantinople between Heraclius and Nicetas. This seems to be an appealing anecdotal story that could easily have found itself into two different authors independently.

The other point of convergence with Theophanes in Nicephorus is the Avar surprise, but there is more detail in Nicephorus. He has the names of the ambassadors sent to the Chagan by Heraclius (Athanasius and Cosmas) and states that Heraclius headed for Heracleia having rested near Selymbria, which puts the ambush at Heracleia in a more understandable context than that of Theophanes. Heraclius' flight is described in more embarrassing terms by Nicephorus: he is a comic figure with his crown "tucked under his arm" and donning "mean and miserable clothes", symbolic of his situation. Nicephorus notes that, the Avars desolated up to the Hebdomon and took an exaggerated 270,000 captives, details not found in Theophanes. Thus even when Nicephorus and Theophanes record the same event the separation of their accounts is apparent.

From 628 Theophanes begins to use a source other than George of Pisidia, whose panegyrics probably culminated with the triumph over Persia in that year.²⁵ George's influence cannot be traced after Theophanes' reproduction of the same fire metaphor on the defeat of Chosroes (*Herac.* 90 and *Herac. II* 230) and the analogy between God resting on the seventh day and Heraclius

²⁵ See Speck, *Dossier* p. 155-193, on Theophanes' text to 641.

fighting for six years and resting during the seventh. As the theatre of operations becomes Syria, rather than Armenia and northern Persia, Theophanes may well have been able to begin to draw on the Syriac source that Agapius of Membij, Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234* also preserve, as from this year Theophanes shows significant similarities with the nexus of Syriac sources for his knowledge of events outside of the capital. In order to determine what the nature of these sources was we must consider a comparison between Theophanes, Agapius, Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234*, which preserve much of the lost work of Dionysius of Tell-Mahre, as well as considering very incomplete information from the earlier *Chronicles of 637, 641, 755, 819 and 846*.

A look through the early extant Syriac writers will not show where Theophanes, Michael and *1234* (Dionysius of Tell-Mahre) got their information, but Conrad has in a pair of lengthy investigations suggested that the source was Theophilus of Edessa.²⁶ The information the other incomplete Syriac Chronicles provide ranges from the minimal in the *Chronicle of AD 846* which has only the death of Phocas through the two relevant dates of the *Chronicle of 819* (627 the death of Chosroes and 636 the Yarmuk) to a more lengthy list of events and dates in the chronicles of *641* and *755*. In that of *641* the Euphrates freezes in 610 whilst in Theophanes the sea (not named) freezes. Egypt is captured by the Persians in 619 (not 616) but is evacuated at God's command in 629 - Heraclius gets no credit for his defeat of the Persians. Siroes reigns

²⁶ Conrad, 'Theophanes', p. 1-44. and 'Arwad' p. 322-348. Articles which have built upon the pioneering work of Brooks, 'Sources', p. 578-587.

seven months, as he does in Theophanes. The battle of Caesarea is dated to 634 and in 636 Syria and Palestine are invaded. There is not so much chronological accuracy in the *Chronicle of 755* (Zuqnin): it has the Arabs capture as far as the Euphrates in 621 and the death of Phocas and the reign of Heraclius in 622. Zuqnin was using a list of Byzantine emperors that was twelve years out of step with his main dating system which caused a comparable dislocation of many events. In 622 (Theoph. p. 632-633) it describes the sword in the sky and, a unique detail, that in 629 Heraclius began to build the church at Amida. 633 is its date for the Yarmuk, Iad enters Edessa one year earlier than in Theophanes in 637 but Dara falls two years later than Theophanes' date of 639. The sparseness of detail in these sources shows that they were not operating in the same tradition as the source available to Theophanes, and their confusion about dates is not evidence enough to explain those places where the chronology in Theophanes and *1234* is confused. Theophanes' eastern source, identified by Conrad as the eighth century writer Theophilus of Edessa, had access to different information - not always accurate in terms of date but at least different in his errors which crop up consistently in the various sources which followed him.

Theophanes and *1234* have information in common before 628. These similarities may reflect nothing more than that an event of this nature occurred in roughly this year, or that the story was current. Two examples illustrate the differences in details and yet the general similarity of their accounts. The letter of Chosroes to Kardarigan, falsified by Constantine, is in *1234*, and is the reason that *1234* gives for the ending of the siege of Constantinople in 626.²⁷ In this the *Chronicle* betrays its eastern bias in its

presentation of facts as well as its unwillingness to credit God and the Theotokos for the victory, as all the Byzantine writers do. For *1234*, having a Monophysite stance, saw Heraclius as a heretic and could not therefore depict him as being smiled upon by God. Theophanes and *1234* both contain brief accounts of the siege, which differ very little in content, but Theophanes places the forged letter to Kardarigan, which *1234* sees as being so important to the raising of the siege, one year later than *1234*. They also have similar accounts of the early history of Islam, though *1234* does not name Khadijn and it has Mohammed lead a raid into Palestine in 622,²⁸ but whilst *1234* gives details on Mohammed's teachings Theophanes has only a misguided description of Muslim paradise.²⁹ *1234* places this in its chronological context of 622 whilst Theophanes is content to wait until the Arabs come to greater prominence in Roman and especially Heraclius' affairs with the death of Mohammed.

Theophanes and *1234*'s accounts of Heraclius' actions in the East immediately after his victory do not agree, for they are simply not following the same source tradition. Theophanes has Heraclius converting the Jew Benjamin in Tiberias, whilst *1234* has him saving the Jews of Edessa from a massacre through his messenger Joseph.³⁰ In 629 Heraclius meets Athanasius the Patriarch of the Monophysites.³¹ *1234* goes on to exemplify Heraclius' involvement

²⁷ *1234* p. 231-233.

²⁸ *1234* p. 227-228.

²⁹ *1234* p. 228-230 and Theoph. p 334.

³⁰ *1234* p. 235-236.

³¹ It is now that Michael the Syrian chooses to mention his marriage to Martina which Theophanes dates to 613 (A.M. 6105) and

with the Eastern Church by including his irritation with Isaiah of Edessa when Heraclius meets Athanasius and the twelve prelates at Mabhug. This disagreement, which is not related at all by Theophanes, caused Heraclius to initiate a persecution against the Monophysites, the sin which 1234 uses to explain the Roman defeats at the hands of the Arabs.³² In Theophanes the wars against the Arabs begin in earnest with the defeat of Sergius at Caesarea. The *Chronicle of 1234* provides a little more detail including the speech of Abu Bakr to his troops before they set out.³³ The story of Sergius' defeat is told differently. Theophanes has Sergius as the first to die (Theoph. p. 336.16-19), whilst 1234 has him conduct a protracted personal act of cowardice:

"The patrician saw this and began to flee headlong to save his skin...Sergius fell from his horse, but his attendants came to his aid and set him back on again. He stayed briefly in the saddle, then fell again. Again his companions held ranks and set him back on his mount. A few steps further on he fell to the ground for a third time. They were making as if to put him back in the saddle when he said "Leave me. Save yourselves. Otherwise you and I shall drink the cup of death together".³⁴

which 1234 places after the siege of 626 but before the battle with Rhazates (p. 233).

³² 1234 p. 237.

³³ 1234 p. 240.

³⁴ 1234 p. 241-242.

After this defeat both Theophanes and Michael the Syrian, but not *1234*, add that a sign in the shape of a sword appeared in the sky for thirty days, symbolising the rise of Islam.³⁵ This is soon apparent in the sources. Sergius' replacement is Heraclius' son Theodore whose arrogance, according to *1234*, contributed to his defeat, and was illustrated by his conversation with Theophilus the Stylite.³⁶

An element of confusion now enters the story-line concerning the battle of the Yarmuk. The problem is not so much in dating the battle but rather in distinguishing it from other less decisive ones. According to Theophanes (p. 337) Theodore was defeated near Gabitha but Baanes and a *sakellarios* Theodore were then successful at Emesa; this persuaded the Arabs to vacate Damascus although Heraclius also left Syria at this point. Then the next year Theodore was defeated and Baanes was vanquished at the Yarmuk. *1234* does not date the Yarmuk, but it has more detail than Theophanes. Theodore is defeated after speaking arrogantly to the Stylite, then there was a Roman defeat at Emesa which is described along similar lines to that of the Yarmuk, which according to Theophanes took place later. A substitution of Yarmuk for Emesa would seem to lessen the confusion as *1234* goes on to describe the fall of Damascus, and the terms it and then Emesa got from the Arab conquerors.³⁷ However, this is not a legitimate explanation for the confusion over the battle of the Yarmuk, for next the Arabs return the tribute and the Yarmuk is described, as in Michael, before the

³⁵ Theoph. p. 336, and Michael the Syrian, XI. iv (Chabot II p. 414).

³⁶ *1234* p. 243.

³⁷ *1234* p. 244-249.

departure of Heraclius and his letter to the other provinces.³⁸

Like Theophanes *1234* now goes on briefly to Egyptian affairs. Cyrus and his replacement Manuel arrive and leave. *1234* has the additional detail of the Coptic Patriarch Benjamin aiding the Arabs,³⁹ and then illustrates Manuel's aggressiveness towards the invader (Theoph. p. 338) but does not have the Arab reply to the reinstated Cyrus about swallowing a huge pillar.⁴⁰ Both sources have the story of Umar's entry into Jerusalem, and that of the pact of John with Iad to preserve Roman influence around Edessa through money payments, and name Ptolemaeus as the man whom Heraclius used to replace John. Similarly both end with the massacres at Tella and Dara. However, *1234* has two pieces of extra information. The first concerns the immoral conduct of the Armenian general, David who began a campaign against the Arabs in Syria but ended up persecuting the local inhabitants there.⁴¹ The local commander Titus tried to appeal to their common Christianity to prevent this but was rebuffed. His forces survived the Arab attack because they were brave but David's men, who got no help from God, all perished along with their commander. The second piece of information follows a description of Muawiyah's capture of Caesarea, which Theophanes dates later to 641.⁴² Muawiyah captured and massacred or enslaved the population of Euchaita. Theophanes now includes the story of Hormisdas' flight into the interior of Persia,

³⁸ *1234* p. 249-251.

³⁹ *1234* p. 253.

⁴⁰ Theoph. p. 339

⁴¹ *1234* p. 257-258.

⁴² Theoph. p. 341.

which is introduced a lot later than 1234.⁴³ Umar's census is only mentioned by Theophanes before both report the death of Heraclius in a dry factual tone. 1234 does not mention his dropsy and calculates his reign at thirty years and five months, compared to Theophanes' thirty years and ten months. Within this "Syriac source" nexus there are links with the information that Theophanes also provides about Heraclius' actions in the east and the rise of the Arabs. Theophanes is the earliest writer on Heraclius to include detailed information on these events as result of the intercultural transmission that Conrad describes, and so his chronicle is the first to incorporate it into a criticism of Heraclius.

The Syriac chronicle tradition does not end with Michael and the *Chronicle of 1234*. Bar Hebraeus has a lot of detail on Heraclius much of which is in line with the entries of his predecessors and with Theophanes. Bar Hebraeus dates the beginning of Heraclius' reign to the twenty-first year of that of Chosroes compared to Theophanes' twenty-second year date. Then Heraclius the Elder and Gregorius attack Constantinople and Phocas "was killed" - Bar Hebraeus provides no further details on the coup unlike Agapius who relates the race to Constantinople between Heraclius and Nicetas. Michael and Bar Hebraeus have Heraclius send ambassadors to Chosroes in the early years of Heraclius' reign with a similar message "Phocas killed your friend Maurice we have killed him". Bar Hebraeus has the same dates as Theophanes for the fall of Jerusalem and Egypt and the arrival of Shahin at Chalcedon, whilst he sides with Michael for the capture of Caesarea in 611 and the detail on the fall of Jerusalem, his only error being to attribute the capture of Antioch to

⁴³ Theoph. p. 341, and 1234 p. 247-248.

Heraclius and not to the Persians.

Following the narrative format of Michael he then goes on to describe the rise of Islam in a more concise style before dealing with the siege of Constantinople and the story of the forged letter which Bar Hebraeus, unlike Theophanes and Michael says contained the names of 300 not 400 satraps to be killed, but otherwise has the same material as Michael's story. He is closer to Michael than Theophanes for the defeat of Rhazates and the nine month reign of Siroes but Bar Hebraeus has Heraclius winter in Edessa rather than Armenia, which he has possibly confused with Heraclius' movements the next spring. Bar Hebraeus introduces new information on Heraclius' opinion of the Arabs, where he describes them as an "early cloudy dawn". He also has extra details on Mohammed including his actions at Mecca and Medina, yet there is no detail on the meeting at Mabhug between Heraclius and Athanasius. Bar Hebraeus follows Michael for the defeat of Sergius and the Arab conquest of Syria and Palestine including the plan of the son of Shahbaraz to rule Persia with Arab forces and its failure due to the influence of the daughters of Chosroes with Umar. Both Michael and Bar Hebraeus use an anecdote to describe the end of the Persian empire, as a naked Arab carries all before him. Bar Hebraeus differs in his version of Egyptian affairs, according to him Egypt is conquered after Manuel leaves, but Michael and Theophanes have Cyrus return to an irretrievable situation. His story about Umar's entry into Jerusalem is also slightly different - Umar does not change his clothes. From this point onwards Bar Hebraeus closely follows Michael right up until the same dry reporting of the death of

Heraclius.

Returning from the eastern source traditions and their links with Theophanes, the next Byzantine writer to be considered is George the Monk, who composed under the Emperor Michael III and his chronicle ends in 842. His account represents an amalgam of Theophanes and Nicephorus with a limited amount of additional information, such as a physical description of Heraclius. He follows Theophanes for the coronation of Heraclius in the church of St. Stephen, but uses Nicephorus for the end of Priscus' career, including Priscus' inability to act either as a son-in-law or as friend. Then George has the story of the Roman ambassadors being kept in chains in Persia which is in Nicephorus (7) and which Nicephorus and George both ascribe to the initiative of Shahin at Chalcedon.

George may be using Theophanes for Heraclius' departure from the capital to the east, though in this context he mentions an alliance with the Khazars in a similar place to its inclusion in Nicephorus, whilst Theophanes dates it after the Avar Surprise; this is George's next entry and here he follows Nicephorus again (12), though he has only 70,000 men and women being captured by the barbarians, as opposed to 270,000. The account of the siege of 626 is brief enough to suggest Theophanes as a source: George does not include any personality in his account and he does not mention the naval battle that is in Nicephorus. George does not in fact follow Nicephorus' account for the siege as Proudfoot has suggested.⁴⁴ George has few details on the final defeat of the Persian army, not even mentioning Rhazates. He does include the imprisonment of

⁴⁴ Proudfoot, 'Theophanes', p. 396.

Chosroes and his death by starvation, and the description of the temple of Chosroes: both are mentioned by Nicephorus, though the latter comes in a somewhat earlier context.⁴⁵ George repeats the comment of George of Pisidia that Heraclius fought for six years and then rested in the seventh, before describing his return to the capital, which is similar to that of Theophanes.⁴⁶

George then deals in an abrupt fashion with the religious affairs of the reign. This is the same as the narrative format Theophanes employs but George is more concise. He merely says that Heraclius was deceived by Athanasius, and because of this Heraclius caught dropsy. The symptoms of this are described in Nicephorus' terms (27). George's last comment is on Heraclius' marriage to Martina (who is not named) which is also in Nicephorus.

George moves about blocks of chronology; he has Shahin at Chalcedon and Heraclius sending ambassadors to Persia before the Avar Surprise, but he then places the alliance with the Khazars and the fall of Jerusalem together in one report after the Avar surprise. It is possible that he followed Theophanes for the alliance with the Khazars but the date of the fall of Jerusalem is way out of place. After he reports the death of Heraclius George has a unique disparaging account of Mohammed (p. 702.10-705.16), and further on the battle of the Yarmuk is to be found (p. 707.13-17) displaced to the reign of Constans. However, though this confusion obscures George's narrative it does not hide his sources: in view of the

⁴⁵ Niceph. 15 and 12 respectively.

⁴⁶ Theoph. p. 328. 2-10.

discrepancies he may have read these in advance and then produced an account from memory, rather than copying them directly.

Leo the Grammarian in the tenth-century wrote a slightly longer history than George, but one based upon essentially the same sources. He has the same physical description of Heraclius that is in George and like George has Heraclius crowned in the church of St. Stephen. However, the actions of Priscus after the coronation are from Nicephorus. Leo and George mention Priscus acclaiming Heraclius and then have him at Caeserea before mentioning his failings as both a son-in-law and as a friend. This information is to be found in Nicephorus (2) but not in Theophanes. Nicephorus' influence is also found in the point Leo makes about the despondency of Heraclius (Niceph. 8) who does, however, seem to place it later in the reign. Then Theophanes is used by Leo to chronicle eastern affairs, the fall of Jerusalem and Chosroes' speech to the Roman ambassadors:

οὐ φείσομαι ὑμῶν ἕως ἂν ἀρνήσησθε τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον
ὃν λέγετε θεὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσκυνήσητε τῷ ἡλίῳ.⁴⁷

εἰ ἀρνήσεται ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον καὶ
προσκυνήσει τῷ ἡλίῳ, ποιῶ εἰρήνην.⁴⁸

and he follows Theophanes for the date of the fall of Egypt (616). Theophanes is also used by Leo for the Avar surprise, which is not

⁴⁷ Theoph. p. 301. 23-24.

⁴⁸ Leo Gramm. p. 148. 20-22.

dated, but Leo does not mention that peace was made the following year. The sequence of events continues to follow Theophanes with Heraclius leaving for the east in 622, having minted *nomismata* and *milliariesia* and celebrated Easter. Then Leo's chronology becomes a little confused. He now inserts the story of the imprisoned ambassadors, which is to be found in Nicephorus, after Shahin has come to Chalcedon.⁴⁹ This is dated by the *Chronicon Paschale* to 615 and the position of the event is well out of step with all other writers. We are then told that Heraclius prayed in penitent garb to ask God to forgive the Romans' religious failings before he began his Persian campaign - this seems to be Leo's own comment on the moral state of the Empire as it is not found in any of the earlier Byzantine sources, although it is of course the reason that the Monophysite Syriac writers give for later Roman defeats. Leo seems to be following Nicephorus at this point, for he too has Heraclius ally with the Khazars at this time whilst Theophanes places it later in 626 (Niceph. 12, Theoph. p. 301). Leo, like George, ignores the early campaigns of Heraclius in the east and moves straight on to the siege of 626. Here he is shorter than Theophanes, but while George like Theophanes mentions only "the citizens" Leo does refer to Sergius and Bonus as defenders, and the final naval victory which is not actually recorded in Theophanes. Leo does not mention the battle between Heraclius and Rhazates, but moves straight to the fall of Chosroes. His description of Chosroes' temple is found in both George and Nicephorus (12), who places it much earlier in the campaigning. Leo now has Heraclius in communication with Shahbaraz. According to Nicephorus (17) Heraclius and Shahbaraz concluded a peace, which is not referred to in Theophanes (p. 327), who only has Siroes and

⁴⁹ Leo Gramm. p. 149. 22-150. 2, and Niceph. 7. 13-15.

not Shahbaraz.⁵⁰ George of Pisidia's point, preserved in Theophanes, about Heraclius fighting for six years and resting in the seventh is also in Leo, but Leo has a slightly different version of Heraclius' movements. Unlike Theophanes and George he has Heraclius go to Constantinople, then to Jerusalem, and finally back to the capital. Leo's version of Heraclius' return to the capital is very similar to that of Theophanes:

οἱ δὲ τῆς πόλεως τὴν ἔλευσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς
παλατίοις τῆς ἡρίας ἐξῆλθον σὺν τῷ πατριάρχῃ καὶ
Κωνσταντίνῳ βασιλεῖ τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ, βαστάζοντες κλάδους
ἐλαιῶν καὶ λαμπάδας πρὸς ὑπαντὴν καὶ εὐφημοῦντες
αὐτόν. καὶ ὁ μὲν υἱὸς αὐτοῦ προσελθὼν ἔπεσεν εἰς τοὺς
πόδας τοῦ πατρός, ὁ δὲ περιπλακεῖς αὐτόν, κατεφίλουν
ἀλλήλοις ἐν δάκρυσι, καὶ οὕτως λαβόντες τὸν βασιλέα,
εὐφημοῦντες καὶ χαίροντες εἰσῆλθον ἐν τῇ πόλει.⁵¹

ὁ δὲ λαὸς τῆς πόλεως τὴν ἔλευσιν αὐτοῦ μαθόντες
ἀκατασχέτῳ πόθῳ πάντες εἰς τὴν Ἱερείαν ἐξῆλθον εἰς
συνάντησιν αὐτοῦ, σὺν τῷ πατριάρχῃ καὶ Κωνσταντίνῳ,
τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ, βαστάζοντες κλάδους ἐλαιῶν
καὶ λαμπάδας, εὐφημοῦντες αὐτὸν μετὰ χαρᾶς καὶ
περιπλακεῖς αὐτῷ ἔβρεξαν ἀμφότεροι τὴν γῆν τοῖς
δάκρυσιν. τοῦτο θεασάμενος ὁ λαός, ἅπαντες
εὐχαριστηρίους ὕμνους τῷ θεῷ ἀνέπεμπον, καὶ οὕτω
λαβόντες τὸν βασιλέα σκιρτῶντες εἰσῆλθον ἐν τῇ

⁵⁰ This peace is located by the *Chronicle of 641* at Arabissus, Nicephorus' only parallel with an eastern source.

⁵¹ Leo Gramm. p. 154. 18-155. 3

Leo, like George, merely has the deception of Heraclius by Athanasius, which causes Heraclius' dropsy and which forces him to use planks to allow him to urinate, this is described in Nicephorus' terms (27); Leo also ends his entry in a similar fashion to George. Unlike George he does name Martina and he ends with a burial description which is not significantly different to that of Nicephorus (28), but is not in Theophanes or George.

However, unlike George, but following Theophanes, Leo does describe the rise of the Arabs. First he has a chronological computation quoting Stephen of Alexandria, then he uses Theophanes (p. 333) for Mohammed's ancestry and early life including the vision of the angel Gabriel and the role of the false monk (p. 334), before detailing Mohammed's teaching (Theoph. p. 334), but on paradise only. This material is not to be found in Nicephorus.

There is no mention of the battle of the Yarmuk in Leo but he does make another comment on history not found in his sources. That is that the Arabs were successful because God had abandoned the Romans. This is not in Theophanes whilst Nicephorus (20) has Theodore brother of Heraclius blame Heraclius for the situation because of his marriage to Martina. Now Leo describes Heraclius' return to Constantinople, much later than his source Theophanes (p. 328, see above). Finally, he deals with the religious problems of the reign that we have discussed above. In leaving Heraclius' religious

⁵² Theoph. p. 328. 2-10.

error to the very end of his reign Leo may be trying to preserve the image of a successful emperor for as long as possible, since he does not even mention the greatest defeat of Heraclius' reign, the Yarmuk.

Of the later Byzantine writers the version of Cedrenus, written at the turn of the eleventh century, is the most extensive on Heraclius. We will see him lean heavily on Theophanes, though with a few significant exceptions. Cedrenus follows Theophanes for eastern events in the first decade of Heraclius' reign, from the fall of Apamea via the same words on the Saracens in Syria, Cedrenus only switches χωρία and ἱκανὰ around,⁵³ and an almost word for word account of the fall of Jerusalem (Ced. p. 715,7-13).

παρέλαβον οἱ Πέρσαι τὸν Ἰορδάνην καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην
καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν πολέμῳ , καὶ ἀπέκτειναν ἐν αὐτῇ
διὰ χειρῶν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὥς φασὶ τινες, μυριάδας θ' .
αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὠνούμενοι τοὺς Χριστιανούς, καθ' ἕκαστος
ἠύπορει, ἀπέκτεινον αὐτούς. Ζαχαρίαν δὲ τὸν
патριάρχην Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ τὰ τίμια ξύλα λαβόντες
σὺν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ πολλῇ ἐν Περσίδι ἀπήγαγον.

παρέλαβον οἱ Πέρσαι τὸν Ἰορδάνην καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν
πολέμῳ καὶ πολλοὺς ἀπέκτειναν ἐν αὐτῇ διὰ χειρὸς τῶν
Ἰουδαίων, ὥς φασὶ τινες, μυριάδας ἐννέα. οὗτοι γὰρ
ὠνούμενοι τοὺς Χριστιανούς καθὰ εὐπόρει ἕκαστος
ἀπέκτεινον αὐτούς. Ζαχαρίαν δὲ τὸν πατριάρχην
Ἱεροσολύμων, καὶ τὰ τίμια καὶ ζωοποιὰ ξύλα λαβόντες

⁵³ Ced. p. 714. 23, and Theoph. p. 300. 18.

σὺν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ πολλῇ ἐν Περσίδι ἀπήγαγον.⁵⁴

This parallelism extends to the Avar surprise where Theophanes merely has a few more words. But Cedrenus also demonstrates borrowings from other extant writers, Nicephorus and Leo the Grammarian. The involvement of Photius in the coup (Ced. p. 712.20-713.1) is from Nicephorus (1), though the names are different, Photius in Nicephorus and Photeinus in Cedrenus, and the language is almost entirely different. As both writers have the same story Cedrenus may simply have been writing from memory, as no other source is obvious. The repartee over Phocas' government of the empire, and that between Heraclius and Priscus on the role of a son-in-law and friend is also from Nicephorus (Niceph. 2). In 612 Theophanes says that Heraclius was at a loss, but Cedrenus is more definite in saying that he wanted a leave of absence from government which is closer to the remark of Nicephorus that he considered leaving for Africa (8). Cedrenus also includes a physical description of Heraclius that exists only in Leo and George the Monk.⁵⁵

Οὗτος ὁ Ἡράκλειος ἦν τὴν ἡλικίαν μεσήλιξ, εὐσθενής,
εὐστερνος, εὐόφθαλμος καὶ ὀλίγον ὑπόγλαυκος, ξανθὸς
τὴν τρίχα καὶ λευκὸς τὴν χροιάν, ἔχων τὸν πώγωνα
πλατὺν καὶ πρὸς μῆκος ἐκκρεμῇ. ὁπηνίκα δὲ πρὸς τὸ
τῆς βασιλείας ἦλθεν ἀξίωμα, εὐθέως ἐκείρατο τὴν κόμην
καὶ τὸ γένειον τῷ βασιλικῷ σχήματι.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Theoph. p. 300. 31-301. 5.

⁵⁵ Baldwin, 'Emperors', p. 19.

⁵⁶ Leo Gramm. p. 147. 18-148. 2.

Οὗτος ὁ Ἡράκλειος ἦν τὴν ἡλικίαν μεσήλιξ, εὐσθενής,
εὐστέρνος, εὐόφθαλμος, ὀλίγον ὑπόγλαυκος, ξανθὸς τὴν
τρίχα, λευκὸς τὴν χροιάν, ἔχων τὸν πώγωνα πλατὺν καὶ
πρὸς μῆκος ἐκκρεμῇ. ὀπηνίκα δὲ πρὸς τὸ τῆς βασιλείας
ἦλθεν ἀξίωμα, εὐθέως ἐκείρατο τὴν κόμην καὶ τὸ γένειον
τῷ βασιλικῷ σχήματι.⁵⁷

In 622 also Cedrenus has information found only in Leo in his use of Stephen of Alexandria for a chronological computation, and his entry for 623 is a mixture of Theophanes and Leo. The narrative now switches to the imprisoned ambassadors to Persia, in the same way that Leo does, before Cedrenus returns to using Theophanes as Heraclius takes the Holy Image and crosses the sea to train his army: Theophanes (Theoph. p. 303) is the same as Cedrenus (p. 719.20).

The manoeuvrings in Armenia, Pontus, and Persia are mirrored in Theophanes (p. 304), though there is no mention of the sun aiding Heraclius' victory over Shahbaraz (p. 305) but Cedrenus has the same words as Theophanes when Heraclius leaves Armenia to winter in the capital. Cedrenus then has a detailed description of Chosroes' heavenly chamber which is also found in Nicephorus and Leo the Grammarian, but is not recorded in Theophanes.

καὶ εἰσελθὼν ἐν αὐτῇ εὗρε τὸ μουσαρὸν εἶδωλον τοῦ
Χοσρόου, τό τε ἐκτύπωμα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ τοῦ παλατίου
σφαιροειδεῖ στέγῃ ὥς ἐν οὐρανῷ καθήμενον, καὶ περὶ
τοῦτο ἥλιον καὶ ἀστρα. οἷς ὁ δεισιδαίμων ὥς θεοῖς

⁵⁷ Ced. p. 714. 1-6.

ἐλάρευε, καὶ ἀγγέλους αὐτῷ σκηπτροφόρους περιέστησεν.
ἐκεῖθεν τε σταγόας στάζειν ὡς ὑετοὺς καὶ ἤχοῦ ὡς
βροντὰς ἐξηχεῖσθαι ὁ θεομάχος ταῖς μηχαναῖς
ἐπετεχνάσατο.⁵⁸

ἐφ' ἑνὸς δὲ τούτων εὖρηται, ὡς Χοσρόης εἰαυτὸν
θεοποιήσας ἐν τῇ τούτου στέγῃ εἰαυτὸν καθήμενον ὡς
ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀεστήλωσεν, ἄστρα καὶ σελήνην
συγκατασκευάσας, καὶ ἀγγέλους περιεστῶτας αὐτῷ, καὶ
βροντὴν διὰ μηχανῆς ποιεῖν καὶ ὕειν ὅπότ' ἂν
θελήσειεν.⁵⁹

ἐφ' ᾧν εὐρέθη Χοσρόου τὸ μυσαρὸν ἐκτύπωμα, ὥσπερ ἐν
οὐρανῷ ἐν τῇ τοῦ οἴκου στέψῃ καθήμενον, ἄστρα καὶ
ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην κατεσκεύασεν, καὶ ἀγγέλους
περιεστῶτας αὐτῷ καὶ βροντὴν διὰ μηχανῆς γίνεσθαι, καὶ
βρέχειν ὅταν θελήσειεν.⁶⁰

The account ends with Heraclius wintering in Albania - taken from Theophanes. For 624 Cedrenus has less detail of Heraclius' campaigning than Theophanes but they share the same words, p. 310.19-21 and p. 723.17-21, and almost the same oration of Heraclius to his troops with Cedrenus only missing out "and God will give us our reward" at the end of the speech (p. 723. 23-724. 3,

⁵⁸ Ced. p. 721. 20-722. 4.

⁵⁹ Niceph. 12, 43-47.

⁶⁰ Leo Gramm. p. 151. 23-152. 3.

Theoph p. 310.26-311.2). In 625 Cedrenus has Heraclius cross the Taurus mountains not the Saros river (p. 726. 2, p. 313.13). However, when Shahbaraz speaks to Cosmas as Heraclius fights the giant on the bridge the words are again the same, Cedrenus again leaving out the end of the speech "like an anvil he spurns their blows" (Theoph. p. 314.14-17, Ced. p. 726.19-21). The battle ends in both accounts with the Persians afraid of the evening and Chosroes forcing Nestorianism on the Christians in Persia.

Comparable similarities are evident in the entries for 626. Chosroes recruits a new army and Heraclius splits his army into three. Theodore defeats Shahin but Cedrenus does not add, as Theophanes does, that his body was preserved in salt and subjected to many indignities when it arrived back in Persia (p. 728.4). In connection with the Khazar alliance Cedrenus does not mention Tiflis or the number of men that the Khazars gave to Heraclius (Theoph. p. 316.14). On the siege of Constantinople there is far more detail in Cedrenus than in Theophanes, and this caused Barisic's belief that Cedrenus used a lost source more closely than Theophanes.⁶¹ Both chronicle the Avars moving canoes to the Golden Horn and the fact that after ten days they were defeated by God and the Theotokos, but only Cedrenus goes on to mention the vision of the Theotokos that the Avar Chagan has at Blachernae which impelled him to retreat (Ced. p. 728.23-729.18). This serves as Cedrenus' explanation for the defeat of the Avars in much the same way as a vision of the Theotokos by the Chagan does in the *Chronicon Paschale*. This may not be due to a lost source but could instead be

⁶¹ Barisic, 'Le siège', p. 376-377.

a reference to a "folk memory" of the siege that was kept alive by hymns like the *Akathistos*. The similarity is closer between Cedrenus and Theophanes for the year 627, especially in the description of the Turcomans abandoning Heraclius in Persia, and Heraclius' speech to his troops is the same in Cedrenus as in Theophanes.

γνῶτε, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμῖν συμμαχῆσαι θέλει, ἀλλ' ἡ
μόνος ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἡ τοῦτον τεκοῦσα ἀσπόρως θεοτόκος.
τοῦτο δὲ γίνεται ὅπως δείξῃ ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ πᾶσι τούτοις
ἐαυτοῦ δυναστείαν, καταπέμψας ἡμῖν τὴν αὐτοῦ
βοήθειαν.⁶²

γνῶτε, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμῖν συμμαχῆσαι θέλει, ἀλλ' ἡ
μόνος ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἡ τοῦτον τεκοῦσα ἀσπόρως μήτηρ, ἵνα
δείξῃ τὴν ἐαυτοῦ δυναστείαν, καταπέμπει τὴν βοήθειαν
αὐτοῦ.⁶³

On the battle with Rhazates Cedrenus only leaves out the name of Heraclius' horse Antelope and switches the Persian retreat and the plundering of the Romans around, but there is less information on the manoeuvres after the battle. Theophanes has a few extra details on the flight of Chosroes, a forty-eight mile march by the turmarch George to seize four bridges over the Lesser Zab (p. 320), and Theophanes has 300 not 500 gazelles but no ostriches in Chosroes' palace at Dastagerd. Cedrenus does not remark upon

⁶² Ced. p. 730. 3-6.

⁶³ Theoph. p. 317. 17-21.

Chosroes going to Ctesiphon for the first time in twenty-four years, but does make the point that Chosroes' speed of movement in retreat was five times faster than in earlier campaigns (Ced. p. 732.24-733.1, Theoph. p. 323.5-6). There is also a similar account of the falsified letter of Chosroes to Kardarigan, spelt Καρδαρίξας but there is less detail in Cedrenus on internal Persian affairs, and no "eat what you have collected" remark from the Persians to their former ruler (Theoph. p. 327. 2-3). There are practically the same words used in Siroes' promise to return the True Cross.

τότε γράφει Σιρόης πρὸς Ἡράκλειον τὴν τοῦ μιανοῦ
Χοσρόου ἀναίρεσιν, καὶ εἰρήνην ἀειπαγῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν
ποιησάμενος πάντας τοὺς ἐν Περσίδι αἰχμαλώτους
ἀπέδωκεν αὐτῷ σὺν τῷ πατριάρχῃ Ζαχαρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς
τιμίοις ξύλοις τοῖς ἔξ Ἱεροσολύμων ληφθεῖσιν ὑπὸ
Σαρβαραζᾶ.⁶⁴

τότε ὁ Σιρόης γράφει πρὸς Ἡράκλειον εὐαγγελιζόμενος
αὐτῷ τὴν τοῦ μιανοῦ Χοσρόου ἀναίρεσιν, καὶ εἰρήνην
ἀειπαγῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ποιησάμενος πάντας τοὺς ἐν
φρουραῖς Χριστιανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν Περσίδι πάση
αἰχμαλώτους ἀπέδωκεν αὐτῷ σὺν τῷ πατριάρχῃ Ζαχαρίᾳ
καὶ τοῖς τιμίοις καὶ ζωοποιοῖς ξύλοις τοῖς ἔξ
Ἱεροσολύμων ληφθεῖσιν ὑπὸ Σαρβαραζᾶ, ὅταν τὴν
Ἱερουσαλήμ παρέλαβεν.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ced. p. 734. 18-23.

⁶⁵ Theoph. p. 327. 10-16.

and from this point Cedrenus follows Theophanes in a more concise way, only failing to mention Heraclius' conversation with Benjamin at Tiberias and having Siroes reign eight months (Ced. p. 735.23) compared with Theophanes' two (p. 329.5).

The entries for 630 both have the same words for the meeting between Heraclius and Athanasius:

ὄντος Ἡρακλείου ἐν Ἱεραπόλει, ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν
Ἀθανάσιος ὁ πατριάρχης τῶν Ἰακωβιτῶν, δεινὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ
κακοῦργος τῇ τῶν Σύρων ἐμφύτῳ πανουργίᾳ,⁶⁶

Ἡρακλείου ὄντος ἐν Ἱεραπόλει, ἦλθε πρὸς αὐτὸν
Ἀθανάσιος, ὁ πατριάρχης τῶν Ἰακωβιτῶν, δεινὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ
κακοῦργος τῇ τῶν Σύρων ἐμφύτῳ πανουργίᾳ,⁶⁷

but there are differences from then onwards. Cedrenus misses out the information by which Theophanes then (p. 330.11-15) describes how the Monophysites believed that they had won the debate before the two accounts come together to describe Sophronius.

Σωφρόνιος χειροτονεῖται ἐπίσκοπος Ἱεροσολύμων, καὶ
συναθροίσας τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἐπισκόπους τὸ μονothέλητον

⁶⁶ Ced. p. 736. 4-6.

⁶⁷ Theoph. p. 329. 21-23.

δόγμα ἀνεθεμάτισε, καὶ σύνοδικῶς Σεργίῳ τῷ
Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ Ἰωάννῃ τῷ Ῥώμης
ἀπέστειλεν.⁶⁸

Σωφρόνιος χειροτονεῖται ἐπίσκοπος Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ
συναθροίσας τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἐπισκόπους τὸ μονothέλητον
δόγμα ἀνεθεμάτισε καὶ συνοδικὰ Σεργίῳ τῷ
Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ Ἰωάννῃ τῷ Ῥώμης
ἀπέστειλεν.⁶⁹

Cedrenus picks up the narrative with the death of Sophronius after Theophanes has spoken again on Heraclius' actions, "thinking he was doing something great" (p. 330.21). Theophanes, but not Cedrenus, thinks that the Monophysites have won (p. 330.23-29). Cedrenus, unlike Theophanes, does not include the plot of Pyrrhus and Martina versus Constantine (p. 330.31-331.6). He does, however, have a muddled account of Theodore, Maximus and Martin in Cherson in exile which is similar to that of Theophanes but with less detail (Ced. p. 737.10-15, Theoph. p. 331.6-332.8), and the same end result "the desolate Amalek rose up and smote the people of Christ" (p. 737.16-17, p. 332.10-11). This entry ends with Cedrenus providing a small detail found in Theophanes (p. 351) and George the Monk, the death of the persecutor of the Church (Constans) in the bath house of Daphnae in Sicily.

For the events of 631 there is a far greater divergence by Cedrenus from Theophanes. Cedrenus has a more concise account of

⁶⁸ Ced. p. 736. 20-737. 1.

⁶⁹ Theoph. p. 330. 16-19.

Mohammed's life than Theophanes, but then at the point where Theophanes describes the Muslim paradise and then records the royal births (Theoph. p. 334.20), he has a fuller account of Mohammed's teachings alleging borrowings from Jews, Arians and Nestorians (p. 739.18). Cedrenus is prepared to deal with Mohammed's views on Christianity - that he allows for the crucifixion of Christ but not for baptism or the sabbath (Ced. p. 740.6-8) or the Theotokos (p. 740.19); Mohammed is God's prophet, and Christ is not regarded as the son of God. Cedrenus says that the sword-shaped star appeared for thirty days after the death of Mohammed rather than after the Arab victory over Sergius, as Theophanes relates (p. 336).

Cedrenus then follows Theophanes for 634 having missed out 632 and 633, including Theophanes' explanation for why the Arabs raid north and the detail of the defeat of Sergius. But in 635 Cedrenus gives his own explanation, namely that the Arabs were united and the Romans were not, before recording that the Romans are defeated at the Yarmuk. Cedrenus has 40,000 killed whilst Theophanes has 40,000 fight on each side. Cedrenus has no detail on Egypt save that the Arabs colonised it. The accounts are closer in 636 when all that Cedrenus adds in connection with Umar's advance into Jerusalem is Umar's taking of the temple of Solomon; and Sophronius' quote is almost the same:

ἐπ' ἀληθείας τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως,
ἐστὼς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ced. p. 746. 14-15.

ἐπ' ἀληθείας τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ
Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ.⁷¹

The death of Sophronius is also similarly worded and the same words are used for Iad going into Syria. From p. 747-750 Cedrenus includes what amounts to a topological/biblical digression on the Holy Land that is now subjected to the Arab invasions.⁷² Then in 636 he reproduces detail found in Theophanes' entries for 631, on births in the imperial family, and for 632 on the Persian civil war and Heraclius being congratulated by the king of the Indians for his victory against the Persians:

τότε ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰνδῶν πέμπει συγχάρια τῷ βασιλεῖ,
μαργαρίτας καὶ λίθους τιμίους πολλούς⁷³

ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ καιρῷ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰνδῶν πέμπει
συγχαρίκια τῷ Ἡρακλείῳ ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Περσῶν νίκῃ,
μαργαρίτας καὶ λίθους τιμίους ἱκανούς.⁷⁴

There follow Romano - Arab rivalry and the battle of Mouthos and the end of *rogaie*, and (633) the death of Sergius near Caesarea. For the years 637-641 Cedrenus follows Theophanes again:

⁷¹ Theoph. p. 339. 22-24.

⁷² Ced. p. 447 from *Exodus* and p. 747-748 from Josephus. See Proudfoot, 'Theophanes', p. 399.

⁷³ Ced. p. 750. 22-23.

⁷⁴ Theoph. p. 335. 10-12.

ἦλθεν Ἰωάννης ὁ Κατζᾶς, ἐπίτροπος Ὁσροηνῆς, πρὸς Ἰᾶδ εἰς Χαλκηδόνα , καὶ ἐστοίχισε διδόναι αὐτῷ δεκά μυριάδας νομισμάτων πρὸς τὸ μὴ περᾶσαι τὸν Εὐφράτην μήτε εἰρηνικῶς μήτε πολεμικῶς.⁷⁵

ἦλθεν Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἐπὶ κλην Καταίας, ὁ ἐπίτροπος Ὁσροηνῆς πρὸς Ἰᾶδ εἰς Χαλκίδα, καὶ ἐστοίχισε δοῦναι αὐτῷ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν δέκα μυριάδας νομισμάτων, τοῦ μὴ περᾶσαι τὸν Ευφράτην, μήτε εἰρηνικῶς, μήτε πολεμικῶς, ἕως οὗ τὴν ποσότητα τοῦ χρυσοῦ ἀποδίδωσιν.⁷⁶

In 641 he dates Heraclius' death as 11 March not just March but the reign is the same length, thirty years and ten months. Then Cedrenus uses information not found in Theophanes but which is in George the Monk and Leo the Grammarian, namely the explanation that Heraclius was seduced towards Monothelitism by Athanasius and Sergius:

Οὗτος δὲ ὁ Ἡράκλειος ὑπὸ Ἀθανασίου πατριάρχου τῶν Ἰακωβιτῶν καὶ Σεργίου τοῦ Σύρου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀπατηθεὶς εἰς τὴν αἵρεσιν τῶν μονοθελητῶν ἐξεκυλίσθη.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ced. p. 751. 16-19.

⁷⁶ Theoph. p. 340. 2-6.

⁷⁷ Leo Gramm. p. 155. 4-6.

οὗτος ὑπὸ Ἀθανασίου πατριάρχου τῶν Ἰακωβιτῶν καὶ
Σεργίου τοῦ Σύρου Κωνσταντινοπόλεως ἀπατηθεὶς εἰς
τὴν αἵρεσιν τῶν μονοθελητῶν ἐξεκυλίσθη.⁷⁸

God's revenge was the disease of dropsy which meant that Heraclius had to urinate with the aid of planks. An additional explanation for the disease was the marriage to Martina his second cousin (not named in George the Monk). Cedrenus' account of the reign ends with the funeral description also absent from Theophanes' account; Leo the Grammarian has a similar notice but he differs on details such as lying in state for four days and burial with garlands of flowers. Cedrenus' account is the most complex that we shall examine. He has copied large portions of the chronicle of Theophanes but at other points his source is Leo the Grammarian. This does not mean that his presentation of the reign is constructed with the same objective as Leo. Cedrenus merely adds details that may not have been available to Theophanes; Heraclius' coup, the fire temple of Chosroes, and the Islamic vision of Paradise. Cedrenus supplements Theophanes' narrative, while only leaving out his personal comments on ecclesiastical affairs.

The twelfth century chronicler Zonaras also appears to follow Theophanes, though occasionally inserting details from Nicephorus. His description of the coup is from many sources. Heraclius' mother and fiancée being imprisoned in a monastery is from Theophanes, as is his arrival at the harbour of Sophia. The involvement of Photius in

⁷⁸ Ced. p. 752. 15-17.

the arrest of Phocas could be from either John of Antioch or the *Chronicon Paschale*, but because both Nicephorus and Cedrenus (Niceph. 1, Ced. p. 712.20) preserve the story but did not use the *Chronicon Paschale* it must come from John, and John provides the repartee between Heraclius and Phocas. The execution and cremation of Phocas in the Forum of the Ox is from John of Antioch yet there is no mention of Bonosus. The situation on the accession of Heraclius is from Theophanes (p. 300); the Avars control Thrace and the Persians Asia Minor, while Heraclius is only able to find two soldiers who fought under Phocas. But then Zonaras has the detail of Priscus being sent to Cappadocia from Nicephorus, using the form Crispus which is a firm indication that he is following Nicephorus' tradition. He follows this with Theophanes' mention of the birth of Constantine, the crowning of Epiphania and the death of Eudocia; the last has the extra detail of the servant-girl spitting on the corpse, that Nicephorus records. Zonaras also uses Theophanes for Romano-Persian relations. According to him Heraclius sent ambassadors to Chosroes not immediately after his coronation but after the capture of Damascus. They are unsuccessful and Chosroes' reply is similar to that in Theophanes (p. 301) for the year 617-618, with most changes resulting from a switch from direct to indirect speech:

λέγων μὴ ἄν ποτε φείσασθαι τῶν χριστιανῶν, εἰ μὴ τὸν
ἐσταυρωμένον ἀρνήσαιντο καὶ σεβασθῶσι τὸν ἥλιον.⁷⁹

οὐ φείσομαι ὑμῶν ἕως ἄν ἀρνήσησθε τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον,
ὃν λέγετε θεὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσκυνήσητε τῷ ἡλιῷ.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Zonaras p. 205. 13-15.

Theophanes is also Zonaras' source for the Avar Surprise and like Theophanes he has Heraclius sue for peace the next year, a detail not to be found in George or Leo. Zonaras then gets completely out of chronological step and returns to Nicephorus for information about Heraclius going to Caesarea, and the honouring of Nicetas in the capital;⁸¹ this is followed by Heraclius' address to the Senate and Priscus (cf. Niceph. 2). Then Zonaras mentions the birth to Martina of Fabius and David, not recorded in either Theophanes or Nicephorus. He continues with the fall of Jerusalem using Theophanes' details of the role of the Jews and 90,000 dead. This erroneous placing is similar to that in Nicephorus and George the Monk who also put the fall of Jerusalem after the Avar surprise. Theophanes' narrative is then picked up as Heraclius takes gold and silver from the Great Church (p. 302-303) and after Easter goes east leaving Constantinople in the hands of Sergius and Bonus. Zonaras describes the siege of the capital as being lifted by a sally, a point of view not corroborated by any other source. The campaign versus Persia is a concise version of Theophanes and then Chosroes flees to Ctesiphon before the letter, falsified by Sharbaraz, reaches Kardarigan. The coup of Siroes is described in more detail than in Leo or George, Siroes being jealous of Mardaisan and callous to his imprisoned

⁸⁰ Theoph. p. 301. 23-24.

⁸¹ This must be from Nicephorus because of the mention of Priscus (but not spelt Crispus as in Nicephorus), whose spelling is followed by George the Monk, Cedrenus, Glycas and Leo the Grammarian. Zonaras preserves the correct form of Priscus' name, whereas Nicephorus and all his direct copyists use Crispus. However, the fact that the rest of the information in this section is from Nicephorus suggests that he was responsible for the reference to Caesarea.

father (cf. Theoph. p. 325, 327). Heraclius then takes the True Cross and is acclaimed in Constantinople in the seventh year, but there is no mention of the preceeding six years at war. The religious disputes of the reign are also a concise version of Theophanes (Zonaras. p. 212.3-213.18) but follow an equally confused vein. Following Theophanes' narrative format Zonaras then deals with the history of Mohammed (Zonaras. p. 214.1-215.16) but he does not detail any of the conquests of the Arabs. His entry for Heraclius ends in much the same way as Nicephorus (27): Heraclius gets dropsy because of his Monothelitism and dies in the thirtieth year of his reign. Zonaras' presentation of the reign omits the defeats suffered at the hands of the Arabs which suggests that he may have innocently followed the same format of Leo the Grammarian, for Zonaras does not include the description of Heraclius' triumphal return to Constantinople at the end of his account.

There are three other Greek sources that incorporate elements of all those examined so far. Joel, in an extremely brief account of thirteen lines of text, follows Theophanes for the marriage of Heraclius to Eudocia, for Heraclius is both autocrat and bridegroom on that day.

ἔστέφη δὲ ἅμα αὐτῷ ἡ μεμνηστευμένη αὐτῷ Εὐδοκία
Αὐγούστα τοῖς στεφάνοις τοῦ γάμου, ὁμοῦ αὐτοκράτορες
καὶ νυμφῖοι ἀναδειχθέντες.⁸²

καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὁμοῦ αὐτοκράτωρ καὶ νυμφίος
ἀναδείκνυται.⁸³

⁸² Joel 46.16-19.

and for the fall of Jerusalem. But Heraclius' deception by Athanasius and lapse into Monothelitism is couched in the same words as George the Monk, Leo the Grammarian and Cedrenus; he notes Heraclius' dropsy but without providing details.

Michael Glycas uses a similar mixture of sources in his chronicle that extends down to 1118; his account of Heraclius is only two pages long. As in Theophanes Heraclius' revolt is initiated by a letter from the senate (p. 511.5), and Heraclius carries an image of Christ, but the involvement of Photius (p. 511.8) is derived either from Nicephorus or a later writer, such as Leo, and the riposte of Phocas to Heraclius' taunt is from the same source:

οὕτως ἄθλιε τὴν πόλιν διώκησας καὶ ὁ Φωκάς σὺ
κάλλιον διοικῆσαι ἔχεις.⁸⁴

οὕτως, ἄθλιε, τὴν πολιτείαν διώκησας, ὁ δὲ σὺ μᾶλλον
κάλλιον διοκεῖν μέλλεις.⁸⁵

Phocas' death in the Forum of the Ox is in all the main sources, whilst the tradition of Nicephorus is again employed for Heraclius' denigration of Priscus' behaviour (p. 512.1-2). The precis of 615-628 could be from any source: Heraclius negotiates with the Persians via ambassadors that are treated badly, after fighting Shahin and

⁸³ Theoph. p. 299.13-14.

⁸⁴ Glycas. p. 511.12-13.

⁸⁵ Niceph. 1 41-43.

Shahbaraz he captures Persia in six years, and then returns the True Cross to Jerusalem. The last point on his deception by Athanasius contains the same words as George the Monk, Leo the Grammarian, Cedrenus and Joel.

Exactly how far the earlier sources can be confused is illustrated by the work of Constantine Manasses. This is a poetic conglomeration that runs up to 1081 and which leaves any particular source indistinguishable. Phocas is killed, the servant of Death defeated by God and the sea, ideas not used by any other writers. Nor indeed is the description of Heraclius which concentrates not on his physical appearance but on his personality.

ἦν δὲ στρατηγικώτατος , ἄλκμος , θυμολέων, ὀπλίτης
καρτερώτατος, ὀξύχειρ, βριαρόχειρ.⁸⁶

He was deceived by men about dogma but there is no mention of Athanasius as arch-deceiver. Persian aggression "all quiver-bearing" is vividly depicted without any concrete facts, as are their atrocities. Chosroes is named when he turns to flight, but no other general. Siroes binds him like a "huge fish", but Siroes' callous remark included in earlier writers' work is not retained. The siege of the capital is described with the Persian army "gaping wide to swallow the blessed city". There is a description of Avar naval preparations and the battle itself. God and the people are responsible for the defence of the city; finally Heraclius dies without any mention of dropsy or the Arabs.

⁸⁶ Con. Man. p. 62C

The above discussion cannot pretend to have solved the problem that the sources pose for the study of the reign of Heraclius. However, it does point out the broad themes within their interrelationship. It is important to keep the accounts of Theophanes and Nicephorus completely separate in any discussion of their origins. Even though we can add to them other accounts who have no common material, the *Chronicon Paschale*, 1234, John of Antioch and John of Nikiu, we must accept that any source later than Nicephorus or Theophanes is likely to be a melange of one or all of these and their followers.

Appendix.

In addition to these sources most of which are interrelated, or could be interrelated, in some way, there are also three seventh-century texts with evidence on Heraclius which can be treated separately since they have no connection with any of the texts so far discussed: these are the anonymous *Chronicle* of Guidi, the Armenian historian Sebeos and the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*. Sebeos begins his account (24) with two errors, that Heraclius was the Roman commander in Egypt and that Heraclius the Elder was the main protagonist in the coup of 610. Like 1234 he has Heraclius send ambassadors to Persia as soon as he ascends the throne but unlike the account of 1234 Chosroes sees Heraclius as a usurper and the presents that he has sent as already belonging to himself; the ambassadors he puts to death. Sebeos has Priscus in Caesarea and Philippicus as his replacement but he does not mention the tonsure

of Priscus in Constantinople. The next action of the reign concerns the fall of Jerusalem, where unlike Theophanes he says that 57,000 died and 37,000 were taken prisoner. Chapter 26 begins with Shahin at Chalcedon and Heraclius' speech to him is not in any other source. Heraclius says that he is the avenger of Maurice so there is no reason for Persian aggression. Sebeos now has 4,000 Persians die in a naval attack. This is not a jump to 626 for Heraclius only leaves for the east after Chosroes has again insulted him, calling him a usurper. In chapter 27 Heraclius is in Persia/Armenia. Chosroes is killed on the orders of Siroes who cedes the frontiers to Heraclius using the same ambassadors as reported in the *Chronicle Paschale* (p. 730). The return of the True Cross is the responsibility of Shahbaraz who has been aided by Heraclius (Chp. 28). Boran follows him in Persia then Zarmiduxt, Hormisdas and Yazdagerd (there is no mention of Ardasir, but Sebeos does have the name of the last Persian monarch unlike Theophanes). Heraclius then restores the True Cross and returns the borders to the days of Maurice. The True Cross is not removed from Jerusalem until the Arabs arrive, which is described in chapter 30, though there is less detail on this than in Theophanes and they are said to have been influenced by the Jews of Edessa, and Sebeos' last entry describes the Yarmuk.

Like Sebeos Guidi can be used to add detail to the storyline that we have already patched together above. In chapter 21 the Persians capture Jerusalem because the Byzantines had shed "the innocent blood of Maurice and his children" and so God showed the Persians the location of the True Cross. If this is merely a different

slant to proceedings, in chapter 22 then Persians take Alexandria through the betrayal of Peter a personality who has not been mentioned before. Extra details follow; the Jews set fire to the churches in Jerusalem (Chp. 23), the Persians rebuild these churches (Chp. 24), Chosroes panics in flight at the sound of a semantron. In chapter 28 the death of Cosroes is reported differently, Nihormizd and Shamta ask Siroes for permission to kill Chosroes in revenge for his mistreatment of their respective families. Heraclius' death is not ascribed to dropsy but to the grief of Roman defeats by the Arabs of which Guidi mentions two (Chp. 37, 51); on each occasion 100,000 Romans die.

If Sebeos can be used to corroborate some details and add a few more, and Guidi can supplement the story of eastern events, the last source *The Life of Theodore of Sykeon* by a contemporary of Heraclius, the monk George, can be used not only to explain the other sources but to fill in gaps in their chronology. In chapters 151-162 he has details of the revolt of Comentiolus, brother of Phocas. A Domentiolos died at Constantinople with Phocas (John of Antioch) but the *Life* tells us that Heraclius spared another Domentiolus, the nephew of Phocas on the intercession of Theodore himself (152.10-18). This revolt explains John of Nikiu's remark that "great uncertainty prevailed in the churches because of the long duration of the war" (CX. 10-12). The other additional information concerns chapter 153.13-16 where Priscus at Caesarea is publicly expected to achieve a victory that does not materialise (Chp.153.23-24). This story is picked up by John of Antioch but the *Life of Theodore* does not have any detail on the subsequent Heraclius-Priscus rivalry. Heraclius also visited Theodore en route for Antioch in 613 during

Lent when he was assisted by Nicetas, though Sebeos has his brother Theodore in that role.

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