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URBAN CIVILIANS' EXPERIENCES IN THE
ROMANO-PERSIAN WARS, 502-591 CE

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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Abstract

This thesis studies the wartime experiences of the Empire's urban civilians in the sixth-century Persian wars. While many researches have been conducted to examine Romano-Persian relations, civilians' fates in the armed conflicts between these two great powers were generally neglected. This dimension deserves more attention to shed new light on the relationship between Rome and Persia and the nature of warfare in classical antiquity.

This thesis is divided into three parts. In chapter 1, both a sketch of major political and military events of the Roman Near East and a brief review of late antique intellectual backgrounds are provided. Chapter 2 aims to investigate how late antique and medieval writers presented and described civilians' wartime experiences. The results show that they not only shared the same language stock with their predecessors, but also adopted certain allusions and motifs in their works. Roman civilians' fates are examined thematically from chapter 3 onwards. Whereas many of them were killed, the blockade of a city could lead to famine and cannibalism. Meanwhile, cases of sexual violence were reported by authors from different literary milieux. Also, the inhabitants' possessions and buildings were either destroyed or removed. Different types of population movements in wartime are investigated in chapters 4 and 5. Some Romans took refuge outside their hometown or escaped to other places, while certain notables were detained as hostages. The victorious Persians captured many survivors and transported them to different places.

In the end, chapter 6 includes both a synthesis of Roman civilians' wartime experiences and an explanation for these phenomena. Whereas many cities were either besieged or threatened, it is shown that the Romans' fates in these conflicts were variable and affected by the interaction of various factors such as the Sasanids' strategies and the responses of the Empire's authorities.

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Notes on transliteration and terminology

1. Most Greek personal names will be transcribed, so Prokopios rather than Procopius, and Theophylaktos, not Theophylact. Other standardised, anglicised personal names such as Justinian, George, and Paul, will still be used.
2. There is no standard system of transliteration for middle Persian or Arabic names. In these cases the conventions in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* <http://www.iranicaonline.org> (accessed 12 April 2015) and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden 1960-2009) will be followed. For those coming from other languages, I use the commonly latinised forms of the names.
3. I use the term 'Mesopotamia' either to designate two frontier provinces of the Empire, Mesopotamia and Osroene, or the alluvial plain lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The term 'Roman Syria', on the other hand, refers to the region which includes both Syria Prima and Syria Secunda.
4. Throughout my thesis I use the most well-known Greek names for the place-names in the Roman Near East unless the names in other (usually oriental) languages were used by our authors in their texts. Thus Edessa and not Urfa or Urhay, Beroea, not Halab and so on. The case of Kallinikos needs to be addressed briefly. While this city bore names from both Greek and Latin in Late Antiquity, many Greek-speaking authors like Prokopios called it Καλλινίκος in their texts. In my thesis a transliterated name Kallinikos is thus preferred to its latinised form Callinicum and Leontopolis.
5. Throughout my thesis I follow the translation and texts of standard editions for both classical and medieval texts.

Introduction

Armed conflicts between peoples and states can have a terrible impact upon civilian populations such as the victims in the Gaza-Israel Conflict and the Syrian Civil War, the Yazidi refugees in the Jebel Sinjar, and the hostages executed by the ‘Islamic State’. Meanwhile, we are exposed to information regarding these events, with different purposes and standpoints for these calamities and misfortunes being made known across the world; sometimes, the details are even revealed by the perpetrators themselves. The focus of my thesis is both to study civilian populations’ experiences in the long conflicts between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sasanian Empire between the beginning of the Anastasian War (502) and the peace treaty signed in Maurice (582-602)’s reign (591)¹ and to examine which experiences were reported and presented and by what means. However, it is not my aim to compare the situation of the sixth-century Near East to what we can learn from news coverage of contemporary media; the huge social and cultural differences between people living in Late Antiquity and those of contemporary societies would make such a comparison impossible. Rather, through the close reading of available literary sources from the sides of both the Romans and the Sasanids in my thesis, the information we have is clearly subjected to the perspective and contexts of these texts. It is hoped that this observation—in which the importance of relevant political, social, and intellectual background from which our knowledge was produced and presented is highlighted—can contribute methodologically to the study of civilians’ wartime fates nowadays.

Perceived by themselves as the ‘two eyes of the world’,² the relationship between Rome and Persia—the two ‘great powers’ of the eastern Mediterranean

¹ Κosrow II (r. 590-628) promised to give Martyropolis and Dara back to the Romans in 590, Th. Sim. 4.13.24. However, Dara was actually returned in 591, Th. Sim.

5.3.10-1, and the Great King fulfilled his promise by making a peace agreement in the same year, Th. Sim. 5.15.2, Sebeos 12. Therefore, in my thesis, that year is preferred as the end of the Romano-Persian wars in the sixth century.

² Th. Sim. 4.11.2, possibly quoting from Κosrow II’s letter to Maurice (r. 582-602).

This term, however, appears to have originated earlier: see, for example, Petr. Patr.

13, in which this term was used by Peter the Patrician to refer to the negotiation under

world at the end of antiquity—has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Whereas most research has concentrated on political, economic, and even cultural issues, the topic of civilians’ wartime experiences has been largely neglected.³ This underexplored dimension deserves more attention in itself as a way not only to shed new light on the relationship between Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity but also to study warfare and society in the postclassical period.

This is the first study to examine the social aspects of besieged and captured cities in the Persian wars systematically and critically. Based on a thorough analysis of various sources, details surrounding the sacking of cities in the Roman Near East (Amida in the reign of Anastasios I [r. 491-518, hereafter Anastasios], Sura, Antioch, and Kallinikos in the 540s, and finally Apamea and Dara in the reign of Justin II [r. 565-74]) will be examined at factual, textual, and contextual levels. Several important questions will be addressed. First, what might have been the civilians’ experiences in urban communities, from provincial metropoleis to frontier citadels, both during and after armed conflict? Second, how did classical and oriental historians depict Roman civilians’ wartime and postwar experiences and sufferings? Finally, what are the significance and particularities of these sixth-century civilians’ misfortunes in the conflicts between Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity?

Both the Romans and the Persians became victims in the Romano-Persian wars, and indeed certain aspects of Sasanid experience, such as the massacre and deportation of the Persians⁴ and the maltreatment of Persian Christians⁵ in the

Diocletian. On the Romano-Persian treaty of 299, see Blockley 1984: 28-34, 1992: 5-7.

³ The literature on these issues is vast. See Rubin 1995: 225-97, Wiesehöfer 1996: 151-221, Vesta and Stewart 2008, Daryaee 2009, Payne 2014a for the basic introduction of Sasanian Persia’s history and relevant discussions. On Romano-Persian relations, see Blockley 1992, Wiesehöfer and Huyse 2006, Drijvers 2009: 441-54, Bowersock 2012. Also see Wiesehöfer 2005a, Canepa 2009 for studies on cultural and ideological themes. For the collection of translated texts, see Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, Greatrex and Lieu 2002, Dignas and Winter 2007.

⁴ Ps. Dion. II. 6 for the fruits of the Romans’ counteroffensive in Beth Arabaye, where they ‘killed every male (of the Persians) from twelve years upward... and deported

Romans' successful military activities, were noted. However, in most cases the defeated Persians' treatment was not the main concern of contemporary authors, and the information regarding the situation of the frontier regions of the Sasanian Empire is generally lacking. In contrast, the Romans' wartime experiences can be reconstructed from detailed accounts in Greek, Syriac, and other oriental languages. Therefore this thesis will focus on the Romans' wartime experiences rather than those of all non-military personnel of both Rome and Persia.

Admittedly, those living in the Empire's urban settlements and rural areas would have become the victims in wartime, and sometimes we can glimpse the lives of those living in villages from local chronicles and hagiographies. For example, precious information regarding the local countryside of northern Mesopotamia was preserved in the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua,⁶ and the *Life* of Saint Symeon the Younger also gave insights into the situation of Antioch's *territorium* during K̅osrow I (r. 531-79)'s invasion.⁷ In addition, from the account of the *Life* of Eutychios, the patriarch of Constantinople, we know that many villagers became refugees, and some suffered famine when K̅hosrow I's soldiers arrived and raided their land in the second half of the sixth century.⁸ Moreover, extant epigraphical and archaeological evidence such as fortifications prove to be helpful for analyzing both the features of the Empire's countryside in Late Antiquity and, more importantly, the possible repercussions and impacts of war upon local society.⁹ For example, in Clive Foss' research, the results of archaeological excavations were examined in detail to reconstruct the political,

the others'. Th. Sim. 3.4.3, 3.15.15 and Menander fr. 23.8 for the presence of Persian captives in the second half of the sixth century, see also Oleson 1976: 161-4, cf.

Charanis 1961: 140-54.

⁵ Joh. Eph. HE 6.10.

⁶ Josh. Styl. 51-2.

⁷ V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 57ff. On the importance of this text, see Trombley 1994: 182-94.

⁸ Eustratios *V. Eutychii* 1719ff. On the role of local monasteries, see Trombley 1985: 53.

⁹ See, for example, Trombley 2004a: 87-9, cf. Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988: 65-90. On the fortifications in the Roman Near East, see Kennedy and Riley 1990, Howard-Johnston 2013: 853-92, Sarantis 2013: 317-70.

social, and economic life in Roman Syria,¹⁰ while Frank Trombley argued that what happened in 540 in the surrounding areas of Antioch could provide a model for examining similar cases in sixth-century Syria and Mesopotamia.¹¹

Nevertheless, although the invasion of the Sasanids may well have resulted in depopulation and shortage of labour, Trombley's approach neglected the distinctiveness of every case in the sixth century. In fact, in many cases information about the situation of rural areas¹² during wartime is scanty: some villages might have been either destroyed or in decline because of the Sasanids' invasions, but the day-to-day reality of inhabitants' experiences cannot be reconstructed with certainty because of the lack of further details. Neither Prokopios nor other classicising historians ever produced detailed treatments of the situation in rural areas in the Persian wars, and few details can be gleaned from the accounts of John of Ephesos. In short, the dearth of literary and material data pertaining to the Empire's rural areas in the Persian wars makes it difficult both to probe the villagers' experiences and to establish firm connections between the shahs' military activities and such situations.

Compared to the Empire's villages, much more information about the cities of the Roman Near East can be mined. Of course, the size and population of these urban settlements varied greatly in Late Antiquity; while some of them, such as Antioch and Apamea, were metropoleis with large populations, others were merely tiny frontier citadels that were founded for military purposes. As Nigel Pollard previously observed, such a fortress city 'played a military role as a place of defence and a civilian role as a place of residence and administration'.¹³ Therefore, as the Empire's political, military and economic centres, these settlements seem to have become the targets of the Sasanids and, more importantly, the focus of most literary texts. The scope of my thesis, therefore, will be limited to the Empire's cities in the Persian wars.

¹⁰ Foss 1997: 189-269.

¹¹ Trombley 1997: 156-9.

¹² On the detailed survey of Roman Syria, see Tchalenko 1953-8, Tate 1992. For recent works, see, for example, the excavations at Androna (modern al-Andarin, Syria), Mango 2002: 307-15, 2003: 293-7, 2008: 73-81.

¹³ Pollard 2000: 79.

This, however, does not imply that it is always impossible to probe Roman villagers' wartime experiences in the Persian wars. While the situation of the Empire's villages during wartime will be excluded in my thesis because of the lack of detailed accounts, the calamities of villagers in the siege of the Empire's cities can be deduced from a close reading of literary sources. As some contemporary authors noted, many villagers took refuge in the fortified cities during wartime,¹⁴ and from then on they became the *de facto* inhabitants of these urban communities. Since the Sasanids made no distinction between the cities' original inhabitants and those who sojourned there temporarily in terms of their treatment of the defeated Romans, these refugees must have shared similar fates with other Romans.

Apart from the short-term, immediate consequences, scholars have stressed that the Great King's military activities sometimes had long-term effects on the Empire's society and economy in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁵ For example, the sack of Antioch (modern Antakya, Turkey) in 540 was a great shock for Justinian I (r. 527-65, hereafter Justinian), his empire, and his subjects. The emperor's postwar rebuilding scheme made this metropolis survive into the Islamic period,¹⁶ but it never flourished again as in the times of Julian the Apostate (r. 361-3) and Libanios.¹⁷ However, my thesis does not intend to uncover all the long-term or existing structures and phenomena, and providing an exhaustive study of all the Persian wars' possible consequences for and impact upon those living in the Near East is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, this thesis aims mainly to study the short-term effects of the Sasanids' invasions on the Empire's population. Meanwhile, certain important longer-term consequences will be studied as well. A well-known case is the mass panic experienced by the inhabitants of Martyropolis (modern Silvan, Turkey), Edessa

¹⁴ See, for example, Joh. Eph. HE 6.6 for the case of Dara.

¹⁵ Numerous studies exist on this aspect, some of which cover longer periods than others; see, for example, Kennedy 1985a: 141-83, Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988: 65-90, Foss 1997: 189-269, cf. Liebeschuetz 2001, Whittow 1990: 3-29, 2003: 404-23 (esp. 406-8) for an overview of the changes in the Roman East.

¹⁶ Kennedy 1985b: 5-6.

¹⁷ Kennedy 1985a: 155, 1992: 195-6, cf. Liebeschuetz 1972: 99-100.

(modern Urfa, Turkey), Carrhae and Amida (modern Diyarbakir, Turkey)¹⁸ in the middle of the sixth century. Having heard the rumour about the Persians' invasion and massacre of citizens, the inhabitants of Amida were terrified, and their resulting abnormal reactions were preserved in contemporary texts.¹⁹ Therefore, even after several decades, the experience of being sacked by Kawād I (r. 488-96, 498-531, hereafter Kawād) still cast a shadow over local people's minds. On the other hand, despite of being captured by the Great King, some Romans eventually returned to the Empire via a variety of means. These details deserve to be examined not only to probe local populations' understanding and memory of the Sasanids' invasion but also to obtain a comprehensive picture of the Romans' deportation during the sixth century.

It should be noted that sometimes the Romans' misfortunes during the Persian wars resulted from the behaviour or activities of their compatriots. In the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua, local citizens of the Empire's eastern provinces suffered from the soldiers' billets,²⁰ and the Jewish people at Konstantia were slaughtered by other Romans after their plot was revealed.²¹ In addition, the escaped Roman soldiers trampled and killed many Antiochenes in 540.²² Although in these episodes the Romans did not suffer at the hands of the Great King's soldiers, their calamities, as the results of the Sasanids' military invasions, will be included into my thesis to establish a more thorough picture of civilians' wartime experiences.

Chronological and geographical scope

The chronological frame adopted for my thesis will now be discussed in order to explain the reasons for focussing on sieges in the sixth-century Persian wars as the subject of my thesis. As Michael Whitby rightly observed, 'since the defeat of Hannibal...opponents such as Mithridates who challenged the Romans to a

¹⁸ *Spurious Life of Jacob Baradaeus* PO 19.259-60.

¹⁹ Ps. Dion. II. 105, cf. *Spurious Life of Jacob Baradaeus* PO 19.259-62. For the study of these phenomena, see Harvey 1980: 1-11.

²⁰ Josh. Styl. 86, 92-6, cf. Fear 2007: 437-41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

²² Prok. Wars 2.8.18-9.

confrontation were rare'.²³ However, things changed in the third century, and the Empire began to face threats from the north and east. Among these enemies in the postclassical period, only the shahs of the Persian Empire were able to project armed forces to the Empire and even mount a lengthy siege against the Romans; moreover, rich information about their military activities makes it possible to examine relevant political, military, and social issues.

Whereas the Sasanids fought with the Romans from the middle of the third century onwards, the conflict between these two great powers in the sixth-century Near East was particularly significant for the following reasons. On the one hand, in this period, both Rome and Persia attacked each other more frequently than during previous centuries.²⁴ At the beginning of the sixth century, Kawād's first Roman campaign lasted for five years, and the Sasanids again crossed into Roman territory during the reign of Justinian. From the 540s onwards, his son Kōsrow I undertook expeditions to the Empire's eastern provinces (540, 542, 543, 573), Lazica (541), and Armenia Interior (576). The Sasanids' frequent military activities offer an opportunity to compare and contrast their treatment of the Romans inside various frontier citadels, cities, and even inland metropoleis. On the other hand, the available contemporary sources, written in both Greek and Syriac, prove to be helpful in analyzing relevant issues.

The situation was different in previous centuries. As a newly risen power that replaced the Parthians' existing hegemony in the first quarter of the third century,²⁵ the Sasanids soon adopted a belligerent attitude towards the Romans. Several decades later, a lengthy conflict between Shapur I (r. 240-70) and successive Roman emperors broke out: throughout this period, in most cases, the Persians clearly had the upper hand, and numerous cities of Roman Syria, Cappadocia, and Kilikia were captured

²³ Whitby 2007a: 310.

²⁴ Lee 1993b: 143-4 for a catalogue of their invasions throughout Late Antiquity.

²⁵ Much less research has been done on the history and culture of the Parthians, see Bivar 1983: 21-101, Kurz 1983: 559-67, Schippmann 1986: 525-36, cf. Griffin 2000a: 39-41, 2000b: 123-8, Birley 2000: 158-65 for the situation of the first and second centuries.

and sacked. However, the lack of any substantial contemporary accounts makes it difficult to study the Roman citizens' wartime experiences in the third century.²⁶

It is difficult to know whether the Sasanids considered the conquest of Roman Syria and other important cities such as Antioch in the fourth century,²⁷ but villages and cities in the Empire's frontier regions clearly became the invaders' main targets in this period. Certain places, including Amida, Singara and Bezabde, were attacked and even sacked by Shapur II (r. 309-79) during the reign of Constantius II (r. 337-61).²⁸ Contemporary or near-contemporary authors documented these events well, but less information can be extracted from the Perso-Arabic literary tradition.²⁹ Hence, it is not easy to access the voices of different sides, nor to obtain a thorough picture of what might have happened in these frontier cities. Compared to the previous two centuries, those living in the Near East enjoyed quite a long period of peace in the fifth century, and both Constantinople and Ctesiphon at that time faced different rivalries and enemies both inside and outside their realms.³⁰ Thus, little concrete evidence about the sack of Roman cities can be found in this period.

²⁶ On Shapur I's invasion, see Henning 1939: 823-49, Downey 1961: 252-9, Kettenhofen 1982, Millar 1993: 159-67, Edwell 2008: 169-81, 184-98, Mosig-Walburg 2009, cf. Peeters 1924: 288-314.

²⁷ See Lee 1993b: 23-4 for the Romans' perception of the Sasanids' military aggressiveness in Late Antiquity.

²⁸ See the sources assembled in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 211-30. On Shapur II's military activities and relevant issues, see Blockley 1989: 465-89, Lightfoot 1988: 105-25, Hunt 1998: 11-4, 39-43, Lenssen 1999: 40-50.

²⁹ For example, apart from Ammianus, the sufferings of the Roman captives were recorded in the *Acta martyrum et sanctorum* as well. For the translation, see Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 215-9 for the (partial) translation of this text.

³⁰ On the side of the Romans, see Heather 1991 1995, 2006: 145-250, Halsall 2007: 165-219 for the threats caused by the Goths, cf. Heather 2014: 212-29. See Thompson 1996: 69-176, Heather 2006: 300-84 for the invasions of the Huns. On the Hephthalites, who became one of the most menacing enemies for the Sasanids at their northeastern frontier, see Frye 1996: 174-8, Litvinsky 1996: 135-62, Bihar 2003: 198-201, Kurbanov 2010, La Vaissière 2007: 119-32, cf. La Vaissière 2012: 142-69, 2014:

As I have shown above, the sixth century represents a fitting choice for a close look at my topic because of the rich information pertaining to the Sasanids' frequent military activities against the Empire. Finally, in the seventh century, after the period under examination in this thesis, hostilities between these two empires resumed. In the long conflict against the Romans, which was dubbed by James Howard-Johnston in his study of al-Ṭabari as the 'last great war of antiquity',³¹ Kōsrow II's generals and soldiers penetrated into the Empire's heartland, and the reigning shah became the ruler—albeit temporarily—of a substantial Roman territory. While some events of this period, such as the sack of Jerusalem in 614, were recorded by authors in classical and oriental languages extensively,³² we know much less about the situation in other places of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Egypt.³³

The geographical scope of this thesis also requires some explanation. Of course, the theatre of armed conflicts between Rome, Persia, and their allies was not restricted to the regions stretching from the Empire's frontier to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea: in the middle of the sixth century, Kōsrow I competed with Justinian over the control over Lazica, a region situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea,³⁴ and nearby areas for many years; moreover, the Sasanids' allies sometimes attacked the Empire. Because the focus of my research is to investigate the treatment of Romans

182-5, Maas 2014: 6-18 for a broader context. On the strategic dilemma faced by both the Romans and the Persians in the fifth century, see Howard-Johnston 2010b: 38-9, 43-4.

³¹ Howard-Johnston 2006: 1-2.

³² Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 190-3 and Stoyanov 2011: 11-4 for the collection and discussion of some existing literary accounts. On the sack of Jerusalem and the situation of its surrounding areas, see Flusin 1992.2: 129-81.

³³ Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 195. On the Sasanids' conquest and occupation of Egypt, see Altheim-Stiehl 1992: 87-96, 1998: 252-54, Morony 1987: 87-95, Sānger 2011: 653-65. For other regions, see Foss 1975: 721-47, 2003: 149-70, Palme 2007: 265, Haldon 2010: 2-6, cf. Kaegi 2003: 65-99.

³⁴ Greatrex 1998: 46. It could actually have been the Sasanids' target, Howard-Johnston 2008: 80, cf. Bonner 2014: 279.

by the Sasanids, discussion of Transcaucasian affairs will be limited,³⁵ and the conflicts in the Arab peninsula will also be excluded.³⁶ Instead, the conflicts that took place in the eastern frontier regions that stretch from the region of Chorazane to the area south of Euphrates River—including Armenia Interior, the Armenian satrapies, Mesopotamia, Osrhoene, Euphratesia, Syria Prima, and finally Syria Secunda (Map 1)—will be studied in great detail. Whereas the Sasanids chose different routes to cross the border to raid the Empire, and sometimes even aimed to attack sites outside these areas,³⁷ in most cases, the Romans living in these regions would have been the main targets and victims of the conflicts.³⁸

Civilians: terminology, description, and composition

The term ‘civilian’ rather than ‘non-combatant’ will be preferred in my thesis. Admittedly, in classical antiquity, certain groups of people were both regarded as non-combatants and excluded from the proper defending force of a city in some military manuals. In the *Strategikos* of Onasander, a first-century CE Greek philosopher, a general should send ‘women...children...feeble men and old people’ captured from the surrounding territory into a besieged city, for they ‘will consume more quickly the supplies of the besieged’.³⁹ In his *Epitome of Military Science*, an important military

³⁵ Toumanoff 1963, Braund 1994 for a synthesis of these events. See Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 115-22 for some important sources.

³⁶ On the relationship between Rome, Persia, and the Arabs, see Shahîd 1988, 1989, 1995-2009, Fisher 2011.

³⁷ For example, see Prok. Wars 2.20.18 for the claim made by Kōsrow I, who intended to raid Roman Palestine and Jerusalem in the 540s.

³⁸ In 502, Kawād’s forces crossed the border and invaded Armenia Interior; in 540, the Persians took another route and sacked Sura, a frontier city located near the river course of the Euphrates, and later sacked Antioch, the metropolis of Syria Prima. In the following years, the shah’s army reached Edessa and Kallinikos, both of which were in Osrhoene, several times. Finally, during the reign of Justin II, the shah oversaw the siege of Dara in person, while the forces led by Adarmahan penetrated into Syria Secunda and sacked its metropolis Apamea.

³⁹ Onasander 42.23.

manual that was probably composed in the late fourth or the early fifth century,⁴⁰ Vegetius pointed out that those groups of people should either be ‘shut out of the gates because of the need to conserve food’,⁴¹ or, as indicated in the *Strategikon*, one of the most important military manuals⁴² composed either in the late sixth century or in the early seventh century,⁴³ evacuated from their hometown before the enemy’s arrival.⁴⁴

However, as other cases from classical antiquity show,⁴⁵ both soldiers and non-fighting individuals, such as civil officers, women, and even churchmen, engaged in warding off the besiegers. The presence of civilians as combatants in the period covered by this thesis can be illustrated by the following examples. In the siege of Amida, members of the city council led the citizens to defend their city for more than 90 days.⁴⁶ In 540, young people rushed to fight against Kōsrow I’s forces in Antioch.⁴⁷ Finally, in Edessa, according to Prokopios, ‘the whole population, even

⁴⁰ Goffart 1977: 65-100, Barnes 1979: 254-7, Milner 1993: XL-XLI, Zuckerman 1994: 67-74.

⁴¹ Vegetius *Epitome of Military Science* 4.7.

⁴² The treatise on military affairs addressed to Anastasios by Urbicios preserved nothing related to civilians, Burgess et al. 2005: 35-74. Another military manual by Syrianos Magistros, formerly ‘*The Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy*’, was assigned to the middle ages rather than Late Antiquity. On the dating of this text, see Baldwin 1988: 290-3, Zuckerman 1990: 209-24, Lee and Shepard 1991: 15-39, Cosentino 2000: 262-75, Rance 2007: 701-37. For the text and translation, see Dennis 1985: 10-135.

⁴³ On the date and authorship of this text, see Dennis 1984: XVI- XVII.

⁴⁴ *Strategikon* 10.3.

⁴⁵ Apart from the Romano-Persian wars, the role played by the civilians in armed conflicts can still be illustrated by many contemporary examples, see, for example, Agath. 3.25.4, 5.19.4, Menander fr. 12.5. Also, see Vegetius *Epitome of Military Science* 4.25, 28, in which ‘people of all ages and both sexes overwhelm the invaders’ and the citizens could both kill the invaders and destroy the siege engines when the enemies become negligent.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Zach. HE 7.4.

⁴⁷ Prok. Wars 2.8.17, 28-9.

women and little children, were going up on to the wall...the women and children, and the aged also, were gathering stones for the fighters and assisting them in other ways';⁴⁸ some citizens, together with soldiers, were led by Peranios, the Roman commander, to defeat the Persians.⁴⁹ The difference between a combatant and a non-combatant can therefore be blurred; thus, 'civilian' is a preferable term because it evokes an urban-dwelling non-soldier who may nonetheless have resisted invasion.

As the core of my thesis, it is necessary to establish whether and to what extent we can apply the term 'civilian' accurately in the sixth-century Romano-Persian wars to describe such a category of people, together with a certain identity, in the Roman Empire. In classical antiquity, Latin-speaking authors sometimes used *paganus* to describe a civilian as opposed to a soldier in their works. Tacitus reported that 'soldiers were demoralised by mixing with civilian inhabitants' (*inter paganos corruptior miles*) in his *Histories*.⁵⁰ In Vegetius' *Epitome of Military Science*, this word stood for a civilian as opposed to a soldier: 'if training in arms ceases, there is no difference between a soldier and a civilian' (*nam si doctrina cesset armorum, nihil paganus distat a milite*).⁵¹ As suggested in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, originally the word referred to an inhabitant of a *pagus*, a country district,⁵² a peasant and a countryman regardless of whether he was involved in fighting or not.⁵³

The terminologies in some Greek military treatises that are linguistically more relevant to my research subject require further examination. In the *Strategikon*, the author stated that 'if anyone presumes to stay beyond the time of his furlough, he shall be dismissed from the army and as a civilian handed over to the civil authorities' (Εἴ τις τολμήσει βαγεῦσαι ὑπὲρ τὸν χρόνον τοῦ κομεάτου, καὶ τῆς στρατείας ἐκβληθῆ καὶ ὡς παγανὸς τοῖς πολιτικοῖς ἄρχουσι παραδοθείη).⁵⁴ According to E. A. Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)*,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.27.33, 35.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.27.42.

⁵⁰ Tac. Hist. 1.53.

⁵¹ Vegetius *Epitome of Military Science* 2.23.

⁵² *OLD* s.v. *pagus*.

⁵³ *OLD* s.v. *paganus*.

⁵⁴ *Strategikon* 1.6.

παγανός could be used to designate a common citizen who was not a soldier or a pagan.⁵⁵ Thus, again, the use of παγανός was not limited to the military domain exclusively.

More importantly, while the use of *paganus* and παγανός to designate a civilian (or a soldier who, having gone AWOL, was to be treated as a civilian) can be noted in late antique military manuals, neither was a technical term used commonly by sixth-century authors in other literary genres: searches in the TLG database reveal that neither Prokopios nor other major Greek-speaking authors in the sixth-century Empire used παγανός in their works. Instead, several terminologies, often in plural forms, were used in contemporary accounts of non-soldier populations inside a Roman city. Clearly, the bulk of the besieged Romans would have been citizens of urban centres under attack. In 540, Ḳosrow I plundered the property of the citizens (τῶν πολιτῶν) in Beroea.⁵⁶ More than 30 years later, people in the city of (τῶν τῆς πόλεως),⁵⁷ that is, Aramea, went out and negotiated with the Sasanids; and in the last quarter of the sixth century, Melitene, an undefended city that was deserted by its citizens (ἀφυλάκτω καὶ ἐρήμη πολιτῶν καθεστῶση),⁵⁸ was attacked by the Sasanids. In other cases, our authors chose to emphasise either the Romans' unfavourable situation or the military contexts of the Persian wars. During the sieges, 'the besieged' (οἱ δὲ πολιορκούμενοι) was used by Prokopios,⁵⁹ while in negotiations 'pitiful people' (ἀνθρώπων οἰκτρῶν) were mentioned several times in Ḳosrow I's campaign in 540.⁶⁰ His description of civilians' deportations mentioned both 'those who have been captured' (ἠλωκότας)⁶¹ and 'captives' (αἰχμαλώτους).⁶²

⁵⁵ *GLRBP* s.v. παγανός.

⁵⁶ Prok. Wars 2.7.19, 21.

⁵⁷ Th. Sim. 3.10.9.

⁵⁸ Euagr. HE 5.14.

⁵⁹ Prok. Wars 1.7.14, 17, 1.9.1, 2.7.12, 2.13.28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2.5.13 (the citizens of Sura), 2.6.18 (the Antiochenes), 2.7.23 (the Beroeans) Cf. 2.13.14 (τοὺς οἰκήτορας μόνους) when Bar-Hadad negotiated with Kawād on behalf of Konstantia's citizens.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.7.33.

⁶² Ibid., 2.13.2, cf. Ducrey 1968: 19-20, 49 for the connotation of this word.

Other collective nouns can be gleaned from our sources. In the *Wars*, ‘the Romans’ (Ρωμαῖοι) was the general term used when Prokopios mentioned the Persians’ sieges of Roman cities.⁶³ Although these Romans might have consisted of soldiers in the case of Sura, Antioch, and Dara, in other cases, this term seems to have referred to a city’s inhabitants. The most common convention, however, seems to have been to simply call them either ‘the citizens of so-and-so’ or ‘the citizens of the (above-mentioned) city’. That is, the inhabitants of a city were identified with it. In 502, Prokopios reported that the citizens of Amida (Ἀμιδηνοὶ) resisted the Persians.⁶⁴ From the middle of the sixth century onwards, similar examples can be observed when he mentioned cities that were either threatened or conquered by Ḳosrow I’s soldiers such as Sura (Σουρηνοῦς),⁶⁵ Antioch (Ἀντιοχέαι),⁶⁶ Beroea (Βεροιαίους),⁶⁷ Aramea (τοῖς Ἀπαμεῦσιν),⁶⁸ Kallinikos (Καλλινικηνοῦς),⁶⁹ Chalkis (Χαλκιδεῦσι),⁷⁰ Edessa (Ἐδεσσηνοῦς),⁷¹ Carrhae (Καρρηνοὶ),⁷² Konstantia (Κωνσταντινέων),⁷³ and Sergiopolis (Σεργιουπολιῖται).⁷⁴ Euagrios used ‘the son of the Arameans’ (τῶν Ἀπαμέων οἱ παῖδες)⁷⁵ and ‘the city of the Theopolitans’ (τῆ Θεουπολιτῶν)⁷⁶ in Ḳosrow I’s campaigns in 540 and 573, respectively, and

⁶³ Amida: Prok. Wars 1.9.22; Sura: *ibid.*, 2.5.12, cf. 2.5.15; Antioch: *ibid.*, 2.8.9, 11, 15-6; Dara: *ibid.*, 2.13.16, 22, 24, 26-7; Kallinikos: *ibid.*, 2.21.30; Edessa: *ibid.*, 2.26.11, 28, 39, 42, 44, 2.27.1, 7-8, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 23-4, 26-7, 32, 40, 42-4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.7.4, 12, 19, 26, 30, 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.5.13-6, 21, 25, 32, 2.20.3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.6.16, 2.7.25, 2.14.5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.7.5, 13, 19, 32, 34, 36

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.11.21, 36.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.11.28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.12.1-2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2.12.33, 2.13.3, 2.21.27, 2.26.4, 13, 20, 2.27.42, 46, Euagr. HE 4.27.

⁷² Prok. Wars 2.13.7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2.13.8.

⁷⁴ Euagr. HE 4.28, Prok. Wars 2.20.7, 13.

⁷⁵ Euagr. HE 4.26.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.9.

Theophylaktos wrote of the deportation and revolt of the ‘people of Dara’/ ‘the men of Dara’ (Δαρηνοῖ/οἱ Δαρηνοὶ)⁷⁷ at the castle of Oblivion. Also, alternative phrases such as ‘all the inhabitants of the East’ (τῶν ἐφ’ ὅλων ἀπάντων),⁷⁸ ‘the whole population of Apamea’ (ὁ τῶν Ἀπαμέων λεώς),⁷⁹ ‘those who inhabited in Antioch’ (τοῖς ὀκημένοις)⁸⁰ and people (δῆμος)⁸¹ of so-and-so were introduced, but the rule remains the same, and the inhabitants were called by the area in which they lived.

In short, while sometimes the circumstances and contexts of a city’s inhabitants in wartime were either revealed or stressed, so far no technical word or phrase whose use was limited to the military domain can be found in contemporary texts to designate civilians in war; in most cases, our authors merely called them ‘people of so-and-so city’, and such phrases cannot provide readers with details regarding these Romans’ identities. Below the composition of these non-military urban populations will be examined to establish who could possibly have stayed inside a besieged Roman city in the Persian wars.

In wartime, a city’s non-soldier population consisted of two groups: the city’s inhabitants and the citizens who originally inhabited extramural communities but moved to stay in the city temporarily. For example, in the Anastasian War, some villagers stayed in Edessa and attacked the Sasanids with slings.⁸² In 543, ‘many of the rustics’ (τῶν ἀγροίκων πολλοὶ)⁸³ fended off the Persians courageously in Edessa. In addition, descriptions of the situation in a besieged or sacked city sometimes reveal valuable details about the genders, religious beliefs, social statuses, and professions of urban-dwelling civilians. In the following paragraphs, available data extracted from literary texts will be categorised to illustrate the complexity of a Roman city’s population components under the attacks of the Sasanids.

⁷⁷ Th. Sim. 3.5.4,7.

⁷⁸ Prok. Wars 2.6.25.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2.11.16

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2.10.1.

⁸¹ Ibid., 2.11.19, 31, 38 (the Apameans), 2.8.6, 26, 2.14.3 (the Antiochens), 2.26.7 (the Edessenes).

⁸² Josh. Styl. 62.

⁸³ Prok. Wars 2.27.34, see also *ibid.*, 2.27.20.

We may assume that both male and female inhabitants in all age groups would have suffered from the atrocities in the Persian wars. For example, the men were said in Edessa to consist of ‘those who were in the prime of life; men of age fit for service’ (οἱ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἡλικίᾳ),⁸⁴ and in Antioch and others to be ‘the most courageous youths of the populace’ (τοῦ δήμου εὐτολμότετοι νεανία πολλοί).⁸⁵ The presence of women was noted by writers in various cultural traditions; whereas some of them participated in defending a besieged city,⁸⁶ the fates of others, such as the captured maiden in 573, were recorded in great detail.⁸⁷ In addition, many Romans living in Sergiopolis escaped to other places, and only ‘the superannuated and untimely citizens’ (ἐξώρους τε καὶ ἀώρους)⁸⁸ stayed when the Persians arrived. Menander the Guardsman articulated the results of the fierce conflicts between Rome and Persia: ‘...the survivors demanding of us the dead—perhaps a father, or a son, or perhaps a dearest friend, or just a human being...the homes bereft of their menfolk, the new-born child an orphan, and the grief which everywhere spreads amongst all the kin’.⁸⁹

People from both upper and lower echelons of society would possibly have shared similar or the same calamities when a Roman city was besieged, captured, and even sacked by the Sasanids. For example, two distinguished women became concubines in the sack of Amida, while others were raped by the Persians in Antioch and Apamea.⁹⁰ The presence of male elites can be spotted in both Greek and Syriac texts. Having learned what happened in Sura, Bouzes, who was in charge of commanding all troops of the *Oriens*,⁹¹ met ‘the first men of the Hierapolitans’⁹² (τοὺς Ἱεραπολιτῶν πρώτους) and told them his strategy in coping with the Sasanids’ invasion. As well as ordinary citizens of the Empire, many elites became victims.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Prok. Wars 2.8.11. cf. 2.8.17, 28-9.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 2.27.33-4.

⁸⁷ See below, pp. 120-3.

⁸⁸ Euagr. HE 4.28.

⁸⁹ Menander fr. 6.1.

⁹⁰ See below, pp. 114-20.

⁹¹ Prok. Wars 2.6.1.

⁹² Ibid., 2.6.2.

Some were taken as hostages, while others were humiliated, slaughtered, or deported.⁹³ Whereas their fates sometimes receive more attention in our texts, the patchy data does not permit us to trace the experience of any particular family—for example, during wartime—nor is it possible to provide a comprehensive picture of the fates of those who came from the higher echelons of society.

Because both Kawād and Kōsrow I captured survivors from the conquered cities indiscriminately, one may assume that certain non-Christians living in the Empire could have been taken to Persia. For example, the Jewish community in Antioch seems to have been prosperous in Late Antiquity,⁹⁴ and some of them must have been captured along with the Christians from this metropolis in 540. Sadly, no further details are known regarding the situation of the Jews under Kōsrow I's rule,⁹⁵ and it is impossible to know their social or spiritual life in the Persian Empire. It must be stressed, however, that sometimes the wartime experiences of both the Jewish people and the polytheists could have been different from the Christian communities. As noted above,⁹⁶ many Jews were killed in Konstantia by the furious inhabitants because they intended to surrender their city to the Persians. While Kōsrow I extorted money from the cities the Persians passed by in 540, at Cahrae, he refused to do so and left, saying that 'most of them are not Christians, but are of the old faith'.⁹⁷ These cases will be studied in my thesis to discuss the possible consequences of the Sasanids' military activities among the Empire's different religious groups.

Finally, details regarding the civilians' professions inside a Roman city can be unveiled, but the data we have is, of course, patchy. In the first years of the sixth century, some courtesans 'drew up their clothing and displayed themselves' to

⁹³ See below, chapters 3-4 for the treatment of elites.

⁹⁴ Brooten 2000: 29-36.

⁹⁵ Neusner 1970: 107, Wiesehöfer 1996: 216, cf. Kalmin 2006: 138 for further relevant information. Others argued that Kōsrow I's attitude to them must have been a rather tolerant one, Widengren 1961: 147.

⁹⁶ See above, p.11.

⁹⁷ Prok. Wars 2.13.7. On the polytheistic traditions of Carrhae and its nearby areas, see Segal 1953: 97-119, Green 1992: 54-9, cf. Drijvers 1982: 35-43.

Kawād,⁹⁸ who, together with his soldiers, encountered a stalemate in besieging Amida at that time. When this city was later sacked by the Sasanids, a priest approached the shah, saying that it was unkingly to kill prisoners of war.⁹⁹ If what John of Ephesos and other sixth-century Syriac authors reported is right, then Christian monks and priests were killed both during and after the siege of this frontier city.¹⁰⁰ In 540, Germanos, the Emperor's nephew, decided to strengthen Antioch's defence either by cutting off the rock that 'rises to a height only a little less than the fortifications' at the highest point of the surrounding hills or by building a new tower at that point. However, his proposal was rejected by 'the architects of public buildings' (τῶν οἰκοδομῶν ἀρχιτέκτοσι), saying that it was too hazardous to conduct such works.¹⁰¹ In the sack of Antioch, one monk was decapitated, and another was captured;¹⁰² in the end, charioteers and musicians were deported to Persia.¹⁰³ Several years later, many farmers (γεωργῶν πάμπολύ) ¹⁰⁴ stayed in Kallinikos when Kōsrow I's forces conquered this city.

What we can extract from contemporary texts regarding a Roman city's inhabitants in the Persian wars can be summarised now. The results of the previous discussion suggest that whereas the details of their genders, social classes, and professions as distinct from the able-bodied male citizens were sometimes signalled, there is no specific technical term used exclusively to refer to these people in wartime. The words *paganus* and *paganos* were used several times, but clearly they had different meanings in different contexts, and their use was limited to military manuals. Instead, classicising historians in Late Antiquity often used descriptive phrases or words when mentioning these groups of people; all we know is that it was the Empire, or certain cities' citizens, who were the victims of the turmoil and calamities caused by the Sasanids' invasions. Nonetheless, while the majority of these contemporaries

⁹⁸ Prok. Wars 1.7.18.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1.7.30.

¹⁰⁰ See below, pp. 88-89, 93.

¹⁰¹ Prok. Wars 2.6.13.

¹⁰² V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 57.

¹⁰³ See below, p. 148.

¹⁰⁴ Prok. Wars 2.21.32.

never used a term that corresponded exactly to ‘civilians’, the Romans who were mentioned in their accounts clearly belonged to a social group that the Geneva Convention defines as ‘any person not belonging to the armed forces’ in armed conflicts.¹⁰⁵ The term ‘civilian’, therefore, will be used throughout this thesis.

Existing scholarship on civilians in siege warfare

The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a burgeoning of scholarship on various aspects of ancient siege warfare and the Romano-Persian relationship.¹⁰⁶ Because my thesis mainly concerns the literary and social issues of the sixth-century Persian wars, particular attention will be given to relevant studies, and their methodologies and results will be evaluated further to provide a framework for my methodological approaches.

Civilians’ experiences in the conflicts between Rome and Persia have not received the attention they deserve; as Doug Lee noted, ‘the experience of war by non-combatants during late antiquity has not been the subject of any overall synthesis’.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, certain aspects of civilians’ wartime experiences have been investigated,¹⁰⁸ and such work has paved the way for further discussion in the second part of this thesis. Surely certain common features in these events, such as the

¹⁰⁵ Geneva Convention IV of 12 August 1949.

¹⁰⁶ A comprehensive bibliography on all relevant issues, however, is out of the scope of this section; see, for example, Whitby 2013: 433-57 for a short review on the sieges in Late Antiquity, cf. Lavan 2006: 16-25 for bibliography on relevant aspects. On the collection of cases of sieges from Late Antiquity to the early middle ages, see Petersen 2013: 457-764.

¹⁰⁷ Lee 2007a: 146, cf. Rich and Shipley 1993a, 1993b, Hanson 2007: 12 for some relevant studies on the cases of classical antiquity.

¹⁰⁸ On deportation, see Lieu 1986: 475-505, Kettenhofen 1996, Morony 2004a. On sexual violence, see Turtledove 1977: 218-9, Lee 2007a: 144-6. A thorough discussion of sexual violence in ancient warfare, however, is still lacking, Gaca 2011: 75-6, let alone the cases in Late Antiquity. Cf. Lenski 2008: 80-109, 2011: 185-98, 2014: 230-5, 238-46 for the cases of deportation between the Empire and the Germanic peoples.

loss of life, the destruction and removal of personal or communal property and the transportation of survivors can be noted. Here, a study that I found particularly helpful in a methodological sense was the work of Adam Ziolkowski on Roman siege warfare. The author examined the nature of the *urbs direpta*¹⁰⁹ and identified two basic rules regarding Roman treatment of these cities. While the practice of sacking a captured city varied, it would have been conducted in a somewhat consistent framework; in a real sack, the control from above would be suspended, and the soldiers would treat the conquered inhabitants arbitrarily.

This, however, was not always the case. In fact, the Sasanids did not always treat the defeated Romans in the same manner throughout the sixth century. For instance, sometimes the Empire's inhabitants were slaughtered indiscriminately, while in other cases they were spared. Also, certain cities like Antioch and Apamea were reported to have been destroyed by contemporaries, while most of the buildings of other places seem to have been maintained. Having collected and analyzed relevant information from both literary and material sources, I will use these results to establish a paradigm of civilians' fate during the Persian wars to include both the shared features and particularities.

Whereas information related to the Romano-Persian wars from the narratives of both classicising Greek-speaking historians and contemporary Syriac authors has been extracted and studied, the allusions and literary *topoi* in these texts have not received the attention they deserve. Therefore, I aim to offer fresh insights into contemporary and later authors' perceptions and understanding of people's wartime experiences in armed conflicts. As I will demonstrate in subsequent discussions, sometimes the use of literary commonplaces by Greek and Syriac authors could have undermined the credibility of their narratives.¹¹⁰ The use of *topoi* in descriptions of sieges, especially civilians' wartime experiences, however, does not necessarily imply the distortion of historical facts. In fact, in many cases what they reported in their texts can be validated by the accounts of other literary traditions.

¹⁰⁹ Ziolkowski 1993: 90.

¹¹⁰ For example, see below, pp. 71-6 for the suicide of the captured maidens and pp. 128-38 for the discussion of Roman cities' destruction.

I adapted and modified the methodology of some existing works in the literary study of this thesis' core texts. The key features of the *urbs capta* motif and its use in Greco-Roman literature from Homer to the fifth century CE have been identified by George Paul in a seminal article, and the significance of classical education in this motif's transmission and preservation has been highlighted.¹¹¹ Recently, scholars have not only established the connection between late antique/Byzantine texts and other classical works but also demonstrated the importance of rhetorical treatises in the study of late antique historiography. Conor Whately identified different strands of literary traditions in framing these narratives in Prokopios' works¹¹² through the analysis of the descriptions of sieges and battles in Justinian's campaign, while Kyle Sinclair stressed the indebtedness of Byzantine historians to their classical and late antique predecessors and the role played by rhetorical education.¹¹³ Turning to the Christian Syriac evidence, Michael Morony and Amir Harrak examined the biblical terms and phrases used by Syriac authors on the rise of Islam.¹¹⁴ Based on the approaches of these abovementioned works, my thesis will investigate whether and how these motifs were preserved and used by various authors to relate civilians' calamities in the postclassical world.

I have noted the Sasanids' different strategies and manners in treating both the defeated Romans and the conquered cities, and these differences deserve further discussion to study how different factors would shape Roman civilians' experiences. In the third part of my thesis, I will present these results and discuss them in a broader political and military context. I will argue that what happened in a city's sack could actually have been a complicated process affected by different factors. In order to investigate such phenomena, an examination of the roles played by both sides, that is, the Sasanids and the Romans during these sieges is needed. More importantly, since these conflicts were parts of the confrontation between Ctesiphon and Constantinople

¹¹¹ Paul 1982: 144-55. Relevant surveys have been conducted on works of Latin literature; see, for example, Rossi 2004: 10, 17-53. On the work of Livy, see McDonald 1957: 163-4; on Lucan, see Torgerson 2011.

¹¹² Whately 2007: 339-43.

¹¹³ Sinclair 2013: 8-17.

¹¹⁴ Morony 2005: 8ff, Harrak 2005: 45-65.

in Late Antiquity, some perennial, structural features of the Romano-Persian relations, such as the monarchs' propagandistic needs and considerations, will be noted and discussed as well.

Several scholarly works should be highlighted here in terms of their approaches and scopes. Two recent studies have addressed the issue of battlefield psychology in classical antiquity. Josh Levithan argued that in the Roman era, both the defenders and the besiegers would have understood that violence and tension would accelerate as long as the assault of a city progressed, and such progress could ultimately only be ended by the sack of a conquered target.¹¹⁵ This model, however, is not always applicable to the sieges in the Persian wars because, as shown in the cases of Sura and Dara in 540 and 573, respectively, the Great King began a siege promptly upon the Persians' arrival, and nothing similar to such an increasing tension and violence can be noted.

Although it is not always possible to probe the Persians' understanding and perception of things that happened during sieges, as Noel Lenski suggested, to launch a successful siege against a Roman city could have been a difficult and dangerous task for the Great King's soldiers, and their military activities would certainly have been either facilitated or checked not only by the environmental situation of the Near East but also by the Romans' resistance.¹¹⁶ The analysis of these human- and nature-induced factors during the sieges of Roman cities could be helpful in explaining certain atrocities conducted by the Sasanids and their brutal treatment of the Romans.

A successful war against a regime's archenemy would have been an effective propaganda weapon not only to consolidate the authority of the ruling class but also to display their victory against their rivals. In Late Antiquity, both the Romans and the Sasanids seem to have become the main target audience for the Great King's propaganda, and modern scholars have raised relevant issues. Henning Börm not only examined the ideological and political importance of the sack of Antioch in 540 but also placed the Persians' military activities in a broader international and diplomatic context in the Mediterranean world.¹¹⁷ Matthew Canepa suggested that for both Rome

¹¹⁵ Levithan 2013: 48.

¹¹⁶ Lenski 2007: 230-4.

¹¹⁷ Börm 2006: 299-326.

and Persia, the hippodrome was a great venue for the performance of power.¹¹⁸ In this section, I will examine how the Sasanids displayed their victory against the Romans at different occasions and venues and whether and how Roman civilians' fates were affected by their propagandistic considerations.

What the Sasanids did during and after the sieges, however, is merely half the story. The Empire's elites, on the other hand, sought to address the difficulties of the Empire's war-torn areas by adopting various strategies and policies, and these measures could have profound repercussions upon the lives of local society as well. John Haldon has highlighted the importance of the reconstruction of fortifications and tax remission in the Empire's eastern provinces in his study of late antique and medieval society and warfare.¹¹⁹ In the sixth century, emperors adopted similar policies in coping with the situation of the Empire's frontier region. Indeed, it is difficult to examine the possible psychological effects of these measures upon local society for most of them could have been too nuanced to be recorded in literary texts, and sometimes we will probably never know local inhabitants' perception of these events and decisions. However, under certain circumstances, the Empire's political, military and ecclesiastical elites could have played decisive roles in Roman civilians' fates and treatment during the Persian wars. For instance, as a newly arisen authority in the postclassical world, the role of bishops in ransoming prisoners of war has long been recognised. For instance, William Klingshirn has discussed the ransoming of captives by Caesarius of Arles in the sixth-century Gaul and other relevant issues.¹²⁰ These issues warrant further study to investigate the exertion and presence of the Empire's different power and authorities upon local society during the time of armed conflicts.¹²¹

Sources and methods

¹¹⁸ Canepa 2009: 167-74.

¹¹⁹ Haldon 1999: 239-42.

¹²⁰ Klingshirn 1985: 186-7. For other cases, see Osiek 1981: 365-86, Rapp 2005: 228-32, Weisweiler 2009: 389-91.

¹²¹ See below, pp. 245-56.

The argument of my thesis is based on the meticulous study of a wide range of both literary sources and material culture. Political, diplomatic, and military events in the Empire and its neighbouring regimes and peoples were always the main concern of classicising historians in the sixth and seventh centuries. Prokopios' (ca. 500-ca. 565) accounts are the best source we have regarding the reigns of both Anastasios and Justinian. What he recorded will be indispensable in investigating not only the first two cases of my research—that is, the siege of Amida and the sack of Antioch—but also other minor events in the first half of the sixth century, including the fates of those living in Sura, Kallinikos, and other places. The availability of sources for the second half of the sixth century is different. The *History* of John of Epiphania and Euagrius' *Church History* are by far the most detailed narratives regarding the sack of Apamea and Dara after Justin II's Syrian campaign. Unfortunately, only the first parts of John of Epiphania's *History* are preserved intact. The works of Agathias (ca. 530-ca. 582), Menander the Guardsman, and Theophylaktos also shed light on some aspects of these conflicts. Menander the Guardsman's *History*, albeit in fragmentary form today, is the major source for the reign of Justin II, especially the information about the diplomatic activities among Rome, Persia, and other groups of people. However, the fortunes of those defeated in conquered cities or villages were not his main concern, and the most extensive treatment of a city's siege is the Romans' siege of Chlomaros—a fortress in Arzanene—during the reign of Tiberios II (r. 578-82).¹²² Finally, in his *History*, Theophylaktos also provided a rather detailed account of both the situations of the Mesopotamian frontiers and the internal affairs of Persia, and sometimes the postwar experiences of the Romans were recounted.

More information can be collected from both the Western Syrian (Miaphysite) and East Syrian (Dyophysite)¹²³ historiographical traditions. At the beginning of the sixth century, an Edessene citizen¹²⁴ wrote a chronicle which, together with Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*, preserved details concerning not only the siege and sack of Amida but also the situation of many other cities of Upper Mesopotamia. Another

¹²² Menander fr. 23.7. On the forts of this area, see Whitby 1983a: 207-12.

¹²³ See Brock 1996: 23-35 for the discussion of the Nestorians and the Dyophysites.

¹²⁴ Regarding the discussion of the author's identity, see Trombley and Watt 2000: XXVI-XXIX.

important source for our research is the *Church History* of John of Ephesos, written at the end of the sixth century. The third part of this work, in which the reign of Justin II was covered, preserves the most detailed account of the sack of Apamea and Dara we have today.

This, however, does not mean that literary sources of later periods are of no use in the study of civilians' fates in the Persian wars. Whereas the first two parts of John of Ephesos' *Church History* are lost today, they can be reconstituted by examining the texts of later Syriac historians who copied it in their works.¹²⁵ For example, the details about the sack of Antioch were preserved in the chronicle by Pseudo-Dionysios of Tel-Mahre, which was probably written in the second half of the eighth century. From the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, the Syriac-speaking world produced some important historical works,¹²⁶ and three enormous chronicles will be discussed and cited frequently. The first is the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, a *katholikos* of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the twelfth century (?-1199). In the thirteenth century, an anonymous writer finished the so-called *Chronicle of 1234*. Finally, in the second half of the same century, the polymath Bar Hebraeus (1226-86), a *katholikos*, finished the Syriac version of his *Chronography*, 'the last work of Syriac classical historiography'.¹²⁷ Along with these texts, the *Chronicle of Seert* was probably the most important work in the historiographical tradition of the Dyophysites. The main body of this work consists of the deeds of the *katholikoi*,¹²⁸ the Persian shahs, and sometimes even the patriarchs and emperors of the Empire. It thus preserves valuable information regarding both Persia's internal affairs and Romano-Persian relations.

What we can glean from the above-mentioned texts does not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the Romans; however, several types of sources will be examined in order to probe into both the invaders'—that is, the Persians'—perspectives on and perceptions of the sixth-century wars, and some passages from these works can be

¹²⁵ Witakowski 1991: 252-75, 2007: 259, van Ginkel 1998: 351-8, 2005: 36-7, 2006: 53-9.

¹²⁶ Weltecke 2010: 95-111, see van Ginkel 2010: 113-21 for other works in the previous centuries.

¹²⁷ Witakowski 2006: 62.

¹²⁸ Wood 2013b: 43.

used to supplement the evidence of Greek and Syriac texts. The knowledge of the shah's regime in the sixth and seventh centuries can be gleaned from some postclassical sources. From the last decades of the twentieth century, the study of Sasanian sigillography¹²⁹ has yielded precious data regarding the political, social, and religious life of the Sasanids. Several contemporary texts, such as an anonymous work, the *Life of Anasharwan*—in which details about the Sasanids' relationships with both the Empire and the Turks were preserved,¹³⁰ will also be consulted.¹³¹

Nonetheless, few details regarding Kawād's and Kōsrow I's Roman campaigns can be securely concluded from contemporary Sasanian political treatises and sigillographic evidence, and neither the details of the Sasanids' viewpoints nor their treatment of the defeated Romans can be gleaned from them. Therefore, we must use another batch of works, including the texts of medieval Arab and Persian authors from the ninth century onwards, to extract more information. Whether they all used the *Khwadaynamag* ('Book of Lords')—a single, lost national history of ancient Persia compiled in the late Sasanian era—in writing the Sasanids' history and culture¹³² remains a controversial issue among scholars,¹³³ and Michael Bonner suggested that at least in the case of the sack of Antioch, the texts of the Persian Royal Annals' tradition 'raise...more questions than they answer'.¹³⁴ However, the accounts of these medieval texts reflect, to some extent, the viewpoints of the ruling class of the Sasanian Empire. A discussion of all these works is beyond the scope of my

¹²⁹ See, for example, Gyselen 1989, 2004, 2010 for the results of recent studies.

¹³⁰ Grignaschi 1966: 16-45.

¹³¹ For another important text, the *Letter of Tansar*, in which the Sasanids' political ideology was expressed through a dialogue between Shapur I and his chamberlain, see Boyce 1968: 26-69.

¹³² Sometimes the details from other texts were added; see Bonner 2011: 36-7 for the work of Ferdowsī.

¹³³ Nöldeke 1879a: XV-XXVI. For the ensuing discussions, see Yarshater 1983: 359-63, Shahbazi 1990: 208-29, Howard-Johnston 1995: 169-72, 2010a: 341-2, Rubin 1995: 234-9, 2005: 64-70, Daryaei 2014: 65-7, *contra* Bonner 2011: 19-28, 2014: 81-90. I will discuss this issue in chapter 2.

¹³⁴ Bonner 2011: 57.

thesis;¹³⁵ however, some chief works,¹³⁶ including that of Dīnavarī (828-896), the *History* of al-Ṭabari (839-923), and the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī (ca. 940- ca. 1020) will be used in the following discussion.¹³⁷

Apart from this evidence, many later writers also preserved details concerning not only the Sasanids' military activities but also the Romans' calamities. Although sometimes these accounts preserve parts certain lost texts, the information they provide should be treated with caution. For instance, Theophanes the Confessor reported that the Sasanids 'plundered and destroyed all' in Amida,¹³⁸ and Michael the Syrian mentioned the destruction of Dara in 573. Finally, Agapios, the bishop of Hierapolis, stated that the invading Persians seized the wood of the True Cross from Apamea and carried it back to their land.¹³⁹

I will argue that while, in most cases, the sources used by these authors remain unidentified, the credibility of these accounts should be doubted on the grounds that they are contradicted by what contemporary writers described in their works. Whereas Theophanes' account of the sack of Amida was probably based on Eustathios of Epiphania, a common source which was used by other authors like Malalas, nothing related to the destruction of this frontier city is mentioned in these texts,¹⁴⁰ and neither Pseudo-Joshua nor Pseudo-Zachariah reported anything similar. Also, as one of the major military disasters during Justin II's reign, the capture and sack of Dara was recorded by both contemporary and later historians, but none of them has ever

¹³⁵ Howard-Johnston 2010a: 341.

¹³⁶ Wood 2013a: 172.

¹³⁷ See Bonner 2011: 29-46 for an examination of these texts' historical value. For a brief outline of these authors' works and lives, see Rosenthal 1989: 5-134 (al-Ṭabari); Pellat 1995: 417, Pourshariati 2010: 201-8, Bonner 2014 (Dīnavarī); Khaleghi-Motlagh 1999: 514-23 (Ferdowsī).

¹³⁸ Theoph. A.M. 5996.

¹³⁹ Agap. *PO* 8.436.

¹⁴⁰ The collection of data regarding the siege of Amida and subsequent events, however, could have been halted because Eustathios died before the end of the Anastasian war, Mal. 16.9. See Treadgold 2007: 725ff for Malalas, and Trombley and Watt 2000: XXX-XXXI for Theophanes the Confessor.

mentioned the destruction of this frontier city.¹⁴¹ Since Michael the Syrian used John of Ephesos, who was silent on the destruction of Dara, as a primary source in his work,¹⁴² he must have incorporated other texts in which this frontier citadel's destruction was mentioned. Where he obtained such information, however, remains unclear. Finally, Agapios' statement should be rejected, for all the contemporary sources are silent about the removal of this relic. Recently, Andy Hilkens argued that both Agapios and Michael the Syrian used a common yet unidentified Syriac chronicle.¹⁴³ However, since Michael the Syrian never mentioned the capture of the True Cross in 573, Agapios must have incorporated this information from another text. The silence of Euagrios, who often vehemently criticised Justin II's personality and incompetence in military affairs,¹⁴⁴ is even more significant. If this relic had ever been looted by the Persians, it is hard to imagine that he would omit recording it in his work. In addition, if it had been removed by the Persians, then the Romans would have managed to ransom or recapture it, but the issue was never raised by the Roman diplomats on any occasion. Had such a precious relic been removed by the Persians in the reign of a Chalcedonian emperor, other non-Chalcedonian contemporaries like John of Ephesos would surely have recorded this and even seized the opportunity to criticise the emperor. The silence of both the Miaphysites and the Dyophysites about this event is thus significant. It is safe to say that this relic was still kept in the Empire.

Source criticism will be used to examine authors' reports regarding this subject and why they described them in particular ways in these texts. I will examine 'the relations not only of words to words within a literary text but of words in one genre and one social group to the words of quite different genres and social groups—and...of words to specific social relations within the ebb and flow of a particular

¹⁴¹ Mich. Syr. 10.9.

¹⁴² See above, p. 30.

¹⁴³ Hilkens 2014: 299-300.

¹⁴⁴ Euagr. HE 5.7, 9, cf. Isaac 1995: 126-8 for other contemporaries' viewpoints on Justin II's aggressive foreign policies. For Euagrios' opinion on the emperor's personality, see Euagr. HE 5.1-2, 5, see also Whitby 1988: 333-4. For the discussion of Euagrios' *Kaiserkritik*, see Cameron 1977: 9-10.

culture'.¹⁴⁵ Their limitations are various. The first difficulty concerns the narratives' style and pattern. As Brent Shaw has observed, in Greco-Roman historiography, certain narratives regarding violence might have been based on 'typecast descriptions derived from literary prototypes',¹⁴⁶ for example, the scenes of a besieged city, the *urbs capta*, were a notable theme in classical literature from Homer to the very end of antiquity.¹⁴⁷ Also, some hagiographers and church historians clothed the Sasanids' military activities and the Romans' calamities with Judeo-Christian literary motifs. An analysis on these writers' languages is thus needed.

Second, whereas many writers preserved relevant information about the sack of these Roman cities, it is impossible to draw a comprehensive picture of every aspect, and we are bound to recognise the uncertainties, ambiguities, and unevenness of our material about civilians' experiences in different cases; the dearth of further details makes it difficult to provide a complete explanation of all aspects of their experiences. Whereas many writers focused on certain dimensions, they usually chose to leave other issues unmentioned. For example, thanks to both Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* and Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*, we are relatively well informed about the sack of Amida. Prokopios' accounts in the *Wars*, together with other works in oriental languages, make it possible to reconstruct the lives of captured Romans deported to the Persian Empire, but much less information can be collected from the sacks of Sura and Kallinikos in Kōsrow I's campaigns in 540 and 542, respectively. Another example is the fate of the conquered Roman women. Among the classicising historians, only Prokopios provided his readers with several, if not extensive, cases of misfortunes that befell women from Sura, Antioch, and Apamea, and neither Agathias nor Theophylaktos related the misfortunes of women in any detail. In Syriac historiography, from the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua, we can glimpse the fate of women inside Amida when this city was occupied by the Persians, but the most important case remains the suicide of 2,000 Roman virgins in captivity, an event that was first recorded by John of Ephesos in the second half of the sixth century and then

¹⁴⁵ Smith-Rosenberg 1986: 32.

¹⁴⁶ Shaw 1999: 132.

¹⁴⁷ Relevant issues will receive further discussion in chapter 2, pp. 61-8.

preserved in many oriental Christian texts in the middle ages. Apart from these accounts, few additional details can be found in their works.

Moreover, the imbalanced treatment of frontier and inland sites in the Syriac literary tradition must be addressed. The suffering of those who lived in northern Mesopotamia, at least in the cases of the sixth century, seems to have played a dominant role in their narratives. The sack of Antioch can be taken as an example. As one of the most disastrous events in Justinian's reign, this event was mentioned in nearly all of these chronicles from the sixth to the thirteenth century,¹⁴⁸ but neither Pseudo-Dionysios of Tel-Mahre nor the authors of the chronicles in the thirteenth century preserve detailed accounts.

Similar patterns can be found in John of Ephesos and other Syriac historians' narratives of Apamea and Dara: whereas these two cases were treated meticulously by John of Ephesos in his *Church History*, the narratives related to Dara were apparently much longer than those of Apamea,¹⁴⁹ and the situation remains the same in subsequent historical works.¹⁵⁰ It is possible that because all of these writers came from northern Mesopotamia, it was natural for them to concentrate on the affairs around their hometowns or nearby areas.¹⁵¹ For instance, John of Ephesos was born at Amida, a city located not far from both the frontier of the Empire and Dara, and it is possible that the anonymous writer of the *Chronicle of 1234* came from Edessa.¹⁵² Jan Jacob van Ginkel states that in most cases, this church historian used oral reports and letters from local Miaphysite leaders as the main sources of his narratives of the Persian war.¹⁵³ Therefore, what he could obtain from his social networks, such as friends and clerics, must have played a decisive role in the description of these postwar scenes and details.

¹⁴⁸ Chr. 724 a.871/112, Ps. Dion. II. 64, Mich. Syr. 9.24, Chr. 1234 56, Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.79.

¹⁴⁹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Mich. Syr. 10.9, Chr. 1234 66-8, Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.84.

¹⁵¹ Cf. the work of Euagrius the church historian, who was much less familiar with the frontier areas, Whitby 2000: XVIII-XIX.

¹⁵² Weltecke 2010: 102-3.

¹⁵³ van Ginkel 1995: 77.

Because the narratives by John of Ephesos provided the most important primary source of these chroniclers' works in the following centuries, such imbalanced narratives were thus repeated. The reading of the main Syriac chronicles from the middle of the eighth century onwards suggests that the sack of Antioch, probably one of the greatest military disasters for Justinian's Empire, was recorded only succinctly. Indeed, subsequent Syriac authors often truncated John's narratives to fit in their narratives and structures. However, the loss of the second part of his *Church History* makes it impossible to compare John of Ephesos' treatments of Antioch, Apamea, and Dara with those of other Syriac historians, and it is not possible to know whether he had recorded these events as painstakingly as the case of Dara. Therefore, no firm conclusion can be made at this moment because all we have now are the abridged versions, from which we simply have no idea what was removed and what was preserved by these subsequent authors in most cases.

Third, in most cases, we are examining civilians' fates through the distorting lens of the works of social elites. Of course, both social and ecclesiastical elites such as members of city councils and bishops were victims in wartime,¹⁵⁴ but it was the less privileged groups who formed the bulk of the urban civilians in the sixth-century Empire. Unfortunately, they left no direct testimony of their experiences: rather, it was the well-educated, upper-class male authors whose accounts were preserved. As Robert Knapp pointed out in *Invisible Romans*, 'the experience of ordinary people has no direct voice in the histories the Romans have left us'.¹⁵⁵ Therefore it is not always easy to garner insights into the civilians' wartime lives, and a presupposed perspective and readership will sometimes result in the limitation of available information.

Finally, many surviving accounts of conquered cities came from 'outsiders'—that is, those who never experienced or witnessed a city's siege personally.¹⁵⁶ John of Ephesos resided in Constantinople while writing his *Church History*, and as the legal advisers of Gregory, the patriarch of Antioch, Euagrios and John of Epiphania would

¹⁵⁴ See below, chapters 3-4.

¹⁵⁵ Knapp 2011: 2-3.

¹⁵⁶ On the issue of Ammianus' accounts of the Persian invasion and the siege of Amida in 359, see Thompson 1947: 47-55, Austin 1973: 331-5, Blockley 1988: 245-6, cf. Matthews 1989a: 549-62.

have possibly worked within the Patriarchate.¹⁵⁷ However, many, if not all, writers seem to have not only tried to access documentary or oral reports of the events they recorded, but also preserved the information based on the oral reports of either the witnesses or the sufferers themselves or, at least, someone who was familiar with local affairs. The author of the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua was living in Edessa when the Anastasian War broke out. In the seventh book of his *Church History*, Pseudo-Zachariah drew on a local source¹⁵⁸ written by someone who personally knew Gadana, who set a trap for Glonos, the Persian commander who presided in Amida at that time, and his soldiers.¹⁵⁹ The returned Amidenes told of their life in the Caucasus in the middle of the sixth century, and some captives in 573 seem to have reported the torment of the deported Roman virgins.¹⁶⁰ The information from these different perspectives can thus be teased out and examined together.

Material evidence proves to be helpful in historical and military studies.¹⁶¹ For example, the excavation of Dura-Europos' walls yielded valuable evidence about both the sequence of the city's siege and the use of chemical weapons in the third century.¹⁶² Approximately 40 years ago, Clive Foss demonstrated the use of archaeological and numismatic data in the study of Sardis' history in the seventh century,¹⁶³ but the results—together with the limited quantity of evidence—have since been questioned.¹⁶⁴ From the end of the nineteenth century, a series of excavations have been conducted at certain Roman and Persian cities,¹⁶⁵ and the development and

¹⁵⁷ Whitby 2000: XIV.

¹⁵⁸ Greatrex 2006b: 41, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Zach. HE 7.5.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.7, Joh. Eph. HE 6.7.

¹⁶¹ For an updated overview on this topic, see Whately 2013: 139-42.

¹⁶² See, for example, James 2011: 69-101.

¹⁶³ Foss 1975: 14-5.

¹⁶⁴ Charanis 1973: 175-80. Cf. Russell 1986: 137-54, 2001: 41-71 for more discussion.

¹⁶⁵ On the excavation of Antioch, see Elderkin 1934, Stillwell 1938, 1941, Lassus 1972. On Apamea, see Balty 1969, 1981, 1984, 1989, C. Balty and J. Balty 1972,

history of Dara, Sura, and other frontier citadels were studied¹⁶⁶ with the help of available material data. Whereas the results of these campaigns are useful in tracing these cities' development and history, scholars have noted the methodological problems of using non-literary data in historical research. Hugh Kennedy argued that 'archaeologists have tended to look to catastrophes...to explain changes in the urban patterns',¹⁶⁷ and according to Josh Levithan, they 'cannot fill in the essential details of context and chronology'.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, most cities such as Antioch, Ctesiphon, and Dara have been only partially excavated. Therefore, such information should be examined with caution.

The information we can learn from available literary and material sources is thus deemed to be partial and imbalanced. Indeed, the studies of people's wartime experiences in other periods and societies are fruitful: in *Warfare and Society in the Early Medieval West*, Guy Halsall stated that sometimes an analogical approach—in which data from other periods or spaces is introduced to fill the lacuna of information—may be used to reconstruct the details of a conflict. However, it is highly risky to employ this approach on the ground of the particularities of every case and event across different periods, geographical areas, and contexts.¹⁶⁹ Hence, these limitations will be both singled out in my thesis and presented rather than bridged by tentative or conjectural attempts.

Structure of the thesis

Napoleone-Lemaire, J. et al. 1969. On Ctesiphon, see Reuther 1929: 434-51, 1930, Gullini 1966: 7-38, Fiey 1967a: 3-38.

¹⁶⁶ On Amida and Dara, see van Bercham and Strzygowski 1910, Gabriel 1940: 85-205, Sinclair 1987-90: 164-95, 219-24 and Preusser 1911: 44-9, Croke and Crow 1983: 143-59, Whitby 1986b: 737-83, Furlan 1988: 105-27, 1995: 51-64, Ahunbay 1990: 391-7, 1991: 197-203 respectively. On Sura, see Konrad 1999: 398-400, 2001, 2008: 433-54; on other fortifications, see Whitby 1986a: 717-35.

¹⁶⁷ Kennedy 1985a: 150.

¹⁶⁸ Levithan 2013: 10.

¹⁶⁹ Halsall 2003: 6-10, Whitby 2007a: 80.

What follows will be divided into three main parts. In the first part, both a sketch of the historical events of the sixth century and a short review of late antique literary and intellectual backgrounds will be provided in chapter 1. Chapter 2 will study the key texts' narratives, agenda, and possible literary *topoi* to enhance our understanding of their authors' intellectual milieu and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the narratives of earlier works, such as Herodotus' *Histories*, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars*, and Josephus' *Jewish War*, will be studied in order to establish the extent of dependence in later works on them, and the key motifs of both Greek and Syriac texts will be discussed.

The second part consists of three thematic chapters that analyze and compare data from four major case studies: Kawād's sack of Amida and the Romans' counteroffensive from 502-4, the sack of Antioch by Kōsrow I in 540, and that of Apamea and Dara in 573. Other 'minor cases'—for example, the Persian attack on and capture of local cities in some Roman provinces, such as Sura, Kallinikos, and Theodosiopolis (modern Erzurum, Turkey)—have also been studied insofar as they can shed light on my main case studies. In chapter 3, the first thematic chapter of part two, the wartime experiences of civilians inside the cities will be presented and discussed. The theme of the fourth chapter is the movement of Roman citizens in wartime out of their cities, whether as refugees, hostages, or deported captives. In the fifth chapter, the experiences of these prisoners of war once outside the Roman Empire will be examined, whether transported to newly established cities or imperial prisons or sold to nomads.

The last part is the analysis and investigation of factors that influenced the experiences of urban citizens. Apart from the Persians' presence in the Empire, their perspectives in the conflicts, including strategic considerations, economic interests, and the wartime experiences of the besiegers, will be analyzed. On the other hand, the possible impacts of the decisions made by the Empire's elites upon civilians' wartime fates will be assessed. In the end, the experience of Roman citizens of both conflicts and coexistence between Rome and Persia will be placed within the context of the study of the border regions of these two empires.

Chapter 1. Historical and intellectual background

The aim of this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, a sketch of the Romano-Persian wars in the sixth-century Mediterranean world, as the historical setting of the Sasanids' sieges of the Empire's cities, will be provided. On the other hand, as details pertain to these events were recorded by both contemporary and later historians, the intellectual and social contexts from within these accounts were written down and preserved deserve to be studied briefly.

Historical setting

Different types of armed conflicts, such as pitched battles, raids and sieges were conducted by both Rome and Persia from the reign of Anastasios to Maurice. However, the focus of this thesis will be limited to the Sasanids' sieges and sacks of the Empire's cities, and, more importantly, the treatment of the Romans in these events, rather than providing a comprehensive review of the relationship between these two great powers in the sixth century, nor does it aim to investigate the diplomatic relations between Constantinople and Ctesiphon in depth. At the end of this chapter a chronological table of the Persians' incursion into and the sackings of Roman cities will be provided.

For those living in Roman frontier provinces the second half of the fourth century and the subsequent century were marked by a period of relative peace. The bellicose Shapur II, the longest reigning monarch of the Sasanian dynasty who invaded the territory of the Empire several times and sacked Amida (Map 1, zone E5) in 359, turned his attention to Armenia.¹ From the fifth century onwards the Sasanids were occupied with the threats of the Kidarite and the Hephthalite Huns. The war of 421-2² turned into a stalemate,³ while the invasion of Yazdgerd II in 440 ended with little success.⁴

¹ Both Rome and Persia, however, engaged in war in Armenia for decades from the 360s, see Blockley 1987: 222-34, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 21-30.

² Sokr. HE 7.18.7-25, Mal. 14.23. For scholarly studies on relevant issues, see Holum 1977: 153- 72, Croke 1984a: 68-72, Blockley 1992: 56-8, Schrier 1992: 75-86,

Things changed at the very beginning of the sixth century. A depleted treasury⁵ seems to have triggered Kawād to break the peace and launch a sudden attack against the Empire.⁶ In the summer of 502, the shah invaded Armenia Interior and conquered Theodosiopolis⁷ and Martyropolis (Map 1, zone E5).⁸ Later he went southwards, and arrived at Amida in October.⁹ The siege of this city, however, did not go as smoothly as the Sasanids might have expected. While different techniques, including mound and battering-ram, were deployed by the Great King to surmount Amida's fortifications,¹⁰ the inhabitants of this frontier city, under the leadership of civic authorities, defended their city courageously, and the weather conditions tormented the besiegers. The siege lasted for more than three months¹¹ and Amida fell in January 503.¹² All contemporary texts agreed that a massacre took place inside Amida, and

Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 36-43. See Payne 2014b: 296-8 for a summary of the Romano-Persian relations in the fifth century.

³ Greatrex 1993: 2, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 42.

⁴ Thdr. HE 5.37.5-6, Marc. com. a.441, Blockley 1992: 61. See Greatrex 1993: 1-14, 1998: 287-91 and Rubin 1986: 677-95 for the Romano-Persian relations in the fifth century, cf. Millar 2006: 66-76 for the eastern frontier in the reign of Theodosios II (r. 408-50).

⁵ See below, pp. 212-4.

⁶ On the Anastasian War and the sack of Amida, see Trombley 1997: 159-68, Greatrex 1998: 73-119, esp. 83-94, 108-115, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 62-74, Haarer 2006: 53-65, Meier 2009: 174-222.

⁷ Josh. Styl. 48, Zach. HE 7.3.

⁸ Prok. Aed. 3.2.4-7. Whitby 1984: 177-8.

⁹ Josh. Styl. 50, Zach. HE 7.3.

¹⁰ Cf. Rance 2007a: 359-62 for late antique siegecraft.

¹¹ Josh. Styl. 53, Chr. Ede. 80.

¹² The siege and sack of Amida was recored by many late antique and medieval texts. Both Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* and Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History* preserved the most detailed accounts, Josh. Styl. 50, 53, Zach. HE 7.3-4. For other important sources, see Prok. Wars 1.7.3-4, 12-35, Marc. com. a.502, Ps. Dion. II, 5, Theoph. A.M. 5996.

many Romans were deported either to Persia or to the Caucasus. Besides, Kawād's soldiers removed goods from the city and sent them back to their territory. In the end a Persian garrison was established to rule this city, possibly together with remaining social elites.

Although Kawād attacked other cities such as Edessa, Carrhae and Konstantia (Map 1, zone D4)¹³ in the following years, he was unable to capture any of them, and later his attention was distracted by the Huns' invasion of the Caucasus.¹⁴ The so-called Anastasian war was concluded in 506,¹⁵ and no further major armed conflicts between Rome and Persia took place on the Mesopotamian frontier during Anastasios' reign. It was not until the first years of Justinian that a full-scale war was resumed in Mesopotamia.¹⁶ The siege of Roman cities, however, did not feature at this stage: the Persians led by Azarethes captured Gabboulon in the spring of 531,¹⁷ but other places were spared.¹⁸ In winter, the Persians were dispatched to besiege Martyropolis,¹⁹ but retreated without gaining anything.

Ḳosrow I's reign, which lasted for more than 40 years, saw the most frequent attacks against Roman cities by the Sasanids. In the spring of 540 the Great King broke the Eternal Peace, crossed the border with his soldiers, possibly in May,²⁰ and launched his attack on Roman territory. Prokopios reported that the shah returned to Persia before the end of summer,²¹ therefore, his army would possibly have stayed in

¹³ Josh. Styl. 58-63.

¹⁴ Prok. Wars 1.8.19.

¹⁵ Ibid., Josh. Styl. 98-9, Greatrex 1998: 115-8.

¹⁶ Greatrex 1998: 163, cf. Howard-Johnston 1989: 218.

¹⁷ Mal. 18.60.

¹⁸ See Greatrex 1998: 168-212 for the battles of Dara, Kallinikos and other conflicts.

For the battle of Dara, see Prok. Wars 1.13.9-1.1.14.55, Mal. 18.50, Zach. HE 9.3, Theoph. A.M. 6022. For the battle of Kallinikos, see Prok. Wars 1.18.7-56, Mal. 60-1.

¹⁹ Mal. 18.66, Prok. Wars 1.21.4-8, Zach. HE 9.6, Greatrex 1998: 209-11.

²⁰ Chr. Ede. 105.

²¹ Prok. Wars 2.13.29.

the Empire for nearly half a year.²² While the inhabitants of other places chose to ransom their cities,²³ in this year two Roman cities were captured and sacked. The inhabitants of Sura (Map 1, zone D2), together with the soldiers defended their city bravely under the command of their general Arsaces but sought to sue for peace later. Having been irritated by the Romans' resistance, the Great King feigned to negotiate with the Romans first, but not long afterwards seized this city and sacked it.²⁴ The Sasanids encountered fierce opposition again at Antioch (Map 1, zone A3). The siege of this metropolis took place after its inhabitants refused to pay a sum of money to the Persians. While neither the Persians nor the Romans could overcome each other at the beginning, the sudden collapse of the timber platform which the Romans used to attack their enemies created great confusion among the defenders, and both the reinforcements and many civilians began to escape. While many young citizens kept resisting, hope of victory was crushed by the arrival of the Great King's elite forces. Antioch was captured and sacked in June 540.²⁵ The treatment of those living in Sura and Antioch shared some common features, including slaughter, plundering and deportation. In the end both of them were reported have been destroyed.

In spite of the fact that the Great King and his soldiers invaded Roman Mesopotamia several times in the following years, only a few cities like Edessa and Sergiopolis (Map 1, zone D2)²⁶ were besieged and only Kallinikos (Map 1, zone D3)

²² On Kōsrow I's campaign and the sack of Antioch, see Bury 1923.2: 96-8, Downey 1953: 340-8, 1961: 542-6, Stein 1949.2: 485-92, Evans 1996: 155-8, Treadgold 1997: 192-5, Meier 2003: 313-20, Tate 2004: 750-6, Börm 2006: 299-328. On the possible repercussions, both mentally and physically, see Trombley 1997: 158, 168, Liebeschuetz 2001: 71, 295, 392, 410, Morony 2004b: 183. The examination of epigraphical data was provided in Trombley 2004b: 342-50.

²³ Apamea: Prok. Wars 2.11.21-4, Chalkis: *ibid.*, 2.12.1-2, Edessa: *ibid.*, 2.12.33-4, Konstantia: *ibid.*, 2.13.8, Dara: *ibid.*, 2.13.28.

²⁴ On the siege and sack of Sura, see Prok. Wars 2.5.8-33, 2.9.9-10. Cf. Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.254.

²⁵ Mal. 18.87.

²⁶ For Sergiopolis, see Prok. Wars 2.20.1-16, Euagr. HE 4.28, 6.21, cf. Th. Sim. 5.13.2, for Edessa, see Prok. Wars 2.26.5-2.27.46.

was captured in 542.²⁷ In 545, a five-year truce was signed with the Persians.²⁸ A comprehensive peace treaty was concluded in the last years of Justinian.²⁹ The second half of the reign of Justinian was a relatively peaceful period, and the Romans living in the eastern provinces enjoyed peace for about 30 years.

Some more Roman cities were conquered and sacked in the last years of K̄osrow I's reign. In 572, it was Justin II who took the initiative in waging war against the Sasanids.³⁰ The Romans, under the leadership of Marcian, the newly-promoted *magister militum per Orientem*, began to attack some Persian frontier citadels and Nisibis (Map 1, zone F4). Although their military activities seemed successful at first, they failed to capture Nisibis and began to retreat.³¹ The Sasanids,³² on the other hand, launched counterattacks on two fronts. K̄osrow I, who was now in his seventies, led his army in person across the river Tigris and went towards Nisibis.³³

The shah not only tried to expel the besiegers, but also struck Dara (Map 1, zone F4), the most important fortified site of the Empire. K̄osrow I made every effort, using various methods such as mounds, ramparts and siege towers to subdue this place's fortifications. The Romans defended this city for more than sixth months, and their resistance certainly perplexed the Great King. The wintry weather and the

²⁷ Prok. Wars 2.21.32.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.28.11. For the information regarding the diplomatic activities in the subsequent years, see *ibid.*, 8.15.1-7, Agath 2.18.3, Stein 1949.2: 510, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 123-4, 275.

²⁹ See Menander fr. 6.1 for the most extensive account.

³⁰ For the accounts on Justin II's unsuccessful campaigns and the Sasanids' counteroffensive, see Stein 1919: 40-8, Goubert 1951: 68-70, Downey 1961: 561-2, Turtledove 1977: 191-220, Allen 1981: 220-4, Whitby 1988: 250-8, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 135-50, cf. Trombley 2007: 321-56.

³¹ For Marcian's campaign, see Euagr. HE 5.8-9, Joh. Eph. HE 6.2, Chr. 1234: 65. Joh. Epiph. 2-3, Th. Sim. 3.10.1-4.

³² Euagrius stated that the Sasanids had made sufficient preparation, Euagr. HE 5.9. Such a detail, however, could be mentioned to illustrate Justin II's negligence of military affairs.

³³ Euagr. HE 5.9, Th. Sim. 3.10.6, Chr. 1234 66.

defenders' negligence, however, eventually led to the fall of this citadel,³⁴ which was conquered in November of 573.³⁵ The treatment of the remaining defenders was harsh: many of them were slaughtered, while survivors were captured and sent back to Persia. K̄osrow I did not want Dara to be occupied by the Romans again, and a garrison was established to keep a firm grip on this frontier citadel.

Another force of the Sasanids, led by Adarmahan, a *marzbān* (a governor of a province of the Sasanian Empire)³⁶, crossed into Roman territory.³⁷ In this case much less information regarding the siege and sack of the Empire's cities can be securely noted. In the *Chronicle of 724*, the compiler indicated that the Sasanids conquered Seleukia (Map 1, zone A3);³⁸ Michael the Syrian enumerated what territory Adarmahan's forces ravaged, including Barbalissus (Map 1, zone C3), Qasrin, Beth Dama, Gabboulon,³⁹ and the territory surrounding other important cities, such as Chalkis (Map 1, zone B2), Gazara⁴⁰ and Antioch.⁴¹ However, it remains unclear how

³⁴ Contemporary authors mentioned Dara's siege and fall, and some of them provided detailed accounts on this event, Euagr. HE 5.10, Joh. Epiph. 5, Th. Sim. 3.11.2, Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, cf. Chr. 1234 66.

³⁵ Agapios *PO* 8.436, Mich. Syr. 10.9. Theophanes the Confessor mistakenly attributed the fall of Dara to Adarmahan's siege, Theoph. A.M. 6066.

³⁶ Christensen 1944: 136-7, Gignoux 1984: 1-27.

³⁷ Euagr. HE 5.9, Joh. Epiph. 4, Th. Sim. 3.10.7-8. John. Eph. HE 6.6. Chr. 1234 68. The sequence of events given by Agapios is different. Having found it was difficult to surmount the fortifications of Dara, K̄osrow I decided to send another force to invade Roman Syria, possibly considering Antioch as his primary target, Agap. *PO* 8.436. This statement is contradicted by what we know from other sources.

³⁸ Chr. 724 a.884/112. This information cannot be found in other sources, but it may be correlated with what we can learn from the *Šāh-nāma*, in which the Persians captured Beroea and Sakila, Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 8.46-7, see also the comments in Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 150.

³⁹ As a city not far away from Antioch, this place has been attacked by the Sasanids in the reign of Justinian as well, Mal. 18.60.

⁴⁰ Barbalissus is Beth Balash, and Qasrin was probably the city of Neocaesarea. Beth Dama was near Hierapolis, and Gazara was probably Gephyra in Greek, see

the Sasanids captured these places and, if so, how the Romans were treated in the post-conquest period. Both Greek and Syriac authors agreed that Adarmahan came into Koele Syria and seized Apamea (Map 1, zone A2) by trickery. Having made an agreement with this city's representatives, the Persians asked the inhabitants to open the gates and controlled the whole city. Apart from plundering this city's wealth and destroying its buildings, Adarmahan's soldiers enslaved the Apameans and returned back to join Kōsrow I's forces.⁴²

The capture of Dara, the Empire's frontier citadel, and Apamea, the metropolis of Syria Secunda, marked the Sasanids' last greatest military success in the Empire's eastern provinces in the sixth century. In 576, Kōsrow I again conquered and destroyed some Roman cities such as Sebasteia and Melitene,⁴³ but little further information regarding the treatment of these places' civilians can be mined from late antique and medieval texts. The Persians ceased to conduct serious sieges against the Empire's cities in the last decades of the sixth century. In 578, a year before Kōsrow I's death, they merely laid waste to the region around Theodosiopolis, Konstantia and Martyropolis and Amida.⁴⁴ The situation in Hormozd IV (r. 579-90)'s reign was similar: we know that his commander Adarmahan again despoiled the country around Konstantia and Edessa and even went against Kallinikos,⁴⁵ but none of them was besieged and sacked. Several years later, the nearby areas of Martyropolis were raided, but again the city was left intact.⁴⁶

Honigmann 1923: 20, 48, 15, 40 respectively for the identification of these sites. I owe this information to Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 283.

⁴¹ Mich. Syr. 10.9.

⁴² On Adarmahan's invasion and the fall of Apamea, see Euagr. HE 5.9-10, Joh. Epiph. 4, Th. Sim. 3.10.8-9, Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

⁴³ The most reliable account should be John of Ephesos' report, see Joh. Eph. HE 6.8-9, Whitby 2000: 275. For other works, see Euagr. HE 5.14, Th. Sim. 3.12.11-14.11.

⁴⁴ Menander fr. 23.1, 23.6, Th. Sim. 3.15.11-2. See Joh. Eph. HE 6.14, 27 for more details.

⁴⁵ Th. Sim. 3.17.8-11, Joh. Eph. HE 6.17, Chr. 1234 74.

⁴⁶ This raid took place after the Sasanids' failure to take Monocarton, a Roman fortress near Konstantia, Th. Sim. 1.14.7, Whitby and Whitby 1986: 245.

Therefore in terms of the Sasanids' sieges and sackings of Roman cities the Romano-Persian wars in the sixth century can be divided into three stages. The first stage stretches from the beginning of Kawād's Roman campaign to the Eternal Peace; the second consists of Kōsrow I's invasions in the 540s and his counterattacks in 573, and the last stage begins with the Sasanids' campaign of Melitene in 576 and ends with the truce between Maurice and Kōsrow II. In the first stage Kawād besieged Theodosiopolis and Amida successfully and sacked the latter. The situation in the second period was different. In the middle of the sixth century Zenobia was captured but its inhabitants were spared, while Sura, Antioch and Kallinikos were sacked. The Sasanids also tried to attack other Roman cities like Beroea (Map 1, zone B3), Dara, Sergiopolis and Edessa, but failed, or, in some cases, were persuaded not to take them. Three decades later, two more cities, Dara and Apamea, were captured and sacked. In short, in the heyday of the Sasanian Empire, that is, Kōsrow I's reign, both the Empire's two metropoleis and two frontier citadels were successfully captured. The frequency of the Persians' sieges of Roman cities decreased significantly in the third stage: they never captured any Roman city except those seized in Kōsrow I's last expedition in 576. The reign of Hormozd IV was less-documented by contemporary authors, and information about the situation inside the Sasanian Empire proves to be sketchy. Therefore, we do not know to what extent the internal unrest of Persia⁴⁷ curtailed the Sasanids' military capabilities. The differences between these three stages of the Persian wars may be explained, albeit tentatively, by Kōsrow I's decision after his fiasco in the battle of Melitene in 576. The Great King ordered that from then on it was prohibited for a shah to engage in foreign expeditions unless he fought another king.⁴⁸ Therefore, while in the first and second stages, both Kawād and Kōsrow I frequently led their armies in person against the Romans, in the third stage, the Great King's generals went against the Empire. Scholars have argued the crucial role played by the Great King, who often threatened his soldiers to surmount the Romans' defences during sieges,⁴⁹ and the Persians' morale could possibly have

⁴⁷ Th. Sim. 3.16.9-13, al-Ṭabari 1.988.

⁴⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.9, see also Euagr. HE 5.14, Th. Sim. 3.14.11.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Whitby 1994: 227-63.

been raised by the presence of their shah. Therefore, in the third stage, the Sasanids could possibly have lost their impetus to launch a serious siege against the Romans due to the absence of the Great King in military expeditions.

It, however, should be pointed out that while the Sasanids seem to have been more aggressive in the second period, their treatment of Roman civilians did not experience drastic change. Instead, certain common features, such as massacre, deportation, plundering and destruction, can be observed in almost every Roman city they sacked. In the subsequent chapters, these aspects will be studied in depth, first to investigate how these details were presented in literary texts and second to establish why and how these atrocities were conducted during wartime.

Intellectual and social contexts of key texts

The information regarding the Sasanids' military activities or relevant issues can be extracted from different late antique and medieval texts, but a comprehensive discussion of all available sources' authors and their intellectual background is certainly beyond the scope of my thesis.⁵⁰ Instead, this section will focus on two main groups of authors. The Persians' military activities were recorded extensively by classicising Greek historians. Meanwhile, Greek- or Syriac-speaking monks, bishops and patriarchs also wrote some important historical works in which civilians' wartime experiences were preserved. I will discuss these writers' cultural and social background to establish to what extent these factors could have influenced their accounts.

The late antique Greek authors' cultural background must be established in order to understand the possible use of literary techniques in their works, an important issue which will receive more discussion in chapter 2. All of them may well have have either practised as lawyers or studied law, a subject which was 'over and above the

⁵⁰ For example, it is not possible to identify the compiler (s) of some medieval texts like the *Chronicle of Seert* and the *Chronicle of 1234*. See Wood 2013a and Hilken 2014 for the most up to date research on these two texts.

normal course of grammar and rhetoric'.⁵¹ Prokopios was referred to as a *rhetor*,⁵² a term usually applied to people who practised law.⁵³ While information about his family and social background is meagre,⁵⁴ he was clearly a well-educated official.⁵⁵ Agathias and John of Epiphania received legal training⁵⁶ and later on worked as legal counsellors. Also, Menander the Guardsman was trained at the capital's law school,⁵⁷ and Theophylaktos, who could possibly have come from the upper class,⁵⁸ must have finished education at both Alexandria⁵⁹ and Constantinople.⁶⁰ As the last Greek-speaking church historian in Late Antiquity,⁶¹ the education of Euagrios, as a *scholastikos*, was clearly rhetorical/ legal,⁶² and the use of atticising language and

⁵¹ Jones 1964: 999. On the benefits of studying law, see Jones 1964: 511-3, Kaster 1988: 124, Greatrex 2001: 155, 157.

⁵² See *PLRE* III: s.v. Procopius 2 where such evidences were collected.

⁵³ Baldwin 1980: 21, Blockley 1981: 48, cf. Cameron and Cameron 1966: 15-6. On the evidences regarding Prokopios' knowledge of law, see Greatrex 2001: 150.

⁵⁴ See, for example, the attempts made by James Howard-Johnston, Howard-Johnston 2000: 19-21, *contra* Turquois 2015: 219-31, see also Barnes 1998: 66, Kelso 2003:122-5.

⁵⁵ On the discussion of Prokopios' life and education, see Cameron 1985: 5-8, Greatrex 1996: 125-45, Howard-Johnston 2000: 24-30, cf. Kouroumali 2006: 102-3. On Prokopios' connection with Gaza, see Downey 1963, Greatrex 1996: 125-45.

⁵⁶ On Agathias' education, see Agath. 2.15.7, Cameron and Cameron 1966: 8. On John of Epiphania, see *PLRE* III: s.v. Ioannes 162, Whitby and Whitby 1986: XXI.

⁵⁷ Menander fr. 1. See Baldwin 1978: 103 for further discussion.

⁵⁸ Th. Sim. 8.13.12, Whitby and Whitby 1986: XIII.

⁵⁹ The bibliography on the vivid intellectual life of Alexandria is enormous, see, for example, Watts 2006: 204-31, 2010: 53-88, Majcherek 2010: 471-84.

⁶⁰ Whitby and Whitby 1986: XIV.

⁶¹ On the themes and features of Euagrios' work, see Liebeschuetz 1993: 162, Conrad 1999: 96, cf. Allen 1989: 2-3.

⁶² See Whitby 2000: XIV for Euagrios' education, cf. Allen 1987: 377-81.

style draws him closer to other classicising authors.⁶³ His accounts of the Romano-Persian wars, therefore, should be examined together with Prokopios and other classicising historians.

As the core of their education, key features of late antique rhetorical education should be investigated. Although we will probably never know the teaching materials of every rhetorical school, for many teachers and rhetoricians must have had their own textbooks,⁶⁴ we know something about what these classicising historians had probably read and which works were regarded as exemplary by Greek-speaking *literati*. The examination of extant ‘teaching materials’ and the preliminary exercises, the *Progymnasmata*,⁶⁵ by distinguished rhetoricians will be helpful for understanding the possible literary indebtedness of our historians to their predecessors. Although a wide range of texts was studied in schools,⁶⁶ the dominance of Homer is evident,⁶⁷ and Raffaella Cribiore argued that prose works by orators and historians, such as Demosthenes, Thucydides and Herodotus, were widely read ‘as a preparation to rhetorical school’.⁶⁸ Whether students could, as Averil Cameron argued, have obtained knowledge of certain exemplary passages from handbooks,⁶⁹ is difficult to determine.⁷⁰

⁶³ Allen 1981: 51, cf. Krueger 2010: 16-9 for the fifth- and sixth- century church historians’ practice of citing biblical passages.

⁶⁴ Kennedy 2003: XII.

⁶⁵ Webb 2001: 289-92. They were the exercises which were assigned to the students of the ‘intermediate level’, that is, at the stage between elementary the rhetoric school.

⁶⁶ Morgan 1998: 97. For the citation of important classical texts in rhetorical treatises, see Morgan 1998:318-9.

⁶⁷ Wilson 1983: 19.

⁶⁸ Cribiore 2001: 144. See, for example, Iglesias-Zoido 2012: 401-17 for the collection of these exemplary passages. For the influence of Thucydidean passages from the postclassical era onwards, Reinsch 2006: 755-78, also see Canfora 2006: 721-53 for earlier periods.

⁶⁹ Cameron 1964: 44, 52. It seems that only parts of Thucydides were read, Cameron 1986: 39, Carlos Iglesias-Zoido 2012: 395.

⁷⁰ Reinsch 2006: 762.

Apart from classicising authors' texts, the works written by late antique and medieval monks, bishops and even patriarchs also preserved much invaluable information pertaining to Roman civilians' wartime experiences. Extant biographical information on many Syriac-speaking writers is meagre. For example, many hypotheses regarding the identity of the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* have been proposed,⁷¹ but a firm conclusion cannot be reached. Also, our knowledge about the continuator of Zachariah, a monk of Amida, is rather limited.⁷² Nevertheless, nearly all these authors, together with John of Ephesos, the towering figure in Syriac historiography, were all clerics from Edessa, Amida or other places of Upper Mesopotamia, and must thus have been taught either in the monasteries, 'the centers of authority and intelligence'⁷³ in the Syro-Mesopotamian world, or in village schools.⁷⁴

Admittedly the study of rhetoric and the education programme of classical antiquity, if in reduced circumstances, remained alive in Syriac in the monasteries of Upper Mesopotamia,⁷⁵ and certain Greek texts, including those of classical writers⁷⁶ and the Homeric epics had certainly been translated into Syriac.⁷⁷ The situation, however, changed in the early middle ages. While many cities in Mesopotamia were bilingual in classical antiquity,⁷⁸ the use of Greek seems to have been in decline from the second half of the eighth century onwards.⁷⁹ Therefore the lack of Syriac versions of Herodotus, Thucydides and other great classical historians would have made it

⁷¹ See Palmer 1990b: 275-9 for a summary of relevant discussions.

⁷² Greatrex et al. 2011: 32.

⁷³ Debié 2010: 160.

⁷⁴ Debié 2010: 127-35. See, for example, van Ginkel 2005: 37 for the early life of John of Ephesos.

⁷⁵ Watt 1993: 49, 67-8, 1994: 245-8, 1999a: 159, 166.

⁷⁶ Watt 1993: 62, Brock 1982a: 27.

⁷⁷ On the reading of the Homeric epics, see Watt 1993: 58-60, 1994: 254-5. See Debié 2010: 142-5 for other Greek texts.

⁷⁸ Segal 1970: 30-1, Brock 1982a: 17-34.

⁷⁹ Watt 1993: 49-50.

difficult for the intellectuals to imitate their style, content and methods.⁸⁰ The reading and study of Demosthenes or other Greek orators' classical portraits of postwar scenes was also much slighter in medieval Mesopotamia, and it is impossible to know whether Syriac historians had access to these texts.

Therefore, while the classical rhetorical tradition of describing a city's capture and fall inspired Christian homilists and hymn writers in the Greek-speaking world,⁸¹ relevant motifs seem to have played less prominent roles in the majority of Syriac historical works. Instead, the focus of their educational programme was a theological rather than a literary or rhetorical one. The reading of the Bible was the core part of their curriculum,⁸² and sometimes the works of great Christian theologians, like Gregory of Nazianzus, might have been read in translation.⁸³

Many Syriac writers composed their works mainly for didactic purposes. Pseudo-Joshua stated that the aim of his work is '[...] to leave behind memorials of the punishments inflicted in our times on account of our sins, so that when they⁸⁴ read and see what happened to us, they may guard against our sins and escape our punishments'.⁸⁵ Right before his account of the Sasanids' invasion, he stated that 'these things (i.e. the political and natural disasters in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the sixth century) ... occurred to discipline us, because our sins had grown so great'.⁸⁶ Similar accounts can be noted in Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*, which was written 'for the instruction of the brethren, the pleasure of lovers of learning, and the edification of the faithful'.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Watt 1993: 62, 1999b: 326.

⁸¹ Maguire 1981: 94-6.

⁸² Debié 2010: 127.

⁸³ Watt 1994: 245, 1995: 67.

⁸⁴ The monks under the leadership of Sergios, an abbot on whose request our author composed this work, Josh. Styl. 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 49, cf. Watt 2006: 286-90, Watts 2009: 79-83 for our author's explanation of these catastrophes.

⁸⁷ Zach. HE 2.0.

Having such purposes in mind, the potential readers of these Syriac texts would have been limited to local, co-religionists' communities.⁸⁸ As Jan van Ginkel has observed, it is evident that the Greek-speaking ruling elites or intellectuals of the Empire could not have been John of Ephesos' audience since he wrote his work in Syriac, a provincial language of the East. Rather, being a well-known leader of the Miaphysite community, John's co-religionists must have been his intended readers.⁸⁹ The situation in the later period must have been similar. Having finished these historical works with strong edifying purposes in mind, the Miaphysite communities under Muslim rule,⁹⁰ especially churchmen and the monks, must have been the main audience of these historical works.⁹¹

This chapter argues that whereas both Greek and Syriac-speaking authors were Christians, and most of them would have come from the upper echelons of the Empire's society, clearly their cultural and intellectual background would have been different. Therefore, they seem to have inherited different language stock from their predecessors, and they addressed different audiences with different purposes. As these two categories of sources are the most detailed accounts we currently have concerning the Persian wars, information from these texts will be extracted and studied together in the next chapter to investigate not only how these writers presented Roman civilians' wartime experiences but also how they tried to establish the connection between what they had studied in schools and their reportage.

⁸⁸ Such imbalanced accounts (see above, pp.35-6) could possibly have been a part of the literary movement through which the identity of local community was formed in the sixth century, cf. Wood 2010: 175-183.

⁸⁹ van Ginkel 1995: 97.

⁹⁰ Apart from the 'well-trained clerics... "the insiders"', some of them, like Bar Hebraeus, aimed for a larger audience, Weltecke 1997: 21, 2009: 125.

⁹¹ Morony 2005: 29.

A chronological table on the sixth-century Persian wars, with a special emphasis on the Sasanids' sieges of Roman cities

502 August	Kawād's invasion in Armenia; the fall of Theodosiopolis and Martyropolis
502 October	The siege of Amida began
503 Winter	The sack of Amida
503 Spring- Summer	The Romans' counteroffensive
504	Persians' retreat from Amida
526/7	Ambassador Probos sent by Justinian to the Huns; meeting between the Amidenes and Probus
540 Spring	Ḳosrow I's invasion of the Empire
540 Spring?	The sack of Sura
540 June	The sack of Antioch
540?	The foundation of the city Better Antioch of Ḳosrow
540 Autumn	The return of Ḳosrow I's forces back to Persia
542	Ḳosrow I's second invasion; the conquest of Kallinikos; negotiation between Tribunos and Ḳosrow I; the release of distinguished captives
543	The unsuccessful siege of Edessa
552/3	The return of the Amidenes from Transcaucasus
573 Spring?	The siege of Dara began
573	The invasion of Adarmahan of the Empire's provinces; the fall of Apamea
573 November	The sack of Dara
589?	The escape of Roman captives from the castle of Oblivion
590	The dethronement of Ḳosrow II
591	The return of Dara to the Romans

Chapter 2. Analysis of literary accounts

The results of the survey in the previous chapter suggest that many—if not all—of our authors shared similar social and intellectual backgrounds. Many were among the elites of the Empire or, in medieval times, their local communities, and in their school years they must have read the works of towering figures such as Homer, Thucydides, or other normative texts including the Bible. Through an examination of the description and presentation of Roman civilians' wartime experience in our core texts, this chapter aims to identify the possible influence and traits of both these 'normative texts' and these authors' social backgrounds on their accounts and narratives. The discussion will be centred on three groups of texts that form the bulk of our knowledge about Roman civilians' wartime experiences: first, contemporary classicising histories; second, church histories and hagiographies written in both Greek and Syriac; and finally, some late antique and medieval texts in which the Sasanids' perspectives can—albeit tentatively—be established.

Through a close reading of selected passages from our core texts, I will investigate not only the literary techniques, features, and themes in which these authors' accounts were framed but also the preservation and transmission of certain viewpoints and perspectives in this chapter. I will study individual and dominant figures such as Prokopios and John of Ephesos in detail, and the similarities and differences between contemporary and later authors' texts will be examined as well. Civilians' wartime experiences in the armed conflicts between Rome and Persia will thus act as a test by which various literary features of Greek and Syriac texts are examined not only to investigate how they portray these scenes but also to establish the possible connections among these accounts, their predecessors, and various literary traditions.

Words and phrases

Scholars have demonstrated the influence of classical historians on those of Late Antiquity. Arnaldo Momigliano has already pointed out that the latter sometimes borrowed from or alluded to the works of their predecessors;¹ Brent Shaw also

¹ Momigliano 1978: 11.

suggested that ‘most of Procopius’ accounts of sieges and set battles [are] dependent on rhetorical devices and images adopted from earlier historians’.² Whereas the affinities between some late antique historians’ narratives of armed conflicts and those of classical writers have been attested by many scholars,³ a comparison between their accounts of civilians in a conquered city is lacking. This section does not aim to provide a comprehensive index of all possible terms used by both classical and postclassical Greek-speaking historians in portraying a captured/conquered city, nor will it discuss the details and accuracy of every event reported in their works.⁴ Some passages, such as the construction of the Better Antioch of K̄osrow and the situation inside the Castle of Oblivion, were clearly based on contemporary accounts, but the majority of these authors seem to have followed certain patterns in describing the wartime fates of the Romans. What follows is a study centred on such key cases in the sixth-century Persian wars to investigate the possible affinity and similarities of these historians to their predecessors. In the first stage, I will examine the texts related to our case studies to determine whether they share a common stock of phrases. I will then compare these results to key passages in Herodotus, Thucydides, and other important classical histories to establish possible connections among them.⁵ In the last part, I will present and discuss both these postclassical authors’ indebtedness to their predecessors and their portraits’ novelty pertaining to civilians in the Persian wars.

As one of the most detailed accounts regarding Kawād’s and K̄osrow I’s campaign, Prokopios’ narratives deserve to be examined first. In Amida, Kawād ‘bade the Persians plunder the property and make slaves of the survivors’ (ἀλλὰ τὰ τε χρήματα ληΐζεσθαι Πέρσας ἐκέλευε καὶ τοὺς περιόντας ἐν ἀνδραπόδων ποιεῖσθαι λόγῳ).⁶ In the sack of Sura, a frontier fortress of the Empire, he reported that K̄osrow

² Shaw 1999: 133.

³ On the historical works of the previous centuries, see, for example, Thompson 1945: 92-4, Blockley 1972: 18-27, Baldwin 1981: 50-6. On Prokopios, see Braun 1885, 1894, Haury 1896; on Agathias, see Cameron 1964: 33-52, Adshead 1983: 82-7.

⁴ For the discussion of these events’ details, see below, chapters 3-5.

⁵ Cf. Kaldellis 2012: 71-85.

⁶ Prok. Wars 1.7.32.

I ‘plundered the houses and put to death great numbers of the population; all the remainder he reduced to slavery, and setting fire to the whole city razed it to the ground’ (τάς τε οἰκίας ἐλήϊσατο καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πολλοὺς μὲν κτείνας, τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς ἅπαντας ἐν ἀνδραπόδων ποιησάμενος λόγῳ πυρπολήσας τε ξύμπασαν τὴν πόλιν ἐς ἔδαφος καθεῖλεν).⁷ Later, the survivors were captured, and their property was removed (Χοσρόης δὲ τὸ μὲν στράτευμα τῶν Ἀντιοχέων τοὺς περιόντας ζωγρεῖν καὶ ἀνδραποδίζειν ἐκέλευε καὶ τὰ χρήματα πάντα ληΐζεσθαι).⁸ When he mentioned this catastrophe again in Book VIII of the *Wars*, the Persians ‘razed Antioch to the ground’ (καὶ Ἀντιόχειαν γὰρ τούτου δὴ εἵνεκα ἐς ἔδαφος καθελῶν).⁹ In 541-2, the shah ‘enslaved and razed everything to the ground’ at Kallinikos, another Roman fortress (οὗς ὁ Χοσρόης ἀνδραποδίσας ἅπαν ἐς ἔδαφος καθεῖλεν).¹⁰ Finally, whereas Kawād did little to harm the Empire’s buildings, Kosrow I ‘fired every structure and razed it to the ground’ (ἅπαντα πυρπολήσας ἐς ἔδαφος καθεῖλε).¹¹ The accounts of John Lydus, Prokopios’ contemporary, are mainly concerned with the sack of Antioch. Having slaughtered the Romans, the Great King burned this metropolis, plundered its wealth, and then deported the inhabitants of Roman Syria back to Persia (εὐχείρωτον αὐτῷ φανεῖσαν ὡς ἄφρακτον λαβὼν πολέμῳ κατέφλεξεν, φόνον ἄπειρον ἐργασάμενος, τοὺς δὲ ἀνδριάντας, οἷς ἐκοσμεῖτο τὸ ἄστυ, σὺν πλαξί καὶ λίθοις καὶ πίναξιν ἀπλῶς ἀναρπάσας ὄλην εἰς Πέρσας Συρίαν ἀπήλασεν).¹²

These accounts of the Persian wars terminated in the 550s, and I will resort to other texts in order to examine the details about the Romano-Persian conflicts in the second half of the sixth century. John of Epiphania wrote that the Persians plundered the properties, enslaved the inhabitants, and burned the city of Aramea (διαρπάζουσι μὲν οἱ Μῆδοι τὰ πράγματα, καὶ τοὺς ἐνοικοῦντας ἀνδραποδίσαντες, τὴν τε πόλιν

⁷ Ibid., 2.5.26.

⁸ Ibid., 2.9.14.

⁹ Ibid., 8.7.11.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.21.32.

¹¹ Prok. Anecd. 23.7.

¹² Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.54.

ἄπασαν πυρὶ παραδόντες) in 573,¹³ while *Ḳosrow I* plundered the entire city and enslaved the population after his capture of Dara (Πᾶσάν τε αὐτὴν ληϊσάμενος, καὶ τοὺς τε ἄλλους ἀνδραποδίσας).¹⁴ In Theophylaktos' work, the Sasanids 'enslaved the city...consigned it to the flames' (καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἀνδραποδίζεται...δὲ καὶ τῷ πυρὶ παραδούς) at Aramea.¹⁵ Euagrius related the Persians' atrocities, saying that Adarmahan burnt Aramea completely, plundered everything, and enslaved the city (πᾶσαν ἐμπρήσας καὶ πάντα ληϊσάμενος...ἐξἀνδραποδίσας τὴν πόλιν).¹⁶

The examination of these accounts suggests that while these classicising authors shared similar social and intellectual background,¹⁷ they did not always use exactly the same words and phrases in describing the results of armed conflicts. Certainly some words (ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον—to enslave, ληϊζομαι—to plunder) frequently occur, but others (ἀναρπάζω—to snatch up, ἀπελύνω—to expel, διαρπάζω—to plunder, ζωγρέω—to capture) were employed as well. In addition, particular phrases and words (ἐς ἔδαφος καθαίρω—to raze something to the ground) were used in describing the destruction of different Roman cities. Clearly these words and phrases had classical precedents.¹⁸ Some of them like ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον or ζωγρέω were used in the works of many classical writers,¹⁹ but others seem to have been less popular.²⁰ Also, the phrase 'to raze a city (or its fortifications) to the

¹³ Joh. Epiph. 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ Th. Sim. 3.10.9.

¹⁶ Euagr. HE 5.10.

¹⁷ See above, chapter 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Cribiore 2001: 144.

¹⁹ Hdt. 1.66, 1.76, 1.155-6, 1.161, 3.59, 3.137, 3.140, 3.147, 4.203-4, 5.27, 6.9, 6.17-8, 6.94, 6.96, 6.101, 6.106, 6.108, 8.29, 8.126. Thuc. 1.98.1-2, 1.113.1, 2.68.7,9, 3.28.1, 3.36.2, 3.68.3, 4.48.4, 5.3.4, 5.9.9, 5.32.1, 5.116.4, 6.62.3. ζωγρέω: Hdt. 1.66, 1.83, 1.86, 1.128, 1.211, 2.169, 3.52, 4.62, 4.110, 5.77, 6.20, 6.28, 6.30, 6.37, 6.91, 7.210. Thuc. 1.50.1, 2.5.4, 2.92.2, 3.66.2, 4.57.4, 7.23.4, 7.24.2, 7.41.4, 7.85.2, 8.95.7.

²⁰ For example, ἀναρπάζω: Hdt: 8.28, 9.60, διαρπάζω: Hdt. 1.88-9, 9.42, 9.70, Thuc. 8.36.1, ληϊζω: Hdt. 4.111, 113.

ground', which was frequently used by Prokopios,²¹ can be traced back to classical antiquity as well for both Thucydides and Polybios reported that some cities were razed to the ground by the invaders.²²

Averil Cameron observed that whereas some similarities can be observed between Prokopios' and Thucydides' accounts on the plagues, they are simply a 'superficial resemblance',²³ and the divergence between these two authors can be noted occasionally.²⁴ In what follows, I will examine the extent to which the use of these similar or identical phrases would affect the classicising authors' accounts of Roman civilians' fates by comparing their works with not only the information from other non-Greek contemporary texts but also the material data from archaeological excavations. I will argue that the use of similar or identical words and phraseology does not necessarily entail the fabrication or invention of things that did not happen at all; rather, what these classicising authors reported would have been sober historical facts.

Because Prokopios preserved more cases than any other historian (Amida, Sura, Antioch and Kallinikos), I will examine the data extracted from his work first and then compare it to other historians' texts. His descriptions were mainly composed of four elements—massacre, plundering, destruction and deportation. What we can observe from other classicising authors' texts is similar. Although certain details regarding what the Sasanids plundered from Antioch were provided, John Lydus, who probably wrote his works during the reign of Justinian,²⁵ again limited his description to certain themes: the Romans' massacre and deportation, the plundering of their goods and the destruction of this metropolis. John of Epiphania focused on the Persians' plundering, destruction, and deportation at Apamea and Dara, and both

²¹ Prok. Wars 1.13.8, 2.7.20, 2.29.24, 3.5.22, 4.13.26, 6.21.39, 7.6.1, 7.8.10, 7.21.19, 7.22.6, 7.23.3, 7.24.27, 8.4.6, 8.5.28, 8.7.11, 8.9.30, 8.12.28, 8.13.20, 8.13.22, 8.14.47, Prok. Anecd. 23.7, Prok. Aed. 2.4.8, 3.7.7, 4.5.6, 4.5.13, 6.5.4, 6.6.2.

²² Thuc. 3.68.3, 4.109.1, Plb. 4.64.10, 4.65.4, 5.9.3, 5.10.6.

²³ Cameron 1985: 40, cf. Kouroumali 2006: 78.

²⁴ Cameron 1985: 40-3.

²⁵ Bandy 1983: XXIV-XXVIII.

Euagrios and Theophylaktos—who used John as a primary text²⁶—added nothing new to John’s *History*. Thus these Greek-speaking authors could have possibly presented Roman civilians’ fates quite selectively at the expense of other aspects, and in many cases what they recorded, as Ryszard Kulesza rightly pointed out in his study on the deportation of the Greeks in classical antiquity, was merely ‘of a very general and simplified character’ as well.²⁷

What Prokopios and other Greek-speaking writers reported, nevertheless, can be checked by contemporary Syriac texts, such as the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua and John of Ephesos’ *Church History*. In fact, the massacre and deportation of the Romans and the destruction of the Empire’s cities would make up the common features of the Persian wars.²⁸ Given that the conduct of sieges had not dramatically changed since classical antiquity, it is not surprising to note such parallel traits in these texts. In addition, as the following chapters will show, these accounts might actually imply not only the classicising authors’ shared interests in recording the topics that deserved to be mentioned in a city’s fall and sack but also, more importantly, the Sasanids’ consistent and coherent strategies in treating the defeated Romans throughout the sixth century.²⁹

The nature of these Greek-speaking classicising historians’ texts, particularly the descriptions of a captured city, however, could create obstacles for modern readers and even cast a shadow on the credibility of these accounts. For example, in many cases, such as Kallinikos (542), Dara and Apamea (573), these Greek-speaking *literati* seem to have refrained from providing further details and have presented information rather selectively. Furthermore, Prokopios preferred using ‘to raze something to the ground’ (ἐς ἔδαφος καθαίρειω), a more vivid and dramatic term, in Κosrow I’s campaign during the 540s in Sura, Antioch, Beroea (540) and Kallinikos (542). In this case, the results of archaeological campaigns prove to be the basis of reference to assess Prokopios’ reliability. As my discussion of these data below will

²⁶ Whitby and Whitby 1986: XXI- XXII.

²⁷ Kulesza 1994: 231.

²⁸ See the discussion of chapters 3-5.

²⁹ See the discussion of chapter 6.

show,³⁰ whereas there are discernible traces of destruction in these cities, the Sasanids do not seem to have totally destroyed all of them in the sixth century. The mention of total urban destruction, therefore, could have been a rhetorical exaggeration through which the Romans' sufferings were emphasised.

Women, children and the *urbs capta*

Whereas all civilians must have been victims in wartime, depicting the suffering of women and children in the capture and sack of a city was sometimes a particularly effective literary device for engendering sympathy and compassion among an audience.³¹ In this part, I will first present what we can notice in contemporary works before moving on to examine possible literary motifs in the ensuing sections. Finally, I will discuss the significance of these narratives in the description of civilians' experiences.

In his *Wars*, Prokopios reported that in Sura, 'a comely woman and one not of lowly station' (γυναῖκα κοσμίαν τε καὶ οὐκ ἀφανῆ ἀλισκομένης τῆς πόλεως), while running, was dragged by the Persians by her left hand violently, and thus her weaned baby fell to the ground.³² The Great King, having noticed such a horrible scene, 'uttered a pretend groan...making it appear to all who were present...that he was all in tears...[He] prayed God to exact vengeance from the man who was guilty of the troubles which had come to pass'.³³ Whereas the reading of the preceding and following clauses suggests that Prokopios might have intended, on the one hand, to stigmatise Kōsrow I as 'a master at feigning piety in his countenance...absolving himself in words from the responsibility of the act',³⁴ Prokopios' account of this aristocratic woman and her child's fate, on the other hand, could actually have belonged to a larger literary tradition in classical antiquity.

³⁰ See, for example, below, pp. 128-38 for the discussion of Roman cities' destruction in the Persian wars.

³¹ Cf. Rossi 2004: 41.

³² Prok. Wars 2.9.9.

³³ Ibid., 2.9.10.

³⁴ Ibid., 2.9.8.

Before embarking on further discussions about relevant issues, a preliminary investigation on how a city's capture and fall, the *urbs capta*, was portrayed in classical literature should be conducted. Because a city's fall and its inhabitants' fates were important themes across different literary genres in classical antiquity, it is impossible to draw a conclusion by examining all of these accounts in my thesis. Instead, I will focus on certain bundles of texts to establish first which passages were considered to be important and second which motifs were essential in describing a city's capture in Greco-Roman literature.

As preliminary exercises for students of rhetoric, the importance of the cases introduced in the *Progymnasmata* in the study of rhetorical education has been highlighted in the previous chapter, where it was shown that some core texts were widely appropriated in classical education.³⁵ Below, I will collect and analyze the passages quoted or cited in these treatises. In *On the Method of Forceful Speaking* (Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος) of the Hermogenic corpus, the author stressed both the tragic style of Homer's description of a city's sack and Demosthenes' imitation of it.³⁶ In another treatise, *On Invention*, which might have been used by the students in both composing declamations and delivering public speeches,³⁷ the scenes depicting sacks of cities in Demosthenes' works were regarded as excellent examples of a 'highly-developed' narrative.³⁸ More evidence can be found in other rhetorical treatises. When Aelius Theon of Alexandria³⁹ introduced the technique of paraphrase in his *Progymnasmata*, he indicated that both Demosthenes and his contemporary Aeschines rephrased the words of Homer's *Iliad* and developed their own images about the capture of a city.⁴⁰

³⁵ See above, p. 50.

³⁶ Pseudo-Hermogenes *On the Method of Forceful Speaking* 33. On the dubious authorship of this treatise, see *OCD* s.v. Hermogenes (2).

³⁷ Kennedy 2005: XVI.

³⁸ Pseudo-Hermogenes *On Invention* 2.7.

³⁹ The information about this manual's date of composition and Aelius Theon's life is sparse; see Kennedy 2003: 1.

⁴⁰ Theon *Progymnasmata* 62-3, see also Webb 2009: 114-5.

In short, with regard to a city's sack, the descriptions by Homer, Demosthenes, and others seem to have become excellent examples in classical education. Hereafter, I will examine the passages cited or mentioned in these textbooks to establish how a city's sack was portrayed in these texts. The most well-known example comes from Homer's *Iliad*. On the side of the besieged, Phoenix said that Meleager's wife Kleopatra recounts the sufferings after the fall of city: 'the men are slain and the city is wasted by fire, and their children and low-belted women are led captive by strangers' (ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει, τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας).⁴¹ Apsines considered the misfortunes of the Phokians in Demosthenes' *On the False of Embassy* to be a stereotypical account when he addressed the issue of *pathos*, 'an evil happening to a city or some person beyond what is deserved'.⁴² What Demosthenes portrayed in this oration thus deserves to be quoted in length: 'cities stripped of their defensive walls, a countryside all emptied of its young men; only women, a few little children, and old men stricken with misery'.⁴³ In Aeschines' *Against Ctesiphon*, the scenes of a city's sack were portrayed in greater detail: '...the razing of their walls, the burning of their homes; their [i.e., the victims'] women and children led into captivity; their old men, their aged matrons, late in life learning to forget what freedom means; weeping, supplicating you'.⁴⁴

To sum up, certain scenes, including the destruction of buildings, the killing of male inhabitants, and acts of violence meted out to women and children,⁴⁵ seem to have been mentioned repetitively in these frequently cited passages. However, these

⁴¹ Hom. Il. 9.593-4. Similar images were preserved in the dialogue between Hector and Priam: if Troy was conquered, then the aged Priam would be tortured and 'my sons perishing and my daughters dragged off, and my treasure chambers laid waste, and little children hurled to the ground in the dread conflict, and my sons' wives dragged off beneath the deadly hands of the Achaeans', *ibid.*, 22.61.5. On the eve of Troy's conquest and sack, Agamemnon said that the Greeks would lead the Trojan women and children away, *ibid.*, 4.238-9.

⁴² Apsines *Art of Rhetoric* 10.48.

⁴³ Demo. 19.65.

⁴⁴ Aeschin. 3.157.

⁴⁵ See Rossi 2004: 24ff for an extensive discussion of these features.

authors clearly did not use exactly the same words or phrases to portray civilians' sufferings in their works, and the details varied. Therefore, instead of providing a sole, clear definition that includes every bit of detail regarding the *urbs capta*, a category in which several core motifs are included will be established. Whenever a classical writer portrayed a city's fall and conquest, certain aspects—such as destruction, women and children's capture/sufferings, and the massacre of the male population—would not only be highlighted but also be elaborated. For reasons of brevity, in subsequent discussions, I will use the term '*urbs capta* motif' to designate these abovementioned motifs through which the sacking of a city was presented.

Because these post-siege scenes were preserved in these handbooks of classical antiquity, teachers of later periods would have introduced them in rhetorical schools, and young pupils from the classical period onwards must thus have learnt and memorised these scenes and passages. The purpose of mentioning such scenes and details in their description of a city's capture was to evoke emotions in the audience. When Apsines, a sophist of the third-century Empire,⁴⁶ analyzed the issue of pity⁴⁷ extensively in his work *Art of Rhetoric*, what Phoenix told Agamemnon was regarded as a moderate example of portraying people's sufferings properly in a way that could arouse their pity.⁴⁸ In the part on *ekphrasis* (description) of Nikolaus' *Progymnasmata*, a sophist who taught rhetoric in Constantinople from the second half of the fifth century onwards,⁴⁹ Demosthenes' narratives were regarded as a good example 'to frighten or amplify feelings'.⁵⁰

The dissemination of the *urbs capta* motif can be noted across different genres. The experiences shared by women and children in Troy were preserved and further elaborated by the tragedians of the fifth century B.C.⁵¹ as well as in other literary

⁴⁶ Dilts and Kennedy 1997: XVI.

⁴⁷ Cf. Dilts and Kennedy 1997: 207n for more ancient texts on this topic.

⁴⁸ Apsines *Art of Rhetoric* 10.31.

⁴⁹ Kennedy 2003: 129.

⁵⁰ Nikolaus the sophist *Progymnasmata* 71.

⁵¹ Kern 1999: 154-62. See Anderson 1997: 105-76 for a study of these tragedians' works. See, for example, Eur. Andr. 9-11, Tro. 484-6, 1173-8, Aisch. Seven 321-68.

genres.⁵² In the Hellenistic period, the so-called tragic historians,⁵³ who usually depicted pathetic events dramatically,⁵⁴ introduced relevant themes. Phylarchos described events at Mantinea: ‘...the clinging women with their hair dishevelled and their breasts bare...crowds of both sexes together with their children and aged parents weeping and lamenting as they are led away [to] slavery’.⁵⁵ While admitting that these Mantineans deserved to be punished for their faithlessness,⁵⁶ Polybios thought that what Phylarchos employed here was ‘an ignoble and womanish strategy’ to ‘arouse the pity and attention of his readers’ by ‘depicting certain crude scenes vividly in order to bring horrors to his audience’.⁵⁷ Indeed, the fall of a city became ‘a theme common to tragedy and history’,⁵⁸ but clearly not every classical historian used this motif in his works. For example, whereas Thucydides, as D. Lateiner rightly observed, was a historian interested in both the calamities of people and their literary representation,⁵⁹ such pathetic and dramatic scenes were not used frequently in his descriptions of a city’s siege and sack;⁶⁰ and the fates of women and children, though often mentioned, were not presented in detail.⁶¹ More importantly, a recent investigation of rhetorical works, including the *Progymnasmata* and its use in composing declamations,⁶² demonstrates that not all parts of Thucydides were read in Late Antiquity, and in most cases only certain passages were introduced into the curricula of imperial teachers,⁶³ none of which consisted of postwar scenes in conquered cities or villages.

⁵² Paul 1982: 148ff. Rossi 2004: 20-4.

⁵³ Cf. Ullman 1942: 33-44.

⁵⁴ Lateiner 1977: 43, Momigliano 1978: 8.

⁵⁵ Plb. 2.56.7. Cf. Walbank 1957: 259-60, 1960: 216-7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.58.4-5, 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.56.7.

⁵⁸ Rutherford 2010: 510.

⁵⁹ Lateiner 1977: 51, cf. Thuc. 1.23.2-3.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Thuc. 7.29.4 for the atrocities in Boiotia.

⁶¹ On Thucydides’ descriptions of women, see Wiedemann 1983: 163-5.

⁶² Carlos Iglesias-Zoido 2012: 394-5.

⁶³ Carlos Iglesias-Zoido 2012: 417-8.

Apart from his accounts concerning the Sasanids' atrocities at Sura in 540, Prokopios provided another example, though not in a conquered city, when recounting the Vandals' defeat by Belisarios' forces. After Gelimer, the king of the Vandals, ran away, 'the men (of the Vandals) began to shout and the children cried out and the women wailed',⁶⁴ and the victorious Romans 'captured the camp, money and all...pursued the fugitives...killing all the men upon whom they happened, and making slaves of the women and children'.⁶⁵ The reading of classicising historians' texts, however, suggests that the use of the *urbs capta* motif almost disappeared in the sixth and seventh centuries, and neither Menander nor Theophylaktos ever used it when describing the enemies' seizure of Roman cities. In addition, although both Prokopios and Agathias occasionally elaborated on calamities that befell women and children in wartime, not every case can be seen as belonging to the *urbs capta* motif. In the second half of the sixth century, Agathias depicted gruesome scenes regarding the defeated Misimians, a people who lived in the Caucasus, stating that many women 'came streaming out of the houses crying and sobbing', and many children 'were seized sobbing and crying out for their mothers', and the victorious Romans 'hurled some of them down and mangled brutally against the rocks...tossed others in the air, as though they were playing some sort of game, and caught them on the points of their spears'.⁶⁶ While the first part of this account echoed the feebleness of women and children of the *urbs capta*, the later part diverted from this motif's ordinary features, and what Agathias intended to stress here would be the Roman soldiers' atrocities, possibly performed in retaliation for the killing of general Soterichos and their insolence towards the Empire's dignity: 'the inhuman wretches (i.e. the Misimians) despoiled the dead men, taking away...everything else that the place contained...appropriating the Emperor's money'.⁶⁷

We can now return to Prokopios' use or adaptation of this motif in the sack of Sura. Although he might have been inspired by the characters of the *urbs capta* motif, it should be noted that it was an aristocratic—rather than ordinary—woman who was

⁶⁴ Prok. Wars 4.3.23.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 4.3.24.

⁶⁶ Agath. 4.19.3-5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.16.9. Later on the Misimians supported the Persian cause, *ibid.*, 3.17.2.

the focus in his account.⁶⁸ Since the nobles were usually the ‘spotlights’ of ancient society, it is not surprising that their experiences would have been signalled in these texts more than those of others. As a historian who came from a high social class,⁶⁹ Prokopios would have been more inclined to depict the sufferings of his ‘peers’ than those of others. Moreover, he would have considered those who had similar social and intellectual backgrounds to be his potential readers and thus might have chosen topics or scenes that would have particularly resonated with them. Some who had personally experienced these events would surely ‘respond with enthusiasm’,⁷⁰ and his work was popular in the Empire.⁷¹ Both aristocratic and more humble women must have been violated by the Persians, but Prokopios may have decided to concentrate on the dreadful fate faced by these noble women to attract the attention of his readers and evoke more sympathy among them.

The traits of the *urbs capta* should now be placed in a broader context in order to deduce Prokopios’ intention of using this motif in the *Wars*. Unlike the succinct accounts of other conquered Roman cities including Amida and Kallinikos, civilians’ calamities in Sura, a tiny frontier city, were treated in much greater detail by Prokopios. In fact, this account was actually second in length only to that of Antioch.⁷² As the first important Roman citadel conquered by the Persians in 540, such atrocities could have been conducted on purpose in Sura, possibly to frighten the Romans living in other cities.⁷³ Considering the lack of knowledge regarding his primary sources, it is difficult to know whether Prokopios provided such a lengthy narrative on the sufferings of Sura’s inhabitants simply because he had access to more sources regarding this city. Nonetheless, the detailed accounts concerning the inhabitants in such a small city could have been Prokopios’ strategy to emphasise the cruelties of the Persian wars. This event was inserted abruptly in his narrative of

⁶⁸ See also Prok. Wars 2.8.35 for another example in which distinguished women’s calamities were illustrated.

⁶⁹ See above, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Kaldellis 2004: 1.

⁷¹ Prok. Wars 8.1.1.

⁷² Ibid., 2.8.34-5, 2.9.14-8.

⁷³ Cf. below, pp. 223-6 for the Sasanids’ possible intentions.

Antioch's sack, and the looming traces of the *urbs capta* could have been used by Prokopios to imply that much such atrocities against children and women could possibly have been committed by the victorious Sasanids in this metropolis. More importantly, because the Sasanids' invasions from 540 to 545 were the main concern of Book II, his detailed accounts about the calamities caused by K̅osrow I's forces in Sura—the first Roman city sacked by the Persians since 503—at the beginning of this book could have acted as a signpost to alert his readers to the Sasanids' policies in treating Roman civilians in the following chapters.

Motifs from Judeo-Christian Literature

Apart from the works of classicising historians, other contemporaries preserved details regarding Roman civilians' wartime experiences in their works as well. Further research will be conducted to examine whether, and, if possible, how these authors alluded to the texts of their predecessors or other literary traditions in order to awaken the shared memories of their addressees.

Being mostly clerics in the monasteries of northern Mesopotamia,⁷⁴ late antique and medieval Syriac-speaking writers would have been very familiar with the siege scenes in the Old Testament, for instance, the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the sixth century B.C.⁷⁵ While this motif was never used in the description of the calamities in the Empire's major cities such as Amida, Antioch, and Dara,⁷⁶ other biblical allusions, together with the texts of renowned Christian or Jewish writers such as Flavius Josephus and Eusebios of Caesarea, were important components in framing their narratives.

Many biblical passages were invoked simply to describe either the Sasanids' invasions or the conflicts between Rome and Persia. The term 'Assyrians', as God's

⁷⁴ See above, p. 51.

⁷⁵ The relevant passages in the Old Testament are particularly numerous, see for example, 2 Kings 25: 1-11, 2 Chronicles 36: 6-7, 18-9, Jeremiah 34: 1-3, 39: 1-9, 52: 4-11.

⁷⁶ It does not mean that this motif disappeared in Late Antiquity. Rather, in Eustratios' *Life of Eutychios*, the patriarch of Constantinople, K̅osrow I was portrayed as the new Nebuchadnezzar who led the godless Persians, Eustratios, *V. Eutychii*, 1720-1.

punishment, designated the Persians by many Greek- and Syriac-speaking church historians and hagiographers. At the very beginning of the sixth century, the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* stated that God 'struck us by means of "the Assyrian" designated "the rod of anger"'.⁷⁷ In the *Life* of Saint Simeon Stylites the Younger, in a divine vision God handed 'the senseless people'⁷⁸ to the 'Assyrians' in the sack of Antioch, that is, the Persians,⁷⁹ and John of Ephesos cast Kōsrow I's forces in 573 as the Assyrians as well.⁸⁰ In the middle ages, Michael the Syrian again reported that the invading Persians in the sixth century were the Assyrians, 'the rod of God's anger',⁸¹ who were sent by God to punish the ungodly people.⁸² While John of Ephesos' *Church History* was used by many medieval Syriac authors, nothing similar can be observed in other works such as the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysios or the *Chronicle of 1234*. Therefore, such details could have been added by Michael the Syrian rather than John's original accounts. As one of the most furious enemies of Israel, the Assyrians were of course presented in numerous negative ways in the Bible. In the Old Testament, they were usually identified with the misfortunes resulting from war and invasion, including plundering/extortion,⁸³ deportation,⁸⁴ and other types of disasters and misfortunes.⁸⁵ For example, in the book of Isaiah, the Israelites' enemy was 'the rod of mine [i.e., God's] anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation' and 'I will send him...against the people of my wrath will I give him a

⁷⁷ Josh. Styl. 5. Cf. Harrak 2005: 6, Debié 2009b: 106.

⁷⁸ Deute. 32.21.

⁷⁹ V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 57.

⁸⁰ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5. See Harrak 2005: 45-65 for more examples in the following centuries. For its use in the process of the ethnicisation of the Syriac Orthodox Church and the formation of their new identities, see Becker 2008: 398-9.

⁸¹ Cf. Isaiah 10:5-6.

⁸² Mich. Syr. 9.24.

⁸³ 2 Kings 15:19-20, 16:8.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15:29, 16:9, 17:6, 17:23-4, 18:11, Isaiah 36:1.

⁸⁵ 2 Kings 16:18, 17:26, 18:16, 19:11, 19:17, Isaiah 20:6, 37:11, 37:18, Jeremiah 50.17.

charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets'.⁸⁶

Other biblical allusions were used mainly to describe the military operations of both Rome and Persia. When Edessa was besieged by Kawād's soldiers in 503, the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* reported that the Persians' attacks were in vain, using a story in the book of Judges: 'like the Philistine who went up against Samson and who although numerous and armed could not kill him, while he, unarmed as he was, killed a thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass'.⁸⁷ In the reign of Tiberios II, John of Ephesos described Curs, the Roman general, launching a sudden attack against the Persians 'like fire that is left in the wood, and as the flame which burned the mountains'.⁸⁸ The passages from the Psalms in which aid from God in crushing Israel's enemies was requested were here quoted to describe the Persians' defeat.⁸⁹

Therefore, some church historians or chroniclers might have viewed the Romano-Persian wars as the conflicts between the Israelites, the chosen people, and their enemies/conquerors. The clearest example regarding the use of the Judeo-Christian literary allusions in portraying civilians' fates, however, comes from Pseudo-Zachariah in the middle of the sixth century. He stated that the scale of Amida's famine surpassed those which occurred during the siege of Samaria and the sack of Jerusalem in the first century.⁹⁰ What he was alluding to here belonged to two different traditions. First, there is the infamous case of a mother in famine-stricken Samaria as preserved in the Old Testament who approached the king of Israel and said, 'Give thy son, (so) that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow...we boiled my son, and did eat him'.⁹¹ In Josephus' account, a horrible scene was described: 'Among the residents of the region beyond Jordan was a woman called Mary...she proceeded to an act of outrage upon nature...Seizing her child, an

⁸⁶ Isaiah 10:5-6.

⁸⁷ Josh. Styl. 62. Trombley and Watt 2000: 81. For the parallel passages in the Bible, see Judges 15: 9-15.

⁸⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.28.

⁸⁹ Psalms 83.14.

⁹⁰ Zach. HE 7.5.

⁹¹ 2 Kings 6: 28-9.

infant at the breast...she killed her son, roasted the body, swallowed half of it, and covered up and stored the remainder'.⁹² Although nothing like the aforementioned 'mother-child cannibalism' can be found in other contemporary texts such as the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua and the *Wars* of Prokopios, such well-known and dramatic scenes might have served as a literary trope through which the readers would be reminded of the possible but hidden sufferings in times of dire famine.⁹³ Also, because Pseudo-Zachariah already mentioned the cannibalism committed by women in the same chapter,⁹⁴ the allusion to Josephus could thus have been used to stress the connection between women and predators inside Amida.⁹⁵

In John of Ephesos' lengthy narrative about the 2,000 Roman virgins' suicide,⁹⁶ various motifs taken from biblical and martyrological texts can be noted. In 573, the Great King's force led by Adarmahan took numerous prisoners of war back to Persia. Kosrow I then selected a number of girls in puberty from these captives, and sent them to the Turks as gifts. While apart from Apamea, nothing pertaining to sieges of the Empire's eastern cities at the time has been preserved, certain places were taken by force by the Sasanids.⁹⁷ Therefore some of these deportees must have been captured from these places, and the suicide of the 2,000 virgins should be discussed in the context of the Romano-Persian wars. A brief outline of this event's important features should be provided before further discussion. Various types of calamities were then mentioned—for example, the pollution resulting from the consumption of 'impure meats...horseflesh, and things that have died or been strangled'.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the antagonism against the pagan Persians and Turks was stressed not only by John of Ephesos but also by other Syriac historians in the middle ages. John stated that these virgins 'were to be delivered into the savage hands of barbarians and enemies', and clearly they understood that they would eventually be 'defiled and

⁹² Joseph. BJ 6.201-9.

⁹³ Cf. Stathakopoulos 2011: 45.

⁹⁴ Zach. HE 7.5.

⁹⁵ See below, p. 109.

⁹⁶ See below, pp. 120-3 for further discussion.

⁹⁷ See above, pp. 45-6.

⁹⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.7.

polluted by the barbarians and heathenism'.⁹⁹ In Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle*, these Roman virgins did not want to lose 'both the faith of their souls and the purity of their bodies by mixing with godless people',¹⁰⁰ and their torments mainly came from the loss of Christianity and the impurity of the barbarians—i.e., the Turks¹⁰¹—and it was their Christian belief that at the end strengthened their soul and body.¹⁰² In the end, these maidens decided to commit suicide. In John of Ephesos' earliest version, a rather long, enthusiastic and zealous 'speech' was preserved;¹⁰³ however, the language used in the Armenian version of Michael's *Chronicle* was even more dramatic: because these girls 'would become prey to the ferocious beasts',¹⁰⁴ they eventually chose to commit suicide, and regarded it as martyrdom, exclaiming that 'Christ...Thou art the crown and the salvation of Christians, the husband of celestial pure virgins, come to us, contemplating our martyrdom, receive us in your womb'.¹⁰⁵

John of Ephesos and other medieval chroniclers seem to have intertwined various strands of literary motifs in the suicide of the 2,000 Roman virgins. Regarding this episode's layout and subject, he seems to have been inspired by Eusebian accounts of the martyrs in the Great Persecution. The comparison of this event with Eusebios' *Church History* suggests some striking parallels with almost the same descriptions: two virgin sisters from Antioch, according to Eusebios, '...illustrious in family and distinguished in life, young and blooming, serious in mind, pious in deportment, and admirable for zeal....the worshippers of demons commanded to cast them into the sea' (ἐπιδόξων μὲν ὁ γένος, λαμπρῶν δὲ τὸν βίον, νέων τοὺς χρόνους,

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Mich. Syr. 10.10.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Joh. Eph. HE 6.7, see Mich. Syr. 10.10, in which these virgins exclaimed the name of God before jumping into the currents.

¹⁰³ Ibid. Medieval Syriac historians tended to omit it; see Mich. Syr. 10.10, Chr. 1234 69.

¹⁰⁴ Langlois 1868: 207.

¹⁰⁵ Langlois 1868: 207.

ὠραίων τὸ σῶμα, σεμνῶν τὴν ψυχὴν, εὐσεβῶν τὸν τρόπον, θαυμαστῶν τὴν σπουδὴν...θαλάττη ρίπτειν ἐκέλευον οἱ τῶν δαιμόνων θεραπευταί).¹⁰⁶

Similar episodes can be found—with some variation—in the works of late antique Christian hagiography and historiography¹⁰⁷ and became an important literary *topos*. In the martyrdom of Pelagia, an Antiochene virgin possibly in the reign of Diocletian,¹⁰⁸ her female relatives committed suicide by drowning themselves in water.¹⁰⁹ In the fourth century, a mother (Domnina) and her daughters (Bernike and Prosdoke) were martyred in the Great Persecution by drowning near Hierapolis (Map 1, zone C3) in order to escape being ravished by the Roman soldiers.¹¹⁰ As suggested by John Chrysostom, the river ‘became everything—both altar and wood and knife and fire and offering and baptism, a baptism far clearer than this baptism’.¹¹¹ The suicide, therefore, can be understood as these virgins’ second and final baptism. Therefore, these virgins’ suicide through drowning in water, as a ‘highly public and spectacular method’,¹¹² could have reminded these texts’ audience of similar scenarios from other works they had read or heard.

The accounts about what these virgins suffered or would suffer at the hands of the Sasanids and the Turks were clothed by certain literary allusions and *topoi*. Their complaint about consuming impure foods, though at first glance seeming to have resulted from the changing dietary habits and customs, is a good example. In fact,

¹⁰⁶ Eus. HE 8.12.5, see Clark 1992: 256-60 for the synthesis of Eusebios’ accounts.

¹⁰⁷ Ambrose *On Virgins* 3.7.33-7, Joh. Chrys. *On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina* 19-21.

¹⁰⁸ Leemans et al. 2003: 149.

¹⁰⁹ Ambrose *On Virgins* 3.7.33-7. The identity of Pelagia in the homily of John Chrysostom was different from Ambrose’s *On Virgins*; cf. Hunter 2000: 281-303. See also Joh. Chrys. *A Homily on Pelagia, Virgin and Martyr* 2.

¹¹⁰ Joh. Chrys. *On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina* 19-21, trans. by Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil 2006: 171-4. Regarding the possible connections between these two acts, see Mayer and Neil 2006: 156.

¹¹¹ Joh. Chrys. *On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina* 20.

¹¹² Gaddis 2005: 113, see Castelli 1994: 1-20 for the study of the interrelationship between ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’ in early Christianity.

those who were familiar with the Bible might have understood the allusions to *Acts* in which Christians were commanded to ‘abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood’.¹¹³

The image of the virgin martyrs in late antique hagiographical tradition should be analyzed before embarking on the analysis of John and other authors’ texts. The purpose of hagiography was to exhort Christians to imitate the deeds of Christ, and its subjects were thus presented as a model or an example of virtues which deserved to be imitated by fellow Christians.¹¹⁴ From the fourth century onwards, certain new types of heroes, including virgins, monks and bishops were introduced and formed another important branch of hagiographical literature; in most cases, a virgin was a young, pretty girl.¹¹⁵ John of Ephesos’ lengthy account makes it possible to examine his use of such motifs in this episode, and the virgins’ appearance was recounted in detail. Having selected 2,000 Roman virgins from his captives, the shah commanded that these selected women, ‘full-grown, and of perfect beauty’, should be ‘adorned in everything like brides, in splendid and costly garments, and gold and silver, and jewels and pearls’.¹¹⁶ Several further martyrological *topoi* can be noted. John stressed these virgins’ fear of being violated by the heathen Turks. As Elizabeth Castelli has written, what the audience expected from the martyrological texts were ‘the triumph of virginal virtue over scurrilous and scandalous male desire’.¹¹⁷ Finally, a lengthy speech was delivered by these virgins before their suicide. As Claudia Rapp has rightly observed, the martyrs ‘displayed great boldness of speech in their loud and fearless confession of faith...during their execution’.¹¹⁸ Daniel Boyarin has further

¹¹³ Acts 15: 20, 29.

¹¹⁴ Harvey 1990: 37-8, Leemans et al. 2003: 23.

¹¹⁵ Winstead 1997: 8-9, Leemans et al. 2003: 24, cf. van Henten 1995: 305-6 for a discussion of the literary motifs in Judeo-Christian tradition. For the image of virginity in the discourse of late antique Christianity, see Cameron 1991: 71-3, 171-82. Also, see Murray 1975: 131-42, Brock and Harvey 1998: 8, Harvey 2003: 44-5 for its role in Syriac Christianity.

¹¹⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.7.

¹¹⁷ Castelli 1994: 10.

¹¹⁸ Rapp 2005: 268.

suggested that ‘a ritualised and performative speech act associated with a statement of pure essence’ was a focal part of martyrology.¹¹⁹

In short, John of Ephesos and other Syriac authors’ narratives of these virgins in the Persian wars were clothed with different literary allusions. As monks and bishops in late antique Mesopotamia, the study of the Bible was an indispensable part of these authors’ education. Their knowledge of biblical passages in their texts must thus have come from what they had learnt in schools or monasteries. The images of famine mentioned in Flavius Josephus’ *Jewish War* by Pseudo-Zachariah here deserves further study. The *Jewish War* was used in Eusebios’ *Church History*,¹²⁰ and this work had been translated into Syriac in the fifth century.¹²¹ The Syriac-speaking writers could therefore have obtained this knowledge of the sack of Jerusalem in the first century, and John of Ephesos could have consulted this work and adapted its narratives as well. The second possibility is that the translation of Josephus’ works themselves would have made it possible for them to read these narratives first-hand. The *Jewish War* was probably translated into Syriac before the middle of the fifth century and was even included in the Syriac Vulgate.¹²² Hence, our author might have

¹¹⁹ Boyarin 1999: 95.

¹²⁰ See Schreckenberg 1972 for the use of Josephus’ text by late antique writers, cf. Allen 1988: 1-11.

¹²¹ The earliest extant Syriac manuscript of Eusebios’ *Church History* was dated to the fifth century; see Wright 2001: 61, van Rompay 1994: 73-4. See Brock 2006: 21-4, Debié 2009a: 24-9 for a broader context of Greek and Syriac historiography in Late Antiquity.

¹²² Schreckenberg and Schubert 1991: 74-5. The reception of Josephus’ works in Syriac Christianity has not received much attention. David Taylor has presented his paper *The reception of Josephus in Syriac Christianity* in the workshop on the Reception of Josephus by Jews and Christians from Late Antiquity to c. 1750 at Oxford (January 7-8, 2012)

(<http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/research/josephus/workshops/1>) (accessed October 10, 2015), but I was not able to consult this work at this moment.

had a chance to consult the manuscript deposited in the library of Amida,¹²³ but no firm conclusion can be reached owing to the lack of further information.¹²⁴

These stories, as Susan Ashbrook Harvey has suggested, ‘had to be true to the thought world of their time’;¹²⁵ for what these writers, though not necessarily hagiographers, were really concerned about was spiritual rather than literal or historical truth to ‘celebrate the patterns of holiness that gave shape to history’.¹²⁶ The possible sufferings of these virgins were preserved and then transformed into shared memories among the Syriac Christian (literate) communities, both the Miaphysites and the Dyophysites, through the use, revision, and adaptation of his work.¹²⁷ For both the writers and their audiences, what they could learn from the experience of these 2,000 Roman virgins was its moral lesson rather than its sober historical record.

The above study shows that many late antique and medieval Greek and Syriac writers resorted to existing literary motifs, phrases, or passages in portraying the Romans’ wartime experiences in the Persian wars; however, certain differences can still be noted. First, their accounts were clearly derived from different literary traditions: whereas the classicising historians inherited words or *topoi* from their classical predecessors, the scenes or motifs from the Bible and other Judeo-Christian literary works played important roles occasionally in the texts of Greek and Syriac hagiographers, monks, and church historians. In addition, whereas the classicising writers used the phrases from their predecessors to portray civilians’ fates, the majority of the late antique and medieval church historians and hagiographers used biblical passages merely to embed their description of the conflicts between Rome and Persia; but with the exception of Pseudo-Zachariah’s accounts of famine in

¹²³ On the collection of books and manuscripts in Miaphysite community, see Menze 2008: 137-40, cf. Debié 2000: 409-12 for the record keeping in Edessa. For the case of Pseudo-Zachariah, see Greatrex 2006b: 41-2, Greatrex et al. 2011: 32, 38.

¹²⁴ See J. BJ 6.193-213 for Josephus’ accounts and Schreckenberg 1972: 189-90 for their transmission.

¹²⁵ Brock and Harvey 1998: 3.

¹²⁶ Winstead 2000: 2.

¹²⁷ Cf. Castelli 2004: 11-2, Saint-Laurent 2009: 174-8.

Amida, none of these references was explicitly connected to their portraits of civilians' calamities.¹²⁸

The Great King's kindness presented in literary sources and the *Khwadaynamag* tradition

So far, we have seen that Greek- and Syriac-speaking authors would have either alluded to normative passages or been inspired by the motifs from various literary traditions to construct their narratives in which the Romans' calamities were stressed. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Sasanids were always portrayed in a negative light in our literary sources; sometimes, the Great King's generosity and kindness were stressed by two groups of authors, first, some late antique and medieval Christian writers, including Prokopios, Pseudo-Zachariah, and the compiler of the *Chronicle of Seert*; second, the medieval Islamic authors from the ninth century onwards. I will offer further analysis in order to examine which of, how, and why these images were presented in our literary texts. I will divide the following discussion into several parts. First, I will present information extracted from both groups of texts and analyze these accounts' similarities and differences. The results will pave the way for further analysis in the subsequent part. I will investigate the literary contexts of these works, and which primary sources these Christian writers might possibly have used and whether medieval Islamic authors used the *Khwadaynamag*, a lost volume of Persian royal annals, in their works will be discussed. In the end, I will assess the significance of the Great King's positive images in these Christian and Islamic sources by examining whether, what, and how similar information was possibly preserved and transmitted across different linguistic traditions from Late Antiquity to the middle ages.

As one of the most important texts we have regarding the Romano-Persian wars in the sixth century, Prokopios' record deserves to be examined first. Whereas Prokopios wrote that Kawād treated the deportees from Amida 'with a generosity

¹²⁸ See van den Ven 1970: 315-21 for the list of biblical passages in the *Life* of Saint Simeon Stylites the Younger, Trombley and Watt 2000: 143-4 for the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua, and Greatrex et al. 2011: 524-8 for Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*.

befitting a king' and released all of them later,¹²⁹ such an account is contradicted by contemporary Syriac texts, in which details about deportation, including the destination of these Amidenes, were provided. In the case of Antioch, the generosity of the Iranian king was stressed again.¹³⁰ If we take all of these accounts at face value, the Persian king K̄osrow I emerges as one who treated his Roman captives rather kindly or, at least, not cruelly.¹³¹ More information can be found from other sources. In the second half of the sixth century, the shah's compassion for the captured Romans—, including the building of a hospital, —was mentioned at the very end of Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*.¹³² Finally, in the *Chronicle of Seert*, the inhabitants of the Better Antioch even paid homage to K̄osrow I after his death.¹³³

While the shah's benevolent treatment was highlighted by these three Christian writers, the results of recent studies suggest that they seem to have obtained such information from different primary sources. Philip Wood demonstrated elsewhere that the author of the *Chronicle of Seert* sometimes used material from official Sasanian historiography as his source,¹³⁴ and such a fascinating story could have come from the propaganda of the Sasanids. Sometimes, we can glimpse the primary texts used by Prokopios in his *Wars*. For example, he obtained the knowledge pertaining to the castle of Oblivion from a certain 'History of the Armenians' (ἡ τῶν Ἀρμενίων ἱστορία);¹³⁵ but in other cases, Prokopios seldom mentioned the sources he used in writing his work.¹³⁶ After the analysis of his reports on civilians' deportation in the

¹²⁹ Prok. Wars 1.7.34.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 2.14.1-3. Some scholars are sceptical about Prokopios' accounts; see Flusin 1992.2: 346.

¹³¹ Fiey 1967b: 415.

¹³² Zach. HE 12.7.

¹³³ Chr. Seert. 2.38.

¹³⁴ Wood 2013a: 171-4.

¹³⁵ Prok. Wars 1.5.9, 40, Prok, Aed. 3.1.6. For the discussion of this text, see Garsoïan 1989: 6-16, Traina 2001: 405-13.

¹³⁶ Börm 2007: 53-7 for a discussion of Prokopios' possible accesses to both oral and written sources.

sixth century, particularly the mild policies adopted by the Sasanids, Erich Kettenhofen stressed Prokopios' use of pro-Sasanian or Sasanian-friendly sources.¹³⁷

As a military officer who accompanied Belisarios in Dara, Prokopios possibly had access to first-hand reports from the Sasanids. Berthold Rubin pointed out that he could have had some knowledge of middle Persian,¹³⁸ but Prokopios never implied the use of Persian sources in his works. In any case, judging from the detailed narrative regarding the city Better Antioch of Kosrow ,¹³⁹ it may be safe to say that he had access to such information from the Sasanids, from someone who developed familiarity with Persian affairs or even from the returned captives themselves.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, while Prokopios described Kosrow I's policies in treating the captured Antiochenes in a positive light, it remains an open question whether he ever had a chance to read the official history of the Sasanids.

As Averil Cameron has previously argued, in the middle of the sixth century, Agathias, through an intermediate translation, could have had access to the material of the *Khwadaynamag* text or the text itself.¹⁴¹ The Sasanids agreed to give Sergios the interpreter the records of the Persian Royal Annals, and Sergios 'took the names and dates and principal events' and translated them into Greek.¹⁴² The accounts available to him clearly ended with the reign of Kawād. It is possible, therefore, that the parts depicting Kosrow I's reign had not been finished at that time. Second, while Kosrow I's deeds and reign were also described by Agathias in great detail, nothing pertaining to the Great King's military campaign in 540 and the construction of a Persian Antioch was mentioned by him.

Agathias' account, however, may raise more questions than it can answer. We do not know the exact text that was consulted by Sergios, Agathias' intermediate, in the

¹³⁷ Kettenhofen 1996: 301. See also Rubin 1956: 363 for Prokopios' use of pro-Sasanian source.

¹³⁸ Rubin 1956: 52.

¹³⁹ See below, chapters 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ Börm 2007: 175. Whether it was based on oral or written sources is not possible to ascertain, see Cameron 1985: 153 for further discussion.

¹⁴¹ Cameron 1969-70: 162.

¹⁴² Agath. 4.30.4.

sixth century, nor can we ascertain whether what he had read was the full text of the Sasanids' official history. However, if Agathias, who finished his work later than Prokopios, was able to consult the Royal Annals covering the rule of Kawād, then it is difficult to imagine that Prokopios would have had access to the Sasanids' official accounts of the Great King's construction of the Persian Antioch, an event which would have happened and was expectedly recorded much later.

The editors of Pseudo-Zachariah's work suggested that he based his account on oral reports from the part dealing with the conversion of those living in the Caucasus onwards.¹⁴³ Such information, however, probably did not come from the escaped Amidenes, who would have passed through the Persian Empire in at least two periods: first, in the beginning of the sixth century when they were sold to the Sabir Huns, and second, in the middle of the sixth century. The Christianisation of the Northern Caucasus and the activities of the missionaries from neighbouring countries might have been remembered by these Amidenes, but it would have been difficult for these captives who lived outside the Persian Empire for more than 50 years to know the situation of the Sasanids' capital in southern Mesopotamia, not to mention the shah's treatment of other captives in his realm. Instead, this author might have either used pro-Sasanian sources or adopted the oral reports of someone who was either influenced by Sasanian propaganda or was familiar with Kōsrow I's court. We have no information regarding this informant's identity, but he could possibly have been a Persian or a Roman who came from the political nucleus of the Sasanids, and most possibly a Christian, because the last parts included not only an allusion to the apocalypse but also Kōsrow I's conversion. He could possibly have been a diplomat, or at least someone who was a member of the Roman diplomats' retinue. According to Pseudo-Zachariah, Peter the Patrician visited Amida in 553/4 and 'restrained the *dux* from again expelling the monks' after learning the reports from the monks.¹⁴⁴ Peter was sent by Justinian to negotiate with the Sasanids, and the settlement was confirmed in 551.¹⁴⁵ These Roman diplomats would thus have been familiar with the situation of the Sasanid Empire. As a local monk, Pseudo-Zachariah could possibly

¹⁴³ Greatrex et al. 2011: 50.

¹⁴⁴ Zach. HE 12.6.

¹⁴⁵ Prok. Wars 8.15.2-6.

have had the chance to talk with Peter's retinue at Amida and to obtain knowledge about the Persian court and the Great King.

The intertextual relationships between these three Christian sources should be examined as well. As noted above, information in Prokopios and the *Chronicle of Seert* seem to stem from accounts about the Great King's treatment of the Antiochenes, and these accounts would have come from different literary traditions. Below I will further argue that the relationship between these two texts proves to be weak. Whereas both of them called the city where the captured Antiochenes were resettled 'the Antioch of K̄osrow', in the *Chronicle of Seert* this city was also known as 'al-Rumiya', the city of the Romans, a piece of information Prokopios never mentioned. This city, according to Prokopios, was established near Ctesiphon, but the author of the *Chronicle of Seert* merely suggested that it was founded in Seleukia. In the *Chronicle of Seert* nothing pertaining to this city's planning was mentioned, whereas Prokopios described the shah's building schemes in detail. The most striking difference, however, lies in the last part of the *Chronicle of Seert's* accounts of the sack of Antioch, in which the author concluded that the enslavement of the Antiochenes was a terrible punishment for Justinian.¹⁴⁶ Hence clearly the whole passage must have come from the community of non-Chalcedonian Christians. The accounts from Prokopios and the *Chronicle of Seert* thus differ in terms of details and focus.

Although the details pertaining to the benevolent relations between the Great King and the captured Romans/Antiochenes differ in Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History* and the *Chronicle of Seert*, both texts highlighted the Christian beliefs of these Roman captives: the Great King built a hospital for the Christian captives in his realm, while the captured Antiochenes paid homage to the Great King according to Christian customs.¹⁴⁷ More stories with similar themes can be noted in other sixth-century texts. For example, in John of Ephesos' *Church History*, the Christians of the Persian Empire worshipped and prayed for the Great King after K̄osrow I promised

¹⁴⁶ Chr. Seert 2.32. Cf. Mich. Syr. 9.24, in which Justinian wept greatly over (the calamities of those living in) Antioch.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.38.

that they would never be persecuted again.¹⁴⁸ Therefore the accounts from both Pseudo-Zachariah and the *Chronicle of Seert* could have belonged to a larger literary tradition in which the survival and even expansion of Christianity within Persia was stressed.¹⁴⁹

In the next subsection, I will discuss the well-known *Khwadaynamag* argument through a close reading and analysis of some medieval Islamic texts. In his groundbreaking work *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Theodor Nöldeke argued that many Islamic and Persian historians relied on a single, lost volume of Persian royal annals as a common source when they wrote the history of pre-Islamic Iran. This work, which was centred on the Great King's deeds, was possibly composed under the patronage of Kōsrow I or Yazdegerd III (r. 633-51),¹⁵⁰ the last monarch of the Sasanian Empire. The original text was reported to be translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa', an eighth-century Persian thinker who had access to Sasanian archives. Recently, however, this argument was challenged by Michael Bonner, who suggested that instead of a single, lost Persian official history, what these medieval Arab and Persian writers used might have been a *Khwadaynamag* tradition in which pro-Sasanian perspectives were embodied.¹⁵¹

The details regarding the Great King's treatment of the defeated Romans in medieval Islamic texts and Eutychios' *Annals*, as one of the core parts of these writers' narratives of the Romano-Persian wars, should be presented first to assess the possible affinities between these texts. Both Dīnavarī and al-Thālibī reported that the Romans were captured in Amida and Martyropolis during the reign of Kawād.¹⁵² Later, they, together with al-Ṭabari, enumerated almost exactly the cities conquered by the Persians in Kōsrow I's campaign.¹⁵³ Also, both al-Thālibī and Eutychios reported that the Great King asked his prefect to build a Persian Antioch according to

¹⁴⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.20, see also Euagr. HE 4.28, Joh, Nik. 95.23-5.

¹⁴⁹ Greatrex et al. 2011: 454. Recently Alexander Schilling has studied the story of Kōsrow I's conversion to Christianity, Schilling 2008: 37-41.

¹⁵⁰ Nöldeke 1879a: XV-XVI.

¹⁵¹ See the discussion in Bonner 2014: 82-4, 293, 295.

¹⁵² Dīnavarī 68, al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 594-5.

¹⁵³ Dīnavarī 70, al-Ṭabari 1.959. al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612-3.

the plan of Roman Antioch, and the presence of a Christian prefect of this newly built city was mentioned by Dīnavarī and al-Ṭabari.¹⁵⁴ Finally, these medieval authors all emphasised the similarities between the original Antioch and that built by the Sasanids.¹⁵⁵

In addition, Kōsrow I's expeditions against the Romans in the 540s became unanimously the spotlight of these medieval writers' narratives, and his greatness and military successes were emphasised at the expense of other sixth-century Persian rulers. All of these medieval authors treated Kawād's campaign rather succinctly and kept silent about the Sasanids' successful counteroffensive in 573—an event that received much attention in Greek and Syriac texts—let alone the fiasco¹⁵⁶ in the campaign of Melitene three years later. The reign of Hormozd IV was generally presented negatively, because he returned the cities conquered by his father, including Amida, Martyropolis and Dara.¹⁵⁷

Two more features of these medieval texts' descriptions of Kōsrow I's military activities can be noted. Compared to what we can observe from Prokopios¹⁵⁸—by far the most detailed account of the Romano-Persian wars in the first half of the sixth century—it is indicated that 'it did not matter to the Persians which cities were involved, so long as their forced submission was emphasised'.¹⁵⁹ Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, a Persian epic poem, is an excellent example. He not only stressed the Romans' aggressiveness and subsequent defeat,¹⁶⁰ possibly as a way to aggrandise the shah's military prowess, but also articulated the brutal treatment of the defeated Romans. For example, after the end of the Romans' massacre at Shurab (Sura?), 'the stronghold

¹⁵⁴ Dīnavarī 71, al-Ṭabari 1.959-60.

¹⁵⁵ Dīnavarī 70, al-Ṭabari 1.898, 959, al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612-3, Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.259-60, Eutychios 92.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Bonner 2014: 281.

¹⁵⁷ Dīnavarī 81.

¹⁵⁸ Prok. Wars 2.5-14.

¹⁵⁹ Bonner 2011: 52, see, for example, al-Ṭabari 1.959.

¹⁶⁰ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.255-8. Whether this general can be equated with Germanos, Justinian's nephew who was sent to Antioch in 540, cannot be confirmed.

was all trunkless heads and feet, elsewhere were headless trunks'.¹⁶¹ Later, another Roman city, Arayish-i-Rum (Hierapolis), became 'a sea of blood'¹⁶² and 'unnumbered Romans perished beneath the arrows'. The veracity of these descriptions, however, should be questioned on the grounds that nothing similar was mentioned in other contemporary Greek and Syriac accounts. What we can note from it, however, was Ferdowsī's (or the authors' of his primary sources) efforts to emphasise the Romans' defeat.

Meanwhile, the 'fundamental principles of government' of Sasanian Persia,¹⁶³ particularly K̄osrow I's generosity and kindness, were illustrated. In the city Better Antioch of K̄osrow, the Great King had the workers plant more green trees for a Roman captive after hearing this man's complaint.¹⁶⁴ Ferdowsī uses hyperbole to demonstrate the similarities between the original Antioch and the Persian Antioch; it is difficult to believe that a newly captured Roman would have dared to make complaints about such a trivial matter.

Despite of such similar features and descriptions, certain differences among these texts' accounts are discernible. Many of them mentioned the deportation of the Amidenes, but only al-Ṭabari related that it was women and children who became the prisoners of war.¹⁶⁵ In al-Thālibī', both the seizure of these two cities and the Romans' deportation were recorded, but nothing pertaining to the construction of a new city in which these captives were resettled,¹⁶⁶ which was reported by Dīnavarī,¹⁶⁷ was mentioned. In Eutychios of Alexandria's *Annals*, the fierce battle between Rome and Persia at Alexandria, an event that cannot be found in Dīnavarī, al-Ṭabari, and

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 7.254. Whether it implied the mutilation of corpses, however, remains unclear because nothing similar was preserved in other texts.

¹⁶² Ibid., 8.47.

¹⁶³ Howard-Johnston 1995: 171, 2010a: 350.

¹⁶⁴ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.260, cf. al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 613.

¹⁶⁵ al-Ṭabari 1.887.

¹⁶⁶ al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 594-5.

¹⁶⁷ Dīnavarī 68.

Ferdowsī, was inserted abruptly after Amida's destruction.¹⁶⁸ The difference between these texts regarding Ƙosrow I's first invasion in 540 is clear: both Dīnavarī and al-Ṭabari stated that the Sasanids conquered many Roman cities, whereas Ferdowsī merely mentioned the sack of Sura, Kallinikos, and Antioch; in Eutychios' *Annals*, only Antioch was seized.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, neither the toponym of the Persian Antioch nor the name of this city's prefect in other texts can be identified with Dīnavarī's reports.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, these medieval authors focused particularly on both Ƙosrow I's military prowess and the construction of the Persian Antioch, and a comparison of their texts demonstrates striking affinities; however, in many cases, the details gleaned from them varied. Michael Bonner's argument—in which the *Khwadaynamag* should be regarded as a literary tradition with various versions rather than a single lost historical text¹⁷¹—can thus be accepted.

The results of a close study of these Christian and Islamic texts—especially the positive image of the Great King in the Persian wars—can be compared. Whereas the resettlement of the captured Antiochenes received particular attention in these Islamic texts, and the Great King's endeavours to build a replica of the original Antioch and his generosity in treating these Romans were stressed as well,¹⁷² none of them mentioned the events preserved in Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History* and the *Chronicle of Seert*, nor do they emphasise Ƙosrow I's Christian-friendly policies in treating the captives inside his realm. On the other hand, whereas late antique and medieval Christian writers portrayed Ƙosrow I in a positive light, what they presented sometimes concerned the Great King's friendliness towards the Christians, and such details received much less attention in medieval Islamic texts. The difference between the *Khwadaynamag* tradition-based texts and the Christian sources in which the Great King's kindness towards the captives was recorded is thus clear.

¹⁶⁸ Eutychios 82, see also al-Ṭabari 1.898. The Sasanids never fought against the Romans at Alexandria in the sixth century.

¹⁶⁹ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.254-9, Eutychios 92.

¹⁷⁰ Dīnavarī 70.

¹⁷¹ Bonner 2014: 82-3, 293.

¹⁷² al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612-3.

The above investigation suggests that it is difficult to employ the dichotomy of Christian/non-Christian or Greek/oriental texts to explain the different images of the Sasanids provided in these narratives. Rather, what we see in these texts is a multifaceted picture: Pseudo-Zachariah and Prokopios depicted the Sasanids' atrocities in Amida and Antioch, respectively, but both of them also preserved the positive image of Kōsrow I in their works. More significantly, such details were written in Greek, Arabic (Christian), and Perso-Arabic (Islamic) works. Therefore the differences between these religious and literary traditions were blurred.

The contrast between the information provided by these texts and those by John of Ephesos, in which the sufferings of those in the city Better Antioch of Kōsrow were stressed, is clear. John's accounts may reflect the viewpoints of the Romans,¹⁷³ or, at least, could be based on the observation of local communities where their daily lives were harassed by the invading enemies. These two standpoints do not necessarily contradict each other, and both of them might have just been one part of the whole puzzle. The Persians might have treated the captured Romans well, especially those from Antioch, for they would have been considered as 'show pieces' to be settled in the 'Persian Antioch', a space designed to glorify the Sasanids' victories, while at the same time certain countermeasures were adopted in order to prevent the captured Romans from escaping this place.

In this chapter, I have examined a number of core texts to establish how contemporary and later historians constructed their narratives to describe Roman civilians' calamities. Many Greek-speaking classicising writers used the same or similar clauses and words to describe certain aspects of the Romans' experiences. The credibility of the majority of these accounts, however, can be established by comparing their reportage with contemporary Syriac texts and material data. Motifs from the Bible and other Judeo-Christian literary works were used by Greek- and Syriac-speaking hagiographers and church historians in Late Antiquity and in the middle ages, such as the Assyrians' invasions, the turmoil in the siege of Jerusalem, and the martyrs. Finally, the reading of the *Khwadaynamag* tradition-based texts suggests that whereas many parallels in their accounts can be observed, the details were actually at variance with each other. A single *Khwadaynamag* text, therefore,

¹⁷³ Kettenhofen 1996: 305.

might never have existed. Positive images of the Great Kings were mentioned in some Christian texts, but the connection between the *Khwadaynamag* tradition and these accounts proves to be weak; nothing identical can be observed in these two groups of texts. The investigation of this chapter, therefore, suggests contemporary and medieval sources' literary and historical complexity. In the following chapters, I will further examine these complexities to unveil Roman civilians' experiences in the conflicts between Rome and Persia.

In most cases, authors from a common linguistic and cultural group shared a similar standpoint. Although it is too crude to say that most Greek and Syriac authors from the sixth century onwards shared common attitudes, they clearly focused on civilians' misfortunes in a conquered city. By contrast, the Persians' military victories were the main concern in some Islamic texts, whereas few details regarding the atrocities against urban civilians were preserved. Of course, the homogeneity of the works in the Perso-Arabic literary tradition is significant, but a closer reading of these texts reveals that many differences can still be observed. Hence, the material used would have come from a variety of texts within a common literary tradition rather than a lost single volume of royal annals. More significantly, the shah's positive image can also be noted occasionally in some late antique and medieval Christian texts, which stressed the compassion and respect between the Great King and the captured Christians rather than the Persians' greatness and generosity. Although the details of these sources were at variance with each other and seemed to have had different access to such information, what they recorded and presented could possibly have originated from the same literary and cultural context.

Chapter 3. The experience of civilians in Roman cities

The calamities of those living in urban communities in wartime can be observed both during and after a city's siege. The Sasanids' sieges and attacks would have led to a high death toll among civilians. Having overcome the resistance of defenders, the victorious Sasanids would have seized control of the conquered Romans. In this chapter I will examine the citizens' wartime experiences thematically inside or near the cities, including loss of life, sexual violence, plundering and destruction.

Loss of life

The loss of life was one of the most prevalent experiences of a besieged city's civilian population. In most cases, the Romans were killed by the Persians either during or after the siege; while the enemy would have inflicted numerous casualties on a city's inhabitants, many would be slaughtered in the post-siege massacre. Other Romans perished in wartime from lack of food.

Hand-to-hand combat and street battles

Although many citizens would surely have been killed when the Sasanids attacked a city's fortifications and inhabitants, relevant evidence is scarce even in contemporary sources. What we have, instead, is information concerning hand-to-hand combats between the defenders and the Sasanids.

Hand-to-hand combats would have happened when the Persians strove to break the Romans' resistance and enter the cities. The most detailed description comes from contemporary accounts regarding the situation on the eve of Amida's fall. Despite different details provided in Greek and Syriac texts, most reports agreed that those who were in charge of defending this frontier city were killed when the Persians were struggling to enter the city. The author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* reported that the guards of the fortifications had drunk too much and fell asleep, and some of them even deserted their posts.¹ The continuator of Zachariah's *Church History*, who would have used a local text in his work, suggested that when the monks who were in charge of defending the fortifications of Amida were drunkenly sleeping, the Persians

¹ Josh. Styl. 53.

approached the fortification with ladders and slaughtered them in the Tripyrgion, the 'three towers'.²

Such precious information makes it possible to glimpse the situation inside Amida. Since this city was taken in January 503,³ what contemporary writers described above must date to the very beginning of that year. From Prokopios' *Wars*, we are further informed that at that time the Romans were 'keeping some annual religious festival to God'.⁴ Although they did not celebrate the Epiphany,⁵ the defence of Amida at that point could possibly have become more lax. Having noticed that his soldiers were discomfited by the weather and the Romans' resistance, the Great King asked the Amidenes to ransom their city⁶ rather than continuing the siege. Therefore, the civic leaders of Amida might have relaxed their vigilance against the Persians.

The defenders' negligence soon led to the fall of Amida. Even though many Amidenes rushed to assist the monks and managed to repel the Persians, it was too late, and many of them were shot by arrows and perished. After the Persians consolidated their grip on this tower, the Great King began the final attack in the morning; more towers were seized and the inhabitants killed, and eventually the whole fortification fell into the hands of the enemies, who 'killed and thrust back the guards over one night, one day, and another night'.⁷

In both Antioch (540) and Dara (573) heavy street battles raged. After observing the departure of Roman forces, the Persians entered Antioch, but some young citizens resisted the invaders. While some of them wore heavy armour, others remained

² Zach. HE 7.4, cf. Prok. Wars 1.7.23-8. See also Marc. com. a.502 and Theoph. A.M. 5996, both of whom ascribed the fall of Amida to the defenders' treachery. Other similar cases can be noted in Shapur II's invasion and the siege of Amida in 359, see Ammianus 18.8.3, 19.5.4-5.

³ See above, p. 41.

⁴ Prok. Wars 1.7.22.

⁵ Greatrex 1998: 91.

⁶ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁷ Ibid.

unarmed and used stones to attack the approaching Sasanids.⁸ They were even able to push the enemies back, albeit temporarily, and ‘raised the paean...proclaimed the Emperor Justinian triumphant’.⁹ Later on it was only after the arrival of the elite forces sent by K̅osrow I, who ‘forced back the citizens by their numbers and turned them to flight’, that the resistance of these Romans was crushed.¹⁰

In 573, Euagrius wrote that the shah slew some Romans in Dara, presumably after their capture (Απαντας τοίνυν ἐξαγαγών, πλήθος ἀστάθμητον, καὶ τοὺς μὲν αὐτοῦ δειλαίως κατασφάξας, τοὺς δὲ πλείστους καὶ ζωγρίας ἐλών),¹¹ but we do not know how it happened. Here we should consult contemporary and later Syriac sources. After this city was captured by the Sasanids, numerous Romans ran to the gates in order to escape,¹² but they soon realised that the enemy had begun to flow into Dara and they could not find the keys to open the gates. Such a frustrating situation ultimately ignited their will to defend their city, and a street battle took place inside this frontier fortress. These Romans, as John of Ephesos recorded, began to resist desperately: they rushed towards the enemies and ‘mowed and smote one another down like ears of corn’¹³ for seven days. Dara was now full of corpses of both Persians and Romans, and the inhabitants were forced to throw them into the adjacent river and the cisterns.¹⁴ In order to take control of the havoc and turmoil, the victorious Persians decided to persuade the remaining Romans to surrender, and

⁸ On their subversive and military role in Late Antiquity, see Al. Cameron 1976: 105-25, Roueché 1993: 152-3, Whitby 1999: 229-53. In the late Empire, imperial legislation usually prohibited private persons from possessing weapons, presumably for deterring local violence and turbulence, Kaegi 1992: 51, Haldon 1999: 257.

⁹ Prok. Wars 2.8.29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.8.34.

¹¹ Euagr. HE 5.10.

¹² Cf. Chr. 1234 66, in which the author implied that they tried to flee into the citadel but were rejected. On the credibility of John and the anonymous author, see van Ginkel 1995: 78, cf. Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 283.

¹³ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

promised to make peace with them. It was not until the mutual agreement between the attackers and the citizens was finalised that the bloody conflict finally ended.¹⁵

While many Romans were killed by the Sasanids in the hand-to-hand battles, massacres and executions, others perished during the Persian wars for a variety of reasons. The presence of Roman army contingents sometimes caused troubles to a city's inhabitants. In the reign of Anastasios some civilians were insulted and attacked by the soldiers for trivial matters when the Roman army billeted the Empire's cities, such as Edessa, and a citizen was killed because he managed to prevent soldiers from stealing produce from a garden.¹⁶ However, no further detail regarding the lawlessness of Roman soldiers can be noted in other contemporary sources. Also, we have a piece of information regarding the fates of local Jews at the hands of their compatriots, presumably the Empire's Christians at the beginning of the sixth century. Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, our chief source of this episode, reported it in great detail.¹⁷ When the Great King assaulted Konstantia, the Jewish inhabitants decided to side with the Sasanids; they dug a tunnel in the tower of their synagogue to inform the Persians about what had been done so that they could dig another tunnel from outside the fortifications and sneak into the city. However, their plot was disclosed, and the defenders were eventually informed by Peter the *comes*, who was at that time detained as a hostage by the Persians. Having observed what the Jews had done, a massacre ensued, and 'all the Jews they (i.e. the Romans) could find, men and women, old and young' were slaughtered.¹⁸

Finally, in some cases, Romans sometimes perished, though accidentally, in the havoc and turmoil inside the besieged cities. When the defenders of Antioch found they were not able to resist the Sasanids anymore, the soldiers of Theoktistos and

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Josh. Styl. 96.

¹⁷ Prokopios did not mention it in his account of Kawād's campaign.

¹⁸ Josh. Styl. 58, see also Petersen 2013: 333. The massacre was stopped by the bishop Bar-Hadad and the *comes* Leontios, who took charge of the defence of Konstantia.

Molatzes ‘leaped upon the horses...rode away to the gates’¹⁹ to desert the city. Meanwhile, they tried to coax the remaining citizens, possibly to facilitate their escape, by saying that since the reinforcement by Bouzes would come soon, they had to go out of Antioch to receive them. The sudden retreat of these soldiers resulted in chaos among the remaining Antiochenes. They, possibly fearing their subsequent fate after the retreat of Roman soldiers, together with ‘all the women with their children’ started to rush to the gates (ἐνταῦθα τῶν Ἀντιοχέων πολλοὶ μὲν ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες δὲ πᾶσαι ξὺν τοῖς παιδίοις ἐπὶ τὰς πύλας δρόμῳ πολλῶ ἤεσαν).²⁰ The overcrowding of people and horses soon resulted in a disaster: in order to escape Antioch as soon as they could, the soldiers ‘sparing absolutely no one of those before them, all kept riding over the fallen still more fiercely than before’.²¹ Many people were thus trampled by their compatriots and perished even before this metropolis was conquered by K̅osrow I’ s forces.

Massacres and executions

Having crushed the defenders’ resistance and rushed into the city, the victorious Persians began to slaughter the remaining Romans. While mass graves in places like Jerusalem have been recently excavated and studied,²² the results of archaeological excavations in Antioch, Dara²³ and other eastern cities are much less helpful. Therefore we are reliant on information from written sources preserved in different

¹⁹ Prok. Wars 2.8.17. Theoktistos survived this turmoil, see *ibid.*, 2.16.17, 2.19.33-4, 2.24.13 for his participation of later operations against the Persians.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.8.18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.8.19.

²² On the assessment of both literary and archaeological data related to the sack of Jerusalem, see Avni 2014: 307, Stoyanov 2011: 11-23, Kaegi 2003: 77-8, Schick 1995: 20-6. On the material traits, especially the well-known Mamila burial cave, see Breydy 1981: 62-86, Maeir 1994: 299-306, Reich 1994: 111-8, 1996: 26-35, Naggar 2002: 141-8. For other similar cases in the Balkans, see Poulter 2007: 86.

²³ For example, see Mango 1975: 209-27 and Gabriel 1940 on the Necropolis of Dara and Amida respectively, but nothing related to the slaughter of the Romans has been noted.

linguistic milieu. I will investigate these texts both to provide a synthetic account of what happened and to establish our understanding of certain important features, including these executions' locations, victims and means in the post-siege period.

In 503, apparently it was Kawād who commanded the massacre of the remaining citizens once the Persians rushed into Amida. They 'destroyed men and women of every class and age for three days and three nights',²⁴ while Michael the Syrian wrote that they were ordered to kill all the adults.²⁵ The Latin chronicler Marcellinus Comes noted that even the monastic traitors²⁶ were executed.²⁷ Such indiscriminate massacres, however, proved to be uncommon in Kōsrow I's campaigns in the 540s. Even in Beroea, where the citizens refused to pay more money and took refuge in the citadel, Kōsrow I, possibly moved by the words of Megas, their bishop, refrained from slaughtering them.

Pseudo-Joshua claimed that in the sack of Amida the Persians killed many Romans on the top of the mound.²⁸ Several observations regarding the timing and location of these executions can be made. Kawād's soldiers constructed at least two mounds outside Amida's fortifications during this city's siege. In his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John of Ephesos reported that having destroyed the monastery in the vicinity of Amida, the Persians exploited its building materials and 'piled its wood and its stones and its clay on to the "mule" (i.e. the mound) against the Romans'.²⁹ While this mound was destroyed by the Amidenes,³⁰ Kawād's soldiers managed to

²⁴ Zach. HE 7.4, cf. Josh. Styl. 53, Prok. Wars 1.7.30, the former emphasised the manner of the Romans' execution, while the latter simply mentioned that the Romans were slaughtered.

²⁵ Mich. Syr. 9.7.

²⁶ Cf. above, pp. 88-9.

²⁷ Marc. com. a.502.

²⁸ Josh. Styl. 53.

²⁹ Joh. Eph. *Lives*, PO 19.217. See also Josh. Styl. 50, Prok. Wars 1.7.14. It might have been a wooden structure. Greatrex et al. 2011: 235.

³⁰ Josh. Styl. 50, cf. Prok. Wars 1.7.14-5, in which the mound collapsed, possibly because too many Persians stood on it. See Zach. HE 7.3 for the most detailed account of the Persians' use of mounds and their destruction.

restore it, presumably in the later phase of siege. Therefore, the corpses of the Romans must have lain on the second mound.³¹

In order to reconstruct the circumstance of these civilians' deaths, a brief review of what could have happened during the siege of Amida is needed. In the sixth century the Romans seldom launched sorties against the Persians during sieges, and in many cases the defenders would simply keep the enemy away from attacking and surmounting the fortifications. One exceptional episode, however, can be noted in Kawād's unsuccessful siege of Edessa in 503. At that time, a few defenders went out from the city and killed many Persian soldiers, and some local women even carried water for these Edessenes. The author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* attributed the Sasanids' incapability of assaulting the fortifications to the blessings of Christ.³² However, since the Sasanids arrived at Edessa in the middle of September, which is the end of the campaign season,³³ they could have purposed to merely surround the walls of Edessa, both to intimidate the citizens and, more possibly, to distract the attention of the Empire's forces that had been mustered at Samosata.³⁴

The situation of Amida in 502-3, however, could have been different. While at some point during the siege Kawād considered the possibility of receiving payment from the Romans and retreating,³⁵ the Sasanids' assaults on the fortifications must have been fierce.³⁶ Therefore, while Pseudo-Zachariah noted that a criminal dared to snatch provisions from the Sasanids when the siege was still in progress,³⁷ it would have been much riskier for the Romans to constitute any counteroffensive, and no sally was made against Kawād.³⁸

Therefore, given the lack of sally at Amida in 502-3, none of the Romans would have stayed and been killed outside the fortification before the fall of their city, and

³¹ Ibid., 53. Other contemporary historians failed to mention this detail.

³² Ibid., 60. Cf. Lenski 2007: 225-34 for the anatomy of the Persians' sieges of Amida.

³³ Greatrex 1998: 105.

³⁴ Josh. Styl. 60.

³⁵ Zach. HE 7.4.

³⁶ Josh. Styl. 53, Zach. HE 7.3.

³⁷ Zach. HE 7.4.

³⁸ Cf. Ammianus 19.6.7-11.

what Pseudo-Joshua referred to must have been the events that took place after the siege concluded. In the sack of Amida in 359, while the Roman soldiers were occupied in fighting off Shapur II's soldiers, Ammianus hid with two other Romans and escaped through an unguarded gate during a dark night.³⁹ Just as in 503, those who were killed at these mounds might thus have been the Romans who managed to escape from the city when the enemies rushed into their hometown in January 503.

More relevant information can be extracted from contemporary Syriac works. While many Romans were killed outside the city, others seem to have been slaughtered inside the fortifications. Some of them were killed in public spaces, like the squares, and others were discarded in the private spaces, like inns and houses.⁴⁰ However, it is impossible to tell whether the Sasanids rushed into the houses of individual citizens to slaughter them or simply to cast some corpses into different places. The most vivid account was the testimony of an old survivor who came from the brotherhood of the monastery Mar John and took refuge inside Amida at that time. In the sack of Amida, the refugees seemed to have been at a loss about what they should do: 'we (i.e. the priests) all stood up sorrowing and weeping for the Service of our death and of our lives' end, slaughter being now set before our eyes'. Later, when the Persian soldiers or, if Pseudo-Dionysios' narrative is to be believed, two Persian scouts⁴¹ arrived and saw the Romans, they began to slaughter them: '(they) beheaded ninety of us in one massacre while our eyes beheld it'.⁴²

Prokopios' reports provide the backbone of our knowledge of the massacres in both Sura and Antioch in 540. Having accepted the entreaty of Sura's bishop deceitfully,⁴³ the Sasanids got a chance to hold the gates open. It was at that point K̄osrow I's soldiers rushed into this city and slaughtered the inhabitants (καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πολλοὺς μὲν κτείνας).⁴⁴ In June, an 'unlimited massive killing' (φόνον

³⁹ Ammianus 19.8.5.

⁴⁰ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁴¹ Ps. Dion. II, 5.

⁴² Joh. Eph. *Lives*, PO 19.219.

⁴³ Prok. Wars 2.5.16.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.5.25-6.

ἄπειρον κατεργασάμενος)⁴⁵ took place inside Antioch after the best Persian forces had been sent to crush the resistance of the young Antiochenes.⁴⁶ The Persians killed many people, did not ‘spare persons of any age’, and slew ‘all whom they met, old and young alike’ (οὐδεμιᾶς ἡλικίας φειδόμενοι τοὺς ἐν ποσὶν ἅπαντας...ἔκτεινον).⁴⁷

Prokopios’ accounts regarding the massacre in this metropolis above were not unparalleled. For example, Belisarios’ victorious soldiers were ‘killing all whom they encountered, sparing neither old nor young’ (...τὸν ἐν ποσὶν ἀεί, οὐδεμιᾶς ἡλικίας φειδόμενοι, ἔκτεινον)⁴⁸ at Naples in 536. Instead of resorting to the *urbs capta* motifs, such phraseology in the *Wars* echoes Thucydides’ description of what happened when the victorious Thracian mercenaries ransacked Mykalessos in Boiotia: they dashed into the city and slaughtered its people, ‘spared neither old nor young, but cut down, one after another’ (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐφόνευσον φειδόμενοι οὔτε πρεσβυτέρας οὔτε νεωτέρας ἡλικίας, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἐξῆς, ὅτῳ ἐντύχοιεν).⁴⁹ These Thracians’ brutality at Mykalessos is unusual, and it is in fact one of the most detailed accounts on a sacked city in Thucydides. Therefore, the use of similar phrases by Prokopios in the *Wars* could have served to highlight the Antiochenes’ extraordinary sufferings in Kosrow I’s campaign. Although other contemporary writers did not use such vivid phrases to describe the massacre of the Antiochenes, what Prokopios said may be compared with the situation at Amida in 503, where the Sasanids killed ‘men and women of every class and age’.⁵⁰ The credibility of Prokopios’ accounts may thus be established.

In 573, a massacre took place when a substantial body of Persian forces entered Dara and encountered the Roman inhabitants. At the beginning they mingled with each other peacefully, but, as described by John of Ephesos, not long afterwards the victors began to ‘seize the Romans...and put most of them to the sword’.⁵¹ After finishing the first wave of massacre, the Persians further chained the rest of the

⁴⁵ Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.54.

⁴⁶ Prok. Wars 2.8.28-9, 33.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.8.34.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.10.29, cf. 7.29.1.

⁴⁹ Thuc. 7.29.4.

⁵⁰ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁵¹ Joh.Eph. HE 6.5.

survivors, along with ‘their nobles...women of rank, and their princes’, and took them to Kosrow I. The Shahanshah then ordered that all of them should be drowned in the nearby river.⁵² John of Ephesos’ narrative is contradicted by what we learn from the *Chronicle of 1234*, in which the shah ‘forbade a slaughter of the leaders of city...(and) carefully bound their hands’.⁵³ Since it is evident that apart from the common sources like John of Ephesos’ *Church History* the anonymous author also used other unknown sources,⁵⁴ he might have chosen to rely on the accounts in which another version of the sack of Dara was provided. While we cannot rule out the possibility that the Sasanids, as suggested by preceding cases, might treat social elites magnanimously,⁵⁵ in this case no clear answer regarding the reliability of these two sources can be found.

Although both Apamea and Dara were conquered and sacked by the Sasanids in 573, it seems that a post-conquest massacre only took place in Dara. However, it should be noted that in the *Chronicle of 1234*, the compiler stated that in Apamea the Persians killed men but spared women and children whom they chained and put into captivity.⁵⁶ This account sounds reminiscent of classicising authors’ reports of a city’s sack, in which male citizens were slaughtered, while women and children were enslaved. Scholars have suggested the close connection between the anonymous writer of the *Chronicle of 1234* and Edessa and its surrounding areas, and he could have been a lower-ranking cleric.⁵⁷ Andy Hilkens further noted his great interest in the sieges of cities, and his account of the Trojan War was impressive.⁵⁸ However, since the author seems to have had no access to the original Homer epics and other

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Chr. 1234 66.

⁵⁴ Neither John of Ephesos nor other Syriac historians mentioned that Kosrow I treated the leaders of Dara kindly.

⁵⁵ See below, p. 100 for the cases of Amida in 503.

⁵⁶ Chr. 1234 68.

⁵⁷ Hilkens 2014: 19-23.

⁵⁸ Hilkens 2014: 24.

important texts of Greek historiography,⁵⁹ it seems less likely that he consciously reverted to classical literary commonplaces to portray the calamities of the Apameans.

In addition, while the Persians could have killed the male citizens in order to curtail any possibility of a later uprising, neither the Greek historians, including Euagrius, John of Epiphania and Theophylaktos, nor other Syriac chroniclers mentioned that a comprehensive slaughter had been conducted by the Sasanids. Indeed such an *argumentum ex silentio* is certainly not conclusive, but the silence of Greek authors is exceptionally significant. Being an important metropolis in Roman Syria, what happened in Apamea must have been important for the Greek-speaking world. Take Euagrius, who came from Epiphania in Syria Secunda for example. Judging from his detailed knowledge of sixth-century Apamea,⁶⁰ he would surely not have failed to talk about a mass killing of the Romans if such a slaughter had ever happened in this important city.

While many Romans were killed in the above-mentioned *ad hoc* massacre, the Persians captured and executed other survivors. The soldiers of the Great King did not choose distant places to kill the Romans, and the post-siege executions would have taken place either inside the conquered cities or in their vicinities. Sometimes the survivors were thrown into nearby water. In 503, some Amidenes were thrown into the Tigris,⁶¹ and 70 years later, many defeated Roman elites from Dara were cast into the river of Cordes which runs through this frontier citadel.⁶² While in doing so there was no need for the Sasanids to cover or remove the corpses from the conquered cities, it would have been a difficult process because they had to first collect the Romans then transport them to the location of execution.

Certain details regarding the methods of the Romans' executions can be noted by looking at contemporary Syriac texts. In the first years of the sixth century, the author

⁵⁹ On the translation and reading of Greek texts by medieval Syriac-speaking communities, see above, pp. 51-2.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Euagr. HE 4.25-6 for the situation inside this city on the eve of the Sasanids' arrival in 540.

⁶¹ Josh. Styl. 53, cf. Zach. HE 7.4.

⁶² Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* stated that some of the Amidenes were stoned,⁶³ and according to Pseudo-Zachariah, certain citizens were crucified.⁶⁴ No report about such methods can be found from other cases in the Romano-Persian wars in the sixth century,⁶⁵ and these accounts deserve to be studied in depth. While we cannot rule out the possibility that these accounts may serve didactic purposes,⁶⁶ Syriac writers merely noted such details in passing. Another possible explanation, therefore, seems to be more plausible. In classical antiquity, to crucify someone was a method of execution practised by either the barbarians,⁶⁷ or the Romans, 'against slaves, foreigners, and citizens of low social standing', and, more importantly, against those who committed serious crimes.⁶⁸ This method of execution, together with its excruciating death,⁶⁹ must have shocked beholders. In addition, for the Christians of the Empire to stone someone to death was also regarded as a savage and barbarous way of killing people.⁷⁰ Both the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, a contemporary Edessene writer and Pseudo-Zachariah, who came from Amida and might have used an Amidene source in the seventh book,⁷¹ may have demonstrated the cruelty of Kawād 's soldiers by providing these details.

⁶³ Josh. Styl. 53.

⁶⁴ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁶⁵ See Anthony 2014: 15-26 for the collection of crucifixion cases conducted by the Sasanids in Late Antiquity. Most of them were Christian martyrs or political opponents of the regime.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the cases in the sack of Jerusalem in J. BJ 5.449ff. For the crucifixion of Christian martyrs, see Eus. HE 8.8.2, 8.14.13. For the discussion of Pseudo-Joshua and Pseudo-Zachariah's didactic purposes, see above, pp. 52-3.

⁶⁷ Hengel 1977: 22-4. For some late antique cases, see Cook 2014: 304-10.

⁶⁸ Cook 2014: 358-9, 423.

⁶⁹ Cook 2014: 418-23.

⁷⁰ Matthews 2010: 77-8. For other cases in classical antiquity, see Pease 1907: 5-18, Rosivach 1987: 232-48.

⁷¹ On their identity, see above, p. 51, on the possible primary text used by Pseudo-Zachariah, see Greatrex et al. 2011: 54-5.

In most cases, such as the sack of Amida, Antioch and Dara, indiscriminate slaughter of the Roman elites is not reported in either Syriac or Greek texts. The case of John, son of Timostratos is a good example. Being a local commander of Dara⁷² who ‘surpassed all the others in power and rank’⁷³ and took charge of both the administration and defence work of this city,⁷⁴ he was praised by John of Ephesos as ‘a man of great warlike ability’.⁷⁵ He was deported to the Persian Empire after the siege was concluded rather than being killed instantly.⁷⁶ The fate of Paul, the son of Zaynab, the steward, needs to be discussed further. In 503, he was killed after the fall of Amida by the soldiers of Kawād, and actually this was the only case we have regarding a member of the elite’s execution in this frontier city. His death might have resulted from the Persian soldiers’ dreadful experience during the siege and, possibly, the humiliation when they tried to negotiate with these Roman elites. Having been frustrated by the prolonged siege, Kawād was eager to seek a compromise with the Romans by asking for small amounts of gold from them. Instead of paying the ransom, the Persian envoy was sent back by the leaders inside the city to demand from the enemies ‘the price of cultivated vegetables that his army had consumed as well as of the grain and wine that they had gathered and brought from the villages’.⁷⁷ In other words, the invaders were asked to compensate the inhabitants for their economic loss in war. While some social elites would have either owned or managed estates in the *territorium* of Amida, and it is needless to say that their crops must have been destroyed by the Sasanids, such a reckless reply was rejected immediately. Paul was surely a member of the group of civic leaders, but it is difficult to know whether he was regarded as a scapegoat by the victorious Persian soldiers or not.

⁷² *PLRE* III: s.v. Ioannes 87. Cf. the more negative image of Euagrios, in which this general not only paid little attention to the defensive work of Dara but also acted treacherously, Euagr. HE 5.10.

⁷³ Joh. Epiph. 5.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Euagr. HE 5.10.

⁷⁵ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

⁷⁶ Joh. Epiph. 5.

⁷⁷ Zach. HE 7.4.

The massacres eventually ended in different ways.⁷⁸ In Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, it was the entreaty of old and young inhabitants from Arayish-i-Rum (Hierapolis) which terminated the atrocity, and the defeated Romans were eventually treated by the Sasanids benevolently.⁷⁹ In the sack of Amida, it was terminated possibly by Kawād himself. In the continuator of Zachariah's work, the king ceased the slaughter after three days and nights,⁸⁰ while Pseudo-Joshua did not provide any relevant detail at all. Prokopios wrote that a certain old priest (τῶν τις Ἀμιδηῶν γέρον τε καὶ ἱερεὺς)⁸¹ approached Kawād and entreated him to stop killing more captives.⁸² At first glance it seems that it was the bishop of Amida who called a halt to the massacre on behalf of the Romans, but in fact John of Saoro, the bishop of Amida, had passed away 'a few days earlier (before the arrival of the Persians),' and no new bishop could have been ordained during the siege of Amida.⁸³ In other cases like Sura, Antioch and Dara and other conquered cities in the sixth century, all we know is that the slaughter was ended, but no further detail was given.

It is not easy to reconstruct the timing of the removal of corpses and how they were treated either by the surviving Romans or by the Sasanids. After the main forces of Kawād left Amida, the remaining Persians, presumably the garrison left behind, began to clear the city,⁸⁴ possibly ordered by Glonos, while Pseudo-Zachariah recorded that the city was cleaned before the arrival of Kawād.⁸⁵ Such a decision must

⁷⁸ Many Syriac authors reported civilians' casualties in such atrocities. I will study all these data, together with similar details in cases of deportation in Appendix 2.

⁷⁹ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.255.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ The word is a term he usually referred to a bishop in his works, Greatrex 1998: 92. See, for example, Prok. Wars 2.13.13. Cf. Cameron 1985: 115 in which Prokopios' methods in mentioning Christian subjects were discussed.

⁸² Prok. Wars 1.7.30-2. Cf. Christensen 1925: 107-9 for the discussion of Kawād's character.

⁸³ Zach. HE 7.3.

⁸⁴ Josh. Styl. 53.

⁸⁵ Zach. HE 7.4.

have resulted from both hygienic⁸⁶ and strategic reasons. While the cold temperature must have slowed the rate of decomposition as this city was captured in January 503, the smell of the corpses must have been unendurable for the garrison soldiers.⁸⁷

Strategic considerations would also have been a crucial factor. Since Kawād seems to have intended to attack the Romans continuously in the following period, the consolidation of what the Persians had conquered up to that point must have been important. The survivors, possibly along with the Persians, must have removed the bodies lying in public areas. Pseudo-Zachariah wrote that the corpses were counted ‘not including those who had been put in the inns...in the streams and those left in the houses’.⁸⁸ Some corpses of the dead Romans were removed by the Sasanids from the city and piled them up outside the North Gate⁸⁹ (today’s Kharput Gate),⁹⁰ while other dead bodies were carried through other gates.⁹¹ In the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysios of Tel-Mahre, the author noted that ‘they (i.e. the corpses) were cast into pits and ditches, and buried there’.⁹² Since Zoroastrians were forbidden from burying dead bodies and rather exposed them,⁹³ it is difficult to believe that the Persians buried them themselves. It would thus have probably been the Romans who buried the dead, either inside, or, more possibly, outside the city.

Despite the atrocities perpetrated by the Persians, many Romans seem to have survived, and some of them hid or took refuge at certain places. Pseudo-Zachariah wrote that a Christian prince from Arran, i.e. Caucasian Albania, pleaded with Kawād

⁸⁶ The outbreak of an epidemic during the siege of Amida in 359 was mentioned by Ammianus 19.4.1-8. For this event, see Stathakopoulos 2004: 189-90 no.11.

⁸⁷ Josh. Styl. 53, cf. Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

⁸⁸ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁸⁹ Josh. Styl. 53.

⁹⁰ Trombley and Watt 2000: 62, cf. Gabriel 1940: 132.

⁹¹ Ps. Dion. II, 5.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The abhorrence towards and prohibition of cremation and burial by the Zoroastrians was well attested both by the works of Greco-Roman authors and by the *Vendidad*, the ecclesiastical code of Zoroastrianism. See the translated texts in the *Vendidad*, Boyce 1990: 65 and the details regarding the laws of purity, Boyce 1996: 294-324.

not to kill the refugees in the Great Church of the Forty Martyrs,⁹⁴ which was built by the bishop of Amida.⁹⁵ In addition, as suggested by contemporary Greek and Syriac texts, many Romans remained in this frontier city in the time of famine.⁹⁶ While very little is known of similar events in other places, the Persians did not always try to kill all the survivors, and such bloodthirsty activity was clearly not the victors' primary goal. After the conquest of Antioch K̄osrow I did not slaughter all the soldiers and the civilians inside this metropolis: having considered that the remaining soldiers would likely obstruct his forces' subsequent activities, the shah decided to allow them to escape to other places freely, and the Persians even 'made signs to the fugitives with their hands, urging them to flee as quickly as possible'.⁹⁷ If Prokopios is right, then all the remaining Roman soldiers, along with their generals and some citizens, left Antioch through the gate which led to Daphne.⁹⁸ In the *Life* of Saint Simeon Stylites the Younger, the Antiochenes rushed out of the city and fled southwards once the gates were opened.⁹⁹ Later, in the *Buildings* he further pointed out that 'it became impossible for the people of Antioch to recognise the site of each person's house'.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, some inhabitants of this metropolis must have survived the postwar carnage. In 573, when the line of defence at Dara was broken by the Sasanids, at the beginning they did not obstruct the Romans from fleeing either, and simply 'held back...gave the Romans room to flee, lest they should turn and defend themselves'.¹⁰¹ The annihilation of the remaining Romans was clearly not the Sasanids' target at all.

Lack of subsistence

⁹⁴ Zach. HE 7.4, cf. Chr. 1234 51, in which a Persian general stopped the slaughter.

See, however, the discussion below, pp. 207-8.

⁹⁵ Greatrex 1998: 83.

⁹⁶ See below, pp. 107-10.

⁹⁷ Prok. Wars 2.8.24.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.8.25-6.

⁹⁹ V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Prok. Aed. 2.10.20, cf. Downey 1939: 367.

¹⁰¹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

Apart from being killed during or after a city's siege, in Late Antiquity sometimes urban-dwelling Romans perished because of famine.¹⁰² Nevertheless, although the Persians invaded the Empire and besieged the cities many times in the sixth century, only the Amidenes seem to have suffered from severe famine. Below I will present the background to this event and the details of the Amidenes' experiences.

Both the situation in northern Mesopotamia from the very end of the fifth century to the beginning of the sixth century and the background of the siege and sack of Amida from 502-3 needs to be addressed first. Those living in Amida and its vicinity had suffered from the arrival of locusts which 'devoured and ravaged these regions, consuming everything in them',¹⁰³ from Edessa, Konstantia to the border of the Sasanian Empire.¹⁰⁴ Before the coming of the Sasanids, their bishop John admonished the wealthy citizens, saying that 'they should not hoard grain in [such] a time of distress but sell [it] and give [it] to the needy'.¹⁰⁵ Therefore at that time while some Amidenes could sustain their lives, other inhabitants faced famine caused by pestilence, invasion and other factors.

To what extent Amida and its surrounding areas recovered from these catastrophes is impossible to determine, but clearly when Kawād and his soldiers arrived in October of 502 the Romans were not suffering from a shortage of food. Indeed, the Sasanids besieged this city for more than 90 days, and historians reported no information regarding the lack of provisions. However, such a prolonged siege could possibly have drained resources in the vicinity of this city. As noted above, Kawād's military operations would have halted the production of crops in Amida's neighbouring areas. Similar cases can be found elsewhere. In 503, Kawād again led his forces and invaded Konstantia, a city which was fortified by Constantius II in the middle of the fourth century and was the seat of the *dux Mesopotamiae* at that time.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Stathakopoulos 2004: 46-7.

¹⁰³ Josh. Styl. 38. For the famine at Edessa and other places, see Stathakopoulos 2004: 250-5 no. 80.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Zach. HE 7.3.

¹⁰⁶ Matthews 1989a: 54, Greatrex 1998: 31.

The Sasanids were not able to capture this city.¹⁰⁷ Later, the shah decided to retreat because of the boldness of the Romans and the scarcity of provisions; ‘it could not find supplies in an area that had been devastated’¹⁰⁸ because the invading Persians had plundered the surrounding areas of this city in the winter of 502.¹⁰⁹ At that time, the bishop of Konstantia Bar-Hadad approached Kawād, bringing with him wine, dried figs, honey and loaves. Having been persuaded by the bishop’s entreaty, and possibly thinking that it was fruitless to attack such a poor city, the shah decided to retreat and went westwards to Edessa.¹¹⁰

Of course, the situations in the hinterlands of both Konstantia and Amida were different. While Ammianus noted the barrenness of the area around the former city by stating ‘everything is parched by constant drought except for a little water to be found in wells’,¹¹¹ the *territorium* of Amida was fertile.¹¹² Nonetheless, such an example still suggests that the devastation of armed forces in the Anastasian war’s area of operation could have considerably diminished the agricultural yields. Therefore, it would have been difficult for both the Sasanids and, possibly, the remaining Romans to obtain provisions from nearby areas after the Persians’ occupation of Amida at the beginning of 503. Furthermore, as an inland city, those living in Amida must have relied on the crop production of its hinterland, and the supply of provisions would be affected by the displaced people from the neighbouring areas who took refuge in Amida during wartime.¹¹³ Although we have no idea how many people flooded into

¹⁰⁷ Josh. Styl. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 51.

¹¹⁰ Prok. Wars 2.13.13-5. However, it is unthinkable for Kawād to present the provisions of his soldiers to the bishop. See Trombley and Watt 2000: 74, in which such a statement was regarded as a historical invention made by Kōsrow I to justify his extortions from Roman cities in his 540 campaign.

¹¹¹ Ammianus 18.7.9.

¹¹² Ibid., 18.9.1-2.

¹¹³ Stathakopoulos 2004: 46-7, 2007: 213, cf. Millman and Kates 1990: 9-11.

this city during the campaign season, their presence could have resulted in the shortage of foodstuffs.¹¹⁴

From 503 onwards, the Empire's forces were dispatched not only to attack the Persian Empire but also to re-capture Amida. While it remains unclear how long the Romans' siege of the Persian-occupied Amida lasted, several remarks can be made. The forces led by Patrikios and Hypatios failed to capture this city and retreated in the summer of 503.¹¹⁵ Several months later they, together with other forces retreated to their winter quarters at Melitene.¹¹⁶ The second tide of the attack against Amida was launched possibly in May 504,¹¹⁷ but soon the Roman commanders decided to blockade the city in order to force the enemies to surrender.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the Romans, unlike what the Sasanids had done nearly two years earlier, did not incessantly attack Amida's fortifications. Even though many Roman soldiers began to disperse in wintertime,¹¹⁹ the blockade of this frontier city could have lasted several months until the Sasanids' surrender. As I will demonstrate below,¹²⁰ such a prolonged blockade could have led to the famine inside Amida.

While details of famine¹²¹ were preserved in both Greek and Syriac texts, it remains unclear when exactly the outbreak of starvation took place inside Amida. The clearest passage regarding the lack of provisions among the Sasanids comes from Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, that in A.G. 816.¹²² Some clues, however, can still be

¹¹⁴ Cf. Stathakopoulos 2012: 107.

¹¹⁵ Josh. Styl. 56.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-2, 75.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁰ I will examine the possible role played by the Romans' military activities in terms of the Amidenes' famine in detail below, see pp. 249-3.

¹²¹ See the definition of Peter Garnsey, Garnsey 1988: 6: 'a critical shortage of essential foodstuffs leading through hunger to starvation and a substantially increased mortality rate in a community or region'.

¹²² Josh. Styl. 76. It ran from 1 October 504, Greatrex 1998: 113, see also Trombley and Watt 2000: LIV.

noted. In July 503, while the soldiers of Patrikios and Hypatios failed to attack Amida by using siege towers, some Persians, together with a *marzbān*, were killed in a trap set by Farzman, another Roman general.¹²³ If it can be identified with the death of Glones,¹²⁴ an event which eventually resulted in the closure of local market, then after the middle of 503 the Persian garrison and the Romans inside Amida could have faced the shortage of commodities.¹²⁵ In May 504, the Sasanids inside Amida clearly faced the problem of the lack of meat. When a young boy grazed his camels and donkeys around the city, one of the asses approached the fortifications. Having noticed it, a Persian ‘came down from the wall by rope, intending to cut it up and take it up for food’.¹²⁶

Later, the Amidenes’ sufferings were manifold. The shortage of provisions led the Persians to adopt certain strategies to sustain their lives. The first victims were the male citizens and the remaining local elites, who were tied up by the soldiers¹²⁷ and detained in the amphitheatre.¹²⁸ We do not know how long these Amidenes were detained, but many of them perished in custody because of hunger or imprisonment, while others survived by eating their sandals and excrement and drinking their own urine to survive.¹²⁹ The situation was so desperate that the prisoners attacked each other, possibly wrestling for the limited provisions. Finally they were released ‘like dead men from their graves’.¹³⁰

In the second stage, when food became even scarcer, things changed again, and no more food was provided to either women or men. If none of the Persian soldiers, as Pseudo-Joshua’s work suggested, ‘had anything except a daily handful of

¹²³ Josh. Styl. 56, see also Zach. HE 7.5.

¹²⁴ Greatrex 1998: 99, *contra* Trombley and Watt 2000: 68. On the details about Glones’ death, see Zach. HE 7.5, Prok. Wars 1.9.5-17.

¹²⁵ Zach. HE 7.5, in which the outbreak of famine and the imprisonment of Roman elites and male citizens were mentioned just after the closure of local market.

¹²⁶ Josh. Styl. 72.

¹²⁷ Zach. HE 7.5.

¹²⁸ Josh. Styl. 76.

¹²⁹ Zach. HE 7.5, cf. Stathakopoulos 2004: 84-5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

barley...had absolutely no meat, wine, or any other item of provision',¹³¹ the situation among of the remaining Romans must have been even more difficult. Prokopios pointed out that the Persians, not knowing the possible disastrous consequences, 'continued to conceal scrupulously their lack of the necessities of life, and made it appear that they had an abundance of all provisions'.¹³² Such accounts chime with the Persians' characteristics as described in the *Strategikon*, in which they are presented as 'extremely skilful in concealing their injuries and coping bravely with adverse circumstances'.¹³³ Later Prokopios mentioned that actually the Sasanids 'doled out provisions...more sparingly than they were needed',¹³⁴ and they left the provisions for around seven days inside Amida. Thus the Romans' incompetence in prosecuting a successful siege against the Sasanids was highlighted by Prokopios.¹³⁵ Had they done so, the Romans could have recaptured Amida through defeating the enemy rather than paying money to the Great King.

The situation among the Amidenes must have been worse, and our historians recorded certain horrible events which testify to their desperation. At the beginning, people might have resorted to certain 'unaccustomed foods' and even 'every forbidden thing' (οἱ δὲ ἐς βρώσεις ἀήθεις τὰ πρῶτα ἐλθόντες τῶν τε οὐ θεμιτῶν ἀψάμενοι πάντων),¹³⁶ such as 'shoes, old soles, and other horrible things from the streets and squares'.¹³⁷ Later on in order to survive such an ordeal, the Romans 'tasted each other's blood' (τελευτῶντες καὶ ἀλλήλων ἐγεύσαντο),¹³⁸ implying cannibalism among both men and women. Unlike his detailed accounts regarding the cannibalism

¹³¹ Josh. Styl. 76.

¹³² Prok. Wars 1.9.3, cf. Zach. HE 7.5 for the Persian garrison's weakness on the eve of Amida's return.

¹³³ *Strategikon* 11.1.

¹³⁴ Prok. Wars 1.9.21.

¹³⁵ Cf. Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.53, in which Patrikios and Hypatios' cowardice was stressed.

¹³⁶ Prok. Wars 1.9.22. For other cases in classical antiquity, see Garnsey 1990: 133-46, Stathakopoulos 2004: 81-7.

¹³⁷ Josh. Styl. 77.

¹³⁸ Prok. Wars 1.9.22, cf. *ibid.*, 7.16.2.

practised by two women, who killed and ate seventeen male strangers who lodged in their house in the nearby areas of Ariminum,¹³⁹ Prokopios preserved no further information about the situation among the Amidenes. In Syriac texts the devouring of human flesh seems to have been practised only by women. The surviving women began to form groups and hunted for their possible prey in Amida at the time of sunset or daybreak, ‘seized some of the men by seduction, by deceit, and by craftiness’,¹⁴⁰ and more than 500 men were eaten by them. In addition, ‘...anyone they came across whom they could overpower, whether woman, child...old man, they would pull indoors, kill and eat, either boiled or roasted’.¹⁴¹ While both Pseudo-Joshua and Zachariah may allude to Flavius Josephus’ renowned passage about the cannibalism in the siege of Jerusalem,¹⁴² the hunting and devouring of men by women as predators can also be seen to symbolise the subversion of the traditional values and social order among the desperate Amidenes, as cannibalism, because of its disgusting and monstrous connotation, has often been ‘used to “other” particular groups...(including) working classes, women, homosexuals’.¹⁴³

Having learned of this gruesome activity, the Persian governors executed some of those responsible and prohibited these women from doing such things again, possibly in order to control the situation as far as they could. However, they still permitted them to devour dead bodies. Things seem to have become worse because of the coming of winter ‘with a great deal of snow and ice’:¹⁴⁴ even the Roman soldiers outside Amida, who seem to have enjoyed plenty of supplies,¹⁴⁵ became too weak to stand it,¹⁴⁶ and began to either desert their camps or retreat to winter quarters. The situation of those inside Amida must have been even less favourable, and many must have died.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.20.27-9.

¹⁴⁰ *Zach.* HE 7.5.

¹⁴¹ *Josh. Styl.* 77.

¹⁴² *Zach.* HE 7.5. See *J. BJ* 6.193-213 for Josephus’ accounts.

¹⁴³ *Brown* 2013: 4, cf. *Goldman* 1999: 1-2.

¹⁴⁴ *Josh. Styl.* 81, *Prok. Wars* 1.9.2.

¹⁴⁵ *Josh. Styl.* 77.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

Meanwhile, those staying outside Amida, including both the besieging Romans and the Persian reinforcements, noticed the shortage of food experienced by both the Amidenes and the Persians. According to Pseudo-Joshua, the Persian *astabed* (the general or the chief of an army of the Sasanian Empire)¹⁴⁷ outside Amida, knowing that his fellow Persians under siege were distressed by hunger, tried to provide them with food.¹⁴⁸ His endeavour proved to be in vain because the supply group which consisted of 300 camels was destroyed by the Romans.¹⁴⁹ The hunger of the Amidenes was relieved possibly after the Romans re-occupied Amida, when a supply column, possibly dispatched by Anastasios, was sent from Edessa in order to replenish the granaries there.¹⁵⁰ The remaining citizens must have been tormented by the lack of provisions for a considerable period of time.

While no statistical data on rates of mortality in the famine of Amida can be computed, the scale of such a great disaster can be gauged from contemporary accounts. It seems that some corpses were disposed inside the city for a certain period of time, and it was not until the re-establishment of Roman imperial rule at this city that they were removed: having re-occupied Amida at the end of 504, the citizens from surrounding areas were recruited to remove the corpses out of this place and received their due salaries.¹⁵¹ Although the employment of these people might have resulted from Anastasios' eagerness to restore the damaged social and daily life in Amida as effectively as possible, the employment of outsiders suggests the shortage of manpower in Amida: the casualties of famine might have been so great that most inhabitants perished before the arrival of the Romans, and the emperor had to renew the city by introducing other non-Amidenes.

Apart from the calamities of the Amidenes at the very beginning of the sixth century, no famine is related of any other city besieged by the Persians in the sixth century. When the forces led by Kawād's generals besieged Martyropolis in 531, the

¹⁴⁷ Christensen 1944: 136, Greatrex 1998: 104.

¹⁴⁸ Josh. Styl. 80.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 83.

inhabitants were faced with a lack of provisions,¹⁵² but the Sasanids retreated without achieving their objective,¹⁵³ and no further information regarding the famine among the defenders can be noted. In 573 Kōsrow I laid siege to Dara for six months, and in the end the Romans agreed to let the Persians occupy their city due to the lack of necessities.¹⁵⁴ However, neither John of Ephesos nor any other contemporary authors stated that those who stayed in Dara suffered from famine.

More discussion regarding the nature of the Persian wars and the situation of the Empire in the sixth century should be provided to investigate why the Romans did not experience a similar fate as the Amidenes during the reign of Anastasios. Here, one possible explanatory factor is the length of sieges. Dionysios Stathakopoulos suggested that in cases of famine, the average duration of larger cities' sieges would have been more or less one year, while the smaller sites would have capitulated within six months.¹⁵⁵ While the shah besieged the frontier cities and citadels like Amida and Dara for several months, it was less possible for his expeditionary troops to launch a prolonged siege against the Romans at cities like Antioch, Apamea and Beroea, and sometimes the Sasanids themselves encountered problems with provisions.¹⁵⁶ In fact, in most cases the Great King's soldiers subdued the Roman resistance promptly and swiftly, and neither Greek nor Syriac authors ever reported that they intended to blockade a city and starve the Romans.

While the length of a Roman city's siege could have been a decisive factor that led to famine among the defenders, a proper supply of necessities would have surely reduced the risk for provision shortages. At the local level, some epigraphical evidence of the construction of granaries at individual cities can be noted. At the end of the fifth century the bishop Andreas supervised the construction of a public granary

¹⁵² Prok. Wars 1.21.8.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 1.21.27, Zach. HE 9.6, Mal. 18.66.

¹⁵⁴ Only John of Ephesos mentioned this piece of information, Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, cf. Prok. Wars 6.27.25, in which the Goths, having been tormented by famine during the siege of Fisula, decided to surrender and *ibid.*, 7.16.3, where the Romans at Placentia accepted the Goths' terms after being tormented by famine and cannibalism in 545.

¹⁵⁵ Stathakopoulos 2004: 47.

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Prok. Wars 2.21.16, cf. *ibid.*, 2.6.6.

at Arethusa (modern Al-Rastan, Syria).¹⁵⁷ In May 543, a granary was established at Konstantia under the supervision of bishop Thomas.¹⁵⁸

It was not until the news of the Amidenes' sufferings became known to Anastasios that the emperor ordered that a store should be established in every city of the Empire, presumably in order to stockpile provisions for the citizens.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, clearly the emperor was aware of the importance for adequate supplies during wartime. In 531, Justinian dispatched the former praetorian prefect Demosthenes with money to ensure that enough food was provided in the cities, such as Antioch, Edessa¹⁶⁰ and those of Osrhoene, to cope with possible attacks and sieges launched by the Persians in the coming future.

With Dara being one of the most important citadels in north Mesopotamia, the emperors must have always ensured its supply of provisions in the sixth century. According to Prokopios, 'there is always an abundant supply of all manner of provisions...stored away against a siege' during the reign of Justinian.¹⁶¹ He also related that the inhabitants of both Dara and Nisibis 'put away the annual food-supply in public store-houses', for these two cities would surely have become the targets of invading enemies.¹⁶² In the second half of the sixth century, Menander the Guardsman reported that Justin II dispatched John, the son of Domnentiolos, to this frontier city to restore the water supply and to 'deal with other needs of the inhabitants'.¹⁶³ We have no idea what the needs of Dara's citizens would have been, but replenishing necessities must have been important. The Romans could, therefore, have withstood the Great King's siege for sixth months in 573 without experiencing famine.

¹⁵⁷ *IGLS* 2081.

¹⁵⁸ Humann and Puchstein 1890: 405. For the translation, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 243. I owe this information to Geoffrey Greatrex.

¹⁵⁹ Josh. Styl. 81. See, for example, Bell and Mango 1982: 103 for the case of Dara.

¹⁶⁰ Mal. 18.63, Chr. Ede. 100 on the arrival of Demosthenes at Edessa.

¹⁶¹ Prok. Wars 8.7.6-7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.19.20.

¹⁶³ Menander fr. 9.1. See Prok. Aed. 2.2.1-3, 26 for Justinian's endeavors to control the river Cordes.

Sexual violence

In classical antiquity both male and female populations could have become the victims of sexual violence during wartime.¹⁶⁴ In the sixth-century Persian wars, however, only cases concerning women were reported. Although neither the Romans' attitudes to these events nor women's understanding and perception of their fate were recorded in detail, both their treatment at the hands of the Sasanids and their response in wartime can still be recovered.

Concubinage and sexual relations with the conquerors

Both distinguished and ordinary women could have been treated as either concubines or sex slaves in wartime. After their city was conquered by Kawād in 503, Prokopios noted that a few remaining Amidenes 'were destined to minister as servants to the daily wants' (οἱ δὴ ἐς τὴν διαίταν ὑπηρετήσειν Πέρσαις ἔμελλον)¹⁶⁵ of the Sasanids. While in this passage Prokopios' language is rather ambiguous, what he wrote can be viewed together with Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*. When the Persians encountered the lack of provisions later, they still distributed food among the female citizens for they were 'useful': 'they (i.e. the Sasanids) committed adultery with them and needed them to grind and bake for them'.¹⁶⁶ Hence some of the remaining Roman women could have become domestic servants/slaves to satisfy the victors' daily needs, while others could have been forced into sexual service.

The sexual violence against Roman women during the Persian wars is not confined to the cities conquered or occupied by the Sasanids, and the presence of Roman soldiers could sometimes have been a threat for the local female population as well. In the first years of the sixth century, the Empire's billeting soldiers 'had their way over the women in the streets and houses'.¹⁶⁷ In addition, events in Martyropolis,

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, the cases collected in Williams 1999: 104-7.

¹⁶⁵ Prok. Wars 1.7.33.

¹⁶⁶ Josh. Styl. 76.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 86. In the well-known *Euphemia and the Goth*, a billeting soldier even had children with a widow's daughter at the end of the fourth century, *Euphemia and the Goth*, 11-2, trans. by Francis Crawford Burkitt 1913: 133-4.

an important Roman frontier city seized by the Persians, though not through siege, in 589,¹⁶⁸ should also be examined. Having controlled this city, Sittas, the Roman deserter,¹⁶⁹ ‘kept inside the majority of women in the prime of life...expelled everyone else except for a few slaves’,¹⁷⁰ presumably with the help of a contingent of Persian soldiers. The information we have regarding the situation inside Martyropolis during the Persians’ occupation is rather meagre: all we know is that while the Romans failed to win it back,¹⁷¹ this city was eventually handed back by K̄osrow II around two years later in return for Maurice’s aid, and Sittas was executed.¹⁷² Although further investigation on these women’s fates cannot be made, Euagrios’ language implies that they were treated as concubines, and in any case they must have been at the mercy of Sittas and the Persian soldiers.

In other cases some distinguished women in conquered places were regarded as a kind of reward to be bestowed on Roman deserters. The experience of Constantine, a senator,¹⁷³ and probably the *comes Armeniae* at that time,¹⁷⁴ is a good example. Having been defeated at Theodosiopolis, he surrendered the city to the Persians in the summer of 502.¹⁷⁵ Later on Kawād rewarded him with ‘two eminent women of Amida’,¹⁷⁶ presumably after the fall of Amida. Constantine, however, was forgiven by the emperor in the end: when he went back to the Empire with these concubines after finding out that it was profitless to join the cause of the Sasanids, Anastasios simply ordered a bishop to ordain him priest. Nothing, however, about the eventual fate of

¹⁶⁸ Euagr. HE 6.14, Th. Sim. 3.5.11-6.

¹⁶⁹ On the possible status of Sittas, see Whitby 2000: 305.

¹⁷⁰ Euagr. HE 6.14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 6.14-5, cf. Th. Sim. 4.2.1.

¹⁷² Ibid., 6.19, Th. Sim. 4.15.6-12.

¹⁷³ Theoph. A.M. 5996.

¹⁷⁴ See Prok. Aed 3.1.27 for the limited armed forces at the disposal in coping with possible threats.

¹⁷⁵ Josh. Styl. 48.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 74. Malalas’ account, in which Constantine, who defended Theodosiopolis bravely, died later in the territory of the Persians, Mal. 16.9, should be objected, Greatrex 1998: 75, *PLRE* II: s.v. Constantinus 14.

these two women is recorded. Another example comes from Kōsrow I's campaign in the spring of 540. Having sacked Sura, the shah, 'either through motives of humanity or of avarice, or as granting a favour to a woman whom he had taken as a captive from the city', decided to release the captured Romans from this city.¹⁷⁷ This beautiful woman, Euphemia, could have been deported to Persia because she, having been favoured by the Great King, became his concubine,¹⁷⁸ but neither Prokopios nor other contemporary text preserved any further information related to her ultimate fate.

In short, the fate of these distinguished Roman women in a captured city seems to have been somewhat different from that reserved towards the Empire's ordinary women. While those who came from the higher strata of the Empire's society were treated as concubines of either high ranking Roman deserters or the Great King himself, the majority of the Empire's ordinary women could have served as the Persians' slaves/servants after the enemy occupied their city. Recently, Leif Petersen argued that defenders' concerns for their own families would play a crucial role in their decisions during sieges.¹⁷⁹ It can be equally be assumed that the Sasanids might possibly have managed to demonstrate their lenience towards the defeated Roman social elites. If this were the case, then the different treatment of Roman women from varying social strata in a captured city would have had political and propagandistic appeal. In the middle of the fourth century, Shapur II treated the wife of Craugasius of Nisibis, 'a man distinguished among the officials of his town for family, reputation and influence',¹⁸⁰ benevolently, hoping that her husband would turn to the cause of the Persians and surrender Nisibis to him.¹⁸¹ The scarcity of further information during the sixth century, however, prevents us from reaching a solid conclusion.

Rape

¹⁷⁷ Prok. Wars 2.5.28.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Petersen 2013: 320.

¹⁸⁰ Ammianus 18.10.1.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 18.10.3.

The female population inside a conquered Roman city could have either been raped by the victorious Sasanids or suffered from the threat of being violated sexually.¹⁸² In 540, one Roman citizen of Apamea approached K̄osrow I and accused a certain Persian of ‘entering his house and violating his maiden daughter’ (ἐς τὴν οἰκίαν τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀναβάντα τὴν παῖδα οὕσαν παρθένον βιάζεσθαι).¹⁸³ The Romans, as Prokopios noted, had surrendered this metropolis to K̄osrow I.¹⁸⁴ Thus, it may be safe to say that even in such a relatively peaceful case, the presence of the shah’s soldiers could have been a threat for local women. The role played by the Great King and the Apameans in this event needs to be discussed further. If Prokopios is right, K̄osrow I’s attitude changed several times. At the beginning, he ordered that this rapist should be executed, but he later promised that the culprit would be released to the Apameans because of the entreaty of other Romans. However, in the end, the shah impaled this Persian, perhaps at his camp outside the city.¹⁸⁵ Upon discovering that the shah would execute the rapist, the people (ὁ δῆμος) of Apamea ‘raised a mighty shout as loud as they could, demanding that the man be saved from the king’s anger’ (γνοὺς δὲ ... παντὶ σθένει ἀνέκραγον ἐξαίσιον οἶον, πρὸς τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ὀργῆς ὀργῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐξαιτούμενοι).¹⁸⁶

While the Apameans seem to have protested against the shah’s will, an act through which, according to Henning Börm, the Romans’ moral superiority was stressed,¹⁸⁷ a brief review of the context of K̄osrow I’s arrival and stay in this metropolis is needed both to check the credibility of Prokopios’ report and to see whether the surrendered Romans dared to argue with a shah who had just sacked another metropolis several days earlier. The arrival of the Sasanids resulted in horror

¹⁸² For other cases of classical antiquity, see Harris 1979: 52-3, Schaps 1982: 193-213, Pritchett 1991: 238-42, C. R. Whittaker 2004: 129-32, T. Whittaker 2009: 234-42. Recently see Gaca 2010-1: 85-109, 2014: 305-11, 324-57 for philological studies.

¹⁸³ Prok. Wars 2.11.36.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.11.21-3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.11.37-8.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 2.11.38.

¹⁸⁷ Börm 2007: 99.

among the Apameans,¹⁸⁸ and they ‘implored their bishop to bring forth and display...the saving and life-giving Wood of the Cross, so that for the last time they might see and kiss the sole salvation of mankind and receive a passage to the other life’.¹⁸⁹ Later, K̅osrow I selected ‘two hundred of the best of the Persians’ (ἄνδρας τῶν ἐν Πέραις ἀρίστων διακοσίους),¹⁹⁰ and entered this metropolis with them. Since the Romans had already surrendered their city before the Persians reached it,¹⁹¹ the decision to elect these ‘best men among all of them’ to accompany the shah might thus have been considered a ‘spectacle’ to glorify the strength and might of the Persians.¹⁹² In addition, later the shah ordered that a chariot contest be conducted in the hippodrome.¹⁹³ When he learned that Justinian supported the Blue faction, K̅osrow I hoped that the Greens would win.¹⁹⁴ At the beginning things did not go to plan, and the Blue faction had the upper hand.¹⁹⁵ The Great King’s reaction is interesting: ‘thinking that this had been done purposely...he cried out with a threat that the Caesar had wrongfully surpassed the others...commanded that the horses which were running in front should be held up’.¹⁹⁶ This time the Roman circus, according to Alan Cameron, as ‘a backdrop against which the emperor could act out in due pomp his role as divine ruler, victor in war, and provider of peace’,¹⁹⁷ was introduced by K̅osrow I as a means both to celebrate his victory, and, possibly, to stress the opposition between himself/the Persians and Justinian/the Romans deliberately.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁸ Prok. Wars 2.11.16.

¹⁸⁹ Euagr. HE 4.26.

¹⁹⁰ Prok. Wars 2.11.24.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 2.11.22-3, Euagr. HE 4.26.

¹⁹² See Menander fr. 18.6, and Th. Sim. 1.15.2 for similar strategies used by the Persians and the Romans respectively.

¹⁹³ Prok. Wars 2.11.31.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.11.32.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.11.33-4.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.11.35.

¹⁹⁷ Al. Cameron 1976: 182.

¹⁹⁸ See Dagron 2011: 245 for other sixth-century examples.

Therefore the shah's authority and prowess were established, albeit temporarily, at different occasions in this metropolis, and at the same time the Apameans must have been intimidated. Since the accuser may have come before the shah soon after (ἐνταυθα) the end of the chariot race, it is not impossible that the people of Apamea were gathered either at the hippodrome or at another public place. Indeed, acclamation was a common way through which public opinion could be conveyed in Late Antiquity,¹⁹⁹ but it is difficult to believe that the inhabitants would have felt able to demand K̅osrow I's mercy under such circumstances.

The Apameans' supplication, therefore, could have been made up by Prokopios. This episode can be compared with the situation inside Naples while occupied by the Goths to explain Prokopios' possible purpose for inserting this event. At that time, a certain Roman came before Totila, and charged one of the bodyguards with raping his maiden daughter (τὴν παῖδα παρθένον οὗσαν οὗτι ἐκουσίαν βιάσασθαι).²⁰⁰ Unlike what happened in Apamea, this time it was the Gothic aristocrats who approached their leader and asked for the rapist's release.²⁰¹ Totila, however, refused to do so and executed this soldier, giving the Roman girl all of the culprit's belongings.²⁰² It is shown that while sexual violence against Roman women may not have been uncommon in enemy-occupied cities, contemporary authors could have employed these events for their own purposes. Whereas Totila acted as the guardian of justice, in the case of Apamea, as Henning Börm rightly argued, the Great King was a ruler who 'was ready to agree to everything and to pledge the agreement with an oath, and much more ready to forget completely the things lately agreed to and sworn to by him'²⁰³ for breaking his previous promise.²⁰⁴

Even though the women themselves were not raped by the invading enemies, the prospect of sexual violence was horrifying. In 540, two 'illustrious women of

¹⁹⁹ Roueché 1984: 181-99, Potter 1996: 129-60, Bowersock et al. 1999: 274-5, cf.

Roueché 2009: 169-77 for the cases in religious contexts.

²⁰⁰ Prok. Wars 7.8.12.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 7.8.14.

²⁰² Ibid., 7.8.15-25.

²⁰³ Ibid., 2.9.8, see also ibid., 2.11.24, cf. 2.12.34.

²⁰⁴ Börm 2007: 99.

Antioch' (γυναῖκας τῶν <ἐν> Ἀντιοχεῦσιν ἐπιφανῶν δύο) 'got outside the fortifications' (ἔξω τοῦ περιβόλου) after this metropolis was captured by the Persians. While the calamities and chaos inside Antioch could possibly have instigated their flight, clearly being violated by the Persians must have been a much more dreadful threat. Instead of escaping to the neighboring areas of Antioch and taking refuge at safer places, they, according to Prokopios, '...perceiving that they would fall into the hands of the enemy (for they were already plainly seen going about everywhere) (αἰσθομένας δὲ ὡς ὑπὸ τοῖς πολεμίοις γενήσονται πανταχόσε γὰρ ἤδη περιόντες καθεωρῶντο), went running to the River Orontes. In other words these women might have understood that in any case they would be doomed to be violated. Later, having been horrified by the prospect of being raped by the enemy in the coming future (φοβουμένας δὲ μή τι σφᾶς ἐς τὸ σῶμα ὑβρίσωσι Πέρσαι), they 'covered their faces with their veils and threw themselves into the river's current'.²⁰⁵

Since the clothing style of Roman women always played a predominant role in the construction of their status, identity and gender in society, the wearing of veils in Prokopios' vignette above may have had special meanings and connotations. It is possible that the veils were used to hide their faces, making it difficult for the Persians to know their identity and gender after their death, and their clothing style might have been influenced by the customs of those living in inland areas of Roman Syria, where women usually kept their heads covered with veils and decorated bands.²⁰⁶ Two more observations can be made. Since it was difficult for those who wore veils to perform manual labour, this clothing style must have been a 'privilege' for noblewomen.²⁰⁷ Also, the display of Roman women's bodies was seen as the neglect of modesty which might have been associated with sexual immorality, and a married woman

²⁰⁵ Prok. Wars 2.8.35, cf. Prok. Anecd. 7.37-8 in which an aristocratic woman committed suicide by jumping into the Bosphorus after being seized by circus partisans. The threat of sexual violence was implied: 'many unwilling boys were compelled to enter into unholy intercourse with the Factionists... women, too, while living with husbands, had to submit to this same treatment', *ibid.*, 7.36-7. I owe this point to Geoffrey Greatrex.

²⁰⁶ Croom 2010: 129-30.

²⁰⁷ Olson 2008b: 45-6.

should wear a veil,²⁰⁸ as a mark of her virtues,²⁰⁹ to cover her head in public life. In this context, this clothing style was a symbol of these Antiochene women's purity and chastity, both physical and spiritual.

The suicide of 2,000 virgins²¹⁰

John of Ephesos' *Church History* includes arguably the most significant, and possibly the most detailed narrative regarding the potential threats of sexual violence suffered by Roman women in the Persian wars. John gave quite a lengthy account of the mass suicide of Roman virgins who were captured by the Sasanids in 573. This story could have become well-known among the Christians in the Near East. While it circulated independently,²¹¹ different versions of this story were preserved by many important Syriac historical works as well.²¹² When the Armenian version of the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian was translated in the thirteenth century, the mass suicide of these Roman virgins was preserved, albeit in abridged form.²¹³ More significantly, Bar Hebraeus removed this event from the Arabic version of his *Chronography*.²¹⁴ These Roman virgins' deeds and suicide were thus deemed unimportant for the Arabic

²⁰⁸ Clark 1993: 108: 'veiling connoted modesty as well as marriage'. On the wearing of veils by Roman women, see Treggiari 1991: 163, Croom 2010: 112, Edmondson 2008: 27, Olson 2008b 93-5, cf. MacMullen 1980: 208-18, cf. Beard 1980: 13.

²⁰⁹ Croom 2010: 89, Olson 2008a: 147, 2008b: 34-5, 89.

²¹⁰ See above, pp. 71-6.

²¹¹ See, for example, cod. Vat. Syr. 145, in which the scribe mentioned this event after the brief account of Dara and Apamea's fall in 573, Greatrex 2006a: 52. For the manuscript of this text, see Assemanus 1759: 263. I owe this information to Geoffrey Greatrex.

²¹² Chr. Seert 1.3, Mich. Syr. 10.10, 14.2, Chr. 1234 69, Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.84.

²¹³ In the nineteenth century two versions of this work were published at Jerusalem, but none of them were translated. Victor Langlois' translation was based on other recent manuscripts, Schmidt 2013: 98-101.

²¹⁴ See Hambye 1990: 406, Conrad 1994: 319-78, Aigle 2005: 92, 94-5, 106-7 for the possible audience of this work.

readers. Such a difference makes it clear that the story might have been a shared cultural heritage which was transmitted only among the Syriac-speaking community in the medieval near east.

The historical background of this event in John of Ephesos' text fits into the relations between the Sasanids and the nomads in the second half of the sixth century. These virgins were regarded as the Persians' gifts to those who inhabited 'the heart of his territories', i.e. the Turks, in order to please and then hire them. What he said can actually be compared with the account of an Arabic text, the so-called *Sirat Anusharwan*, 'Life of *Ḳosrow Anushawan*', in which the details about the recruitment of the Turks in the reign of *Ḳosrow I* were preserved.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, the anachronism of other medieval texts is clear, and the use of the same story in different periods suggests that it can fit into different contexts by different authors. The author of the *Chronicle of Seert* considered the transportation of these virgins to be the results of the conflicts between Rome and Persia in the mid-third century, and it was Shapur I who decided to send them in order to please the Hephthalites.²¹⁶ Since the Hephthalites had not been a menace at the north-eastern frontier of the Sasanian Empire in the third century,²¹⁷ this dating should be rejected. Similar problems are discernible in the Armenian version of Michael the Syrian's work, in which the scribe confused the Turks with the Hephthalites, stating that the shah sent these 'gifts' to the Thedaliens (the Hephthalites) because the Sasanids wanted to wage war against the Romans, the Armenians and the Dadjiks (the Tajik people?).²¹⁸ The claim regarding the possible recruitment by the Sasanids should be rejected on the ground that apparently the Hephthalites had been vanquished, if not totally, by the Turks well

²¹⁵ Cf. Joh. Eph. HE 6.22. In 568, four Turkish tribes submitted to Persia, and the warriors, along with their wives, children and servants were permitted to inhabit the territory of the Persians, *Sirat Anusharwan* 9. Grignaschi 1966: 23-4, Bonner 2011: 85-7. On the history of the Turks in the sixth century, see von Gabain 1983: 613-7, Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996: 327-34.

²¹⁶ Chr. Seert 1.3.

²¹⁷ They had been a menacing threat for the Sasanids from the reign of Yazdegerd II (r. 438-57), Litvinsky 1996: 138-41.

²¹⁸ Langlois 1868: 207.

before the Syrian campaign of Justin.²¹⁹ Interestingly enough, Michael the Syrian inserted this story for the second time when he talked about the Turks,²²⁰ suggesting that it took place when Shapur I destroyed Dara.²²¹ Since Dara had not been founded in the third century, once again the anachronism of this passage is clear.

The suicide of these 2,000 Roman virgins, therefore, cannot be taken at face value. In fact, the literary study of this event in chapter 2 suggests a variety of literary traditions were introduced by these Christian authors and then intertwined.²²² In addition, some scholars regard the suicide of 2,000 virgins as a fabricated episode. Erich Kettenhofen argued that this story should be read as hagiography rather than history,²²³ while Jan van Ginkel pointed out that the focus of these historians were thus the integrity, chastity and faithfulness of these Roman virgins—‘martyrs for the Christian faith’.²²⁴

Sometimes the enemy’s rape of the Empire’s female ascetics was recorded in great detail in Late Antiquity. For example, when the Kutrigurs ransacked the Empire in the second half of the sixth century, according to Agathias, ‘many ladies of noble birth who had chose a life of chastity were cruelly dragged away...being forced to serve as the instruments of unbridled lust’.²²⁵ Some of them, who lived ascetic lives for they ‘from their youth renounced marriage together with the love of material things...hidden themselves in the contemplative solitude of the cloister...withdrawing themselves entirely from active life’, were raped as well.²²⁶

²¹⁹ Widengren 1952: 69-94, Grignaschi 1980: 219-48.

²²⁰ Mich. Syr. 14.1. Michael the Syrian clearly mingled this event with other sources which may come from Muslim or Georgian sources in this passage, Rapp 2003: 257, 267, Witakowski 2007: 259. I owe this information to Dickens 2006: 439.

²²¹ Ibid., 14.2.

²²² See above, pp. 71-6.

²²³ Kettenhofen 1996: 301. Some scholars chose to consider the capture and suicide of them as historical information and even tried to identify the place where these virgins committed suicide. Suermann 1992: 45, Turtledove 1977: 218.

²²⁴ van Ginkel 1995: 156.

²²⁵ Agath. 5.13.2.

²²⁶ Ibid., 5.13.2-3.

However, it is not the case in the suicide of the 2,000 Roman virgins. Neither John of Ephesos nor other oriental Christian historians provided any further information regarding these virgins' identity in their texts. John of Ephesos designated them as maidens (*laimta*).²²⁷ We will probably never know whether John's original version was based on some Romans' actual calamities in the Persian wars. Nevertheless, since some female populations of other Roman cities, as shown above,²²⁸ were treated as concubines in the sixth century, it is not implausible to say that some maidens were actually deported together with other prisoners of war and even faced the threat of sexual violence.

Loss and destruction of property

The removal and destruction of property or buildings is another important dimension of citizens' wartime experiences in the conquered cities. Although nothing related to what the Sasanids captured from the Empire can be found today, the results of archaeological excavations sometimes prove to be helpful in estimating the scale of destruction at certain places. In this section I will analyze both literary and material data to study the Persians' plundering and destruction in the conquered cities.

Plundering

In exercising control over the conquered cities, the victorious Sasanids were regularly said to seize valuable goods from the Romans. While the possessions of those living in Roman cities such as Sura was plundered,²²⁹ the most detailed accounts come from those related to Antioch, Apamea and certain frontier cities. In the sack of Amida the removal of citizens' property possibly took place after the massacre.²³⁰ In 540, K̄osrow I ordered that all possessions should be plundered from Antioch after

²²⁷ If these virgins had been ascetics, surely John would have the appropriate term such as *b'tula*, *TS* 1.624, J. Smith 1903: 57. I owe this information to Shahîd 1995: 732.

²²⁸ See above, pp. 113-5.

²²⁹ *Prok. Wars* 2.5.26.

²³⁰ *Zach. HE* 7.4.

resistance was suppressed.²³¹ After the conquest of Dara, the shah seized wealth from the inhabitants and then pillaged the whole city,²³² ordering that ‘who had gold should bring it to him’, and all bullion found in this border city, including those from churches and other places, should be gathered to his tent.²³³ In the same year, having seized Apamea by trickery, the Persians, on the third day after the agreement,²³⁴ made the inhabitants into prisoners of war, perhaps in order to facilitate their looting and plundering, and then began to pillage the city.²³⁵

The treasures of the church were one of the most important targets of the invaders.²³⁶ Sometimes the victorious shah himself visited places, especially churches, in the conquered cities, possibly in order to inspect the possible wealth accumulated inside these buildings. When Kawād entered the treasury of the church and took the sacred gold and silver vessels, his soldiers ‘trampled on the consecrated elements...(and) stripped its churches’.²³⁷ In 540, the possessions of the church of Antioch became the target of K̅osrow I: he went to the church of Antioch together with the Roman ambassadors (αὐτὸς δὲ ξὺν τοῖς πρέσβεσιν ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ἄκρας κατέβαιναν, ὅπερ ἐκκλησίαν καλοῦσιν).²³⁸ The Great King was said to have been ‘seated on the tower which is on the height’ (Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Χοσρόης ἐν πύργῳ τῷ κατὰ τὴν ἄκραν) when the Sasanids were rushing into Antioch,²³⁹ perhaps this means that he was staying at a safer place just outside the city until his soldiers took control. Its wealth must have been significant: the shah plundered it as his own booty, and

²³¹ Prok. Wars 2.9.14-5.

²³² Joh. Eph. 5, Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Chr. 1234 66.

²³³ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

²³⁴ Th. Sim. 3.10.9.

²³⁵ Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

²³⁶ For the examples of other parts of the Mediterranean world, see Agath. 2.1.7-8 for the destruction and plundering by the Alamanni and Th. Sim. 7.14.11-2 for the Avars’ pillage of the martyr’s grave at Drizipera.

²³⁷ Josh. Styl. 53, cf. Villagomez and Morony 1999: 311-2.

²³⁸ Prok. Wars 2.9.14.

²³⁹ Ibid., 2.8.30.

according to Prokopios, ‘departed possessed of enormous wealth’.²⁴⁰ Two years later, a cross decorated with gold and precious stones which was dedicated by Theodora, was seized by K̅osrow I from Sergiopolis.²⁴¹ Since at that time the Sergiopolitans agreed to ransom their city with sacred treasures,²⁴² in this case the cross was regarded as a part of ransom rather than booty. When K̅osrow II occupied the throne with the help of Maurice, he sent this relic back to Gregory, the patriarch of Antioch.²⁴³ Finally, the churches of Dara were plundered by the Persians in the winter of 573. We are informed that the shah plundered more than one or two hundred *kentenaria*²⁴⁴ of gold from this city,²⁴⁵ but no further detail regarding the scale and detail of the church’s wealth can be found.

The removal of relics must have been noteworthy for Roman Christians, because while they did not always elaborate the quantity and quality of what the invading Persians had carried away from the Empire, many of them recorded the seizure of such items in their works. Being one of the most well-known relics in the Empire which was honoured by Christians ‘on the days appointed for adorations’,²⁴⁶ the fate of the fragment of the True Cross from Apamea is worth more analysis.²⁴⁷ In the reign of Justin II, the fragment of the True Cross at Apamea had been divided into two

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.9.15.

²⁴¹ Th. Sim. 5.13.2, Euagr. HE 6.21. Theophylaktos’s account, in which Sergiopolis was subdued by K̅osrow I’s soldiers, was at variance with both Prokopios and Euagrios.

²⁴² Euagr. HE 4.28.

²⁴³ Ibid., 6.21, Th. Sim. 5.13.1-2, see also Higgins 1955: 89-102, Allen 1981: 259-61, Canepa 2009: 26.

²⁴⁴ One *kentenaarion* equals to 100 Roman lbs. (32 kg), see Greatrex 1998: 272, ODB 1121.

²⁴⁵ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5. The anonymous medieval author suggested that the Persians collected 200 *kentenaria* of gold and silver, Chr. 1234 66.

²⁴⁶ Euagr. HE 4.26.

²⁴⁷ For the veneration of the True Cross, see Frolow 1961: 320-39, Wortley 2009: 1-10.

pieces in Antioch.²⁴⁸ While this relic, along with the icon of Kamouliana,²⁴⁹ was later transported to Constantinople by the imperial envoy Zemarchos, presumably in order to protect the capital of the Empire from the threats of misfortunes, the other half was kept in Apamea.²⁵⁰ When the men of Adarmahan ravaged Apamea in 573, a priest hid it inside a well so that the enemies could not capture it. Even though he was taken captive by the Persians, the priest, ‘was able in some way or another’,²⁵¹ to inform Magnos²⁵² where he had placed the True Cross. Magnos then told Varanes, a local aristocrat of Apamea, who in the end found this relic and sent it to the capital of the Romans.

Clearly the Sasanids noticed the wealth possessed by the Empire’s secular elites, and their property was removed as well. In 542 K̅osrow I aimed to invade Palestine and plunder Jerusalem because ‘...this was...peopled by wealthy inhabitants’ (χώραν...πολυχρύσων οικητόρων).²⁵³ In Amida, the Sasanids took beautiful clothes from Ishaq bar Bar’ai, a powerful and rich (honorary)²⁵⁴ consul who had bequeathed his wealth to the church several years before. A record about Ishaq’s wealth and power at that time can be further found in the works of John of Ephesos, in which he, as a patrician, was portrayed as a ‘mighty and great and eminent above all who were in the East’.²⁵⁵ Finally, even the building materials of civic buildings were not spared.

²⁴⁸ Mich. Syr. 10.1.

²⁴⁹ Cedrenus 1.684-5. Kitzinger 1954: 99-100, 114-5, Cameron 1979: 18ff, Klein 2004: 288.

²⁵⁰ Menander fr. 17, Mich. Syr. 10.1. Glanville Downey dated this event to the reign of Tiberios II, Downey 1961: 564. However, according to both Menander and Michael the Syrian’s works, it is evident that it was Justin II, after listening the advice of the patriarch of Constantinople, ask his envoy to transport this relic to the capital.

²⁵¹ Menander fr. 17.

²⁵² On the life of Magnos, see Feissel 1985: 465-76. I owe this information to D. Kennedy 2010: 182-3.

²⁵³ Prok. Wars 2.20.18. See below, pp. 209-10 for further analysis of this statement.

²⁵⁴ *PLRE* II: s.v. Isaac 1.

²⁵⁵ Joh. Eph. *Lives*, *PO* 17.191.

In Amida bronze statues, sundials and marbles were collected,²⁵⁶ while in the sack of Antioch, beautiful marble slabs, stones and even pictures were pillaged and exported into the land of the Persians.²⁵⁷

In the end the victorious enemies sent the booty back to their homeland. Sometimes they simply carried what they had plundered with them, possibly returning back to the Persian Empire directly, and in other instances, as the case of Adarmahan's forces in 573 shows, the Sasanids left²⁵⁸ Apamea and rejoined Kōsrow I's forces as quickly as possible.²⁵⁹ That is, the booty from this metropolis would have been held by Adarmahan's soldiers possibly until the fall of Dara. The Sasanids sometimes used other more effective ways to transport the valuable goods. In 503, after seizing booty and 'everything they liked',²⁶⁰ they placed their loot on rafts and send it back to their country that way²⁶¹ because Amida was located not very far away from the river Tigris.

Apart from being pillaged by the victorious Sasanids as booty, local people's property could have been looted by Roman soldiers, as well. At the beginning of the sixth century, Roman soldiers billeted many eastern cities. Sometimes the social elites could have been spared from being afflicted with such experiences, and those from Edessa chose to pay money and to provide necessities to the Roman army in advance,²⁶² while in other cases, according to Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, both 'nobles and commoners'²⁶³ became victims.

²⁵⁶ Zach. HE 7.4. On late antique public clocks, see Anderson 2014: 23-32.

²⁵⁷ Prok. Wars 2.9.16, Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.54, Ps. Dion. II.64, Mic. Styl. 9.24, Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.79. See also Foss 2003: 157 for the Great King's appropriation of such building materials from Edessa in the seventh century.

²⁵⁸ Euagr. HE 5.10.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Joh. Epiph. 4, in which the Sasanids led by Adarmahan returned to their country directly.

²⁶⁰ Zach. HE 7.4.

²⁶¹ Ibid

²⁶² Josh. Styl. 93.

²⁶³ Ibid., 86.

In Prokopios' *Wars*, a Roman countryman approached Glones, the Persian commander who was in charge of defending Amida, saying that 'when some Roman soldiers chanced upon me (for, as you know, they are constantly wandering about the country here in small bands and doing violence to the miserable country-folk), they inflicted upon me blows...taking away everything'.²⁶⁴ Although a close reading of Prokopios' text indicates that what this merchant said was actually a pretext to entice the Persians to leave the city,²⁶⁵ and Geoffrey Greatrex has rightly observed that our author seems to have focused on the most entertaining and dramatic parts elements,²⁶⁶ sometimes the arrival and presence of the Roman army would have created havoc among local populations. The most detailed testimonies come from the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua, in which the author suggested that 'when those who came to our assistance ostensibly as saviours were going down and coming up, they looted us in a manner little short of enemies'.²⁶⁷ The houses of not only the ordinary people but also those living in rural areas, monasteries and ascetics were occupied,²⁶⁸ and the soldiers also plundered the inhabitants' cattle, provisions and necessities.²⁶⁹ Therefore, many civilians could have lost their property; the Edessenes were delighted after the departure of the Roman army from the frontier.²⁷⁰

Destruction

Many Roman cities and fortresses were attacked or besieged by the Sasanids in the sixth-century. If Prokopios and other contemporary writers are to be believed, some of them like Sura, Antioch and Apamea were either destroyed or burned, while others such as Amida and Dara seem to have been spared. In subsequent discussion I will present and analyze available literary and material data both to discuss the validity of

²⁶⁴ Prok. Wars 1.9.7. I owe this information to Geoffrey Greatrex.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 1.9.5-6.

²⁶⁶ Greatrex 2010: 246.

²⁶⁷ Josh. Styl. 86.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 95.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 86, 93.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 87.

literary accounts and, tentatively, to estimate the scale of destruction caused by the Sasanids' invasion.

In summarising what K̄osrow I's forces had done against the Romans, Prokopios pointed out that he 'fired every structure and razed it to the ground'.²⁷¹ In the spring of 540 the furious shah razed Sura to the ground,²⁷² and two years later Kallinikos was destroyed as well.²⁷³ More than thirty years later, both the Greek and Syriac historians reported that having placed all booty outside the city wall, the soldiers of Adarmahan burned Apamea before they returned to Persia (See map 5 for the design of this city in Late Antiquity and the location of the destroyed buildings).²⁷⁴ The most detailed account, however, was Prokopios' description of the destruction of Antioch in 540. Having removed most valuable goods from it, the Persians are reported to have burned this metropolis into debris.²⁷⁵ A dismaying picture was provided in *Buildings*:

... he (i.e. Justinian) rebuilt the whole city, which had been completely burned by the enemy (ξύμπασαν δὲ πρὸς τῶν πολεμίων καταφλεγεῖνων ἀνωκοδομήσατο τὴν πόλιν αὐτός)...everything was everywhere reduced to ashes and leveled to the ground (τετεφρωμένων γὰρ πανταχόσε καὶ καθηρημένων ἀπάντων)...there were no longer public stoas or colonnaded courts in existence anywhere, nor any market-place remaining.²⁷⁶

Prokopios also stated that 'in this capture the whole city (Antioch)...was destroyed' (ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ ἀλώσει ξύμπασα ἢ πόλις...διέφθαρται)²⁷⁷ when he mentioned the calamities suffered by the Antiochenes in the first half of the sixth century. Euagrius, who used Prokopios as one of his main sources in his *Church History*, further noted that 'he (i.e. Prokopios)...records...how K̄osrow destroyed everything by killing and

²⁷¹ Prok. Anecd. 23.7.

²⁷² Prok. Wars 2.5.26.

²⁷³ Ibid., 2.21.32.

²⁷⁴ Joh. Eph. HE 6.6, Joh. Epiph. 4, Th. Sim. 3.10.9.

²⁷⁵ Prok. Wars 2.9.18.

²⁷⁶ Prok. Aed. 2.10.19-20.

²⁷⁷ Prok. Wars 2.14.7.

burning'.²⁷⁸ Such statements, however, are contradicted by Prokopios' own report about the details of the sack of Antioch. Several buildings of this city were actually spared. For instance, one church was left intact, and many houses at the edge of the city remained untouched.²⁷⁹ Moreover, while those lying outside the fortifications were burned by the Persians, the fortifications and the church of Julianos where the ambassadors sojourned were left unharmed as well.²⁸⁰

If we take all these narratives at face value, then the wholesale destruction of a conquered city seems to have been a common strategy for the Sasanids in the sixth century. However, a closer examination of archaeological evidence suggests that it was not always the case. Of course sometimes the possible traces of destruction can be noted. There are several pieces of evidence in Antioch (See map 6 for the locations of these traces of destruction):²⁸¹ the building of Bath F which stood near the city walls, another building which was located at the west side of the city, and finally, the structure of the colonnaded street. The results of excavations indicated that Bath F was destroyed in the great earthquake of 526. Thereafter, as suggested by its inscription,²⁸² it was used by the Antiochenes during the first decade of Justinian's reign, and then destroyed by a great fire, possibly due to the sack by the Persians in 540.²⁸³ The fate of another large building, the House of Aion, was quite similar to that of Bath F: after its first destruction by earthquake, this building was repaired, in a smaller scale, and continued to be used. It was destroyed by fire, which may also be identified with the invasion of the Persians in 540.²⁸⁴ Finally, at the northeastern part of this city, the traces of 'a general destruction...caused or accompanied by severe

²⁷⁸ Euagr. HE 4.26.

²⁷⁹ Many houses of the area of Cerataeum, the Jewish quarter, were left unmarred, possibly because of its isolation from the main part of Antioch, see Downey 1961: 544 for further information.

²⁸⁰ Prok. Wars 2.10.6-9.

²⁸¹ For the narrative of Antioch's remaining fortifications, see Crow 2013: 400-8.

²⁸² Stillwell 1941: 9.

²⁸³ Stillwell 1941: 9, Levi 1947: 366-8.

²⁸⁴ Stillwell 1941: 11-2, cf. Levi 1947: 195-8.

fire²⁸⁵ was observed at another building. The layers of the so-called main street, which extended over Antioch's center, could be another testimony.²⁸⁶ Judging from the surveys around the mosque of Habib al-Najjâr, Jean Lassus pointed out that the pavements were rebuilt by Justinian after the conflagration by the Persians. He further noted that the catastrophes in the first half of the sixth century such as the earthquakes and then the invasion by K̄osrow I in 540 had not only damaged the original Roman road²⁸⁷ but also elevated the street level.²⁸⁸

The results of the excavation works conducted in the twentieth century at Apamea are helpful as well in gauging the scale and extent of Adarmahan's destruction in this metropolis in 573.²⁸⁹ According to the report of archaeologists, the rubble and traces of burning suggested that some grand buildings were destroyed, possibly in the Sasanids' invasion and sack in 573.²⁹⁰ The evidence from the building of the Atrium Church is exceptionally clear: traces of burning were evident at the pavement of the martyrion, and the mosaics were even swollen and crinkled as the result of great fire and water pouring on it.²⁹¹ Also, a dark spot indicative of high combustion can also be observed.²⁹² In addition, although only parts of the House of the Deer, a grand Roman villa which is located in the north-eastern sector of this city, have been excavated so far,²⁹³ what we can learn from the results of current

²⁸⁵ Campbell 1936: 2, Steillwell 1941: 9.

²⁸⁶ See the outline of campaigns and the preliminary reports: Elderkin 1934: 93-100, Stillwell 1938: 3, Stillwell 1941: 13-8 and further treatments in Lassus ed. 1972: 13-126, especially 19-40, 88-100.

²⁸⁷ Lassus ed. 1972: 30, 148.

²⁸⁸ Lassus ed. 1972: 35.

²⁸⁹ See the synthesis by others, Kennedy 1985a: 162-3, Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988: 66-7, Foss 1997: 206-26.

²⁹⁰ Balty 1989: 92.

²⁹¹ Napoleone-Lemaire et al. 1969: 68-9.

²⁹² Napoleone-Lemaire et al. 1969: 42.

²⁹³ Foss 1997: 222.

campaigns is significant.²⁹⁴ After studying different layers of this site, archaeologists concluded that the lowest destruction layer corresponded with the period of this house's destruction, which could be dated from the end of the sixth century to the beginning of the seventh century.²⁹⁵ Again, traces of burning were evident from the sixth-century mosaic which was found in rooms A and C.²⁹⁶ In the same destruction layer, other material traits, including fragments of jars and bronze utensils, were excavated in the room H.²⁹⁷ Finally, the burnt fragments of mosaic were unearthed from the rooms which collapsed during the fire which destroyed the whole house.²⁹⁸

In short, several, if not all, buildings of Apamea experienced large-scale destruction either in the sixth or in the seventh centuries. However, there are other possible factors which would have resulted in similar traces of destruction, such as earthquakes and arson.²⁹⁹ Earthquakes in neighbouring areas might have shattered and even resulted in the demolition of certain buildings in Apamea, but both contemporary and later authors report nothing about either severe destruction or conflagrations caused by earthquakes in this metropolis. Since both the Atrium Church and the Roman houses were all magnificent buildings of Apamea, their destruction in earthquakes would surely have been noted by historians of either the Greek-speaking or the Syriac-speaking communities. It is thus possible to suggest that these fabulous Roman villas and the Atrium Church might have been destroyed in the invasions of the Sasanids rather than in the natural disasters or the conflagrations.

However, not all material data support the cities' destruction in the Persian wars, and sometimes it seems that the results of archaeological excavation are contradicted

²⁹⁴ It is, however, difficult to know whether other luxurious villas of this metropolis were destroyed by the Persians or not in 573. See C. Balty and J. Balty 1972: 113-41, 1984: 19-58, 181-202 for the results of archaeological excavations. See Foss 1997: 222-4 for more information.

²⁹⁵ Donnay-Rocmans and Donnay 1984: 155-6.

²⁹⁶ Donnay-Rocmans and Donnay 1984: 159-60.

²⁹⁷ Donnay-Rocmans and Donnay 1984: 163.

²⁹⁸ Donnay-Rocmans and Donnay 1984: 164.

²⁹⁹ For the comprehensive catalogue of seismic activities in the sixth century, see Guidoboni et al. 1994: 309-49.

by the reports of contemporary authors. Euagrius wrote that not only the cathedral of Apamea, but also the icon which was commissioned to commemorate the miracle of the Holy Cross in 540,³⁰⁰ were destroyed together by the forces of Adarmahan in 573.³⁰¹ In the twentieth century, the archaeologists excavated a church which can possibly be identified with the cathedral of Apamea,³⁰² but no traces of the destruction of this important building have ever been reported.³⁰³ In fact, in many cases existing material data proves too scant to establish any firm conclusion. The results of a series of archaeological excavations in North Syria suggest that while it is difficult to find any significant material traits of the Diocletianic walls of Sura (Map 7), that is, the eastern part of its city wall, the Justinianic one—the western citadel—was built splendidly. Scholars argue that such a dearth of material data may result from the sack by K̄osrow I's forces,³⁰⁴ but no further supporting evidence has been found.

Therefore, while at first glance all these traits could be corroborated with the information from historical texts,³⁰⁵ a critical examination makes clear that it is highly risky to rely on such partial and ambiguous data. The cases of Antioch are excellent examples. Archaeologists assumed that the great fire which destroyed the Roman bath and another building might have resulted from K̄osrow I's invasion, and that it was K̄osrow I's sack which caused the destruction of the former Roman pavements. According to the excavators, since the engineers did not clear out the pavement before conducting their new construction work, the debris *in situ* could have elevated the street level.³⁰⁶

Since we have no way of knowing whether both the building of Bath F, which stood at the north-eastern side of the city, and another huge building which was built

³⁰⁰ Regarding the details of this miracle which took place on the eve of K̄osrow I's invasion, see Prok. Wars 2.11.16-20, Euagr. HE 4.26.

³⁰¹ Euagr. HE 4.26.

³⁰² Foss 1997: 215.

³⁰³ Foss 1997: 216.

³⁰⁴ Konrad 1999: 399.

³⁰⁵ Foss 1997: 193, 2000: 25. See also Morey 1936: 650, in which the scale of the destruction caused by the Sasanids was stressed.

³⁰⁶ Lassus ed. 1972: 35, Foss 1997: 193.

in the western side were destroyed in the same conflagration around the same time (Map 5), it is nearly impossible to know the reasons for their destruction. Supposing that they were destroyed in the same great fire roughly at the same time, the cause of the fire remains another problem—it was not necessarily caused by the incursions of the enemies, and it could have resulted from other kinds of disasters of both natural and human origin, such as earthquake or arson.

Since severe earthquakes were sometimes accompanied by extensive fire damage, the possible effects of seismic waves on local buildings from the second half of the sixth century onwards should be examined. In 551, an earthquake occurred throughout the Middle East, including the surrounding areas of Antioch, and caused terror and destruction in several cities.³⁰⁷ In 577, another earthquake which might have resulted in the collapse of Antioch's buildings³⁰⁸ struck the capital of the Empire. Two more great earthquakes were observed in the last quarter of the sixth century. One of them tore down all the buildings at Daphne and destroyed many architectural works of Antioch in 577,³⁰⁹ while many buildings in Antioch again were brought to the ground by another one in 588.³¹⁰ Finally, the last earthquake of our period took place at the very beginning of the seventh century.³¹¹ In short, while traces of destruction can be observed from these buildings in Antioch, no assured answer can be found so far from the material evidence,³¹² and it is too precarious to try to link the archaeological findings with the available literary sources.³¹³ The explanation regarding the colonnade street's destruction and rebuilding remains unsatisfactory as well. Of course the destruction and the ensuing work of reconstruction could have elevated the street level. However, if we cannot discern the

³⁰⁷ Mal. 18.112, Agath. 2.15.1-3, V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 105, Theoph. A.M. 6043. Guidoboni et al. 1994: 332-6.

³⁰⁸ Mal. 18.124, Agath. 5.3.1-11, V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 106, Theoph. A.M. 6053, Cedrenus 1.676-7, Downey 1955: 598, *contra* Guidoboni et al. 1994: 344.

³⁰⁹ Euagr. HE 5.17.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.8, Joh. Nik. 101.1-2, Mich. Syr. 10.21, Chr. 1234 77.

³¹¹ Mich. Syr. 10.23, Chr. 1234 82.

³¹² Ellis: 2003: 132, Huskinson 2003: 145, cf. Casana 2003: 119-20.

³¹³ Kennedy 1985a: 150, Chavarria and Lewit 2004: 25.

damage caused by other types of disasters, the difference between the main street's levels could have been merely the results of two successive earthquakes in 526 and 528.

In short, many buildings of Antioch could have been destroyed, while Sura and Kallinikos, as important frontier citadels, would have been destroyed by the Persians lest they were occupied by the Romans. Nevertheless, the discussion above has shown that Prokopios, who explicitly reported that these cities were razed to the ground, seems to have exaggerated the scale of destruction. What Prokopios reported in his works needs to be read together. In the *Wars*, Sura was destroyed by Kōsrow I,³¹⁴ and according to the accounts in the *Buildings*, the Great King took this city within an hour because its feeble fortification could not withstand the Persians' assaults.³¹⁵ Later on, Sura, like Kallinikos, was rebuilt by Justinian so that 'it should no longer yield to the enemy's assaults'.³¹⁶ In the *Buildings*, Prokopios again put a lengthy description of the shah's wholesale destruction of Antioch together with Justinian's subsequent efforts to rebuild this metropolis. More importantly, eventually Antioch became more splendid than before.³¹⁷ The exaggeration of the Persians' atrocities,³¹⁸ therefore, could have served as an antithesis in order to aggrandise the benevolence of Justinian,³¹⁹ a great patron and builder of his realm.

The Sasanids' strategy in treating the fortifications and the buildings of both Amida and Dara seem to have been different, and many of them seem to have been kept intact. In the early sixth century, neither Syriac nor Greek authors noted any large-scale destruction caused by the Sasanids in Amida. Prokopios stated that

³¹⁴ Prok. Wars 2.5.26.

³¹⁵ Prok. Aed. 2.9.1.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 2.9.2.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 2.10.23. Justinian could have managed to rebuild Antioch as far as he could to maintain the prestige of both the Empire and the emperor himself, Downey 1961: 552.

³¹⁸ Downey 1939: 367.

³¹⁹ On the panegyric issues, see Cameron 1985: 106. Cf. Webb 2000, 67-71, Ma. Whitby 2000: 45-57, Elsner 2007: 33-57, Montinaro 2015: 203 for the discussion of this work's genre.

‘neither Glonos nor Kawād, nor indeed any other of the Persians, saw fit either to tear down or to destroy in any other way any building in Amida at any rate’.³²⁰ Only later, when Glonos perished in the ambush of the Romans,³²¹ did his son, furious at the death of his father, set fire to the sanctuary of Saint Symeon where his father had stayed before.³²² What Prokopios recorded can be further supported by Pseudo-Joshua, who related that the Persians captured Amida ‘(merely) with ladders, while the gates were not opened, nor the all breached’,³²³ and the invaders rushed into city even without opening the gates. Such accounts should be doubted on the ground that later on the victorious king Kawād entered Amida on an elephant,³²⁴ and it would have been impossible for such a huge beast to cross the fortifications without opening the gates at all. Instead what Pseudo-Zachariah reported may be correct: after taking control over the whole city, the Sasanids eventually descended from the walls and opened the gates.³²⁵ Similar strategies were adopted by Kōsrow I seventy years later. Clearly the Persians managed to conquer Dara by using different types of siege engines,³²⁶ and such a prolonged siege might have damaged the buildings of this citadel. However, no report regarding the destruction was mentioned by either Greek or Syriac authors. In fact, the remains of its fortifications, especially the traces of certain parts of curtain walls and watch towers can be observed in the twentieth century.³²⁷ While the shah must have plundered Dara as far as he could, it seems that he did not destroy the building works thoroughly.

The material data we have at both Amida and Dara seems to be less helpful: we know that certain parts of the fortifications which can still be observed today at

³²⁰ Prok. Wars 1.9.19.

³²¹ Ibid., 1.9.5-17.

³²² Ibid., 1.9.18.

³²³ Josh. Styl. 53.

³²⁴ Theoph. A.M. 5996.

³²⁵ Zach. HE 7.4.

³²⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

³²⁷ Whitby 1986b: 739-50.

modern Diyarbakir³²⁸ date to Late Antiquity,³²⁹ but we know less about the building schemes inside this frontier city. Therefore, it is difficult to study the destruction caused by Kawād's soldiers. The site of Dara has been partially excavated, and recently two short reports have been published.³³⁰ I should turn to literary sources to examine the situation of these two cities. It should be pointed out that the use of siege engines by the Persians in the winter of 502-3³³¹ could have damaged certain buildings, such as the fortifications and the civic buildings inside Amida. Therefore, Prokopios' claim, that Kawād 'had gone his way without doing the least damage to the buildings' (ταῖς οἰκοδομίαις ὡς ἤκιστα λυμηνάμενος ἀπιὼν ὄχρετο),³³² should not be taken at face value. Rather, what our author had in mind might to contrast what Kawād had done and the immense destruction caused by his son Kōsrow I's invasions. In the postwar period, a series of building works were conducted by Anastasios, and these schemes could have resulted from the destruction caused by the forces of Kawād. The construction of two particular buildings—a church which was dedicated to the Forty Martyrs and a bridge across the Tigris³³³—deserves further analysis: the former had been considered as a refuge for the Amidenes, while Kawād might have used the latter to cross the Tigris in the autumn of 502.³³⁴ That is to say, both of them had already existed on the eve of Kawād's invasion. It is possible that these buildings were either destroyed or damaged during the invasion and occupation of the Persian soldiers from 502 to 504.

³²⁸ For Amida's fortification and buildings, see van Berchem and Strzygowski 1910: 277-85, Gabriel 1940: 95-182, Sinclair 1987-90: 167-76.

³²⁹ On the dating of fortifications, see Gabriel 1940: 175-82, Crow 2007: 440-3. For Latin and Greek inscriptions, see Gabriel 1940: 134-6, Mango and Mango 1991: 465-71, Crow 2007: 440.

³³⁰ Zanini 2003: 203, see also Furlan 1988: 105-27, 1995: 51-64. On the results of recent excavations, see Ahunbay 1990: 391-7, 1991: 197-204.

³³¹ Josh. Styl. 50, 53, Zach. HE. 7.3, Prok. 1.7.13-4.

³³² Prok. Anecd. 23.7.

³³³ Trombley and Watt 2000: 101.

³³⁴ Capizzi 1969: 215-6 for the monastery, Palmer 1990a: 117.

Both the advantages and shortcomings of the literary and material data can be noted from the analysis and discussion above. Contemporary authors sometimes preserved detailed accounts of a city's destruction, but in other cases much less detail can be gleaned from their texts. The results of archaeological excavations are indispensable for judging historical accounts' validity, but many sites have never been excavated properly, and the scarce information makes it difficult to obtain a more thorough picture. Several concluding remarks on the cities' destruction can be made. While some cities like Sura, Antioch and Apamea were said to have been razed to the ground, such statements contradict the results of archaeological campaigns. The traces of destruction, which can sometimes be observed, prove to be moderate, and so far nothing related to a thorough destruction can be securely confirmed.³³⁵ The Sasanids' invasion and conquest must have resulted in the damage or destruction of the buildings in a conquered city, but much remains to be done with the help of further excavations.

The conclusion of this chapter is two-fold. Whereas the examination of what we can extract from various types of sources surely answers some questions, more questions are raised, and several examples will suffice to illustrate these data's limited and partial nature. Although Roman civilians suffered at the hands of both the Persians and the Romans, nearly all contemporaries merely stressed the Sasanids' atrocities and the Romans' calamities. Another limitation of literary accounts lies in the study of the Persians' treatment of the conquered Roman cities. Prokopios and other classicising historians' statements, in which some cities were razed to the ground, cannot always be supported by available archaeological data and other contemporary sources. In most cases, the material data of the Sasanids' sieges of Roman cities proves to be rather sketchy. Although sometimes traces of destruction can be observed, other testimonies are far less conclusive. Many buildings of the conquered Roman cities could have been destroyed or damaged in the Persian wars, but the scale of destruction is still open to debate.

Information extracted from literary, material and documentary sources, nevertheless, remains the backbone of this chapter's investigation. Thematically speaking, the loss of life, the plundering of property and the destruction of buildings

³³⁵ Cf. Petersen 2013: 350.

seem to have been the common features of Roman civilians' wartime fates. Meanwhile, some particular features can be noted, and the Sasanids seem to have adopted different strategies under different circumstances in order to achieve different purposes. Admittedly many civilians would have perished as the siege progressed, but not every city suffered from postwar massacres or executions. Although sexual violence against the Empire's female population can be noted in many cases, sometimes those from higher social class seem to have been treated more leniently. Finally, having looted the wealth of the Empire's ecclesiastical and secular elites, the Persians merely destroyed some cities and left others intact. The above results will serve as the foundation of further investigations in chapter 6. Both the similarities and distinctiveness of these phenomena will be included to establish a paradigm of Roman civilians' wartime experiences, and they will be further contextualised in the Romano-Persian relations to discuss to what extent different factors would affect the Empire's urban inhabitants' fates during wartime.

Chapter 4. The movement, capture and transportation of citizens

In the sixth-century Persian wars, many Roman civilians left their cities and moved to other places for a variety of reasons. Their movements can be divided into three categories: some citizens took refuge outside their hometown or escaped to other places when enemies invaded the Empire, while others might become hostages under the control of the Persians. Finally, many people were captured and transported either to the Persians or to the nomads.

Refugees

While many people moved from rural areas into the city so that they could be protected by the fortifications, a city's inhabitants became the refugees in an 'outward' movement, meaning they went from a city to the nearby rural areas. After the Romans' morale was diminished, some of them chose to leave their hometown or desert their posts in order to escape the potential suffering, violence and chaos caused by the Persians' military operations. Contemporary writers documented the presence of refugees from Amida, Antioch, Kallinikos and Sergiopolis, which were all cities the Sasanids either attacked or passed by during the sixth century.

Although in most cases we have no access to Roman civilians' observations of the Persians' military activities, certain remarks of local people's morale can be noted. The study of the circumstances of these sixth-century sieges suggests that while contemporaries could have exaggerated the feebleness and unpreparedness of the Romans in confronting the Sasanids,¹ the state of the cities' fortifications would have been an important factor which led to the Romans' exile. Having signed the Eternal Peace in 532, the Empire's military personnel were diverted to North Africa and Italy for Justinian's Reconquista, and the cities' fortifications fell into decay.² Prokopios, our chief source for K̅osrow I's campaigns in the middle of the sixth century, described the poor defences of eastern cities like Antioch and Kallinikos in

¹ See, for example, p. 208 for the discussion of the Persians' siege of Amida in the autumn/winter of 502-3.

² Whitby 1986a 728-9, Greatrex 1998: 219-20.

540 and 542, respectively.³ The inhabitants from these cities would easily have observed the ruinous state of defensive works, and their deterioration could have caused concern. In 531, the Persians and their Arab allies had besieged Gabboulon, a city not far from Antioch. They ‘made wooden engines, breached and destroyed the walls’ and then ‘killed everyone they found and also took captives’.⁴ Even the enemies merely reached the nearby area of this metropolis; the Antiochenes must have been terrified by their military activities. Many of them fled to the coast of Syria,⁵ an action which might have resulted from not only the fear of the Persians but also the desolate situation of this great city, which had just recovered from a conflagration and fatal earthquakes approximately five years earlier.⁶ Ten years later, the Persians invaded again, and this time Antioch became their main target. The terrible memories from 531 could have remained lively for those living in this metropolis, and both the city’s feeble defence and the lack of proper armed forces would have created havoc among civilian populations, as well.

The Sasanids’ victory and the calamities of their compatriots would have shocked the Romans as well. In 502, the Great King had already conquered Theodosiopolis before reaching Amida, and his allies had ransacked the Empire’s frontier region.⁷ The Amidenes could have become terrified after learning of Kawād’s military activities and the atrocities committed by his soldiers. Although Kōsrow I neither passed by nor attacked Sergiopolis in 540, the inhabitants could have known what happened in the conquered cities. Such memories would have stayed vivid when the Great King invaded the Empire again two years later and prompted the Sergiopolitans to escape.

Finally, the lack of official support could have reduced the Romans’ *esprit de corps*. The situation inside Antioch in the middle of the sixth century is an excellent example. In Libanios’ age, the zenith of this metropolis’ fortunes, there were four

³ Prok. Wars 2.6.10-3 (Antioch), 2.21.30-1 (Kallinikos).

⁴ Mal. 18.60. See Greatrex 1998: 196-9 for the Persians’ invasion and raids.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 17.16, 20, 18.27, Prok. Wars 2.14.6.

⁷ Josh. Styl. 48, 50-2.

‘authorities’: the council, the emperor, the imperial officials and the generals.⁸ Things were different during the reign of Justinian. As outlined above, it seems that the temporary council was still an active authority.⁹ Nonetheless, without any military protection, they would have helplessly watched the invading enemies. The absence of civic leaders must have aggravated the situation. It is surprising that the relevant governors were never present on any occasion,¹⁰ including the consular of Syria I, who was in charge of internal civic affairs.¹¹ They neither joined the discussion with other dignitaries in the temporary council nor came up with any positive strategies or proposals to deal with the coming Persians.

The arrival of Germanos, a ‘new headship’ of military affairs, might have raised the morale of the Antiochenes. However, having realised that it was impossible to acquire reinforcements from Constantinople, Germanos feared that the Persian king would ‘come against the city (i.e. Antioch) with his whole army’ in order to capture both Antioch and the nephew of Justinian.¹² Other Antiochenes shared Germanos’ idea, and such terror may have directly led them to offer money to buy the peace from their enemies. Being a prominent figure in the public life of cities in Late Antiquity,¹³ the bishops’ involvement in secular affairs can be proved by numerous laws issued in the sixth century.¹⁴ The sudden departure of Antioch’s patriarch before the siege, therefore, could possibly have been another blow to the Romans’ morale. Had the reinforcements led by Theoktistos and Molatzes not reached Antioch, many more inhabitants would have escaped to safer places in 540.¹⁵

⁸ Liebeschuetz 1972: 101-17.

⁹ Regarding the discussion of the role played by city councils, see Liebeschuetz 2001: 107-9, Rapp 2004: 175.

¹⁰ Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988: 78.

¹¹ Liebeschuetz 1972: 110. The office of another important official *comes Orientis* experienced huge transformations in the administrative reforms of the 530s, see Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988: 77, Kelly 2004: 72.

¹² Prok. Wars 2.6.15.

¹³ Segal 1955: 114-5, Garsoïan 1973-4: 120-2, Rapp 2005: 16-8.

¹⁴ Liebeschuetz 2001: 151-5, Rapp 2004: 171, 176-7.

¹⁵ Prok. Wars 2.8.2.

It is impossible to provide a prosopographical catalogue of all the social elites who escaped, but occasionally some information was noted in the texts. The patriarch of Antioch, Ephraem, escaped to Kilikia in 540.¹⁶ More than 30 years later, the arrival of the Sasanids must have shocked the civilians in the Empire's eastern provinces: the bishop of Dara left his see in 573,¹⁷ and Gregory, the patriarch of Antioch, fled taking with him the sacred vessels. While some of them returned to their sees after the departure of the Sasanids, their life as refugees, like those of other more humble Romans, remains unknown.

Most refugees must have been ordinary people. Some holy men played vital roles and provided shelter to these Romans. The Sasanids did not grant any kind of *ad hoc* immunity to Christian holy men during wartime, nor did the Great King show his respect to them from the outset. Rather, what we can notice from contemporary accounts is a three-stage scenario: at the beginning, the invading enemy managed to attack either these holy men or the Romans; in the second stage, the aggressors were prevented from attacking because of miracles; and in the last stage, the enemy soldiers' obedience or fear were stressed.

When Kawād began to besiege Amida in the second half of 502, some inhabitants of this frontier city could have escaped. At that time, there was a holy man named Jacob who lived in Endielon, which was not far away from Amida.¹⁸ Having astonished both the Persians and Kawād himself by performing a miracle through which those who intended to shoot him with arrows were stopped in their tracks,¹⁹ Jacob then requested the Persian king 'to grant to him all the men who during that war should come to him as fugitives'. Kawād agreed to that, and hence there were 'great numbers of men...flocking to him from all sides and found safety there'.²⁰ Prokopios did not specify where these refugees came from, but presumably most of them would

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.7.17. For further information on the life of Ephraem, especially his experiences in administrative affairs, see Joh. Nik. 90.23. *PLRE* II: s.v. Ephraemius.

¹⁷ Honigmann 1951: 240-1.

¹⁸ Prok. Wars 1.7.5.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1.7.8-9.

²⁰ Ibid., 1.7.11.

have been either citizens from Amida or its nearby areas. Nearly 40 years later, some Romans took refuge at the monastery of St Symeon Stylite the Younger. Having been prevented from attacking these Romans by the holy man's miracles, the soldiers of Kōsrow I retreated from the vicinity of Antioch.²¹ This place, therefore, served as a refuge for these Romans. The refugees from Amida and Antioch thus survived the carnage of the Persian wars.

We have much less information regarding the possible destinations of other Roman refugees during wartime. In the early sixth century, after Nonnos, who as the church's steward was captured in the sack of Amida and eventually returned, was ordained as a bishop, he dispatched Thomas his *chorepiskopos*, a subordinate of the bishop who was in charge of the rural churches,²² to oversee the Amidenes who were living in Constantinople.²³ While this community of those from Amida in the capital of the Empire is of interest, the distance between Amida and Constantinople makes it less likely that the immigrants from a frontier city would have chosen to take refuge in the capital when Kawād's soldiers approached their hometown. Instead, they would have preferred other nearby cities or fortified sites in which they could be protected during wartime. Some of those living in the frontier areas took refuge at Edessa, a city whose fortifying works had been strengthened²⁴ after a series of disasters at the beginning of the sixth century. When Patrikios, a Roman officer, intended to approach Edessa with his son Vitalianos and soldiers, it was these refugees who informed him about the situation around this city.²⁵ Having noticed the arrival of the Persians in 502, some Amidenes could have chosen to flee there. After the Persians retreated from Amida, some refugees were able to return to their hometown, and they received gifts from the emperor.²⁶ The report of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, however, is somewhat more ambiguous. He related that money and gifts from both the emperor and Flavian, the patriarch of Antioch, were soon dispatched to this frontier city and

²¹ V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 59-60.

²² Trombley and Watt 2000: 100.

²³ Josh. Styl. 83. See also Ps. Dion. II, 7.

²⁴ Ibid., 52.

²⁵ Ibid., 60.

²⁶ Zach. HE 7.5.

then distributed among the poor, and hence ‘all those who were roaming around in other regions gathered there (i.e. at Amida)’.²⁷ Even though we have no idea who these ‘wanderers’ were, we can conjecture that they had been forced to go into exile because of the misfortunes in the past few years, and some of them could have come from Amida.

On the eve of ζ osrow I’s arrival in 540, the Romans’ morale in Antioch was greatly diminished, and some of them ‘fled as each one could’,²⁸ possibly to Seleukia Maritima,²⁹ the main port of Antioch. Had help not arrived from Lebanon, more inhabitants would have chosen exile.³⁰ When faced with ζ osrow I’s soldiers in 542, the reaction of those living in Kallinikos was similar. The rich citizens noticed that the enemy was approaching and escaped to other fortified places with their most precious treasures (οἱ μὲν εὐδαίμονες αὐτῆς τῶν οικητόρων ἐς ἕτερα ἄττα ὀχυρώματα ἀπεχώρησαν),³¹ and few people remained in Sergiopolis because ‘those in the bloom of youth had departed’.³² That is, those who were capable of escaping had fled to other places. When the detachment of Adarmahan arrived at Antioch in 573, only a few people stayed in this metropolis. Later, ζ osrow I, who was in his seventies at that time, led the army in person, invaded Armenia and seized some cities, but people from places like Sebasteia (modern Sivas, central Turkey) had already taken refuge elsewhere.³³

Hostages

²⁷ Josh. Styl. 83.

²⁸ Prok. Wars 2.8.2.

²⁹ Jord. Rom. 376.

³⁰ Prok. Wars 2.8.2.

³¹ Prok. Wars 2.21.31, cf. Honigmann 1935, Dillemann 1962, Crow 2013: 411-2. On the similar cases of settlements of other regions, see Agath. 2.13.4, Ward-Perkins 2000: 335-6, Curta 2001: 208, Decker 2006: 499-520. For the epigraphic testimony, see, for example, *IGLS* 1811, Foss 1997: 234-5.

³² Euagr. HE 4.28.

³³ Joh. Eph. HE 6.8.

While both social elites and ordinary people could have escaped from their home cities or posts to other places in wartime, only those from the higher echelons of society would have been sent to the Persians as hostages.³⁴ The Persians asked the Romans to send hostages usually to procure potential economic or political profits in the near future. Prokopios pointed out that to send someone as a hostage to the invading enemies was a decision which was ‘much against his will’.³⁵ Since we have no personal accounts of any of those sent as hostages to the Sasanids, the information we have regarding their experiences or feelings is rather limited. Some of them could possibly have been taken back to Persia, though temporarily, while others would have been simply detained and went together with the Sasanids until their release. Whether they would be treated as prisoners or guests or something in between is impossible to tell.

It should be noted that all these Romans in the following cases served as one-way hostages. That is, while the Romans handed over their compatriots, the Sasanids did not send hostages in return.³⁶ In the Anastasian War, as a native of Edessa, the *comes* Basil was sent by the Roman general Areobindos to Kawād as a hostage to guarantee that the Romans would not attack the Persians when they retreated.³⁷ When the shah wanted to make peace with the Romans, Basil, along with other prisoners of war, was sent back to the *magistros* Celer.³⁸ In 540 the shah asked for hostages from the ambassador,³⁹ and they were soon released after Kōsrow I received Justinian’s letter.⁴⁰ When the Sasanids invaded the Empire again two years later, messengers were sent by Belisarios to the shah to discuss the truce. Again the Persians asked the

³⁴ For the exchange of hostages between Rome and Persia, see Lee 1991: 369-74, cf. Matthews 1989b: 29-49.

³⁵ Prok. Wars 2.21.27, Anecd. 12.6-7.

³⁶ Lee 1991: 369. This pattern, however, can be noted in the diplomatic relationships between the Empire and the Germanic people as well, Nechaeva 2014: 55.

³⁷ Josh. Styl. 61.

³⁸ Ibid., 80. Cf. Theoph. A.M. 5997-8, in which Basil, who was detained by the Sasanids ‘contrary to the agreements’, was ransomed by the Romans.

³⁹ Prok. Wars 2.10.24.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.13.2.

Romans to give them ‘someone of their notable men’ as a hostage so that ‘they might carry out their agreement’. Belisarios then went to Edessa and chose John, son of Basilius, ‘the most illustrious of all the inhabitants of Edessa in birth and in wealth’ (γένει τε καὶ πλούτῳ πάντων τῶν Ἐδεσσηνῶν διαφανέστατον) to the enemies.⁴¹

While the furious Κosrow I refused to send John back to the Empire in 542, he agreed to sell him because he had become a captive of the Persians. This time neither political nor ecclesiastical authority managed to rescue this prisoner of war, and it was John’s grandmother who raised 2,000 pounds of silver, and strove to buy her grandson back.⁴² However, after the ransom was delivered to Dara, this proposal was rejected by Justinian for ‘the wealth of the Romans might not be conveyed to the barbarians’.⁴³ Later on John became sick and died.

Captives

The third, and the most extensively reported category of people’s involuntary movement in wartime is capture and transport as prisoners of war. From the time of Shapur I onwards, the victorious Sasanids deported Romans from the conquered villages, cities and metropoleis and sent them back to their territory. The situation in the sixth century remains similar: after subduing the cities of Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, the Great Kings would deport the survivors from the Empire to Persia. I will divide the following discussion roughly in chronological order. In the first part, relevant texts will be analyzed to answer the most basic questions: who were transported by the Sasanids, how and from where? Second, I will reconstruct these Romans’ possible experiences and lives during their captivity, both inside and outside the Persian Empire by examining the places they inhabited and the Persians’ policies. Thirdly, I will discuss the possible types of ‘return journey’ of these prisoners of war by taking into account the roles played not only by the authorities of Rome and Persia but also by the captives themselves.

⁴¹ Prok. Wars 2.21.27.

⁴² Prok. Anecd. 12.7-8.

⁴³ Ibid., 12.9. See below, pp. 198-200, 255-6 for Justinian’s possible attitudes to the elites captured by the Persians in 540.

Categories of captives

Although in most cases our historians did not preserve the names of particular individual deportees, several categories of personnel targeted by the Sasanids can be established. They sometimes aimed to transport certain groups or professions of people from the Empire. Thus distinguished local craftsmen were collected and removed from Amida in 503. They must have been important assets for the shah because they, together with the captured local elites, were apparently regarded as the ‘king’s captives’ by Kawād.⁴⁴ Besides, the Sasanids captured the Amidenes apart from ‘those who were able to hide themselves, together with the elderly people and the disabled ones’,⁴⁵ or, as Ferdowsī reported in the case of Antioch, those who were suitable for military service.⁴⁶ Another example comes from the sack of Antioch by Kōsrow I. Prokopios reported that the king of kings removed the charioteers and musicians from this metropolis⁴⁷ and sent them to Mesopotamia.

The second category of captives comprised the surviving social elites, including members of the civic and ecclesiastical administration, inside the conquered cities. Some notable individuals seem to have been simply removed without being humiliated. For example, Nonnos, the steward of the church of Amida, was captured together with other civilians in 503,⁴⁸ but our sources are silent regarding his treatment by the Persians. In 540, the bishop of Sura stayed in this city when the Persians arrived and later on served as an envoy to negotiate with the Sasanids,⁴⁹ but it is unclear whether he was captured together with other citizens or not. Many local elites must have been removed in the sack of Antioch, as Justinian possibly managed to rescue them several years later.⁵⁰ Finally, we are informed that the bishop of

⁴⁴ Zach. HE 7.4. For the discussion of Kawād’s possible motivation in transporting these craftsmen, see below, pp. 217-9.

⁴⁵ Josh. Styl. 53.

⁴⁶ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.258.

⁴⁷ Prok. Wars 2.14.2.

⁴⁸ Josh. Styl. 83.

⁴⁹ Prok. Wars 2.5.13.

⁵⁰ See below, pp. 198-200, 255-6.

Apamea was captured and transported to the lands of the Sasanids,⁵¹ but his identity remains unclear. Since these Romans were resettled in the city Better Antioch of Kosrow, the bishop, if still alive on arriving at Ctesiphon, might have been relocated to this city along with his flock.

The fates of some captured social elites in Amida, especially those who were in charge of this city's defences, seem to have been more extreme. Having seized valuable goods from different places of Amida, the Persians then began to search for the leaders of the city and its administrators. Many, if not all, of them must have been deported to the territory of the Persians, including Leontios, the head of the city council,⁵² and the Governor Cyrus. Although Kawād did not slaughter them,⁵³ he managed to humiliate these local elites in retaliation for the hardships he and his soldiers had endured in the wintertime of 502 and 503. Both Leontios and Cyrus, who had been shot with arrows and wounded severely before,⁵⁴ were forced to wear filthy garments and pig ropes on their necks, and they were even asked to carry pigs and were humiliated by being paraded through the streets of Amida.⁵⁵ The Persians shouted that 'Governors who do not govern the city well and do not order its people not to insult the king deserve an insult such as this'.⁵⁶ In other words, these governors should have chosen to obey the will of Kawād and surrendered the city to the Persians rather than lead their fellow citizens to resist them for so many days.

Some captives' identities can be deduced from contemporary testimonies. For example, the soldiers of Kawād did not kill all the refugees in the school of Urtaye, and later the survivors were carried away from Amida.⁵⁷ Therefore, some monks could have been deported together with other inhabitants. In other cases, the Persians seem to have removed many nameless Romans from Apamea, Antioch and other

⁵¹ Euagr. HE 5.10, cf. Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

⁵² Zach. HE 7.4.

⁵³ Cf. Ammianus 19.9.2, in which some Roman elites were killed after the siege of Amida was concluded in 359.

⁵⁴ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Joh. Eph. *Lives*, PO 19.219.

cities.⁵⁸ In a recent study, Kathy L. Gaca argued that the focus of selling people as chattle slaves (ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον) in Greek historiography primarily concerned young women and self-mobile children,⁵⁹ while the male combatants would have received different treatments. This argument may be helpful for unearthing the hidden details regarding the fates of the conquered Romans, and similar images were preserved in the works of medieval Islamic authors. For example, while in 542 Prokopios simply reported that Ḳosrow I enslaved the inhabitants of Kallinikos,⁶⁰ such activities could have resulted in, first, the disarming or killing of the male citizens and, second, the capture and deportation of the remaining Romans.

However, a close reading of contemporary texts indicates that this argument cannot be applicable to the situation of the sixth-century Empire. Information from contemporary Syriac texts is of use. In the case of Amida, the author of Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History* related that those who were sent to the Caucasus took wives there.⁶¹ Although we do not know whether they married Roman or local women, clearly some males were deported by Kawād. Second, as already shown, 'ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον' was a frequently used word in many classicising historians' texts,⁶² but neither Prokopios nor Theophylaktos nor John of Epiphania ever reported that the Great King only sold women and children from the cities of the Empire as chattle slaves.⁶³ Rather, the objects of these accounts were usually the inhabitants of a conquered Roman city, which presumably included men, women and children. In short, even though these classicising authors used

⁵⁸ For Sura, Antioch and Kallinikos in the 540s, see Prok. Wars 2.5.26, 2.9.14, 2.21.32. For Apamea and Dara, see Joh. Eph. HE 6.6, Joh. Epiph. 4, Th. Sim. 3.10.9, Euagr. HE 5.10, Greg. Tur. Hist. 4.40 and Euagr. HE 5.10, Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Joh. Epiph. 5 respectively.

⁵⁹ Gaca 2010: 157.

⁶⁰ Prok. Anecd. 3.31.

⁶¹ See below, p. 186 for the situation of these Romans.

⁶² See above, pp. 56-8.

⁶³ Cf. Prok. Wars 4.8.22, 4.21.14, 5.10.29, 6.7.29-30, 6.10.1, 7.38.18, 8.18.24, in which 'ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον' was used to describe the enslavement of non-Roman women and children.

‘ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον’ frequently in their works, there is no clear distinction between the Sasanids’ treatment of the Empire’s male and female population in the sixth century, and what the Sasanids intended to transport to Persia could have been a whole community rather than any particular gender or age groups.

Occasionally the Persians seem to have been keen to capture Roman populations. When K̄osrow I besieged Edessa in 543, the Arab allies and some Persian soldiers were deployed at the rear of his army so that ‘when the city was captured, they might gather in the fugitives and catch them as in a drag-net’.⁶⁴ In other cases the Persians seem not to have managed to capture all the inhabitants from the places they conquered, and many people were spared. As mentioned before,⁶⁵ the deportation made by Kawād from Amida in 503 was not a comprehensive one, and clearly certain groups of people were the focus of the victors. Apart from the garrisoned Persian soldiers, John bar Hablâhâ, one of the city’s wealthy inhabitants, Sergios bar Zabduni and others were appointed to govern their remaining fellow citizens.⁶⁶ The suffering of the Amidenes in the famine⁶⁷ in the subsequent periods indicates that many of them still inhabited Amida after the departure of Kawād and his forces. Again, even if the deportation made by K̄osrow I from Antioch was great, not everyone was led into captivity, and the reading of Prokopios’ text suggests that some of them even participated in the rebuilding work of their hometown, ‘[...] it became impossible for the people of Antioch to recognise the site of each person's house, when first they carried out all the debris, and to clear out the remains of a burned house [...]’.⁶⁸

In 573, the shah, according to Euagrius, ‘led forth everyone, a countless number...most he took as prisoners’ from Dara.⁶⁹ His account can be corroborated by John of Ephesos, who reported that K̄osrow I ‘took the people captive...emptied it of its inhabitants’.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in fact the Sasanids did not capture and transport the

⁶⁴ Prok. Wars 2.27.30.

⁶⁵ See above, pp. 148-9.

⁶⁶ Zach. HE 7.4-5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7.5, Josh. Styl. 76-7, Prok. Wars 1.9.22.

⁶⁸ Prok. Aed. 2.10.20.

⁶⁹ Euagr. HE 5.10.

⁷⁰ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

whole population from this frontier city, and some Romans remained there at the end of the sixth century. Here the testimony of Theophylaktos is useful: after being ousted by his general Bahrām at the very beginning of his reign, K̅osrow II fled to the Roman Empire in order to seek assistance from the emperor Maurice. When the Persians entered Dara and prepared for the shah’s return, K̅osrow II himself choose to stay in ‘the walled precinct at the notable shrine of the city, where the Romans performed the mysteries of religion’.⁷¹ Such an insolent action enraged the inhabitants because ‘the elder K̅osrow (i.e. K̅osrow I) had made no move to insult their religion after he had captured the city’.⁷² Marlia Mundell Mango pointed out that they may have been the Nestorians who were transported by K̅osrow I after his conquest of Dara.⁷³ While certain Persian Dyophysites, both clergy and laity, might have been new immigrants after 573, these furious citizens must surely have been the local Romans. Since this episode happened before K̅osrow II’s decision to return Dara to the Romans,⁷⁴ Dara was clearly still under the occupation of the Sasanids, and these people could not be Roman immigrants from other places. Moreover, from what they said we can conclude that some of them could have either known or even experienced the siege of 573 themselves. That is to say, presumably they were Miaphysites who were either the survivors of the sack of Dara or the descendants of those survivors.

Destinations

Examination of the Greek, Syriac and Arabic texts suggests that having been removed from their hometown by the Persians, many deportees were sent to different places both inside and outside the Persian Empire. At the beginning of the sixth century, the Persians first sent the prisoners of war from Amida to the Mount of Singara, the

⁷¹ Th. Sim. 5.3.4. It must have been the church built by either Anastasios or Justinian at Dara.

⁷² Ibid., 5.3.5.

⁷³ Mango 1975: 222.

⁷⁴ Th. Sim. 5.3.10, Euagr. HE 6.19. Not long afterwards the Persian satrap Dolabzas returned the keys of Dara to Maurice. See Th. Sim. 4.13.24 for the Sasanids’ decision to return this Roman citadel.

frontier zone of the Persian Empire near Nisibis (Map 1, zone 3FG),⁷⁵ but this place was not their final destination. These captives were removed to at least three different places. According to the *Chronicle of Seert*, these people were transported to Seleukia, which was located either in southern Mesopotamia or in Kūzestān (Map 3).⁷⁶ The information about the second possible site comes mainly from the works of medieval Arab historians. In Dīnavarī's work, the captives were sent back to the Persians' country after the conquest of Amida and Mayyāfāriḳīn (Martryopolis).⁷⁷ Kawād then commanded that a new place Abarqobād should be established between Fārs and Ahvāz to resettle these Romans.⁷⁸ While in the Islamic period this place was actually located between Baṣra and Vāseṭ and to the east of Tigris River,⁷⁹ it should, as other scholars have stated,⁸⁰ be identified with Arrajān, Buqubadh, or Wām Qubādh,⁸¹ a city which was established in the province of Fārs (Map 3) and obtained a new toponym Beh az Āmed-e Kawād, 'Better Amida of Kawād' in the sixth century after the arrival of the captives from Amida.

Unlike his father's strategies in the Anastasian war, after the sack of Antioch, Kōsrow I sent all his captives together to a place in lower Mesopotamia, an area which was called Sawad,⁸² the 'dark lands' of lower Mesopotamia⁸³ by al-Ṭabari. These Romans were resettled to 'a place one day's journey distant from Ctesiphon' (See Map 9 for the possible locations of this city and other important sites around Ctesiphon),⁸⁴ the political nucleus of his empire. The site which Kōsrow I used to

⁷⁵ Josh. Styl. 53.

⁷⁶ Chr. Seert 2.17, Trombley and Watt 2000: 62.

⁷⁷ Dīnavarī 68. The conquest of this city was only mentioned by Arab historians, cf. Prok. Prok. Aed. 3.2.4-7, in which the Romans surrendered it immediately.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Bosworth 1982: 64.

⁸⁰ Streck and Wilber 1965: 659, Streck 1960: 3, see also Nöldeke 1879a: 146, Pourshariati 2007: 130.

⁸¹ al-Ṭabari 1.887-8.

⁸² Ibid., 1.959.

⁸³ Bosworth 1999: 14.

⁸⁴ Prok. Wars 2.14.1.

settle these Antiochenes was actually a new city that was established at the east bank of Tigris.⁸⁵ This place seems to have become a preferred site for the Great King to resettle his captives from other Roman cities in the sixth century. In 573, the Sasanids again sent the Apameans, and, possibly along with those from Dara, to this place.

Nevertheless, here we have two different versions of events. While John of Ephesos stated that those captured from these two cities were transported to this area,⁸⁶ Theophylaktos noted that the shah decided to put the captives from Dara into the so-called ‘Oblivion Prison’,⁸⁷ a place which was located in the inner part of Media and in the region of Bizae (Beth Huzaye) and not far from the city of Bendosabora.⁸⁸ Since the use of ‘Media’ by Theophylaktos is often ambiguous,⁸⁹ we are unable to know where the ‘inner part of Media’ was. The second half of his account, however, proves to be correct, as the Armenian historian Moses Khorenatsi placed this prison in the region of Kūzestān.⁹⁰ In the nineteenth century, Henry Rawlinson noticed a ruined Sasanian fort at the foot of Gilgird, the mountains which run along the river Kārūn,⁹¹ but no further information regarding the function and history this site can be found. The captives from Dara were imprisoned by Kōsrow I in southwestern Iran.

According to the accounts of late antique writers,⁹² as a royal prison, the castle of Oblivion seems to have served as a place in which both the Persian and non-Persian magnates or nobles were detained. The ‘trouble-makers’ of the Great King’s regime such as the Qadishaye, a people who revolted and attacked Nisibis during the reign of Kawād,⁹³ were imprisoned as well. Nevertheless, even if the Sasanids had ever sent them to this prison, there was no point in detaining their women, children and others, and presumably only the chieftains could have been imprisoned. If Theophylaktos is

⁸⁵ al-Mas‘ūdī *Les Prairies d’Or* 6.108/181. Fiey 1967a: 26, el-Ali 1968-9: 431.

⁸⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19.

⁸⁷ Th. Sim. 3.5.4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3.5.2. This was the Greek name of the city Gondēšāpur.

⁸⁹ Whitby and Whitby 1986: 104-5.

⁹⁰ Mos. Khor. 3.35.

⁹¹ Rawlinson 1839: 83-4, 87, cf. Kettenhofen 1988: 100.

⁹² See below, pp. 184-5.

⁹³ Josh. Styl. 21-2, 24.

to be believed, those who were captured at Dara were sent to this place. We have no idea how many Romans were deported from this frontier city,⁹⁴ nor do we have any idea about the size of this prison, but it is difficult to believe that all these prisoners of war would be imprisoned at once. If we regard being detained in the Sasanids' castle of Oblivion as a certain type of punishment,⁹⁵ then only the leading Romans, particularly the surviving military and civic leaders who led their fellow citizens to defend Dara for half a year, would be cast into this prison and kept under surveillance.

Apart from being transported to these Persian cities and the Sasanids' royal prison, some captured Romans were sent to the places outside the Persian Empire. Relevant information regarding the fates and destination of the captured Amidenes can be deduced from the detailed accounts of the *Church History* of Pseudo-Zachariah. The author's knowledge of these events seems to be based on the testimony of John of Resh'aina (Theodosiopolis), who came from the monastery of Bet Ishaquni,⁹⁶ a place located near Amida, and of Thomas the Tanner;⁹⁷ both of them were among the deportees who were captured by the Persians from the Empire and sold to 'the land of the Huns'. Therefore these Romans survived their captivity for several decades. K. Czeglédy pointed out that many other prisoners of war must have been deported to the same place,⁹⁸ but no further information can be found to support this argument.

While Pseudo-Zachariah did not record who these Romans were, the analysis of his accounts makes it possible to establish their identity. There are two major cases of deportation in the sixth century: one from Amida and Roman Armenia in the reign of Anastasios, another from Antioch and other places in the reign of Justinian. Since those captured by Kōsrow I in 540 were sent to lower Mesopotamia, either these returned Romans themselves or their ancestors must have been captured when Kawād

⁹⁴ See below, pp. 264-73 for the discussion of Syriac writers' figures of deportation from Dara.

⁹⁵ See below, p. 209.

⁹⁶ See Zach. HE 8.5, Palmer 1990a: XXI, Menze 2008: 152 for this site's possible location. I owe this information to Greatrex et al. 2011: 305.

⁹⁷ Zach. HE 12.7.

⁹⁸ Czeglédy 1971: 146.

invaded the Roman Empire. Apart from Theodosiopolis, Martyropolis, and, most importantly, Amida, the Persians were not able to capture any Roman city from 503 onwards. Thus these Romans must have been captives in the first phase of Kawād's invasion. While it remains unclear whether the Persians sacked and deported the inhabitants of Theodosiopolis or other minor places in his campaign at the beginning of the sixth century,⁹⁹ most of these captives must have been captured at Amida, a relatively populous and important city in northern Mesopotamia.

The examination of passages from Pseudo-Zachariah indicates that these Amidenes were sent to the Caucasus, a place inhabited by different ethnic groups of people from central Asia. A brief survey of the northern frontier of Persia in the early sixth century is necessary. While from the second half of the fourth century onwards different groups of nomadic peoples began to emigrate to Eurasia and became the masters of the northern frontier of both Rome and Persia,¹⁰⁰ in the sixth century, it was the Sabir Huns, a Hunnic group who lived in the region north of the Caucasus (Map 2),¹⁰¹ and the Hephthalites, who established their hegemony at the northern frontier of the Persian Empire,¹⁰² who played dominant roles in the politics of the Sasanids for many decades in the sixth century. Furthermore, the analysis of the continuator of Zachariah's text indicates that the term 'Huns' in the *Church History* was usually used to refer to the Sabir Huns, rather than the Hephthalites.¹⁰³ Therefore, these Romans would have been sent to the territory under the control of the Sabir Huns.

More clues come from the people met by these Roman prisoners of war in the subsequent years. At the very end of Justin I's reign, a Roman ambassador, Probos, the nephew of the late Anastasios, was sent to Crimea in order to recruit soldiers among the Huns living there.¹⁰⁴ While he did not achieve the expected goal, Czeglédy

⁹⁹ Josh. Styl. 48, Ps. Dion. II, 5. Cf. Greatrex 1998: 80, in which Pseudo-Joshua's account was doubted.

¹⁰⁰ Golden 1992: 88-104, Heather 1995: 4-41.

¹⁰¹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973: 432, Blockley 1985: 253.

¹⁰² Prok. Wars 1.3.1-1.4.35.

¹⁰³ Zach. HE 8.5, 9.6, 9.7, 12.7, cf. 7.3 for the Hephthalites.

¹⁰⁴ Prok. Wars 1.12.6. cf. Greatrex 1998: 143-4.

suggests that Probos continued to go eastwards and tried to enlist mercenaries.¹⁰⁵ Since at that time he seems to have been in touch with the deportees from Amida,¹⁰⁶ it follows that they must have been sent to the area east of the Black Sea. Several years later a group of missionaries led by Qardust, a bishop from Caucasian Albania, went to the Caucasus to evangelise people living there and talked to these Amidenes.¹⁰⁷ Instead of passing this area through the Derbend Pass,¹⁰⁸ which was under the control of the Sasanids, they chose to climb the mountains to reach their destination. The location of the kingdom of Albania may thus be helpful for us to locate the possible destinations of these Roman prisoners of war. In Late Antiquity this kingdom lay between the western side of the Caspian Sea and northeast of Persarmenia (Map 2).¹⁰⁹ The third destination of these Amidenes would thus have been the Caucasus.

From Rome to Persia: routes and treatments

Although both contemporary and later authors did not often relate the details about the deportees' calamities, it is possible to reconstruct their possible postwar experiences by examining several factors, including the distance they might have walked between the places they had been captured and their destination, the environment of the Empire's eastern provinces, and finally, their treatments at the hand of their captors. The depiction of the sufferings of the captives from Sura in the spring of 540 is a good starting-point. Even though they had been purchased by Kandidos and then released not long afterwards, the torments already emaciated these deportees: most of them had died, and even those who survived were 'unable to support the misery which had fallen to their lot, and succumbed soon afterwards'.¹¹⁰ Prokopios did not record when the shah released the prisoners, and we do not know where they were ransomed. Kōsrow I could have decided to sell all of them either at

¹⁰⁵ Czeglédy 1971: 146-7.

¹⁰⁶ Zach. HE 12.7.

¹⁰⁷ On the Hunnic peoples living in the Caucasus, see Golden 1992: 106-8.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Czeglédy 1971: 146, in which the Dariel Pass was preferred.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Czeglédy 1971: 147 for the possible territory of the Sabir Huns.

¹¹⁰ Prok. Wars 2.5.33.

Sura or at Sergiopolis,¹¹¹ another Roman city located not far away from Sura. In any case we know that the Great King ‘led his army forward’ to continue his campaign after this settlement.¹¹² Undoubtedly the captured Romans must have been released before reaching Hierapolis, the next destination of the Persians.¹¹³

In the case of Antioch, the detailed accounts in both Prokopios and other oriental texts makes it possible, though only tentatively, to reestablish the possible routes taken by K̄osrow I and his forces in the campaign of 540. The detailed data in Prokopios’ works are of vital importance. After leaving Antioch, K̄osrow I first went to Seleukia, the port of Antioch, then to Apamea.¹¹⁴ Then the Persians passed by certain important cities including Chalkis¹¹⁵ and Edessa.¹¹⁶ Finally, they collected money from the citizens of Konstantia and Dara before reaching the border.¹¹⁷ Apart from Apamea, Edessa and Batne (Map 1, zone C3), the Syriac authors failed to mention the extortions made by K̄osrow I at other Roman cities and towns, and the information in their works is too fragmentary to be useful here. Some of them also stated that K̄osrow I attacked Kallinikos and Barbalissus and captured their populations,¹¹⁸ but all these accounts must belong to the later campaign of 541-2.¹¹⁹

The difference between Prokopios and the Arab historians is significant. According to the latter, at the beginning, the Persians captured several important cities, including Dara, al-Ruha (Edessa), Manbij (Hierapolis). Then they conquered Qinnasrin (Chalkis), Halab (Beroea) and Antioch. Finally, Hims (Emesa) and other cities were subdued as well.¹²⁰ That is, K̄osrow I did not circumvent the strongholds

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.5.28-9.

¹¹² Ibid., 2.5.33.

¹¹³ Ibid., 2.6.21-2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.11.1, 14.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.12.1-2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2.12.33-4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.13.8, 28.

¹¹⁸ Chr. 1234 56. See Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.257-9 for the preservation of this information in Persian literary tradition.

¹¹⁹ Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 107, 114, 270.

¹²⁰ Dīnavarī 70, al-Ṭabari 1.959, al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612.

of the Romans, and chose to march through the area between the Tigris and Euphrates. This argument is contradicted not only by Prokopios' accounts¹²¹ but also by the experiences of military failure by the Persians in the past ten years. Having learned from the failures at Dara in 530, Kawād chose to invade the Empire along the river Euphrates.¹²² While the base of the dux of Mesopotamia had been transferred from Dara to Konstantia after the treaty of the Eternal Peace was signed in 532, the Sasanids would have dreaded the potential presence of armed forces at these frontier citadels. Therefore it is surely inconceivable that Kōsrow I would have chosen to invade the Empire directly in 540 without having learned from the mistakes of his ancestors, and the information provided by the Arab historians, which might have been based on exaggeration or propaganda,¹²³ should not be trusted.

In short, while we do not know the exact routes in the second half of this 'forced journey', that is, from Dara to Ctesiphon, it is possible to reconstruct the routes of the Persians inside the Roman Empire with the help of Prokopios' narratives (Map 4); suffice it to observe that the distances the deported Romans might have walked were much longer than the distances their compatriots had walked from Sura to (possibly) Sergiopolis in 540. Since it would have been a journey of more than 1,200 km,¹²⁴ the tribulation of the Antiochenes after the sack of their city must have been far greater than that of the citizens of Sura, and many of them would have perished before reaching Persia.

¹²¹ Prok. Wars 2.5.1.

¹²² Ibid., 1.17.30-9, Zach. HE 9.4 for Kawād's consideration and decision. For the battle of Dara in 530, see Prok. 1.13.9-1.14.55, Zach. HE 9.3, Mal. 18.50, Theoph. A.M. 6022.

¹²³ Bonner 2011: 52-3.

¹²⁴ I have used the *Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations* <http://darmc.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>, a system developed by Harvard University to gauge the distances the deportees might have walked. It should be admitted that this is surely not an accurate calculation because we know neither whether Kōsrow I's forces always used the road systems of the Empire nor the exact routes they chose. For the roads of the Empire's frontier zone (Euphratesia, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia), see Comfort 2008.

The situation of other cases is much less clear. We know that the soldiers of Kawād transported the Amidenes to the Singara Mountains first, then took them to the Caucasus, and to Fārs and, possibly, Seleukia. In 573 Ƙosrow I's general Adarmahan arrived at Dara after leaving Apamea, and the Roman prisoners of war were counted in Ƙosrow I's presence. As suggested by the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian and Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, the Persians also attacked many cities in this campaign, such as Halab (Beroea), Sakila (Seleukia?) and other places.¹²⁵ However, since we have no idea whether Adarmahan arrived at these places after the sack of Apamea, it is impossible to reconstruct the route his forces took from this metropolis to Dara. Later the Roman captives were 'divided among the troops' and transported to the Persian Empire.¹²⁶ It seems that the Persians did not transport these deportees to the nearby area of Ctesiphon instantly. Rather, these Romans were carried to Nisibis and sojourned there, perhaps in order to wait for the main force led by Ƙosrow I himself for a certain period of time. After Ƙosrow I left Dara with his captives and booty, all these Roman deportees were counted again at Nisibis,¹²⁷ presumably to check how many individuals his fellow soldiers and generals had captured and snatched from these battles.

The issue of those who were sent to the Caucasus, that is, outside the Persian Empire, needs to be addressed. Having been captured and then transported to Persia, these Amidenes eventually were sold to the Huns and left the Persian Empire 'from the gates'. While we cannot deny the possibility that 'the gates' in the text could have been the gates of the Persians' fortifications on the borderline in the Transcaucasus, another more plausible explanation can be found: these prisoners of war might have been led through the so-called Caspian Gates to the land of the nomadic people,¹²⁸ which can be identified with the Dariel pass,¹²⁹ the northern-most site on the borders of the Persian Empire (Map 2). In the first decade of the sixth century this strategic

¹²⁵ Ferdowsī, *Šāh-nāma* 8.46-7.

¹²⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 6.19.

¹²⁸ Cf. Greatrex et al. 2011: 453.

¹²⁹ Priscus fr. 47. This identification was accepted among scholars, see, for example, Braund 1994: 269, Greatrex 1998: 15, 129, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 78.

location was still under the control of the Sabir Huns rather than the Sasanids.¹³⁰ In 504, they began to invade the Persian Empire,¹³¹ and later on even tried to hand over the control of this fortress to Anastasios in order to ask money from the Romans.¹³² It was not until the death of Ambazouces, their ruler, that Kawād seized this site successfully.¹³³ Henry H. Howorth dated this event to 508, two years after the conclusion of the Anastasian War.¹³⁴ If he is right, then the Persians would have controlled the Dariel pass after this date, but no further supporting evidence can be found from our texts. We do not know to what extent the Sabir Huns controlled the checkpoint at the Dariel pass in the first decade of the sixth century, but it would not have been easy for the Persian merchants (or even soldiers) to transport these Amidenes by using this route. The alternative is that these Romans could have been sold in the Caucasus by the Persians, possibly at Derbend, a Persian city at the narrow pass between the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea where merchants from different countries and areas would meet,¹³⁵ and then would have gone through this pass over to the Huns.

In short, apart from the case of Antioch, it is nearly impossible to reconstruct the itinerary of the captured Romans from Amida (503), Apamea and Dara (573) because of the sketchy information from our texts. The problem is aggravated by the fact that except for the so-called Royal Road established by the Achaemenids,¹³⁶ our knowledge about the road system inside the sixth-century Sasanian Empire is limited. Therefore it is not easy to identify the routes chose by the Sasanids for sending their captives. Nevertheless, these Romans would have walked several hundred miles from the Empire to their destinations.

¹³⁰ *PLRE* II: s.v. Ambazuces.

¹³¹ Prok. Wars 1.8.19, cf. 1.9.24, 1.10.15, Prok. Aed. 2.1.5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1.10.10.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 1.10.12.

¹³⁴ Howorth 1892: 614, cf. Kettenhofen 1994: 15.

¹³⁵ Kettenhofen 1994: 13-6 for this city in the Sasanian era.

¹³⁶ Hdt. 5.52.4, Graf 1994: 167-89. See French 1998: 18-9 for the roads from Amida to Susa.

The natural environment of Syria and Mesopotamia, especially climatic conditions, needs to be taken into consideration. Since Kawād crushed the resistance of the Amidenes in January, the survivors must have been captured soon afterwards. While Kawād himself stayed in this city for several months and left it in the spring,¹³⁷ the survivors had been carried away by a detachment of Persians in the winter of 503.¹³⁸ Seventy years later, Dara was conquered by Kōsrow I in the middle of November.¹³⁹ All these Romans must have been deported from their homeland to their first destination in the Persian Empire in the chilly winter of northern Mesopotamia.

The scorching and rainless summer of Mesopotamia could have been proved fatal.¹⁴⁰ In 540, the Persians captured Antioch in June,¹⁴¹ and finished their invasion right before the end of summer.¹⁴² Undoubtedly they invaded Antioch and then returned through Mesopotamia in the hottest period of the whole year, i.e. from June to September. The mean maximum temperature in summer in this region, which would have been nearly 110° F,¹⁴³ would have proved fatal for many captured civilians. On this we have an excellent example from the other side. In the autumn of 584, having captured many distinguished prisoners of war from Nisibis and other places of the Persian Empire,¹⁴⁴ the *magister militum per Orientem*, Philippikos¹⁴⁵ retreated back to the Empire because of the coming of the Sasanids. The Romans, having been vexed by the lack of water, began to slaughter some of these Persian captives who went along the road to Theodosiopolis-Resaina. While the soldiers spared children ‘out of pity for their immature youth’, the shortage of water soon

¹³⁷ Zach. HE 7.4.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Mich. Syr. 10.9.

¹⁴⁰ I owe this information to Lee 1993b: 91, see Kaegi 1991: 586-8 for further information.

¹⁴¹ Mal. 18.87.

¹⁴² Prok. Wars 2.13.29.

¹⁴³ Smith 1969: 16-7.

¹⁴⁴ Euagr. HE 6.3.

¹⁴⁵ *PLRE* III: s.v. Philippicus 3.

destroyed other survivors.¹⁴⁶ Other similar, but less relevant cases can be found in the Roman soldiers' experiences. In the summer of 363, Ammianus Marcellinus frequently mentioned the heat of Mesopotamia in the campaign of Julian the Apostate.¹⁴⁷ In the reign of Justin I, having returned from their unsuccessful attack against Nisibis and the fortress of Tebetha, the Romans managed to return to Dara in the summer. The excess of heat, however, was certainly fatal for the soldiers who 'died of thirst on the road... [others] were lost to the army [who] flung themselves into wells in the wilderness and were drowned, and the rest perished on the road' afterwards.¹⁴⁸

The way the Persian removed these deportees should also be analyzed. In 503, the enemies fettered the captives from Amida,¹⁴⁹ possibly in order to prevent any chance of uprising or revolt. Similar accounts can be found in both Greek and Arabic texts. In the *Life* of St. Simeon Stylites the Younger, a Roman soldier who had participated in battles against the Persians before was 'tied up with iron',¹⁵⁰ that is, became a captive. If Ferdowsī is right, the captured Romans' hands and feet were scraped by the heavy bonds and shackles they wore when they reached Mesopotamia.¹⁵¹

To sum up, the arrival and invasion of the Sasanids in the sixth century led to different types of population movements. Many people escaped from their hometowns to safer places, while some social elites of the Roman Empire were sent as hostages. The most significant feature of civilians' movements in the Persian wars, however, was deportation, and both elites and ordinary people were likely to be captured and

¹⁴⁶ Th. Sim. 1.13.12, cf. Whitby 1988: 278-9, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 167-8 for a summary of the Romans' offensive.

¹⁴⁷ Ammianus 24.4.17, 24.8.3, 25.1.18, 25.3.10, den Boeft et al. 2005: 7. On Julian's invasion, see Blockley 1973: 54-5, Ridley 1973: 317-30, Arce 1974: 340-3 for discussion of literary sources, and Wirth 1978: 455-507, Hunt 1998: 73-7 for a review of relevant details.

¹⁴⁸ Zach. HE 9.1.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.4.

¹⁵⁰ V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 62.

¹⁵¹ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.259.

sent either to Persia or to the nomads. Few details regarding the Persians' treatment of these Romans and the circumstances of their deportation can be unearthed from existing sources with certainty, but many of them must have perished before reaching their destinations.

Chapter 5. The afterlives of civilians outside the Empire

Roman prisoners of war were eventually resettled to different places both inside and outside the Persian Empire in the post-siege period. In this section I will try to answer two questions. First, to what extent can we know the treatment of these captives by both the Sasanids and the Sabir Huns to whom these Romans were sold? Second, what would the life of these captives have been like, either inside or outside the Persian Empire?

The Pseudo-Roman cities

Since both Kawād and Kōsrow I sent some Roman captives to cities within their realm, the features of these places should be discussed. Scholars have pointed out that the Sasanian monarchs only established new cities either in their ancestral domains where the control could be effectively secured or in the newly conquered zones or in remote areas.¹ Since the neighbouring area of Ctesiphon and the province of Fārs were neither conquered frontier places nor remote areas, the cities which were used to accommodate Roman prisoners of wars in the sixth century would have been established in the ancestral land of the Great King. In 503 Kawād transported the Amidenes to an existing city instead of building a new one. While nearly all Arabic historians suggested that the city Better Amida of Kawād was founded by Kawād, al-Ṭabari wrote that it already existed in the third century as Ardašīr I (r. 224-40) passed by this city to conquer his enemies.² The shah, therefore, did not establish it *ex nihilo*, and he might have merely rebuilt this city in the early sixth century.³ Having deported the Antiochenes to lower Mesopotamia in 540, Kōsrow I sent the city plan to his lieutenant,⁴ and ordered that a new city ‘Better Antioch of Kōsrow’ should be built.⁵ However, the date of this city’s construction remains unknown because neither classical nor oriental authors preserved relevant information in their works. It was

¹ Rubin 2004: 242-5.

² al-Ṭabari 1.818.

³ Bosworth 1999: 12.

⁴ al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612.

⁵ Sebeos 9, Chr. Seert. 2.32, al-Ṭabari 1.898. Fiey 1967a: 26, el-Ali 1968-9: 429-31.

established, according to al-Thālibī, a prominent Arab writer from the eastern part of the Islamic world in the tenth century, by the artisans and the workers from both Persia and the Roman Empire.⁶

The toponyms of these places should be addressed further. To name/rename the Persian cities after another conquered Roman one seems to have been a tradition which can be traced back to the middle of the third century. Having sacked Antioch and other Roman cities and transported the captured Roman citizens back to his territory,⁷ Shapur I rebuilt the city ‘Better Antioch of Shapur’, that is, Gondēšāpur⁸ in southwestern Iran to accommodate them. The naming of this Better Amida of Kawād and Better Antioch of Kōsrow I respectively in the first half of the sixth century was thus in continuity with the practice of their predecessors, presumably in order to commemorate the shahs’ victory, conquest and greatness.⁹

While the official name of the city Better Antioch of Kōsrow was Veh-Antiokh-Kōsrow, the Persians would have called it Rumaghan—‘the city of the Romans’, while in Aramaic works its name was Mahoze Hedata, the ‘New City’.¹⁰ In the *Miracles* of Saint Anastasios of Persia in the early seventh century, the name of this city was Neapolis—the ‘New City’.¹¹ Since this testimony came from a certain charioteer who had worked in that place, such a toponym could have been common among local people, or, at least, among the Greek-speaking population. In the Islamic period, this city was mentioned frequently by Arab historians and geographers under different names. Sometimes, as stated in the *Chronicle of Seert*, they called it al-

⁶ al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612-3.

⁷ On the deportation of the Romans in the campaign of Shapur I and the possible Christianisation of Persia, see Chaumont 1964: 169-80, 1986: 121-2, Fiey 1969: 227-33, Decret 1979: 110ff, Jullien and Jullien 2002: 153-87, Mosig-Walburg 2010: 117-56, Jullien 2011: 85-93, cf. Fiey 1970b: 123-53.

⁸ Shahbazi and Richter-Bernburg 2002: 131-5. On the etymology of this city, see Abbott 1968: 71, Henning 1939: 843, Potts 1989: 324-6.

⁹ See also Wiesehöfer 1996: 189, Miri 2012: 100.

¹⁰ Hoffmann 1880: 94, Christensen 1944: 3834, 387, Flusin 1992.2: 124, 346, Chaumont 1986: 123-4, Kröger 1993: 447.

¹¹ *Miracula S. Anastasii* 3, 4.

Rumiya (the Roman city),¹² and in other cases its original name was preserved. For example, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, a tenth-century Persian philologist and historian, reported that ‘the area of al-Mada’in (i.e. the areas around Seleukia and Ctesiphon) consisted of seven cities... (including) Veh-Antioch-Ḳosrow’.¹³ Finally, both Dīnavarī and Ferdowsī called it Zabir-Ḳosrow¹⁴ and Zib-i-Ḳosrow,¹⁵ which mean ‘the ornament of Ḳosrow’. In the Armenian history attributed to Sebeos, another name Shahastan-i Nok-noy, which was unknown to any other source, was mentioned.¹⁶ All of them seem to have been the epithets of this ‘Better Antioch’,¹⁷ but their contexts and origins are unclear.

Although many late antique and medieval authors mentioned the places where the captured Romans were sent, the ruined state today of many Iranian cities, such as Gondēšāpur¹⁸ and Better Amida of Kawād¹⁹ prevents us from reconstructing the possible situation inside these cities in the late Sasanian period. Our best bet, and in fact the only case that we can analyze in some detail comes from the Better Antioch of Ḳosrow. The field surveys by German archaeologists in the early twentieth century showed that there were several ancient towns and cities in the areas adjacent to ancient Ctesiphon. Among them the site of Bostān-e-Kesrā (the gardens of Ḳosrow) is noteworthy with respect to three of its architectural features. The fortifications, including watch towers and curtain walls, might have been built around this site in Late Antiquity.²⁰ The design of the ruined walls is interesting: while the surface of their inner side is vertical enough, the outer part is ‘inclined with a great pronounced

¹² Chr. Seert. 2.32. On the works by other Arab authors in which the city of al-Rumiya was mentioned; see el-Ali 1968-9: 429-31.

¹³ el-Ali 1968-9: 422, Pourshariati 2007: 131.

¹⁴ Dīnavarī 70.

¹⁵ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.259.

¹⁶ Sebeos 9.

¹⁷ Bonner 2011: 55.

¹⁸ Mousavi and Daryaei 2012: 1077.

¹⁹ Gaube 1973: 29, Stein 1940: 80-6 for a brief outline of the decayed buildings in the early twentieth century.

²⁰ Reuther 1930: 35-6, Kröger 1982: 45.

slope'.²¹ Meanwhile, it seems that a system of drainage and canals were built 'to supply water for the particular needs of the enclosed area'.²² More significantly, from aerial photographs one can still guess that 'parallel streets' might have been designed and established in this area.²³ The original function of the site of Bostān-e-Kesrā remains a controversial issue among scholars.²⁴ Some argued that it might have been the site of 'Better Antioch of K̄osrow',²⁵ while others thought that it could have been the hunting reserve, the royal zoo or the Persian kings' *paradeisos*.²⁶ Judging from the mighty fortifications there, K̄osrow I would have resettled the deportees there and then erected these buildings both to sustain their life and to prevent them from escaping.

However, even in the case of Better Antioch of K̄osrow the available archaeological data remains too insufficient and fragmentary to form a clear picture, and it is necessary to resort to literary sources to understand this city's possible architectural arrangements. Again, this site received much more attention than other similar settlements in literary sources. Although it is difficult to know whether the Sasanids always had the conquest of Antioch in mind,²⁷ as the only Roman metropolis which was conquered and sacked by the Sasanids between Shapur I's invasions in the third century and the final great war of K̄osrow II in the seventh century, such a great military success clearly deserved to be emphasised in Persian-Arabic historiography. Ferdowsī recorded that this city was built 'like Antakiva (i.e. Roman Antioch), (as) radiant as a lamp'.²⁸ In other Arab historians' works, this city was built according to

²¹ Gullini 1966: 36.

²² Gullini 1966: 36.

²³ Fiey 1967a: 26.

²⁴ Gullini 1966: 35-6.

²⁵ Christensen 1944: 386-7, Simpson 2000: 61.

²⁶ Huff 1986: 304, Kröger 1993: 447-8.

²⁷ For example, in the last decades of the sixth century, the Persian general TamK̄osrow claimed that 'I will immediately enter their territories...conquer all their dominions, and will winter at Antioch', Joh. Eph. HE 6.26. See Lee 1993b: 23-4, in which the difficulty in telling the Romans' perception and the Sasanids' real intention.

²⁸ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.259.

the plan of the ‘Roman Antioch’, which included ‘the number of its houses, streets, and everything contained in it’,²⁹ and the deportees could even find their own house which was ‘so exactly resembling their former one in Antioch’.³⁰

While it is difficult to believe that this city was, as suggested in the *Šāh-nāma*, a paradise with ‘all rosaries and mansions, parks and gardens’,³¹ a Roman bath and a hippodrome, as reported by Prokopios, were built for the Antiochenes,³² and the deportees could ‘have free access to their other luxuries’ (ταῖς ἄλλαις τρυφαῖς ἀνεῖσθαι ἐποίει).³³ Henning Börm argued that the narratives here cannot be taken literally; rather, they were merely the ‘Roman’ features which Prokopios used to portray this ‘Roman city’.³⁴ However, it was not the first time that the Persian kings had constructed baths. In the late fifth century, Balaš (r. 484-8), the brother of Fīrūz (r. 459-84), irritated the Zoroastrian priests³⁵ because he wanted to build baths in his empire.³⁶ When Kawād sojourned in Amida, he used the bath of Paul the son of Zaynab in Amida.³⁷ The Great King must have been satisfied by it for after returning to his empire the shah ordered that baths should be built in all cities of his empire.³⁸ In 576, Kōsrow I told Theodoros, a Roman ambassador that ‘...we will together enter into Theodosiopolis, and there you shall bathe and refresh yourself, and then I will let you go’.³⁹ Whether the shah simply wanted to show his generosity to Theodoros or

²⁹ al-Ṭabari 1.898.

³⁰ Ibid., Dīnavarī 70.

³¹ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7. 259.

³² Prok. Wars 2.14.1.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Börm 2007: 176.

³⁵ On the uneasiness of the *magi* with the issue of hot baths, see Trombley and Watt 2000: 16-7, Greatrex 2014: 172-3. I owe this reference to Geoffrey Greatrex.

³⁶ Josh. Styl. 19.

³⁷ Zach. HE 7.4.

³⁸ Josh. Styl. 75.

³⁹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.8. It could also be a literary commonplace. See Prok. Wars 1.14.12, in which Fīrūz, the Persian commander, asked the Romans to prepare a bath and lunch in Dara.

just wanted to mock him we do not know, but K̲osrow I must have been aware of these customs of the Romans. The construction of such a building in a newly-established city would not have been impossible if K̲osrow I did intend to build a ‘Pseudo-Roman’ city inside his realm.

K̲osrow I also considerably embellished his Antioch. According to the accounts of the tenth-century Arab historian and geographer al- Mas‘ūdī, brilliant and colourful stones⁴⁰ were imported from the Roman Empire to Persia after the peace treaty with the Romans was signed, and the shah decorated the inner part of Better Antioch’s city walls with mosaics.⁴¹ Theophylaktos reported that ‘Justinian provided K̲osrow son of Kawād with Greek marble, building experts, and craftsmen skilled in ceilings, and that a palace situated close to Ctesiphon was constructed for K̲osrow with Roman expertise’.⁴² In the early twentieth century, a few mosaic cubes in glass and pieces of marble were unearthed in Ayyān-e Kesrā, the ‘Arch of K̲osrow’, in the surrounding areas of Ctesiphon.⁴³ The Persian king might have used them to decorate both this new palace and this ‘satellite city’, an action which, as Matthew Canepa has argued, might have resulted from the shah’s cultural interest.⁴⁴ Modern commentators stated that there is no further evidence to verify Theophylaktos’ words,⁴⁵ and it is possible that the Persians could have acquired these raw materials by other means. These decorative elements could represent the booty from Antioch in 540. This possibility is further corroborated by the information preserved in Greek, Syriac and Arabic works⁴⁶ for they all reported that the Sasanids removed the marble slabs and other building materials from Antioch. In short, what K̲osrow I used in these building works might have been the spoils which had been plundered by his forces from

⁴⁰ These materials might have been either the mosaics or the marble revetments.

⁴¹ al-Mas‘ūdī *Les Prairies d’Or* 2.24/199-200.

⁴² Th. Sim. 5.6.10.

⁴³ Reuther 1929: 442-6, Schmidt 1934: 1, Kröger 1982: 20.

⁴⁴ Canepa 2009: 221.

⁴⁵ Whitby and Whitby 1986: 140. Some preferred to accept the words of Theophylaktos, see Brown 1971: 167, Canepa 2009: 210, 330.

⁴⁶ Prok. Wars 2.9.16, Ps. Dion. II. 64, al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 612. Coates-Stephens 2003: 344-7.

Antioch or other places both as a symbol of triumph and as a demonstration of power, and what Theophylaktos wrote could have been a kind of ‘apologia’ for the sack of Antioch in 540.⁴⁷

While Kōsrow I might have managed to create a replica of what he had conquered near his capital, certain techniques were also adapted to control and monitor these prisoners of war. According to the information from John of Ephesos, there was a strong garrison with less than five hundred men, but we do not know whether these Persian soldiers were parts of the Sasanids’ capital defence system or stationed merely for guarding these Romans. Additionally, an earth wall was built around their living areas,⁴⁸ and the traits of this construction could still be observed in the Islamic period.⁴⁹ The last effective bulwark was the geographical location of this city, which was built on the eastern side of the Tigris.⁵⁰ In the fourth century, the Romans found that it was extremely dangerous to cross the river without the help of boats or bridges,⁵¹ and the Muslim forces also faced the Tigris’ formidable torrents in 637.⁵² Thus it would be nearly impossible for the captives to cross the river and escape back to their homelands.

We cannot establish the identities of those Persian officials dispatched by the shahs to rule these Romans because of the patchy sources, but occasionally clues can be found in our texts. The most important information regarding the city Better Amida of Kawād is a Sasanian seal in which the name of this place, along with two other cities, Bīšāpūr and Eṣṭaqr (Map 3), was inscribed.⁵³ This seal belonged to an *āmārgar*, a provincial officer who was in charge of financial affairs.⁵⁴ We know that an *āmārgar* could have been assigned to collect tax and handle property matters in

⁴⁷ Coates-Stephens 2003: 346.

⁴⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19, see also Fiey 1967a: 27 for the discussion of the Sasanids’ construction of such buildings.

⁴⁹ al-Mas‘ūdī *Les Prairies d’Or* 2.24/200.

⁵⁰ Fiey 1967a: 27.

⁵¹ Ammianus 24.8.2, 25.6.12-4.

⁵² al-Balādhurī *The origins of the Islamic state* 9.6/418.

⁵³ Pirenne and Devos: 1962: 104-5.

⁵⁴ Gyselen 1989: 35-7.

provincial cities,⁵⁵ and the existence of such an officer suggests that this city was under his jurisdiction, but nothing about the identity of this seal's holder can be established at present.

Much more information regarding the 'mayor' of the city Better Antioch of Qosrow can be found. In the *Acts* of George (Mihramgushnasp), a Christian convert and martyr who was executed by Qosrow II in the early seventh century, the author suggested that his grandfather, who was a member of the royal family, had been the 'prefect' of this new Antioch.⁵⁶ Arab and Persian authors, including Dīnavarī, al-Ṭabari, al-Thālibī, and finally, Ferdowsī, thought that the 'mayor' of this city was a Christian from either Gondēšāpur,⁵⁷ or Ahvāz,⁵⁸ another city located in the province of Kūzestān in southwestern Iran.⁵⁹ While Dīnavarī stated that this man was a lieutenant called Yazdfana, al-Ṭabari recorded his name Baraz,⁶⁰ who 'had been the head of the artisans and craftsmen working for him (i.e. the shah)'.⁶¹ Joseph Nasrallah suggested that this officer might have been the 'protector' of the Roman prisoners of war,⁶² but no material testimony could be found to support this argument.

All these works give us some clues regarding the possible social and religious identities of this 'mayor' or the Great King's deputy who was nominated to preside in this city. The first possibility is that Qosrow I entrusted the rule of the Antiochenes to members of the royal family. The importance of lineage had been emphasised by Kawād at the end of the fifth century: 'the offices (of the Persian empire)...shall not be conferred upon others than those to whom each particular honour belongs by right of birth'.⁶³ However, two uprisings must have shattered Qosrow I's confidence and raised his suspicions about his relatives. In the 530s, some discontented Persian

⁵⁵ MacKenzie and Chaumont 1989: 925-6.

⁵⁶ Hoffmann 1880: 94, O. Braun 1915: 223, Christensen 1944: 489, Morony 1976: 46.

⁵⁷ al-Thālibī *Histoire des rois des Perses* 613.

⁵⁸ Dīnavarī 71, al-Ṭabari 1.960.

⁵⁹ Bosworth, De Planhol, and Lerner 1984: 688.

⁶⁰ The literal meaning of this word is 'boar, wild boar', Bosworth 1999: 152-3, 255.

⁶¹ al-Ṭabari 1.960.

⁶² Nasrallah 1975: 150.

⁶³ Prok. Wars 1.6.13.

magnates and Zames,⁶⁴ K̄osrow I's brother, led a revolt and managed to overthrow his rule. In the subsequent large-scale punitive purge of Persian aristocracy, K̄osrow I not only killed Zames by his own hand, but also ordered that all the accomplices, including all his own brothers and their male offspring, should be slaughtered together.⁶⁵ Malalas also reported that the Persian magnates and the *magi*, who were irritated by the Great King's religious policy, initiated a plot to depose K̄osrow I shortly after his enthronement.⁶⁶ In the middle of the sixth century, another armed uprising took place. During the war with the Romans, K̄osrow I fell ill and returned to his empire, and the rumours of his death or illness were soon spread by others.⁶⁷ Anōšazād, his oldest son who was banished in Gondēšāpur at that time, decided to break into the prison and rebel against his father with the help of local Christians. This insurrection was suppressed by the forces of the shah's lieutenant at Ctesiphon. Anōšazād was either blinded or imprisoned again by his father, and his followers were executed.⁶⁸

Considering all these events and their possible effects, as Michael Bonner has suggested, it must have been risky for the Great King to delegate a high-ranking Persian to monitor these captives in the 540s.⁶⁹ Rather, it would make more sense to assign the post of mayor to a person, possibly a Christian, who would have been more loyal to him⁷⁰ so that this officer could oversee these captive Christians in this 'Better Antioch'. It is true that sometimes Christians were suspected of disloyalty to the

⁶⁴ As a one-eyed warrior, Zames could not inherit the throne from his father Kawād because 'it is not lawful for...one having any other deformity to become king over the Persians', Prok. Wars 1.11.4, 2.9.12, 8.10.22. Such customs were mentioned by medieval Arab historians as well, al-Ṭabari 1.833.

⁶⁵ Prok. Wars 1.23.4-6, Pourshariati 2008: 111, 266-9.

⁶⁶ Mal. 18.69.

⁶⁷ Prok. Wars 8.10.10, cf. Dīnavarī 71.

⁶⁸ Prok. Wars 8.10.8-9, 17-8, Dīnavarī 71-2, Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.264-7, 272-7. On the revolt of Anōšazād, see Nöldeke 1879a: 467-74, Christensen 1944: 383, Börm 2007: 120-4, Bonner 2011: 59-70, 2014: 131-7.

⁶⁹ Bonner 2011: 56.

⁷⁰ Bonner 2011: 56-7.

regime of the Sasanids,⁷¹ but in other cases they were recruited into the bureaucracy of Persia, served as spies or diplomats, and even became important agents to secure the loyalty of their co-religionists for the shahs.⁷²

Obviously we will never know the identity of this governor, but he could have been a member of the Dyophysite church, possibly a royalist bishop,⁷³ who would have surely helped the shah exert his control over the inhabitants of this newly-established city. This decision must have come from Kōsrow I's appraisal of the political realities in his empire, not from his 'tenderness and sympathy'.⁷⁴ It seems impossible that Kōsrow I was willing to grant him great power to monopolise the resources of this city, and the words of Ferdowsī, in which the mayor was granted with authority, wealth and even an army, should be rejected.⁷⁵ The reason is simple: it was quite risky to have a Christian governor with his forces, resources and even potential followers near the heart of his empire. If the figure given by John of Ephesos is trustworthy, there could have been around 30,000 residents in this 'Better Antioch' in the second half of the sixth century.⁷⁶ Kōsrow I might have nominated someone to help him oversee these Antiochenes, but he must surely not have intended to create a 'warlord' who could challenge and even threaten his authority and security near Ctesiphon. This mayor should never have become an obstacle for him.

We have no idea whether all these captives really 'lived a life of luxury', as suggested by Prokopios,⁷⁷ nor is it clear whether the civic life of Roman Antioch was

⁷¹ On the primary sources of two examples Babowai, the *katholikos* of Seleukia-Ctesiphon and Barsauma, the bishop of Nisibis, see Chr. Seert. 2.1. See Labourt 130, 135, Garsoïan 1973-4: 134-5, Young 1974: 54, 56, 65-7, Brock 1982b: 1-19, Gillman and Klimkeit 1999: 118-9 for scholarly analyses and discussions.

⁷² On the important role played by the Christians, especially the distinguished ones, see Garsoïan 1973-4: 122-131, Morony 1984: 334, 337-9, Rassam 2005: 35, McDonough 2011b: 304-5, 307-8, cf. McDonough 2008: 87-92 for earlier cases.

⁷³ Bonner 2011: 57.

⁷⁴ al-Ṭabari 1.960.

⁷⁵ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.260.

⁷⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19.

⁷⁷ See also Fiey 1967b: 400.

actually copied or imitated in this ‘Persian Antioch’, but sometimes we can glimpse the life in exile of certain groups of people. In the first half of the seventh century, some charioteers went to the ‘New City’ (i.e. the New Antioch established by Kōsrow I in the sixth century) and received their salary.⁷⁸ Later, the situation around the Sasanids’ political nucleus was reported by Kalotychos, a certain charioteer of the circus⁷⁹ in the ‘New City’, to the writer of the holy man’s *Miracles*.⁸⁰ The charioteer Kalotychos is not otherwise attested, and the only information we have is that he came to Constantinople afterwards to finish his career.⁸¹ His name suggests that he was of Greek origin, but it is impossible to know whether he was a descendant of the captured Romans or not. Since neither Kawād nor Kōsrow I’s successors had ever managed to remove charioteers from the Roman Empire, those captured from Antioch in 540 must have been the first batch of professional charioteers in the Persian Empire, and they could have acted as masters transferring and preserving the knowledge of chariot racing in Iran. While some of these charioteers in the reign of Kōsrow II might have been the descendants of these Antiochenes, clearly many of them must have been non-Christians for they promised to believe in St Anastasios the Persia after observing the miracle performed by this saint.⁸² While it remains unknown to us whether they would play similar roles in the civic life of this ‘Pseudo-Roman’ city, it is evident that as inhabitants in the political and administrative nucleus of Persia who received their salaries from the Shahanshah,⁸³ they would have mainly served the king, perhaps just in the hippodrome of the ‘New Antioch’. Finally, as shown above, some of them, such as Kalotychos, had their own apprentices who could have been engaged in the same profession together, and we can thus assume that the number of these charioteers might not have been negligible in the seventh century.

⁷⁸ *Miracula S. Anastasii* 3.

⁷⁹ Flusin 1992.2: 345-6.

⁸⁰ *Miracula S. Anastasii* 3-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Although we do not know whether Kōsrow I adopted similar policies in treating the captives from other places like Apamea and Kallinikos, he had supreme authority over these Antiochenes, and intended to treat these ‘immigrants’ as his own subjects.⁸⁴ In fact it seems that nearly all of our texts suggest that the Great King treated those from Antioch magnanimously and generously.⁸⁵ He granted them certain legal privileges under his sovereignty,⁸⁶ possibly to protect his ‘booty’ from the menace of other powerful groups, such as the Zoroastrian priests or other magnates. If a slave happened to escape to this city, and anyone of the inhabitants identified him as his relative, their original owner was not able to take him away.⁸⁷ Meanwhile it seems that the basic needs of these captives must have been fulfilled, and Kōsrow I even provisioned them ‘at public expense more carefully than in the fashion of captives’.⁸⁸ Jean Maurice Fiey noted a similar case at the end of the fourth century,⁸⁹ in which a group of Persians and Romans captives liberated from the Huns by Persian forces were treated by the shah kindly and received rations of bread, wine and oil,⁹⁰ to illustrate the gentle manners with which Sasanids treated the ‘forced guests’ in this city.⁹¹ Indeed, such a benevolent treatment would not have been uncommon in Persia. In another sixth-century work, an anonymous author suggested that the Persians treated their subjects with care in the time of famine.⁹² However, it should be emphasised that the patterns and contexts of these instances were quite different. In the case of the Hunnic invasion, there was no conflict between these two great powers, and the Romans might have been considered by the Persians merely as the

⁸⁴ Prok. Wars 2.14.3.

⁸⁵ On the discussion of relevant accounts’ possible background and contexts, see above, pp. 77-87.

⁸⁶ Prok. Wars 2.14.3.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.14.4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2.14.3.

⁸⁹ The event of the Hunnic invasion in 395 was recorded in many works, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 17-9 for the collection of relevant texts.

⁹⁰ Chr. a.724 706/106.

⁹¹ Fiey 1967a: 27.

⁹² *The Dialogue on Political Science* 4.68-9, cf. McDonough 2011a: 61-2.

spoils which they seized from the Huns. Things were different in 540; by this time the Antiochenes were not only the spoils, but also, more importantly, the opponents of K̄osrow I's regime, and some of them would have killed many Persians during the defence of Antioch in the Great King's campaign.

In spite of the detailed accounts in extant literary texts about the Persians' treatment of the captured Romans, we know little about the social status of these captives in the Persian Empire. While neither Prokopios nor other contemporaries have ever mentioned explicitly that the captured Romans were sold as chattle slaves after being taken by the victorious Sasanids in wartime, many classicising historians used ἀνδραποδίζω/ἀνδράποδον, a word that may imply captives were sold as chattle slaves, in describing the deportation of the defeated Romans. Therefore, for these contemporaries enslavement was possibly believed to be the ultimate fate for prisoners of the Persian wars.⁹³ A piece of information comes from the *Passio* of St Golinduch, an aristocratic Persian noble woman who died in the reign of K̄osrow II. The anonymous author reported that some prisoners of war worked for her husband.⁹⁴ We know that Golinduch was martyred under Hormozd IV,⁹⁵ that is, in the last quarter of the sixth century, but her birthdate remains unknown to us, and the only information we know is that she converted to Christianity in the reign of K̄osrow I, for the shah, failing to convert her back, detained her in the castle of Oblivion. Some possibilities can be excluded. Since after the peace treaty was signed in 532, the captives or hostages taken in wartime were to be returned,⁹⁶ the servants of Golinduch's husband must have been captured either in the Anastasian War (502-6) or in the second phase of Justinian's Persian war. They, however, could not have been Antiochenes because, as I argued above,⁹⁷ it is unthinkable that K̄osrow I would put them under the authority or ownership of anyone else in his empire. The situation of the Amidenes is much more complex for we do not know whether Kawād had

⁹³ Such statements were accepted by many scholars, Wiesehöfer 1996: 178, Lee 2007a: 136, Daryaei 2009: 58

⁹⁴ Garitte 1956: 408, 427, Fiey 2004: 85.

⁹⁵ Garitte 1956: 411, 435.

⁹⁶ Mal. 18.76.

⁹⁷ See above, pp.176-7.

given any of them to the nobles of his realm. However, even if some of them were working for these magnates, it is hard to imagine that they would have survived for more than thirty or even forty additional years. Finally, if the accounts in the Greek version of her *Passio* are reliable, then Golinduch was imprisoned for eighteen years.⁹⁸ Since she died in 591, then this Persian convert must have been put into prison before 573. As shown already, K̄osrow I subdued Dara in the November of that year, and the captives from there and the Apameans might have arrived at the heartland at the end of that year. It is almost impossible that the Great King could have sent them to the households of other magnates in the same year. In my mind, these servants must have been captured from Kallinikos or other places in the shah's post-540 invasions.

Nevertheless, as noted above, in other cases the Great King adopted various strategies to treat the prisoners of war from the Empire's different cities. While those captured from Antioch and Apamea were resettled in the Pseudo-Roman cities, some inhabitants from Dara were cast into the royal prison. Therefore, instead of selling all these prisoners of war as slaves, the Sasanids seem to have treated them under different circumstances. These captured Romans, on the other hand, could have been allotted to other types of professions. In the reign of K̄osrow I, as observed by Theophylaktos, those who were deported from Antioch might have joined the construction work of his palace at Ctesiphon,⁹⁹ including the arched hall of the *Ayvān-e Kesrā*,¹⁰⁰ but we will never know whether K̄osrow I transported these prisoners of war from this metropolis simply because he needed certain workers to build his new palace and neither Prokopios nor other oriental authors reported that the shah transported builders in 540. A more plausible explanation is that being one of the most important cities of the Roman Near East, many professional architects and

⁹⁸ Peeters 1944: 82.

⁹⁹ Th. Sim. 5.6.10.

¹⁰⁰ On the building date and the details of this gigantic work, see Reuther 1929: 437, 440-7, Upton 1931-2: 192-3, Kurz 1941: 37-41, Lacoste 1954: 3-22, Bruno 1966: 90, Keall 1987: 155-9.

artisans must have lived in Antioch,¹⁰¹ and some of them might have been deported together with other civilians in the sack of this metropolis. When the shah wanted to build a new palace at his capital, these people would have been enlisted from the city Better Antioch of K̄osrow which is not very far away from Ctesiphon. While the farmers belonged to the third estate of Sasanian society, both the craftsmen and the merchants were regarded as the lowest stratum.¹⁰² Therefore, no matter which type of profession these Roman prisoners of war might have joined in the sixth century, they would have served in the lower echelons of Sasanian society, and it was not easy to break the strict social hierarchy.¹⁰³

In most cases the role played by these immigrants in the process of Christianisation of the Persian Empire would have been minimal,¹⁰⁴ for the cities sacked by the Sasanids, such as Amida and Dara were merely small frontier cities with small populations.¹⁰⁵ Even though the Great Kings managed to capture many Romans from Antioch and Apamea, two metropoleis of Roman Syria, many of them would have perished before reaching the Persian Empire. Coming from Christian-dominated cities in the sixth-century Empire, most deportees from Amida, Antioch and other places must have been Christians, and their deportation would have increased the numbers of Miaphysites not only in Iraq¹⁰⁶ but also other areas both inside and outside the Persian Empire. In the sixth century, the continuator of Zachariah preserved the details about the dreams of Qardust, a bishop from Albania in his *Church History*, which are significant. In the first dream, an angel told him that ‘...I have authority over these captives who have gone into the nations from the land

¹⁰¹ On the eve of K̄osrow I’s arrival, Germanos proposed to repair Antioch’s fortification, but then was rejected by public architects, Prok. Wars 2.6.13, cf. Jon Lyd. De Mag. 3.54, in which the author stressed that this metropolis was unfortified on the eve of the siege.

¹⁰² Daryaei 2009: 47-8. Wiesehöfer 1996: 176-7.

¹⁰³ Tafazzoli 1974: 191.

¹⁰⁴ Morony 1984: 372-3.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix 2 for further discussion of this issue.

¹⁰⁶ Some scholars shared this viewpoint, see, for instance, Labourt 1904: 199, Oates 1968: 114, Rassam 2005: 65, *contra* Morony 1984: 372-3.

of the Romans, and have offered their petition to God'.¹⁰⁷ The caring for these displaced people thus resulted in the arrival of these clerics, and, more importantly, the subsequent Christianisation of the area they inhabited.

Little is known of the religious life of the deported Christians in the Persian Empire, and no report about persecutions on religious grounds can be found in our texts.¹⁰⁸ Information about the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the deported Christians is fragmentary. In the *Synodikon Orientale*, the signature of the bishop of Mahoze Hedata, Claudianos,¹⁰⁹ was attested in the synod of 554,¹¹⁰ but J. B. Chabot argued that this city was Rēv-Ardašīr, the seat of the metropolitan of Fārs, rather than the 'Better Antioch' at Ctesiphon, for the signature of this prelate was found among the signatories of his peers from other metropoleis in this area.¹¹¹ In the sixth and seventh centuries, the Persians launched sporadic persecutions of Christians and some of them were executed,¹¹² but the situation seems to have been much less harsh in previous centuries. In the peace treaty of 562, the status of Christians in the Persian Empire seems to have been improved. From then on they could build churches, worship and sing hymns freely in Persia.¹¹³ The successor of Kōsrow I, Hormozd IV, even stated that the Christians, as important supporters of his power, should not be persecuted,¹¹⁴ and Kōsrow II was not a zealous persecutor either.¹¹⁵ Since the main targets were

¹⁰⁷ Zach. HE 12.7.

¹⁰⁸ Many scholars further suggested that they enjoyed freedom of religious worship, Fiey 1967a: 26, Wiesehöfer 1996: 193, Dignas and Winter 2007: 262.

¹⁰⁹ Judging from the name of this bishop, it is clear that either he might have been a deportee in 540 or he could have been the descendant of Roman captives, Fiey 1967a: 26.

¹¹⁰ *Syn. Or.* 366.

¹¹¹ Chabot 1902: 676, Jullien 2006: 116, *contra* Nasrallah 1975: 162-3.

¹¹² Lee 1993a: 580-2, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 133-4, Walker 2006: 10. For primary texts, see Chr. Seert. 2.24, Chr. 1234 56.

¹¹³ Menander fr. 6.1.

¹¹⁴ al-Ṭabari 1.991.

¹¹⁵ Flusin 1992.2: 118-27 for the martyrs in the reign of Kōsrow II.

high-ranking Persian apostates,¹¹⁶ Christians captured from the Empire would not have been targeted.

While many Miaphysites would have been deported, the issue of the existence of captured Chalcedonians who were deported from the Empire is much more complex. We know little about their activities,¹¹⁷ and even the Chalcedonian historians left few accounts about their coreligionists.¹¹⁸ Neither Theophylaktos nor Euagrios mentioned Ḳosrow II's construction of churches, and results of archaeological campaigns are meagre. In the twentieth century, an ecclesiastical building was unearthed in Kōkē,¹¹⁹ one of the major cities located near Ctesiphon, but the date of this church cannot be confirmed,¹²⁰ nor can we establish the connection between it and Ḳosrow II's building activities. Therefore we shall resort to the accounts from some medieval texts. Agapios reported that having won the civil war with the help of the Romans,¹²¹ Ḳosrow II built two churches for the Christians,¹²² while one of them, which was constructed at al-Madai'n', was dedicated to saint Sergios, another was dedicated to the Theotokos. Similar narratives were preserved by other non-Chalcedonian authors. In the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian,¹²³ Ḳosrow II constructed three great churches after his marriage to Maria, the daughter of Emperor Maurice, one dedicated to Theotokos, another to the Apostles, and finally one to the martyr saint Sergios. In the anonymous *Chronicle of 1234*, the Persian king built two churches for his wife, one to saint Sergios, the other to the Theotokos.¹²⁴ Finally, from the *Chronicle of Seert*, we

¹¹⁶ Fiey 1970a: 95, Young 1974: 55, Brock 1982b: 5, Morony 1984: 332-3, Widengren 1984: 28.

¹¹⁷ Fiey 1967b: 416.

¹¹⁸ Nasrallah 1975: 154.

¹¹⁹ On the excavations, see Reuther 1929: 434-51.

¹²⁰ Reuther 1929: 449-51, Okada 1991: 76, Gullini 1966: 34.

¹²¹ See Whitby 1988: 297-304, Flusin 1992.2: 99-102 for a sketch on the Sasanids' civil war.

¹²² Fiey 1961: 102-14, Fowden 1999: 135-41 for a broader political and diplomatic context of these events.

¹²³ Mich. Syr. 10.23.

¹²⁴ Chr. 1234 81.

know that the Shahanshah built two churches for his wife Maria, and established another church and a castle in the region of Bēt Lāpāt¹²⁵ for another wife, Shirin.¹²⁶

Ḳosrow II's patronage of church buildings was therefore well testified in Chalcedonian, Miaphysite and Dyophysite works. While Agapios stated that these churches were built for Christians, presumably Chalcedonians,¹²⁷ the Miaphysites and the Dyophysites recorded that they were built for the Christian wife of the shah.¹²⁸ Although some medieval Christian and Islamic authors recounted Ḳosrow II's marriage to Maria, the daughter of Maurice, this woman was actually not attested in contemporary sources, and scholars have recently doubted the historicity of this event.¹²⁹ Therefore, these churches would have been built for Shirin, the shah's Christian wife from Kūzestān.¹³⁰ As the queen favoured the Miaphysites,¹³¹ the shah could possibly have built the churches for that community around his capital.

However, we cannot rule out the possibility that these churches were constructed for the Chalcedonians of the Persian Empire, and it could have been a politically motivated¹³² policy that Ḳosrow II used to show goodwill to Maurice. Since the Roman emperor was a supporter of the Chalcedonian doctrine, it would have made sense for the shah to have a Chalcedonian bishop to establish the 'orthodox' ecclesiastical hierarchy in Persia. According to Agapios, the Great King not only invited the patriarch of Antioch, Anastasios, to consecrate these churches¹³³ but also

¹²⁵ The Syriac name for Gondēšāpur.

¹²⁶ Chr. Seert. 2.58.

¹²⁷ Nasrallah 1975: 159-60, Fiey 1977: 369, Jullien 2006: 116-7.

¹²⁸ Chr. 1234 81, Chr. Seert. 2.58, cf. Mich. Syr. 10.23, in which the connection between the shah's wife and these building works was weak.

¹²⁹ Bosworth 1999: 312, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 315, Dignas and Winter 2007: 230.

On the marriage of Maria and Ḳosrow II, see al-Ṭabari 1.991.

¹³⁰ For further information on Shirin and Maria, see *PLRE* III Shirin and Maria 6, Baum 2004.

¹³¹ Sebeos 13.

¹³² See Fowden 1999: 139-40 for more details, cf. Wood 2013a: 178.

¹³³ Agap. *PO* 8.447.

established some Christian priests and deacons.¹³⁴ It would be impossible for Anastasios to have come to Persia as a patriarch because, as Bernard Flusin has shown, his second term as patriarch began after 593;¹³⁵ but the Great King could have invited him, a former Chalcedonian patriarch,¹³⁶ to his realm.

To conclude, while nothing pertaining to the scale and hierarchy of their community can be securely attested in contemporary or later literary sources, some Chalcedonians might possibly have inhabited the area around Ctesiphon.¹³⁷ Since the Persian Church aligned itself with the Dyophysites, these Chalcedonians might have come from outside Persia; that is, some of them could have been the descendants of the Roman prisoners of war captured by Kōsrow I in 540 and 573.

Golinduch converted to Christianity after talking with some Christian prisoners of war. At first glance, the conversion of captors living outside the Empire by the Christians they had captured seems to be a rather popular literary motif in Late Antiquity, and such a connection was a literary *topos* rather than historical reality.¹³⁸ The scenario of these stories remains similar: the captors were converted to Christianity through the miraculous healings of their captives. Rufinos provided his readers with a quite lengthy account of the conversion of the Iberians in the reign of Constantine I after the ‘celerity of the cure, and the miraculousness and healing of faith’ of a female Christian captive Christian woman.¹³⁹ At the northern frontier of the Empire, according to Sozomenos, ‘many priests of Christ who had been taken captive, dwelt among these tribes (i.e. of the Germanic peoples)...healed the sick...cleansed those who were possessed of demons...led a blameless life.’¹⁴⁰ After they observed such activities by Christians, these barbarians were eventually baptised and gathered

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Flusin 1992.2: 101-2. See Euagr. HE 6.24, in which Anastasios ‘returned to his own see after 23 years’, cf. Lee 2007b: 105-6.

¹³⁶ Allen 1981: 24.

¹³⁷ *Contra Greatrex* 2006a: 47.

¹³⁸ See more relevant examples in Sterk 2010: 1-39.

¹³⁹ Ruf. HE 10.11, Sokr. HE 1.20, Soz. HE 2.7.

¹⁴⁰ Soz. HE 2.6.2-3.

into churches.¹⁴¹ Also, the people of Yemen were converted because of the healing of a Christian virgin Theognosta who ‘had been carried off captive from a convent on the borders of the Roman Empire and had been conducted to the king of Yemen and presented to him as a gift’.¹⁴²

The differences between these accounts and the narratives of Golinduch’s conversion should be pointed out. While the church historians above usually furnished their texts with the miracles and deeds of these Christian captives, nothing similar can be found in the case of Golinduch. Even though sometimes it was the clerics who converted the captors, in most cases it was the Christian women who acted as the ‘agents’ of evangelisation. In the martyrdom of Golinduch, the scenario is actually reversed: it was the male servants, the Christians, who played a crucial role in the conversion of a Zoroastrian aristocratic woman.¹⁴³

The royal prison and the nomads

Apart from the Persian cities discussed above, the royal prison named the Castle of Oblivion was also used as a place of detention for Roman captives.¹⁴⁴ While the Persians constructed several jails near their capital Ctesiphon,¹⁴⁵ this place ‘Lethe’ (Λήθη), was certainly well-known by both the Sasanids themselves and their neighbors. Theophylaktos reported that its Persian name was Giligerdon (Γιλίγερδων ὄνομα ἄντη).¹⁴⁶ Prokopios wrote that it was forbidden for the Persians to mention anyone who was jailed there, and ‘death is the penalty for the man who speaks his

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2.6.3.

¹⁴² Joh. Nik. 78.107.

¹⁴³ Garitte 1956: 427.

¹⁴⁴ See above, pp. 154-5.

¹⁴⁵ Some of them could have been broken in the civil war, and Bindoes, the maternal uncle of *Ḳosrow II*, was released, Th. Sim. 4.3.5. Cf. Sebeos 10, in which Bindoes was imprisoned in the fortress *Gruandakan*.

¹⁴⁶ Th. Sim. 3.5.2. On the issue of toponym and etymology of this prison, see Traina and Ciancaglini 2002: 404-5, 414-8.

name' (ἦν γάρ τις ἐνταῦθα ἐμβληθεὶς τύχη, οὐκέτι ὁ νόμος ἐφήσει μνήμην αὐτοῦ εἶναι, ἀλλὰ θάνατος τῷ ὄνουμακότι ἢ ζημία ἐστί).¹⁴⁷

The nature and character of this place of detention should be summarised. Theophylaktos provided a rather informative passage about this place:

...adjacent to this fort is also a prison...The place is dedicated to royal wrath, like a fertile tract to a god, and it would not be inapposite if someone were to call the fort a precinct of hatred. Here, then are enclosed all those caught in the nets of the king's displeasure, some of them his subjects, others prisoners of war (πρόσεστι δὲ τούτῳ καὶ τις εἰρκτή...ὁ δὲ χῶρος ὥσπερ γῆ θεῶ ὀργᾶς βασιλικῶ θυμῶ ἀνατίθεται, καὶ τέμενος δυσμενείας ἀποκαλῶν τις τὸ φρούριον οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοι τοῦ πρέποντος. ἐναποκλείονται τοίνυν ἐνθάδε ὅσοι τοῖς δικτύοις τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως λύπης ἀλίσκονται, τοῦτο μὲν ὑπήκοοι, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ δορίκτητοι).¹⁴⁸

Thus not only the captives from Dara but also other groups were put into this jail.

All these prisoners could have been treated differently by the Great Kings. Some received milder treatment since they would have been considered as hostages rather than prisoners.¹⁴⁹ From the case of both the captured Armenian rulers¹⁵⁰ and other Persian nobles like the apostate Golinduch,¹⁵¹ on the other hand, we know that some prisoners were chained in shackles and collars. Nevertheless, as the deportees from Dara left nothing regarding their own lives and sufferings in this prison, and neither

¹⁴⁷ Prok. Wars 1.5.8. See Cameron 1969-70: 157, Traina and Ciancaglini 2002: 406 for further explanations of these clauses.

¹⁴⁸ Th. Sim. 3.5.2-3.

¹⁴⁹ See the treatment of Kawād, who was cast into this prison at the end of the fifth century, Prok. Wars 1.6.1-8, cf. Th. Sim. 4.6.6, in which the shah was 'nursed at the bosom of hardship', and al-Ṭabari 1.886-7 for more details, some of them are at variance with what Greek sources preserved.

¹⁵⁰ On the case of Arsaces, the Armenian king in the fourth century, see Prok. Wars 1.5.10-29, Ammianus 27.12.1-3, Mos. Khor. 3.34-5, Ps.-Fausta 4.54, 5.7.

¹⁵¹ Peeters 1944: 82-5, Garitte 1956: 429-35. The conversion of Golinduch was preserved in some contemporary sources as well, see Euagr. HE 6.20, Th. Sim. 5.12.1-13 for her martyrdom in Greek literary tradition.

Theophylaktos nor other authors mentioned such details in their works, no secure conclusion can be established.

From the first years of the sixth century, some deported Amidenes began their new life in the land of the Huns. According to the continuator of Zachariah, these captives took wives and even started families, possibly with other Romans, or with local people, in the Caucasus. Due to the lack of both literary and material data, our understanding about the Sabir Huns is limited,¹⁵² and it is impossible to tell how they treated these Romans. The close reading of our texts indicates that sometimes these Romans met visitors from the Empire or neighboring countries and even stayed with them for a certain period of time. When the envoy of Justin I, Probos, arrived at this area, they told him about the saints among the Sabir Huns. Several years later,¹⁵³ these deportees had a chance to talk to the priests from Albania as well.¹⁵⁴ These captives and their descendants might thus not have been isolated from the outside world. If these priests, as Czeglédy suggested,¹⁵⁵ did care for these deportees there, their life under the rule of the Sabir Huns may have been less traumatic. Later, another Armenian bishop Macarius formed another group of missionaries, who went to the Sabir Huns and ‘built a brick church, planted plants and sowed various kinds of seeds’.¹⁵⁶ The source, however, recorded nothing regarding the interaction between the Amidenes and these Armenians.

Back to the Empire

While many captives who were transported to the Persian Empire would have stayed there for the rest of their life, others were fortunate enough to return to their homeland successfully. In the sixth century, the details about the exchange of captured military leaders between Rome and Persia can sometimes be gleaned from our texts. For example, in 531 the Sasanids invaded Osrhoene and captured Domnentiolos, the

¹⁵² Sinor 1946-7: 15-29, Maenchen-Helfen 1973: 440, Golden 1992: 104-6.

¹⁵³ Zach. HE 12.7, see Golden 1992: 107 for the possible dates of this missionary.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Czeglédy 1971: 146.

¹⁵⁶ Zach. HE 12.7, cf. Thompson 1946: 78-9.

nephew of Boutzes, together with the fort of Abgersaton.¹⁵⁷ The counterstrike of the Romans occurred soon afterwards and this time Yazdgerd, the nephew of Hormozd, the governor of Arzanene, was captured. Later on he was released in exchange for Domnentiolos.¹⁵⁸ Also, other captives and hostages were sent back when the truce of the Eternal Peace was signed.¹⁵⁹ Since in the reign of Justin I and the early years of Justinian the Sasanids never conquered any Roman city, few citizens would have been captured as prisoners of war in the Persians' campaigns. More importantly, nothing regarding prisoner exchange involving ordinary people between these two great powers can be found, and neither Anastasios nor Justinian nor their successors ever tried to send captured Persians back in exchange for the subjects of the Empire.

The methods of returning to the Empire can be divided into two categories: sometimes these deportees would escape from their captivity, while in other cases they were either released by the Persians or ransomed by the ecclesiastical or political authorities of the Empire. Some Romans decided to escape before leaving the Empire. The captives who were collected in the school of Urtaye at Amida managed to escape when the city was thrown open because, it was reported, 'God delivered us and strengthened us'.¹⁶⁰ In other words, they must have fled when the Persian were leaving this city. We know that the captors' control over these Romans was sometimes lax. For example, when the Sasanids began to return to their land through Roman Syria and Mesopotamia in 540, Kōsrow I ordered that they must cross the temporary bridge at Obbane as fast as they could because it would be dismantled shortly, possibly for strategic reasons. Three days later, some of his forces were left behind, and these 'disbanded' troops returned to the place where they came from.¹⁶¹ However, since we have no idea how the Great King divided the captured Antiochenes among his forces, no firm conclusion can be established regarding the possible impact of this event upon the transportation of the Romans.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.4.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.5.

¹⁵⁹ Mal. 18.76.

¹⁶⁰ Joh. Eph. *Lives*, PO 19.219.

¹⁶¹ Prok. Wars 2.12.3-6.

In spite of being transported to distant places and having to face challenges, dangers and difficulties, at least two groups of deportees managed to escape from the places where they were sent and return to their homeland. In the middle of the sixth century, some of those who had been sold to the Sabir Huns managed to cross the Caucasus. If the testimony of these survivors in the *Church History* of Pseudo-Zachariah is correct, then the *terminus post quem* of their escape should be 553 for they had stayed in this area for more than fifty years. The internal evidence of the continuator of Zachariah's account is helpful for dating the possible date of these Romans' return. When he inserted the brief introduction of the nations of the world, the author stated that he wrote this chapter (i.e. the seventh chapter of the twelfth book) in 'the year 28 of the serene emperor Justinian...the year 866 of Alexander, and the 333rd Olympiad'.¹⁶² The composition date of this part should be dated to 554/5,¹⁶³ and these Amidenes must have arrived at their hometown before this date.

If these displaced people chose to make their way back to Amida by going through Persarmenia, it must have been an arduous march for they would have faced at least two main obstacles: first, the Persian soldiers stationed in forts and checkpoints and second, the steep cliffs and mountains of the Caucasus. The control of this mountainous area, especially the Derbend and the Dariel passes, was always important for the Persians as the nomadic peoples would have broken their line of defence by passing through these two strategically important channels.¹⁶⁴ In the sixth century, Kawād started to focus on the defence of the Transcaucasus by erecting a series of building works to ward off the possible raiders from the north. Another route, the Derbend pass, had become the stronghold with the fortifications finished in the sixth century by the Sasanids.¹⁶⁵ While it is difficult to know how far the Sasanids actually controlled the northwestern borderline of their Empire, in order to

¹⁶² Zach. HE 12.7.

¹⁶³ Greatrex et al. 2011: 446, cf. Czeglédy 1971: 145.

¹⁶⁴ From the fifth century onwards, the control of these channels became important Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 56, 58, cf. Alemany 2006: 43-5.

¹⁶⁵ For literary and material sources, see Kramers 1936: 613-8, Minorsky 1958: 86-9, Hewsen 1992: 122, Harmatta 1996: 82, Aliev et al. 2006: 143-77. On the date of fortifications, see Gadjiev 2008: 1-16.

avoid the threats of the Persians, the escaping Romans might have chosen to cross the mountains in order to reach their own territory, and this would have been a very difficult task. Here an account in Pseudo-Sebeos' work deserves to be quoted. When the Muslims were defeated by the people living in the north in the seventh century, the survivors 'made for the mountain, for the difficult terrain of the Caucasus mountain. With the greatest difficulty they came out through the ridges of the mountain'.¹⁶⁶

In the last decades of the sixth century, the sufferings and torments experienced by those from Dara in the castle of Oblivion eventually united them and other detainees together and they began to regard each other as 'their brother in distress'.¹⁶⁷ The Roman prisoners of war clearly played a decisive role in the ensuing uprising; they used all available weapons, killed the guards¹⁶⁸ and finally led their compatriots out of the jail and returned to the Roman land 'after many experiences and achievements'.¹⁶⁹ If Theophanes the Confessor is right, these Romans even went to Constantinople.¹⁷⁰

When these Romans returned to the Empire is open to debate. Norman Baynes, who pointed out the inconsistency of Theophylaktos' narratives, was inclined to leave this issue open.¹⁷¹ Claudia Ciancaglini argued that it might have taken place in the last years of K̄osrow I,¹⁷² which is at odds with other scholars. Judging from the following sections about the battle at Martyropolis,¹⁷³ Peter Schreiner placed it in 588.¹⁷⁴ The detailed analysis and dating of Theophylaktos' sections, however, leads us to propose

¹⁶⁶ Sebeos 51.

¹⁶⁷ Th. Sim. 3.5.6.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 4.6.8 for the information regarding the situation inside this prison: there was a Persian commander 'who was an officer and held authority over a company of soldiers' when Kawād was imprisoned.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.5.7.

¹⁷⁰ Theoph. A.M. 6080.

¹⁷¹ Baynes 1912: 35-6.

¹⁷² Traina and Ciancaglini 2002: 402, 407.

¹⁷³ Th. Sim. 3.5.8-10, cf. 3.4.2-4.

¹⁷⁴ Schreiner 1985: 273, which was supported by Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 292.

another possible date. His preceding chapters¹⁷⁵ provide the general outline of the affairs of Thrace and other western provinces in the winter of 588/9.¹⁷⁶ Since the escape of these prisoners of war, according to Michael Whitby, is linked chronologically to these events,¹⁷⁷ this event might have taken place in 589, that is, at the very end of Hormozd IV's rule. At that time the unstable political situation in Persia eventually resulted in the abdication of Hormozd IV and the Persian civil war: in 589, the general Bahrām, who came from the house of Mihran,¹⁷⁸ led a mutiny against the ruling shah after defeating the Turks.¹⁷⁹ Hormozd IV began to summon troops from nearby areas to put down the usurpation either in late 589 or at the beginning of 590,¹⁸⁰ Since from then on the king's armies might have been occupied in crushing the forces of Bahrām, the escapes from the 'castle of Oblivion' would not have been noticed. Secondly, growing discontent within the Persian Empire¹⁸¹ might have facilitated the escape of these prisoners of war. If the shah did 'reduce military pay by a tenth...(and) compel the army to face great dangers'¹⁸² in his reign, then the morale of the Sasanian armed forces must have been low. Even though we have no further information regarding this shah's internal policies in treating specific areas, control over the inner part of his empire could have become lax at the end of his reign. These deported Romans could have exploited these conditions to escape from the prison.

While we do not know what route the escaped Romans took from the remote site near the Zagros Mountains to the capital of the Empire, it must have been an extremely risky adventure. For these Romans to traverse the fertile plain of Persian

¹⁷⁵ Th. Sim. 3.4.6-9.

¹⁷⁶ Whitby 1988: 151.

¹⁷⁷ Whitby 1983b: 329-30, 1988: 233.

¹⁷⁸ Th. Sim. 3.18.10.

¹⁷⁹ al-Ṭabari 1.993.

¹⁸⁰ Th. Sim. 4.2.2-4, 4.3.3.

¹⁸¹ Relevant information in the reign of Hormozd IV has been preserved in both Greek-speaking and oriental authors, Euagr. HE 6.16, Th. Sim. 3.16.9-13, Joh. Eph. HE 6.22, al-Ṭabari 1.988-990.

¹⁸² Th. Sim. 3.16.13.

Mesopotamia was the most expedient way to return home, but there were several major obstacles. Clearly it was difficult to cross both the Euphrates and the Tigris without the help of boats or bridges.¹⁸³ In addition, since this zone had become for many years the political and economic centre of the Sasanian Empire with certain important cities like Seleukia-Ctesiphon and its satellite cities, it was difficult to go through the nucleus of the Persian state without alarming the soldiers stationed there,¹⁸⁴ and a series of strongholds, forts and even walls had been constructed to form a line of defence.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, it was possible that these Romans could have been assisted by other groups of people in order to escape the pursuit of the Persians.¹⁸⁶

Having arrived at Constantinople, these escaped Romans were welcomed and greeted by the reigning emperor Maurice.¹⁸⁷ This is the last piece of information we have regarding these escaped Romans. Some of them might have spent their remaining years in the capital, but it was not impossible that others managed to go back to Dara. Again the material remains prove to be helpful. Among the numerous burial places of the necropolis which is located to the west of ancient Dara (See Map

¹⁸³ See above, p. 171.

¹⁸⁴ See Howard-Johnston 2012: 110 for the possible troops employed at the capitals and cities in Mesopotamia.

¹⁸⁵ The fortifications alongside the Euphrates were built possibly for deterring the raids from the tribes of the Arabs, see Frye 1977: 8-11, 1983: 139, Howard-Johnston 2012: 96-8.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Whitby suggested that the people imprisoned there should be the Kadasenes (Καδάσηνοι) who were living in the surrounding areas of Caspian Sea, see Strabo 11.7.1, Whitby and Whitby 1986: 78, see Syme 1988: 137-50, Schmitt 1990: 62 for more details. Whether they can be identified with the Kadishaye, who inhabited in the Singara Mountains (Καδισσηνοί), remains controversial, see Nöldeke 1879b: 157-61, Greatrex 1998: 50-2, 77, 111.

¹⁸⁷ Theoph. A.M. 6080.

8 for the relative positions of these sites),¹⁸⁸ one spacious tomb, along with its decorative figures (Fig.1) is noteworthy. It is clearly a gigantic Christian burial monument, but the identities of those buried there remain unknown because most of the numerous Greek and Syriac inscriptions and eiptaphs at this site were no longer legible.¹⁸⁹ Nonetheless, it was generally agreed that the motif of this relief was the scene of Ezekiel entering the Valley of Dry Bones, a well-known vision from the Old Testament.¹⁹⁰

While the date of this tomb chamber can be fairly dated to the sixth century,¹⁹¹ the contexts of commissioning this motif¹⁹² in such an unusual large scheme—the entire design is around 5 meters wide¹⁹³—near this frontier bulwark of the Empire needs to be investigated further. Several possibilities have been proposed. Someone might have chosen this theme because of the strong eschatological connotation of Ezekiel's vision¹⁹⁴ and commissioned this project at the beginning of Anastasios' reign when the Christians were expecting the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the 6,000 years after the creation of the world.¹⁹⁵ The situation of northern Mesopotamia at the beginning of the sixth century must have intensified these opinions among the local population. They were afflicted not only by the invasions of

¹⁸⁸ This site must have been used from the very beginning of the sixth century as a stone quarry when the city of Dara was constructed, and were regarded as a burial place later, Mango 1975: 210.

¹⁸⁹ Badger 1852: 307.

¹⁹⁰ Mango 1975: 213, Nicholson 1985: 669.

¹⁹¹ Mango 1975: 217-20.

¹⁹² See Mango 1975: 214-5, Sawyer 2011: 3-4 for the use of this theme in other artifacts.

¹⁹³ Preusser 1911: 48. Recently the excavation conducted by the Mardin museum shows that it stretches around 140m square floor area, Keser-Kayaalp 2009.1: 140.

¹⁹⁴ Block 1998: 391.

¹⁹⁵ Mango 1975: 225. See the narratives of the so-called Oracle of Baalbek and the interpretations by scholars, Alexander: 1967. On eschatological thoughts in the early sixth century, see Magdalino 1993: 4-5, Brandes 1997: 53-62.

the enemies but also by other natural disasters.¹⁹⁶ Since Dara was constructed not long after these disasters, such experiences must have been quite vivid for its inhabitants. Another explanation deserves to be examined more closely. Maria Mundell Mango noted that after the return of Dara to the Romans by Kōsrow II in 591 certain captives, along with those who escaped from the castle of Oblivion, might have returned to their hometown and chosen this theme which was quite appropriate to their own experiences to decorate their burial site.¹⁹⁷ These captives could have observed the gigantic rock-reliefs of the Sasanian kings either at Ctesiphon or at other places, and influenced by these, might have commissioned such grand monuments.¹⁹⁸

Since we do not know whether those who were resettled in Better Antioch had ever returned to the Empire in the reign of Maurice,¹⁹⁹ it is better to have reservations about the first suggestion. The second argument is much more plausible. We cannot reestablish the route taken by these Roman prisoners of war from Mesopotamia to the castle of Oblivion, but some hypotheses may be made. While they would probably never have visited Naqsh-e Rostam, the necropolis of the Persian rulers located not far away from Persepolis,²⁰⁰ they might have been impressed by the huge rock reliefs and building works in the heart of the Zagros Mountains.²⁰¹ Oliver Nicholson provides us with another revised argument. Since it was forbidden for Zoroastrians to inter the corpses of the dead,²⁰² they usually chose rock-cut places to place them, but it is not always easy to find such places outside the Persian Empire. The victorious Persians might have considered the quarry as an alternative place to dispose of the skeletons of both the Romans and their compatriots after conquering this Roman fortress. When these captives came back to their homeland in 591, the bones of their dead comrades might have still been observed outside the city. Thus this relief might

¹⁹⁶ Josh. Styl. 38-44, Zach. HE 7.2.

¹⁹⁷ Mango1975: 226-7.

¹⁹⁸ Mango1975: 220.

¹⁹⁹ Th. Sim. 5.7.1-2.

²⁰⁰ Herrmann et al. 1989: 11-30.

²⁰¹ Cf. Mango 1975: 227, Schmidt 1970: 10, 13, 122-39.

²⁰² See above, p. 102.

have been constructed to commemorate their compatriots who died in the siege of Dara around twenty years ago.²⁰³

For those who were housed near Ctesiphon, the hope of returning to their ancestral land was revived at the end of the sixth century. When the civil war between Kosrow II and Bahrām broke out, a Persian general who supported the shah's rule, Mebodes, delivered a letter in Greek to the prisoners of war in this 'new Antioch', and promised that if they handed in the supporters of Bahrām, then they would be released:

Romans, believers in Christ Jesus our Lord, send greetings to the inhabitants of Persian Antioch...we have come to this land in order to rescue from the entrails of Persia you who have grown old in misery...so that our objective may achieve fulfillment and your yearning, brothers, may result in joy, surrender to us those who have fled to your city of Antioch and those who support Bahrām's cause.²⁰⁴

This letter was quoted by Theophylaktos in his work, and it must have been a quite touching message for the descendants of the deported Romans. Unfortunately, after the Jews and those involved in Bahrām's revolution were executed, Mebodes went back on his word and collected the precious goods in Ctesiphon, and the Romans were never released back to the Empire by the Persians.²⁰⁵

Other Roman captives were released by the Persians under certain conditions. When Kawād sought to sign a peace treaty with the Romans because of the approaching Sabir Huns, he sent back the 'eminent people whom he had taken captive from Amida', possibly in order to show his sincerity to the emperor and his envoy.²⁰⁶ At the beginning the Roman *magister officiorum* Celer intended to execute these former Roman governors because of 'their laxity that the places they were guarding had been delivered (to the enemy)',²⁰⁷ but in the end they seem to have been forgiven. We also know that the steward of the church of Amida, Nonnos, was released back to

²⁰³ Nicholson 1985: 669-71.

²⁰⁴ Th. Sim. 5.7.1-2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.7.4-6, 10.

²⁰⁶ Josh. Styl. 80.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

the Empire later and was even appointed as the bishop of Amida, but the context of his release remains unclear.

In other cases the manner of the release and ransoming of the captives were intertwined. Having destroyed Sura and captured the remaining Romans. Prokopios reported that the shah, 'either through motives of humanity or avarice, or as granting a favour to a woman',²⁰⁸ wanted to sell them soon afterwards, and asked the bishop of Sergiopolis Kandidos to purchase these Romans. However, the Great King's motivation deserves further study. Although Kandidos refused this proposal at the beginning, the King of Kings seems to have been unyielding: he ordered the bishop to promise to pay off the money later in a contract.²⁰⁹ The captives from this frontier city were thus released by paying small sums of money.²¹⁰ But Kandidos never paid off the remaining ransom. When the Great King led his soldiers to invade the Empire two years later, the bishop was detained, tortured and never released back to the Empire because he broke his promise, apparently because of lack of funds.²¹¹

The second example also comes from K̄osrow I's Roman campaign in 540. After the sack of Antioch, the Roman ambassador agreed first to make a one-off payment of fifty *kentenaria* to the shah, and second to give the Persians five *kentenaria* annually.²¹² After Justinian ratified these terms, K̄osrow I wanted to sell all of the captured Antiochenes to the Romans before his departure to profit once more.²¹³ The eagerness of the Edessene people to rescue their compatriots was impressive:

...there were not a person who did not bring ransom for the captives and deposit it in the sanctuary...the harlots took off all the adornment which they wore on their persons...any farmer who was in want of plate or of

²⁰⁸ Prok. Wars 2.5.28.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.5.30-1.

²¹⁰ Iluk 1985: 95 for more similar examples in Late Antiquity, cf. Treadgold 1995: 193.

²¹¹ Prok. Wars 2.20.2, 15-6.

²¹² Ibid., 2.10.24.

²¹³ Ibid., 2.13.1-2.

money, but who had an ass or a sheep, brought this to the sanctuary with great zeal.²¹⁴

Unfortunately, this proposal was refused by Bouzes, who thought that ‘this (decision) would bring him some great gain’,²¹⁵ and all the endeavours failed in the end.

Some Romans, including the emperors themselves, noticed, and even responded to the news of the deportation of these captives. The examination of these events will be helpful in analyzing their attitudes. Having returned to the capital, the Roman envoy Probos reported what he had observed in the land of the Huns. However, Justinian merely ‘caused thirty mules to be loaded by the administration of the Roman cities that were near, and sent them with flour, wine, and oil, garments and other wares and sacred vessels...gave them the animals as a gift’.²¹⁶ The comparison with Malalas’ account, in which the gifts, silver vessels and money were mentioned, suggests that the recipients of these lavish goods were the Christians among the Huns, presumably those who were converted by the missionaries from Caucasian Albania, rather than the surviving Amidenes.²¹⁷

Another example comes from the reign of Tiberios II. Having been captured from their homeland and taken to Persian territory, hatred and nostalgia would probably have been common among the prisoners of war. In the second half of the sixth century, those who were resettled in the Better Antioch of Ḳosrow endeavoured to escape to their homeland from southern Mesopotamia. They decided to cooperate with the Persian guards, and bribed one of them with 500 drachmae which were collected among the Romans.²¹⁸ One night two captives, Benjamin and Samuel, absconded from the city and sent a message to the reigning emperor Tiberios II. John of Ephesos quoted this letter in length:

We are shut up here to the number of more than thirty thousand men; and the Persians who guard us are not more than five hundred. If...one Roman general be sent, and show himself outside the walls, we will slay the

²¹⁴ Ibid., 2.13.3-4.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 2.13.6.

²¹⁶ Zach. HE 12.7.

²¹⁷ Mal. 18.13.

²¹⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19.

Persians, and break out of the city, and return in safety to the Roman territories.²¹⁹

Nevertheless, this proposal was rejected by Tiberios II, who ‘paid it no attention, and acted as though it was not true’.²²⁰

The narratives of John of Ephesos, as the sole source about this event, have to be scrutinised in order to date this conspiracy. The escaped captive Benjamin not only arrived at Constantinople successfully but also came to visit John himself.²²¹ While this information may be justified because John of Ephesos spent the last decades of his life not very far away from the capital,²²² it does not tell us the exact date of this event. The chronological order of John of Ephesos’ accounts in his *Church History* seems to be helpful.²²³ First he mentioned the strikes made by Maurice in 578 in Arzanene.²²⁴ After the narrative of these Roman captives’ failed attempt he then focused on the affairs on the eastern frontier, and talked about the life of K̅osrow I,²²⁵ the shah’s shock and anguish which resulted from the successful campaign of Maurice, and finally, his death in 579.²²⁶ Thus even though he inserted Maurice’s expedition with al-Mundhir which took place in 581²²⁷ abruptly before what happened in the Better Antioch of K̅osrow, it may be safe to place this abortive uprising either in 578 or in 579.

Prokopios also noted the deportation of Romans who were sent to the heart of the Persian Empire by K̅osrow I after the sack of Antioch. After Belisarios arrived in

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² van Ginkel 1995: 35-6, 108.

²²³ The reconstruction of the chronological order of these political and military events of 578-9 is based on the work of Michael Whitby, Whitby 1988: 269-71.

²²⁴ Joh. Eph. HE 6.15, 34. For the accounts of other contemporary texts, see Th. Sim. 3.15.13-5, Euagr. HE 5.19, Menander fr. 23.7.

²²⁵ Ibid., 6.20, Th. Sim. 3.16.7.

²²⁶ Ibid., 6.21, see also Agath. 4.29.7-10, Menander fr. 23.8. All of them reported that the shah was shocked by the Romans’ invasion.

²²⁷ Ibid., 6.16-8, cf. Th. Sim. 3.17.5-7, Euagr. HE 5.20. Whitby 1988: 272-4.

the East, the Romans soon undertook an invasion of the Persian Empire and even penetrated into Assyria in retaliation for the shah's attack in 540. While Arethas, son of Gabalas, led his forces crossed the Tigris and pillaged many places without confronting any major hindrance,²²⁸ the Romans' success was limited²²⁹ and Belisarios soon retreated from Mesopotamia. In the *Secret History* Prokopios criticised Belisarios vehemently, writing that had Belisarios not been distracted by the desire to meet his wife Antonina,²³⁰ he could have 'reached the city of Ctesiphon without encountering any opposition...rescued the prisoners from Antioch and all the other Romans who chanced to be there'.²³¹

The first, and possibly the only case of rescuing the prisoners of war from the hands of the Sasanids in the sixth-century Romano-Persian wars was initiated by Justinian after the sack of Antioch. In 545, two envoys, the new *magister militum* Konstantianos and Sergios, proceeded to Ctesiphon in order to arrange a truce with the Persians.²³² The Persians dictated terms to them: the Romans should give Kōsrow I both money and a distinguished physician, Tribunos,²³³ so that the shah could 'live with him for a year'.²³⁴ Being a man who was nurtured intellectually and 'inferior to none in medical skill',²³⁵ he had cured the Persian king of a severe illness before, and received many precious gifts.²³⁶ According to the continuator of Zachariah, he even became the *archiatros*, the chief physician of the shah.²³⁷ After his recovery from

²²⁸ Prok. Wars 2.19.17ff.

²²⁹ Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 109.

²³⁰ The discussion of Belisarios' reason to retreat is out the scope of our study, see Prok. Wars 2.19.26-46, Anecd. 2.18-22 for two different explanations and Stein 1949.2: 495-6, Shahid 1995: 220-30 for scholars' view on this issue. On the discussion of Prokopios' intention, see Cameron 1985: 51, 160-1.

²³¹ Prok. Anecd. 2.25.

²³² Prok. Wars 2.28.2-6.

²³³ Ibid., 2.28.7-8.

²³⁴ Ibid., 8.10.14.

²³⁵ On the life of Tribunos, see *PLRE* III: s.v. Tribunus 2, Hartmann 2002: 146-7.

²³⁶ Prok. Wars 2.28.9, 8.10.13.

²³⁷ Zach. HE 12.7 cf. Richter-Bernburg 1989: 334, Tafazzolī 1996: 564-5.

sickness, K̅osrow I told his doctor that ‘he could ask for whatever he wanted’.²³⁸ At this moment Tribunos asked for the release of certain Roman elites who were captured in wartime.²³⁹ This time this Iranian king did demonstrate his political magnanimity: he not only released those who were requested by Tribunos because of their social status, but also sent more Roman captives back to their homeland.²⁴⁰ Since these social nobles were requested by name, clearly the ambassador must have had a kind of register in which such details were mentioned at hand. Therefore while K̅osrow I’s invasion must have resulted in turmoil, the imperial authority might have been able to monitor the impact of the Sasanids’ military activities on the social elites.

In the *Chronicle of Seert* another similar story was inserted between the persecution of Mar Aba, which was initiated by the Zoroastrian priests and the revolt of K̅osrow I’s son in the middle of the sixth century. Having been struck by a serious disease, K̅osrow I wrote to Justinian to send him a good doctor. Then a physician Trikhoma was sent to the shah by the Romans. Before the ambassador’s departure to Persia, the empress (i.e. Theodora) enjoined him to rescue the Romans from the Sasanids: ‘if the king offers you the gold mines, the money of the Persians, the pearls of the sea and the treasures of K̅osrow I, don’t accept them...merely ask him to return the Christians from Antioch who had been taken as captives’.²⁴¹ When the doctor begged K̅osrow I to release these captives back to their homeland, the shah became furious and rejected this proposal immediately. It should be pointed out that in this work the kindness of the Iranian king of kings was emphasised again. Even if he refused the ambassador to release his captives, the shah still granted him luxurious gifts, while Theodora had this greedy physician executed later.

The military activities of the Sasanids in Roman Syria and Mesopotamia before 545 should be analyzed to establish the possible identity of those who were included in Tribunos’ checking list.²⁴² After the invasion of K̅osrow I in 540, the second blow

²³⁸ Prok. Wars 8.10.14.

²³⁹ Ibid., 8.10.15.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.10.16.

²⁴¹ Chr. Seert. 2.27.

²⁴² See Evans 1996: 165-6 for a summarised account, cf. Greatrex and Lieu 2002:

to the populations of the eastern provinces soon landed in 542. This time the target of the Persians was to penetrate into Roman Palestine and plunder the treasures of Palestine and Jerusalem.²⁴³ While the invaders must have laid waste across the land of frontier provinces,²⁴⁴ the main victims were those staying in Kallinikos, where many farmers were enslaved by the Persians.²⁴⁵ This was possibly the only large-scale deportation made by K̄osrow I in this period. Since there was no major conflict from 532 to 540, and there was just one major deportation in the post-540 campaigns, most captives in the Persian Empire must have been captured in the 540s, either from Antioch or from Kallinikos. Although it is impossible to know how many nobles had been deported from these two cities respectively, it is likely that most of them would have been captured from Antioch, a rather populous and important city in Roman Syria, and some of them must have been mentioned in the ‘checklist’ of Tribunus.

In this chapter, both literary and material data have been collected and used to investigate the deportees’ lives outside the realm of the Romans. Clearly, being deported from the Empire seems to have been the norm, but it was not the end of the captured Romans’ story. Many of them were resettled to the ‘pseudo-Roman cities’, which were either established or rebuilt by the Great Kings. Some, if not all, of those who were deported from Amida, according to Pseudo-Zachariah, were sold to the Sabir Huns. Finally, if Theophylaktos is to be believed, some captives from Dara were cast into the royal prison in southwestern Iran. Much less detail regarding these Romans’ lives can be uncovered from our sources, but those who were housed in the city Better Antioch of K̄osrow seem to have received milder treatments. Although only Justinian managed to rescue civilians back to the Empire, other prisoners of war returned to their homeland via a variety of means; some of them passed through the mountainous area of the Caucasus, and others escaped from the prison. Those who had sought help from the Empire’s authorities, however, failed in the end.

²⁴³ Prok. Wars 2.20.18.

²⁴⁴ The Persians had tried to besiege Sergiopolis but failed, Prok. Wars 2.20.1-16, Euagr. HE 4.28, cf. Th. Sim. 5.13.2.

²⁴⁵ Prok Wars 2.21.32, Anecd. 3.31.

Chapter 6. Persian policies, imperial responses and civilians' fates

Although comparative textual analysis suggests that it is difficult to recover the particularity of people's wartime experiences, for the accounts we have may lapse into the generic,¹ some of the details of urban Romans' misfortunes after their cities were conquered can be established through the examination of available sources.² While people's wartime experiences at different places and occasions sometimes seem to be similar, this does not mean that civilians living in every city in the Empire would always be treated by the Persians in the same way. Instead, a more complex picture of their wartime experiences in the Persian wars emerges. Both common features of these civilians' wartime experiences in a sacked city and particularities gleaned from different case studies will certainly be included into our discussion. Thereafter, by examining both the Persians' policies in treating the conquered Romans and imperial authorities' different reactions and attitudes to the enemy's invasions, this chapter aims to provide some overall explanations for Roman civilians' fates in the conflicts between Rome and Persia.

Persian perspectives

Given the fact that no contemporary middle Persian text on the Romano-Persian wars has been preserved, it is risky to rely on Roman or Christian accounts to probe the Sasanids' intentions and motivations. Nevertheless, some tentative remarks can still be made through a close examination of our case studies. In these armed conflicts the Persians would either attack or just pass by a Roman city. There were also three possible outcomes of their attacks and sieges: first, the siege was successful and a Roman city was seized by the Persians; second, the inhabitants surrendered to the Persians, and finally the Persians ended a city's siege. In these cases Roman civilians' wartime experiences would have been affected by a range of factors. There were a number of reasons why the Persians treated cities differently, depending on strategic military, economic and political factors. While it goes without saying that the Great

¹ See above, chapter 2.

² See above, chapters 3-5.

King's military activities and the presence of his army in the territory of the Empire must have been decisive, the importance of the invaders' experiences during the sieges, their strategies and targets in campaigns, and finally, the conflicts' eventual outcomes should not be overlooked.

Sasanid wartime experiences

The examination of our case studies suggests that while sometimes we can observe the cruelties and atrocities perpetrated by the Sasanids, in other cases a Roman city would have received lenient treatment: in the Anastasian war those living in Martyropolis (502) were treated kindly by Kawād, and no massacre was reported in Kallinikos (542) or Apamea (573). In this section I will argue that the difference between these cases can be explained by the invaders' rather different wartime experiences. The difficulties of such long and perilous sieges, especially the Romans' stubborn resistance and the difficult weather conditions, could have instigated Sasanids to inflict retribution on the survivors, such as to slaughter those cities' remaining inhabitants, and, possibly, to send the captives of these places to more remote areas, either to the barbarians or to the imperial prison. I will examine some significant cases such as Amida, Antioch and Dara both to illustrate the circumstances faced by the Sasanids and to illustrate the possible connection between the invaders' experiences and their treatment of the surviving Romans.

Both natural and human factors seem to have affected the rate of Persian casualties in their sieges of Roman cities. Apparently the chilly winter of northern Mesopotamia was not a suitable season for the Persians to initiate invasions, who were 'brought up in a hot climate'.³ A sixth-century case illustrated the Persians' difficulty in launching sieges effectively: when Kawād's generals were laying siege to Martyropolis in 531, their activities were hindered by the adverse weather, along with rain and mud.⁴ More examples can be observed in the previous centuries. In 359, Shapur II decided to retreat to his homeland from the Empire because of 'the rapidly approaching end of autumn and the rising of the unfavourable constellation of the

³ *Strategikon* 11.1.

⁴ Zach. HE 9.6.

Kids'.⁵ Sokrates Scholastikos, the church historian of the fifth century, not only commented that 'the races of Persia were greatly enfeebled and totally spiritless in winter...from their inability to endure cold, they abstain from military service at that season', but also quoted a proverb 'a Mede will not then draw his hand from underneath his cloak'⁶ when mentioning Julian the Apostate's Persian campaign.

Although the Sasanids besieged both Amida and Dara in winter, it seems that the wintry weather only acted as a hindrance in the siege of Amida. If Prokopios is right, the siege of this frontier city from 502-3 seems not to have been planned by Kawād, who 'invaded the land of the Armenians, moving with such rapidity...plundered the greater part of it in a rapid campaign'.⁷ While he must have observed the potential difficulties and risks of fighting in wintertime as his forces arrived at Amida in October of 502,⁸ Kawād still chose to besiege it, possibly thinking that to capture a frontier city like this would not be a difficult task. However, as we can observe from contemporary texts, the siege did not go smoothly, and the weather was unendurable for the besiegers: their clothes could not protect them in cold weather, and such adverse weather even made their bows less effective.⁹

Several human-related factors need to be discussed, as well. Obviously, due to the lack of sources, we will never access the Persians' voices, but a prolonged and difficult siege must have been extremely frustrating.¹⁰ From 502 to 503, many Persians perished due to both the gruelling resistance of Amida's inhabitants,¹¹ who 'showed an unexpected fortitude in holding out against dangers and hardships'¹² for

⁵ Ammianus 19.9.1.

⁶ Sokr. HE 3.21.1-2.

⁷ Prok. Wars 1.7.3. Cf. Greatrex 1998: 83 on Prokopios' exaggeration of the Great King's sudden presence.

⁸ Zach. HE 7.3.

⁹ Ibid. See also *Strategikon* 11.1: 'They (i.e. the Persians) are really bothered by cold weather, rain...all of which loosen their bow strings'.

¹⁰ Lee 2007a: 136, Lenski 2007: 232.

¹¹ Josh. Styl. 53, Prok. Wars 1.7.27.

¹² Prok. Wars 1.7.4.

almost one hundred days.¹³ In 573, the Persians underwent many difficulties in besieging Dara, arguably the most important fortress of the Empire's eastern front, and many of them were killed as well.¹⁴ Compared with most of the cases of conflicts between Rome and Persia in the sixth century, the siege of Dara in 573 was surely the longest one. Euagrios wrote that the Persian king spent more than five months besieging this Roman fortress continuously,¹⁵ but the Sasanids actually attacked this frontier fortress for approximately six months.¹⁶

While in other cases the Sasanids finished the siege of a Roman city swiftly, and sometimes the Romans chose either to surrender their city or to pay ransom to the Great King, the enemy occasionally encountered fierce resistance at cities like Sura and Antioch. In the absence of any precise date, it is difficult to know how long the siege of these two cities in 540 persisted. Since the Persians penetrated into the Empire in spring, and reached the border in Mesopotamia again by the end of summer,¹⁷ apparently both of them would have been stormed by the Persians in a short time. Therefore, the mass killings in Sura and Antioch would have resulted from the fierce opposition they encountered. In the *Buildings*, Prokopios stated that 'it (Sura) did not hold him (Kosrow I) off for so much as a half-hour, but was captured immediately by the Persians'.¹⁸ Such a statement, which emphasises the vulnerability of Sura's previous fortifications and the achievement of Justinian, who 'surrounded the entire fortress with a very stout wall...that it should no longer yield to the enemy's assaults',¹⁹ in the post-540 period, may have been an exaggeration. The Romans, under the leadership of the Armenian general Arsaces, defended their city valiantly and killed many Persians (...ἐνθένδε τε μαχόμενος ἰσχυρότατα καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν πολεμίων κτείνας,...)²⁰ when Kosrow I decided to attack the fortifications of Sura.

¹³ Josh. Styl. 53, Chr. Ede. 80.

¹⁴ Mich. Syr. 10.9.

¹⁵ Euagr. HE 5.10.

¹⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Chr. 1234 66.

¹⁷ Prok. Wars 2.13.29.

¹⁸ Prok. Aed. 2.9.1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.9.2.

²⁰ Prok. Wars 2.5.11.

While the inhabitants soon decided to surrender their city because of the unexpected death of their general, the shah was angered by the Romans' resistance. After the departure of the reinforcements led by Theoktistos and Molatzes,²¹ the Antiochenes' resistance was impressive, and they even strove to drive the invaders back courageously with the few weapons at hand after Kosrow I's soldiers had successfully entered into this metropolis,²² was impressive.

These cases, together with the prolonged sieges of both Amida and Dara, deserve further study to investigate the contexts of the defenders' resistance. The prolonged and fierce resistance during a city's siege would have been determined by the situation both outside and inside the targeted city. Although the Persians besieged many Roman cities in the sixth century, these cases can actually be divided into two categories in terms of these sieges' different circumstances. In most cases, the Great King merely asked the Romans in a certain city to pay ransom, and the fortifications were assaulted only if the request was denied. However, it is interesting to note that the Persians promptly attacked the Empire's frontier cities such as Amida, Sura and Dara, and managed to capture them as soon as possible. It could thus have been a to-fight-or-die situation for the Romans, and usually the defenders fought tooth and nail to defend their cities.

The sense of solidarity among the defenders could have been another important factor. Noel Lenski suggested that apart from the civilian population's solidarity, the soldiers, presumably the *limitanei*, usually garrisoned the same place for a long time, and they would have assiduously resisted in wartime.²³ In addition, the presence of ecclesiastical, civic and military leaders, together with substantial forces, would have appeased the uneasiness among a besieged city's population and boosted their morale.²⁴ Prokopios highlighted the role played by the forces of Theoktistos and Molatzes in strengthening the Antiochenes' morale in 540,²⁵ and the Romans at Dara

²¹ Ibid., 2.8.17.

²² Cf. Prok. Wars 1.17.37, in which al-Mundhir's observation was provided.

²³ Lenski 2007: 231.

²⁴ Cf. above, pp. 141-2.

²⁵ Prok. Wars 2.8.2.

warded off the Persians successfully under the leadership of Martinos.²⁶ The retreat or death of these commanders, however, did not always lead to the collapse of the Romans' morale.²⁷ In 540, the Romans at Sura decided to surrender after their commander, Arsaces, was killed,²⁸ but in 573, more than 30 years later, the siege of Dara lasted for six months even though Sergios, the *dux Mesopotamiae*, was killed during the siege.²⁹ Bishops could motivate their flock's resistance, but in a number of instances we learn that sometimes the Romans defended their cities courageously without them. While the bishop of Amida died before the arrival of Kawād's forces,³⁰ the Sasanids spent more than three months in besieging this city. Seventy years later, the bishop of Dara deserted his post and left the city before the siege began, but the inhabitants' stubborn resistance was well attested by both Greek and Syriac texts.

An interesting, but controversial issue of the Persians' experiences was the mockery of the Romans against the military skills of the Persians' commander, that is, the Great King,³¹ a repeated scenario in contemporary Greek and Syriac accounts. Having observed that the attacks of the Persians proved to be ineffectual, the Amidenes, according to Pseudo-Zachariah, 'the disorderly ones',³² 'began to laughingly jeer at the barbarians from the fortifications',³³ and some prostitutes even 'shamelessly drew up their clothing and displayed themselves to Kawād...those parts of a woman's body which it is not proper that men should see uncovered'.³⁴ In 540, the citizens of Antioch not only 'heaped insults upon Kōsrow I from the battlements and taunted him with unseemly laughter'³⁵ but also managed to shoot Paulos, the

²⁶ Ibid., 2.13.16.

²⁷ *Contra* Petersen 2013: 317.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.5.12, cf. Lenski 2007: 232.

²⁹ Cf. *PLRE* III: s.v. Sergius 7 for the successful military experiences of Sergios, the commander-in-chief of the Romans.

³⁰ Zach. HE 7.3.

³¹ Petersen 2013: 318.

³² Zach HE 7.4.

³³ Prok. Wars 1.7.17.

³⁴ Ibid., 1.7.18.

³⁵ Ibid., 2.8.6.

interpreter who was sent by the Great King to ask money from the Romans, to death. Kosrow I, being irritated by such premeditated provocations, commanded his soldiers to storm the fortification.³⁶ More than thirty years later, the confident defenders of Dara despised the king, saying that ‘he (Kosrow I) will get only shame from this as from his other attempts’ when the attacks were renewed by the Persians.³⁷ Nevertheless scholars suggested that some of these accounts could have been literary commonplaces,³⁸ and it is impossible to probe into the Sasanids’ perception and understanding of these activities. The connection between their embarrassing experiences and the Great King’s treatment of the defeated Romans cannot be established with certainty.

During such deadly conflicts against the Romans, many Persians must have been killed as the sieges progressed, and the casualties of the Persian nobles were sometimes considerable. Here, we can notice the clearest relationship between the besiegers’ experiences and their treatments of and retaliations against the defeated Romans in the postwar period.³⁹ Having been persuaded by the peers of those dead magnates, the shah could have ordered the subsequent massacre as a vindictive and bloody punishment. Pseudo-Zachariah mentioned the thirst of the Persians for revenge in 503; some important officers approached Kawād, saying that ‘Our families and our brothers have been killed in battle by the inhabitants of the city’.⁴⁰ Thus, they

³⁶ Ibid., 2.8.7.

³⁷ Joh, Eph. HE 6.5.

³⁸ Debié 2003: 619-21.

³⁹ The atrocities committed by the enemy in 531 could have instigated the Roman commanders to take revenge on the Persians later. For the opinions of these generals, Belisarios and the Roman soldiers at Kallinikos, see Prok. Wars 1.18.16-26, Greatrex 1998: 198-9. Civilians’ calamities must have become known to local people, Mal. 18.59, see also Zach. HE 8.5. I owe this idea to Geoffrey Greatrex.

⁴⁰ What happened in the aftermath of the siege of Naples in 536 is illuminating. Having eventually crushed the resistance of the Goths, according to Prokopios, the soldiers of Belisarios, ‘were possessed with fury, especially those who had chanced to have a brother or other relative slain in the fighting at the wall’, began to slaughter everyone they encountered indiscriminately, Prok. Wars 5.10.29.

asked their king to give them one tenth of the population ‘as compensation for vengeance’.⁴¹ Kawād agreed with their proposal, and his soldiers ‘gathered and counted out and gave to them in proportion to the group’.⁴² Then these Romans were executed in every manner.

In 540 Kōsrow I became furious and wanted to punish the inhabitants of Sura as these Romans, instead of surrendering their city, raised against his soldiers with weapons and slain many Persian notables.⁴³ Later, while his troops who had entered Antioch encountered opposition, the Great King had not yet decided what to do: he then called the ambassadors, presumably in order to discuss something with them⁴⁴—possibly in order to extort a large amount of money from the inhabitants. However, at that moment a certain Persian officer Zaberganes, whose opinions could have represented the sentiments of the Persians whose relatives or comrades were killed or injured by the Romans in the siege, stated that the citizens should be punished:

...they (i.e. the Antiochenes) both before fighting offer insults to your kingdom (i.e. the Persian Empire), and when they are defeated dare the impossible and do the Persians irreparable harm...these men have set an ambush in a captured city and are destroying the victors by means of snares...⁴⁵

Such words can be studied together with what the shah told the Roman ambassadors in the sack of Antioch: ‘all the notables of the Persians were harassing me unceasingly with their demand that I should drag the city as with a net and destroy all the captives’.⁴⁶ We do not know whether it was the shah’s pretext of the post-siege massacre, but clearly the death of Persian soldiers and magnates must have been unendurable for the surviving Persian nobles and the shah himself.

Last but not least, fierce resistance could possibly lead to the cruel treatment of Roman prisoners of war. Due to our lack of our knowledge about the Sabir Huns and

⁴¹ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Prok. Wars 2.5.14.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.8.30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.8.31-2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.9.6.

their economic relationship with the Sasanids in the sixth century,⁴⁷ it is difficult to contextualise the selling of the Amidene prisoners of war by Kawād in the early sixth century, and we do not know whether he had intended to replenish his treasury by selling these Romans to the nomads. These captives might have been exiled for the second time to the distant land by the shah because of the difficulties his forces faced in the siege of this frontier city. In the second half of the sixth century, the contrast between the treatment of those from Apamea and Dara is evident. The forces of Adarmahan subdued the former almost without resistance, but the shah himself and his troops had experienced a tortuous siege at Dara for six months. While the Apameans were sent to the city Better Antioch of K̄osrow, it is not unreasonable that K̄osrow I would have treated the deportees from Dara, particularly the surviving social elites more harshly and interned them in the imperial prison.

Economic profits

The acquisition of portable wealth from the Empire was crucial for the Persians,⁴⁸ they seized valuable goods or, more frequently, bullion from the cities they sacked, conquered, or even just passed. The situation inside both the Empire and the Persian court needs to be analyzed briefly in order to understand why the Persians plundered the possession of the Romans so regularly.

Based on literary and material sources, what follows is a brief examination of the possible wealth accumulated by the citizens living in the cities attacked or targeted by the Sasanids. Considering our lack of detailed knowledge about the activities of Persian spies or informants, we cannot assume that the Persians would obtain all relevant information about every city of the Roman Empire, but sometimes they seem to have known what kinds of wealth were possessed by those living in their target cities. When K̄osrow I and his forces arrived at Euphratesia in 542, he intended to ‘lead the army straight for Palestine, in order that he might plunder all their treasures and especially those in Jerusalem’.⁴⁹ Such information might have come from the

⁴⁷ On the trade relations between them, see the short article by Richard Frye, Frye 1972: 263-9.

⁴⁸ Daryaee 2009: 143-4.

⁴⁹ Prok. Wars 2.20.18.

Samaritans, who, having revolted in the reign of Justinian, went over to Kawād, promising that they would hand over Jerusalem, ‘a city which possessed donations from various emperors, both a large sum of gold and an untold quantity of precious stones’ to the Sasanids.⁵⁰ Relevant information obtained from their allies was important as well. For instance, al-Mundhir, the Lakhmid king, told Kawād that Antioch ‘surpassed all the cities of the Empire in wealth, size and population’ when Kawād managed to launch attacks against the Romans again in 531.⁵¹ Therefore, clearly considerable wealth could still have been housed by its inhabitants of this metropolis even after the earthquakes in 526 and 528.

The inhabitants of the Empire’s cities must have accumulated considerable wealth in the sixth century. Being one of the wealthiest cities of Roman Syria and the capital of Syria Secunda from the beginning of the fifth century, the wealth of Apamea is well attested by both literary and material sources. John of Ephesus thought that this city ‘was full of the accumulated wealth of many years, and rich beyond most of the cities of the east’.⁵² In the itinerary of Antoninus, a pilgrim of the sixth century, this city was said to be one of the most splendid of Syria Secunda.⁵³ Euagrius, who came from Epiphania, a city not far away from this metropolis, reported that Apamea was eventually ruined by time at the second half of the sixth century,⁵⁴ but this image was disproved by the results of a series of archaeological campaigns by Belgian archaeologists.⁵⁵ In the sixth century, a series of buildings were erected under the sponsorship of different social groups.⁵⁶ For example, in the case of the cathedral, the generosity of bishops and ecclesiastical authorities was proved by

⁵⁰ Mal. 18.54, cf. Theoph. A.M. 6021, where he mistakenly stated that it was Kōsrow I who was lured with this proposal.

⁵¹ Prok. Wars 1.17.36. On the wealth of Antioch, see Liebeschuetz 1972: 92-100. For the *territorium* of it, see 40-1, 61-73.

⁵² Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

⁵³ *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* 46.

⁵⁴ Euagr. HE 5.10.

⁵⁵ See Balty 1989: 83, 87, 90-2 for the building works conducted in the sixth century.

⁵⁶ Balty 1989: 91.

the contents of mosaic inscriptions.⁵⁷ Also, the rebuilding of a huge villa (the Triclinos House) in 539, possibly with its amazing mosaic decorations, suggested that at least in the reign of Justinian the local elites still held sufficient wealth to undertake such a significant building scheme.⁵⁸

After its construction at the beginning of the sixth century,⁵⁹ the population and wealth of Dara, a city ‘heavily fortified at the throats of the Persians’,⁶⁰ grew rapidly since the emperor ‘freed all of the settlers⁶¹ ...donated to each one his own land and his own dwelling...contributed several hundred pounds of gold for the building of the church of the city’.⁶² In order to erect this city as quickly as possible, Anastasios demonstrated his generosity by providing a very large payment to the workers,⁶³ and gave the first bishop, Eutylichian, ‘gifts of sacred vessels and gold’ for ‘the establishment of ecclesiastical buildings’.⁶⁴ Since this city had never been conquered since its foundation, these precious items could have been preserved in its church until the Persians’ invasion in the reign of Justin II.

In the campaign of 573, the wealth of this frontier city must have increased for other reasons. In the fifth clause of the peace treaty in 562, both the Romans and the Sasanids agreed that ‘Saracen and all other barbarian merchants of either state shall

⁵⁷ According to the four inscriptions found at the pavement of the porch, the chapel and other places, it was bishop Paul who conducted these building works around 533, Balty 1989: 86-7.

⁵⁸ J. Ch. Balty 1969: 112-3, Foss 1997: 218, cf. Balty 1981: 85.

⁵⁹ Dara was founded not long after the Romans’ reoccupation of Amida. The construction of this important citadel was reported in Greek, Syriac and Latin texts, Prok. Wars 1.10.13-7, Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.28, Zach. 7.6. Also, see a lost work of Marcellinus *Comes* for the dispatch of the outstanding craftsmen. For the translation, see Croke 1995: 40, for the introduction of this work, see Croke 1984b: 77-88.

⁶⁰ Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.47.

⁶¹ They were probably the tenant farmers, Greatrex et al. 2011: 249.

⁶² Zach. HE 7.6.

⁶³ Ibid. Cf. Josh. Styl. 90 for the selection of stone-masons from Syria, see also Croke 1995: 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

not go by strange roads but shall go by Nisibis and Dara'.⁶⁵ Of course the main concern of this clause was the control of these mobile merchants and traders between Rome and Persia for they 'shall not cross into foreign territory without official permission'.⁶⁶ This agreement would have made these two frontier cities trade centres, and those living in Dara must have benefitted from these commercial activities.⁶⁷ In addition, in Late Antiquity, the villagers took refuge in nearby strongly-fortified cities in wartime in order to avoid any possible misfortunes. Since for those living in the adjacent areas Dara seemed to be an impregnable citadel, many civilians 'fled thither, carrying their valuables with them' when the army of Kōsrow I penetrated into their homeland in 573.⁶⁸ Therefore, we can assume that at the end of this year what his soldiers plundered from this city must have included the wealth of both Dara's inhabitants and the refugees who sojourned inside this citadel in wartime.

An examination of what Kawād did in the Anastasian War indicates that the thirst for bullion from the Romans was his primary goal.⁶⁹ In the era of Balaš, the Persians already had to pay tribute to the Hephthalites,⁷⁰ and the shah 'found the Persian treasury empty and the land ravaged by the Huns'.⁷¹ The situation was so desperate that the Great King could not maintain his army.⁷² At the end of the fifth century, the newly-enthroned Kawād sent an embassy to the Romans to extort money but was then refused by Anastasios.⁷³ Several years later, the situation became even worse, and the shah again tried to solve his acute financial problems by trying to extort the emperor. This proposal, however, was rejected again.⁷⁴ Kawād had no

⁶⁵ Menander fr. 6.1.

⁶⁶ Ibid. On the discussion of the merchants, the spies and information-gathering in Late Antiquity, see Donner 1989: 76-8, Lee 1993b: 175-6, Kagan 2011: 162-9.

⁶⁷ Mango 1975: 224-5.

⁶⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

⁶⁹ See Haarer 2006: 51-3 for a short review on these events.

⁷⁰ Prok. Wars 1.4.35, Christensen 1944: 297.

⁷¹ Josh. Styl. 18.

⁷² Ibid., 19.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Prok. Wars 1.7.1-2, Theoph. A.M. 5996.

choice now, and then the only, and probably the easiest way of acquire profits was to launch a war and seize wealth from the Romans.

The hunger for booty to replenish the treasury of the Persian Empire would thus have prompted the Sasanids to break the peace and launch a sudden attack on the Empire.⁷⁵ What the Sasanids needed in the early sixth century is illustrated by their military operations: some Persian forces and their allies were dispatched to harass the frontier zone of the Empire and obtained considerable booty from Edessa, Konstantia and other places.⁷⁶ When Kawād found that it was difficult to conquer Amida, he asked for a small amount of money from the defenders, saying that he would withdraw from this city with such gifts.⁷⁷ Therefore while the Persians devoted so much energy and time to attack Amida, clearly to take something valuable remained important. In Kōsrow I's campaign in 573, it seems that the acquisition of wealth remained vital for the Sasanids as well. When the Great King found that Dara might be too well-defended to be conquered, he asked the inhabitants to ransom their city by paying tributes, and said that he would withdraw from the battlefield.⁷⁸

Having conquered Amida, this frontier city could have been regarded by Kawād as a bargaining chip, and it was said that he sent an envoy to extort money from Anastasios.⁷⁹ When the Sasanids arrived at Edessa later, at the beginning they tried to extract money from the inhabitants rather than engaging in a serious siege: the Persian *astabed* Bawi told Areobindos that 'If you want us to make peace, give us 10,000 pounds of gold, and ratify with us a treaty giving us the customary gold each year'.⁸⁰ Although Areobindos agreed to send 7,000 pounds of gold, the Sasanids were not satisfied with it. Later, Kawād himself not only requested the hostages and money from the defenders in exchange for withdrawing from Edessa but also even sent

⁷⁵ Josh. Styl. 50, Prok. Wars 1.7.3.

⁷⁶ Josh. Styl. 51-2.

⁷⁷ Zach. HE 7.4.

⁷⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Chr. 1234 66.

⁷⁹ Josh. Styl. 54.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

Hormozd, another Persian envoy, soon afterwards to collect 300 pounds of it as a kind of downpayment.⁸¹

Kawād's aim of extracting money from the Romans can be illustrated by another event. Having noticed the escape of Roman soldiers because of the chilly winter in 504, the Persian *astabed* gave the Roman *magistros* Celer an ultimatum, saying that the besiegers should let the remaining Persians get out of Amida safely or accept a new wave of attacks from the Sasanids. We know much less about the details of the negotiation, but it is highly possible that once again the Persians managed to extort as much money as possible. Apart from what they had plundered in 503, in January 505, the remaining Sasanids were permitted to leave Amida, 'carrying as much as they could'.⁸² Pseudo-Joshua wrote that Anastasios sent gifts and a golden table-service to Kawād.⁸³ In the *Church History* of Pseudo-Zachariah, the Romans gave the shah 1,100 pounds of gold in exchange for peace and the control of this city.⁸⁴

While it is unclear whether the depleted treasury was Kōsrow I's main motivation for resuming hostilities in the spring of 540,⁸⁵ we learn from Prokopios' *Wars* that acquiring booty and bullion was his main target, and the annihilation of the Roman forces or the annexation of the cities was never a strategically important object for the Sasanids: in most cases they simply asked for money from local people and departed without attacking either the soldiers or the civilians inside these urban communities. Having sacked Sura, the Sasanids approached Hierapolis, a city with mighty fortifications and many soldiers,⁸⁶ and asked for money from the inhabitants; the shah acquired 2,000 pounds of silver and departed. When the bishop Megas entreated the shah on behalf of the citizens of the East, Kōsrow I promised that after

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸² Zach. HE 7.5.

⁸³ Josh. Styl. 81.

⁸⁴ Zach. HE 7.5-6, cf. Prok. Wars 1.9.4 and Theoph. A.M. 5998, in which 1000 pounds of gold and 3 talents were referred respectively.

⁸⁵ Blockley 1985: 71, Tate 2004: 751, Greatrex 2005: 488, cf. Christensen 1944: 366, Howard-Johnston 1995: 214.

⁸⁶ Prok. Wars 2.6.22.

receiving ten *kentenaria* of gold he would lead his forces back to Persia.⁸⁷ At Beroea, Kosrow I demanded double the amount of what he had received from the Hierapolitans after noticing that the walls were fragile.⁸⁸ At the beginning the inhabitants agreed with this proposal, but they only gave 2,000 pounds of silver to the Persians,⁸⁹ a decision which led to the subsequent plundering and destruction of their city.⁹⁰ The request of money was made through Paulos, the shah's interpreter, upon arriving at Antioch.⁹¹ Prokopios further suggested that the Shahanshah 'would accept even less than this for withdrawing'.

The Sasanids kept demanding money after leaving Antioch. Kosrow I not only made an agreement with the ambassador that he would receive 1,000 pounds of silver in exchange for not inflicting any harm to the Apameans⁹² but also asked the bishop to give him 'not only 1,000 pounds of silver, nor even ten times that amount, but whatsoever treasures were stored there...being all of gold and silver and of marvelous great size'.⁹³ Finally, the citizens of Chalkis and those living in the cities of Roman Mesopotamia like Edessa, Konstantia and Dara were also forced to ransom their city by paying tribute.⁹⁴

Kosrow I once again tried to extort money from the Edessenes in 543.⁹⁵ What his envoy said in the process of negotiation needs to be discussed further. If Edessa's citizens, the Great King suggested, did not want to send him Peter and Peranios, the Roman generals who bravely defended the city,⁹⁶ they could choose either to give the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.6.25, cf. *ibid.*, 2.9.8. Prokopios might have implied that the shah would eat his words later for the Persians eventually sacked Antioch soon afterwards.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2.7.5.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.7.6.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.7.19.

⁹¹ Ibid., 2.8.4.

⁹² Ibid., 2.11.3.

⁹³ Ibid., 2.11.24.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.12.2, 33-4, 2.13.8, 28. The Romans of Dara paid a thousand pounds of silver to Kosrow I.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.26.13.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.26.25ff.

Sasanids 500 *kentenaria* of gold⁹⁷ or to offer their wealth to the invaders: ‘receive into the city some of his associates who would search out all the money, both gold and silver...bring it to him, allowing everything else to remain in the possession of the present owners’.⁹⁸

Jairus Banaji argued that the amount was the Great King’s estimation of Edessa’s wealth.⁹⁹ Of course, the Persians must have been aware of the possible wealth amassed by the Romans in Edessa; in the seventh century, the Sasanids snatched 112,000 pounds of silver from its churches.¹⁰⁰ However, since no statistical data about Edessa’s wealth has ever been preserved, it is impossible to know how rich this city was in the middle of the sixth century. In addition, as shown already, this extortion was actually an alternative provided by the Sasanids when the envoys were sent by the Edessenes, who had been terrified by the enemies’ attack; and in this case, K̅osrow I’s utmost target was threatening the Romans to send to the Sasanids these generals who defended Edessa at that moment.¹⁰¹ Therefore, such a phrase should be regarded as an exorbitant demand made by the shah who intended to disarm the Romans by having them deliver their military leaders to him, rather than a sober assessment or survey made by the shah in wartime.

While the Persians extorted money from the Romans frequently in the sixth century, they did not always plunder wherever they visited or conquered. Rather, they seem to have intended to seize the Empire’s wealth as effectively as they could. If a city were too poor to be extorted, or, in some cases, it had been plundered in the previous campaigns, they would keep it intact and turn their attention to other targets instead of invading it to no avail. Before reaching Sura in the spring of 540, K̅osrow I’s army arrived at the nearby area of Zenobia, a city which was founded by Zenobia, a queen of the Palmyrene Empire.¹⁰² Having observed that there was nothing that he

⁹⁷ At the end K̅osrow I only received five *kentenaria* from the Edessenes, see *ibid.*, 2.27.46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.26.39.

⁹⁹ Banaji 2002: 227.

¹⁰⁰ Chr. 1234 96.

¹⁰¹ Prok. Wars 2.26.38.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2.5.4.

could extort because ‘the land was untenanted and destitute of all good things’,¹⁰³ Ḳosrow I simply forced this city to surrender and departed with his forces. When the Sasanids invaded the Empire again in 542, there was no need to plunder or attack the citadels of Euphratesia because ‘he (i.e. Ḳosrow I) had previously taken everything...as far as Syria, partly by capture and partly by exacting money’.¹⁰⁴ While Apamea was plundered more than thirty years later, the Persians left Antioch intact. In fact, Adarmahan did not approach this metropolis himself; instead, he directed parts of his forces,¹⁰⁵ possibly both to detect whether substantial Roman forces had been stationed there or not and, if possible, to try to capture precious goods. Having experienced setbacks in attacking this city, Adarmahan decided to retreat instead of besieging it.

The Persians must also have enjoyed the economic benefits of transporting the Roman deportees into their empire, and the possible profits could have been multifaceted. In some cases the capture, detention and release of Romans from conquered places could have procured more benefits for the Persians. In 540 the Great King twice tried to sell his captives from Sura and Antioch back to the Romans. Therefore what Ḳosrow I cared about at that time was how to extort money from the Romans as far as he could, more than transporting the captives back to his realm. These captives might have been considered to be a ‘bargaining chip’ by the Persians to extort more money from the emperor.

At the beginning of the sixth century, the Persians must have appreciated the expertise of some captured Romans, for they, together with local nobles, were called the ‘king’s captives’.¹⁰⁶ Several possible explanations of Kawād’s motivations and purposes in transporting these Roman craftsmen can be provided. The deportation of craftsmen from the Roman Empire seems to have been common in Late Antiquity,¹⁰⁷ and the Great King could have used these Romans as ‘technical staff’ in his empire. In the third century, the Roman captives were recruited in the construction works of

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.5.7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.20.17.

¹⁰⁵ Euagr. HE 5.9.

¹⁰⁶ Zach. HE 7.4.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Peeters 1924: 307, cf. Tafazzoli 1974: 191-6.

the Persian Empire's infrastructure projects.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the use of mosaic in the palace complex of Bīšāpūr, a city built by Shapur I, was attested by extant material traces as well.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, since the building scheme of the city Better Amida of Kawād cannot be re-established with any certainty, it is impossible to tell whether the Great King actually employed the Amidenes in the building works of this city in the sixth century. In the *Chronicle of Seert*, Kawād established many villages and cities.¹¹⁰ Once again, we cannot rule out the possibility that the craftsmen from Amida could have possibly been regarded as an important source of manpower, but further conclusions cannot be made because of the lack of any further details.

Scholars had pointed out that after the Amidenes were transported by Kawād into Persia, the city Better Amida of Kawād in which they were settled became an important centre of linen production,¹¹¹ but further information cannot be extracted because of the fragility of textile products.¹¹² Since this city was located at the frontier between the provinces of Fārs and Kūzestān, the craftsmen from Amida could have been sent there in order to produce luxury items. From the sixth century onwards, possibly because of its resources and location,¹¹³ this place developed as an important commercial centre,¹¹⁴ and the local mint seems to have operated even after the Muslim conquest.¹¹⁵ While we do not know whether the Sasanids managed to export

¹⁰⁸ For the archaeological evidences of these works, see al-Ṭabari 1.827, see also Lieu 1986: 478.

¹⁰⁹ Canepa 2009: 75-8 for relevant discussion. For the 'Roman' elements at Bīšāpūr, see Ghirshman 1938: 13, 1962: 159, cf. Keall 1989: 287-9.

¹¹⁰ See below, p. 220 for further discussion.

¹¹¹ Gaube 1986: 519-20, Christensen 1993: 174, cf. Wiesehöfer 1996: 193 for earlier cases in the Sasanian Empire and Canard and Cahen: 1960: 345 for the information from the Islamic period.

¹¹² Bier 2013: 947.

¹¹³ Barthold 1984: 165.

¹¹⁴ Stein 1940: 80-1. Cf. Le Strange 1930: 268-9 for this city's situation in the Islamic period.

¹¹⁵ Daryaei 2003: 11-2, cf. Gyselen 1979: 210, Tyler-Smith 1983: 245 (late Sasanian era), Tafazzoli 2000: 31-3.

these products to the coastal ports of Fārs,¹¹⁶ the geographical location of the city Better Amida of Kawād, which lay on the major road between Ctesiphon, Ahvāz and the eastern part of the Persian Empire,¹¹⁷ made it possible to transport the products of these Romans to the Persian court in lower Mesopotamia.

While neither Prokopios nor the oriental writers ever suggested the connection between the need for labour and the deportation of the Romans in the reign of Kōsrow I in their works, the founding of cities and the recruitment of foreign labourers, i.e., prisoners of war, from a conquered Roman city would have increased the tax revenue of the shah.¹¹⁸ Considering the high mortality the captives would face during the arduous trail, removing the young survivors from Amida, as suggested in Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*,¹¹⁹ might have been a practical strategy for the Sasanids because their survival rate would have been higher than others. The reconstruction of Arrajān, i.e., Better Amida of Kawād, where these deportees were settled later, could have been an important part of Kawād's building plans. Apart from this city, the shah also built other towns, villages and canals in his reign.¹²⁰ These captured Romans might have been considered an important source of manpower for agriculture, which could eventually led to the increase of royal revenue.¹²¹

Meanwhile, the changing course of the Tigris, which possibly took place either at the end of the fifth century or at the beginning of the sixth century, must have provided huge expanses of virgin lands for farming.¹²² In the reign of Kawād, many

¹¹⁶ Whitehouse and Williamson 1973: 29-49, cf. Daryaee 2003: 1-16.

¹¹⁷ Miri 2012: 105. For more information on this city in the Sasanian and Islamic period, see Streck and Wilber 1965: 659, Bosworth, De Planhol, and Lerner 1984: 688-90.

¹¹⁸ Adams 1965: 69-70. On the construction of cities in the royal estate *dastgerd* in the previous centuries, see Wiesehöfer 1996: 185-6, 189, Pourshariati 2008: 38-9, Wood 2013a: 15-6, cf. Gignoux 1994: 105-6.

¹¹⁹ Josh. Styl. 53.

¹²⁰ al-Ṭabari 1.885.

¹²¹ Daryaee 2009: 40, 135. Cf. Adams 1962: 116, 118-9, Kettenhofen 1996: 304, Morony 2004a: 164 for the examples of earlier period.

¹²² Bruno 1966: 90-1, Morony 2004a: 170-1.

villages were established in the area of Mosul and Iraq, that is, the middle Tigris districts and lower Mesopotamia.¹²³ In the *Chronicle of Seert*, the King of Kings then transported people from other places to develop agriculture.¹²⁴ While Erich Kettenhofen argued that they must have been the deported Romans for they were permitted to build churches and form convents there, Michael Morony has reservations about this interpretation.¹²⁵ Several possibilities can be suggested. These people could have been captives from Amida for, as mentioned above, the compiler later also mentioned that the shah managed to deport them to Seleukia. However, if the reign of Kawād was treated chronologically here by the compiler, then this event might have occurred at the end of the fifth century, and these newly-arrived farmers could have been local Christians rather than captives from the Empire. While a solid conclusion cannot be reached because of the lack of precise dates and context of this passage, clearly Kawād was aware of the importance of agriculture, and the deportees could have facilitated the cultivation of Mesopotamia. Later, the system of irrigation of the Diyala plains in the sixth century, for example, the Katul al-Kisrawi (Cut of ̲osrow) which drew water from the Tigris, might have been built in lower Mesopotamia in the reign of ̲osrow I.¹²⁶ This must have created the need for large labour forces for agricultural yields, and possibly, for the increase of taxation to uphold the bureaucracy and army.¹²⁷

More interesting inferences can be made from ̲osrow I's selection of the prefect to rule the captured Antiochenes in the city Better Antioch of ̲osrow. If al-Ṭabari is right, then his narratives, in which a former head of the artisans was promoted to this post, can be further corroborated by the passages in the *Šāh-nāma*, in which Ferdowsī suggested that the Great King regarded this city as 'a tree that bear fruits'.¹²⁸ That is,

¹²³ Morony 2004a: 172-3.

¹²⁴ Chr. Seert 2.12.

¹²⁵ Morony 2004a: 173.

¹²⁶ Adams 1965: 76-9, 1981: 211, Christensen 1993 70-1, Howard-Johnston 1995: 200-1, Wilkinson 2003a: 93, 95.

¹²⁷ On the reforms in the reign of ̲osrow I, see the detailed study provided in Rubin 1995: 225-97.

¹²⁸ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.260.

the shah hoped that he could acquire economic benefits from the transportation of these Romans, and this city would develop as a centre of manufacturing.¹²⁹ Then it is plausible that an ‘experienced’ man¹³⁰ who was engaged in the administration of artisans before would have been appointed as the governor of this city.

Finally, Michael Morony’s argument needs to be examined. He argued that after 540, plague and other factors resulted in the competition of Rome and Persia over the available labour force expressed in the deportation of survivors in wars and battles.¹³¹ In order to test Morony’s hypothesis, below I will first identify the cases of plague in sixth-century Persia and then analyze the shah’s military activities, particularly the deportation frequency in the second half of the sixth century. In the end, I will argue that the relationship between the Great King’s deportation of the Romans and the demographic losses as a result of the plague proves to be weak. While recurrent plague had a profound impact on the economy and demography of the Empire,¹³² fewer details about the situation of Sasanian Persia have been preserved in our texts. When the Persians wanted to invade the Empire from Atropatene, the shah, together with his soldiers, were infected with the pestilence.¹³³ Kōsrow I decided to retreat back to Assyria, ‘where the pestilence had not as yet become epidemic’.¹³⁴ Later on it seems that the Persians must have suffered from the plague as well,¹³⁵ and the plague fell upon the territory of the Sasanids and others,¹³⁶ but we simply have no idea about the extent of the casualties caused by plague or the situation inside Sasanian Persia. We can, nonetheless, hypothesise that the plague would have had a significant demographic impact on Persia, as was the case in Byzantium and later the Islamic realms.

¹²⁹ Morony 1984: 267, cf. Blockley 1980: 95.

¹³⁰ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.260.

¹³¹ Morony 2004a: 179.

¹³² Stathakopoulos 2004: 155-65.

¹³³ Prok. Wars 2.24.8.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2.24.12.

¹³⁵ Cf. Horden 2005: 135-8.

¹³⁶ Prok. Wars 2.23.21. See also Ch. Seert 2.32, Ps. Dion. II. 80, Mich. Syr. 9.28.

From the 540s the Persians fought several times against the Romans. Their military activities can be divided into several phases. K̅osrow I himself invaded the Empire again and captured civilians from Kallinikos, a rather populous city,¹³⁷ and, possibly, from other places as well. From the middle of the sixth century, the shah was occupied with Lazic affairs for many years. His generals besieged certain cities successfully and removed prisoners of war,¹³⁸ but the scale of deportation must have been small. The Mesopotamian front remained relatively untroubled for almost three decades, and it was Justin II rather than K̅osrow I, who was probably in his seventies, who rekindled the conflict again in 572-3. Later the victorious shah, who had just removed many people from Apamea and subdued Dara, chose to arrange the truce with the Romans instead of sending more soldiers to the territory of the Empire.¹³⁹ In the subsequent years the old Great King, intending to penetrate to the inland cities of the Empire, such as Caesarea in Cappadocia through Armenia,¹⁴⁰ launched another invasion in 576,¹⁴¹ sacked several cities and went back. While certain cities were destroyed, neither John of Ephesos nor the Greek historians mentioned any cases of the Romans' deportations.¹⁴²

In the next stage, from the final years of K̅osrow I to the end of his son Hormozd IV, mostly the Sasanids chose either to raid the Empire¹⁴³ or to fight with the Romans in pitched battles¹⁴⁴ rather than engaging in besieging cities.¹⁴⁵ We should not deny

¹³⁷ Prok. Anecd. 3.31.

¹³⁸ Zach. HE 10.13 for the sack of Petra, cf. Prok. Wars 2.17.27-8, in which the Sasanids seem to have been rather restrained.

¹³⁹ Joh. Epiph. 5, Menander fr. 18.1-2, cf. Mich. Syr. 10.9, in which only Zachariah, the envoy from the Empire, was recorded.

¹⁴⁰ Joh. Eph. HE 6.8.

¹⁴¹ Menander fr. 18.4, 18.6, Th. Sim. 3.12.11-14.11, Euagr. HE 5.14, Joh. Eph. HE 6.8-9, Whitby 1988: 262-7.

¹⁴² Joh. Eph. HE 6.8, *contra* Morony 2004a: 175.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.10, Th. Sim. 3.15.8-9 (577); Th. Sim. 3.15.11-3, Menander fr. 23.6, Joh. Eph. HE 6.14 (578); Th. Sim. 3.17.8, Joh. Eph. HE 6.17 (581). See, for example, Whitby 1988: 269, 273 for a detailed narrative.

¹⁴⁴ Th. Sim. 2.4.1-2.5.7, 2.9.1-14, 3.6.1-4, Euagr. HE 6.15, Whitby 1988: 281-2, 290.

that some Romans must have been captured in these skirmishes,¹⁴⁶ but no traces of evidence for massive deportation can be found in this period. Therefore, the above examination shows that apart from Apamea and Dara the Persians did not capture many prisoners of war from the Empire in the second half of the sixth century, and they probably never managed to do so. Had the Great King, either Kosrow I or his son, faced a problem with the lack of manpower in the Persian Empire, they would have surely tried to search for available labour. Morony's thesis should thus be reconsidered. Instead, below I will further argue that apart from economic considerations,¹⁴⁷ the capture and deportation of the Romans from the Empire could have had significant strategic and propagandistic appeal for the Great King.

Strategic considerations

In the sixth century the Sasanids adopted various strategies during their invasion to pursue military and political goals. While in most cases Roman civilians' fates would not have been the Sasanids' main concern under such circumstances, it can be shown that the Persian treatment of Romans related to these military- and political- oriented decisions.

Particular strategies were used by the Sasanids to facilitate the progress of their invasion and conquest. The contents of a lost Persian text called *Ayin-nameh*, 'The Book of Regulations', which was preserved in fragments in the anthology *Uyūn al-Akhhbār*, 'The Book of Choice Narratives', give us some clues regarding the creation and use of fear in siege warfare. If the soldiers intended to besiege a stronghold of a city successfully, they should 'intimidate and frighten them through themselves'.¹⁴⁸ The bloodbath of a conquered city was intimidating both for the surviving defenders

¹⁴⁵ Joh. Eph. HE 6.14, in which the Persians besieged Amida for three days and departed; Th. Sim. 1.14.7-8 for the unsuccessful siege of Monocarton, a Roman fortress near Konstantia, Whitby 1988: 279-80.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, John of Ephesos reported that in 575 Adarmahan was elated by the Roman prisoners of war he had, Joh. Eph. HE 6.13, cf. Menander 18.4, Joh. Epiph. 5, Whitby 1988: 260.

¹⁴⁷ See above, pp. 217-21.

¹⁴⁸ Inostrancev 1926: 16.

in the city and for those in neighbouring areas, and it would have crushed the Romans' remaining morale. Contemporary authors indicated that spreading fear among the enemies was important for the invaders. After that, it would be much easier for the victors to maintain order and then to have their own way, such as looting the city and deporting Roman civilians. Moreover, such activities might have curtailed the possibility of resistance from nearby cities or villages in the future.¹⁴⁹

What Kawād did after the sack of Amida is an excellent example of how the victorious Sasanids used terror as an effective weapon. Having conquered this frontier city, the shah sent Rufinos, the Roman ambassador, back to Anastasios in order to notify him about what had happened in the war zone. The ambassador, who possibly used the *cursus publicus*, the imperial post system, to travel back to the capital,¹⁵⁰ revealed the sufferings of the Amidenes to the inhabitants of every place he visited. Such reports spread fear among the inhabitants living east of the river Euphrates, and many of them began to flee westwards.

The horror of the Romans is understandable. Already in 502, some Persian soldiers were sent to harass Roman Mesopotamia and neighbouring areas, and they even reached Konstantia, 'plundering, robbing, and devastating the whole region'.¹⁵¹ In addition, the king of the Tayyaye, i.e. the Arabs, also led his army to attack the territory of Carrhae and the villages near Edessa, 'ravaging, plundering, and taking captives'.¹⁵² We know much less about the devastation caused by these invaders, but their arrival and presence could also have resulted in horror among the Romans. In order to address this issue, Jacob of Serug, the *periodeutes*¹⁵³ at that time, admonished people to 'trust in divine salvation and not to flee'.¹⁵⁴ In one of his letters, the citizens of Edessa cited Jeremiah 18:7-10 to support their activities. In order to rally them, Jacob reminded them of Christ's message to Abgar - ruler of the kingdom of

¹⁴⁹ Also see the discussion in Petersen 2013: 353.

¹⁵⁰ Leyerle 2009: 116 for the Empire's courier service.

¹⁵¹ Josh. Styl. 51.

¹⁵² Ibid., 52.

¹⁵³ A *periodeutes* is a cleric who was in charge of the supervision of the churches of a city's *territorium*, see Trombley and Watt 2000: 63.

¹⁵⁴ Josh. Styl. 54.

Osroene based at Edessa- in which Christ promised that this city would never be conquered.¹⁵⁵ Upon knowing what happened at the frontier, Anastasios soon dispatched his army to garrison frontier cities, possibly to strengthen people's morale and, possibly, as the commentators of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* have pointed out, to prevent them from migrating altogether.¹⁵⁶

In Late Antiquity envoys were sometimes detained by the hosts for strategical and diplomatic reasons,¹⁵⁷ and such methods were practiced by the Sasanids in the sixth-century Persian wars as well. When Justinian observed Kōsrow I's intention of waging war against his Empire, an envoy Anastasios was sent to the shah.¹⁵⁸ Like what Kawād had done previously, Kōsrow I detained Anastasios,¹⁵⁹ and the envoy went together with the shah's forces to the Empire. Only after the sack of Sura was the envoy dismissed, 'to announce to the Emperor Justinian where in the world he had left Kōsrow, son of Kawād'.¹⁶⁰ Later, having been sent by the Antiochenes to the Sasanids for ransoming their city,¹⁶¹ Megas, the bishop of Beroea, was detained by Kōsrow I again.¹⁶² While the shah did not sack Hierapolis, he threatened to destroy all the Syrians and Kilikians after Megas' entreaty.¹⁶³ The scenario of these three events was almost the same: the Persians first detained these envoys, and, after the demonstration of cruelty (the sack of Amida in 503, the sack of Sura and the threat of

¹⁵⁵ On this well-known legend, see van Rompay 1999: 279-81 for the preservation by Syriac chroniclers, and Mirkovic 2004, Ramelli 2013: 211-23, cf. Brock 1992: 212-34, Carriker 2003: 179-80.

¹⁵⁶ Trombley and Watt 2000: 64.

¹⁵⁷ Nechaeva 2014: 44, 151, 157.

¹⁵⁸ Prok. Wars 2.4.16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.4.26.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 2.5.27.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 2.6.17.

¹⁶² Ibid., 2.6.21.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Both of them were Kōsrow I's targets in 540, see also ibid., 2.5.4, and such opinions seem to have been shared by contemporary Romans: John Lydus recounted that the Sasanids invaded Roman Syria and Cappadocia gradually, Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.53.

destruction in 540), dismissed them. While Prokopios kept silent on Justinian's reaction to Anastasios' report, and we cannot know whether Megas ever mentioned the shah's wild threat to the Antiochenes,¹⁶⁴ these envoys could have been regarded as messengers by the Persians through which the news would have been transmitted not only to the ruling class in Constantinople but also to local populations.¹⁶⁵

The treatment of other 'counterexamples', that is, Romans who either surrendered their city promptly or agreed with the terms with the Sasanids without constituting resistance, was different. In fact, if the Sasanids could obtain what they wanted, the Romans probably received more lenient treatment. In 503 a sortie in Carrhae defeated the Persians and captured the leader of the Hephthalites, but a confrontation or even a siege was clearly not what the Romans wanted, and the Hunnic chieftain was soon sent back, together with 1,500 rams and other gifts. Kawād kept his promise and left this city intact.¹⁶⁶ The situation remained similar in Kōsrow I's campaigns. In the 540s the Persians never attacked those who paid tribute to the shah's forces, while the farmers in Kallinikos were captured and removed rather than experiencing more cruel treatment like massacre. Finally, in 573 the inhabitants of Apamea were merely deported, and nothing related to slaughter was mentioned by contemporaries.

In the sixth century clearly the Sasanids seem to have understood the possible repercussions on the Romans caused by their invasions, and the prospect of a sacked city was used with the aims of demoralising and compelling the Romans to submit. Strategically speaking, what they had done in a sacked Roman city thus became a technique of psychological warfare to facilitate the progress of invasion. In 503 a contingent of Persians was defeated by Timostratos, the *dux Osrhoenae* at Kallinikos, and a *marzbān* was captured. When Kawād arrived, he began to besiege this city, 'threatening to destroy it and slaughter or take captive all its inhabitants if they did not hand over (the *marzbān*) to him'.¹⁶⁷ Having been terrified by such a blunt threat, the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 2.7.14.

¹⁶⁵ Nechaeva 2014: 151.

¹⁶⁶ Josh. Styl. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 64.

Romans decided to hand over the general in exchange for their safety.¹⁶⁸ Although it is unlikely that Ḳosrow I sacked Antioch in 540 simply in order to intimidate the Romans, the fate of the defeated Romans in this metropolis would have terrified people living in the Empire's frontier regions: only those living in Dara, together with their general Martinos, tried to drum up resistance against Ḳosrow I in the same year, and the inhabitants of other places chose to ransom their cities by paying a tribute. Several years later, the experience of the Antiochenes was used by Ḳosrow I as an effective means to intimidate the Roman envoys of Edessa. Having summoned them to negotiate the terms of armistice, the shah 'recounted how many Roman towns he had previously enslaved and in what manner he had accomplished it ... (he) threatened that the inhabitants of Edessa would receive more direful treatment at the hands of the Persians'.¹⁶⁹ In 575, Adarmahan threatened the inhabitants of Konstantia, saying that 'Deliver to us your city, lest the same fate happen to you as to the people of Dara, and you perish'.¹⁷⁰ Dara fell into the hands of the Persians at the end of 573, hence the memory of the atrocities in the sack of this frontier city would have been quite vivid among local people. What Adarmahan intended to do, therefore, was to evoke these horrors to terrify the Romans.

Although it is not always easy to access the Romans' perceptions of what the Persians had done or what they would do in the above cases, things happened in the sack of Amida that clearly cast a shadow upon the Empire's local society even during peacetime. In the middle of the sixth century, those living in the nearby areas of Amida were struck by mass hysteria, which, according to Susan Harvey, was the result of a variety of human and natural-induced disasters, such as religious persecution, plague and famine.¹⁷¹ Interestingly enough, while this region was free of the Great King's invasion for more than 10 years, and the atrocities committed by Kawād's soldiers against the Amidenes had happened more than two generations

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁶⁹ *Prok. Wars* 2.26.20.

¹⁷⁰ *Joh. Eph. HE* 6.13.

¹⁷¹ For the summary of these human and natural disasters and the discussion of this episode, see Harvey 1980: 3-4. On the issue of epidemics and famine, see Stathakopoulos 2004: 298-9, 304, 306-7.

earlier, the terror of war clearly played a significant role in such phenomena. In Pseudo-Dionysios of Tel-Mahre's *Chronicle*, the most detailed account we currently have, certain unusual behaviours among not only the Amidenes but also those living in the surrounding areas were reported.¹⁷² At the beginning, it was rumoured among the Amidenes that the shah's army was ready to enter their city and slaughter the inhabitants. Such news definitely created havoc among local populations, and many civilians fled to other places in great confusion to avoid possible misfortunes. As more details about the Amidenes' calamities spread further, confusion, destruction and people's unusual behaviours followed across the whole region, including Edessa and Konstantia, and lasted for one year.¹⁷³

For the invading Persians to secure what they had seized or obtained must have been important, and their strategic considerations seem to have influenced the treatment of a conquered city's buildings and inhabitants. While some cities like Antioch, Apamea and Sura were reported to have been razed or burned,¹⁷⁴ if not thoroughly, the buildings in other places such as Amida and Dara were spared. The analysis of Kawād's motivation for invasion at the beginning of the sixth century and the experiences of those living in other cities he attacked shows that to destroy the conquered cities comprehensively was not his primary or universal aim.¹⁷⁵ At the beginning of his Roman campaign, his forces subdued the resistance of Theodosiopolis in Armenia successfully and left a garrison there.¹⁷⁶ The accounts in Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, according to which this city was razed by the Persians, should thus be doubted.¹⁷⁷ Later on, the Persians passed Martyropolis, a relatively weakly-fortified city in Sophanene, where the inhabitants chose to ransom their own city rather than defend it. Thus Kawād, who seemed to be pleased by it, 'withheld his

¹⁷² Cf. *Spurious Life of Jacob Baradaeus* PO 19.259-62.

¹⁷³ Ps. Dion. II. 104-6.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Petersen 2013: 350.

¹⁷⁵ Haarer 2006: 54.

¹⁷⁶ Josh. Styl. 48.

¹⁷⁷ Greatrex 1998: 80.

hand from the city and from the whole district'.¹⁷⁸ While it is difficult to know whether the Great King intended to annex these frontier zones into his empire at this stage, he surely wanted to seize valuable goods from these conquered cities and regarded them as either parts of Persian territory,¹⁷⁹ or, more significantly, as beachheads or stepping stones for further military activities.

The situation remained the same in the case of Amida. A temporary ruling group, composed of both Sasanids and local elites, was established in the post-siege period. This was an unprecedented strategy in Kawād's campaign at that time, for in other places, as shown above, he only garrisoned the conquered places with soldiers, and nothing pertaining to any ruling group was mentioned at Theodosiopolis and Martyropolis. After his forces left Amida with prisoners of war and booty, Kawād left a garrison with around 3000 soldiers,¹⁸⁰ two *marzbāns* and a certain Glonēs who was in charge of defending this newly-conquered city from any future attacks by the Romans. Apart from these Persians, John bar Hablâhâ, who came from the rich elite, Sergios bar Zabduni and others were appointed to govern the surviving Amidenes.¹⁸¹ Since these aristocrats must have been more familiar with the situation of Amida than the conquerors, the shah would thus have kept a firm grip on this newly captured Roman city by appointing these Romans to rule their fellow citizens. Whether they would have served as tax collectors,¹⁸² however, remains unknown.

The fate of these Roman aristocrats, however, changed when the Persian garrison faced the problem of famine. Contemporary authors reported that they were detained in the amphitheater together with other male citizens.¹⁸³ Whereas the Persians might have controlled the consumption of food as far as they could, this decision must have resulted from their consideration that these Romans would, through treachery or any

¹⁷⁸ Prok. Aed. 3.2.7. On the ruinous state of Martyropolis' fortifications, see Mal. 18.5.

¹⁷⁹ Greatrex 1998: 81.

¹⁸⁰ See Prok. Wars 1.7.33, where only 1,000 soldiers were left.

¹⁸¹ Zach. HE 7.4-5.

¹⁸² See Foss 2003: 156 for the case of Edessa, where a local elite, Cyrus, was appointed by the Sasanids in the seventh century to collect the tax from the Romans.

¹⁸³ Josh. Styl. 76, Zach. HE 7.5.

other possible methods, deliver their hometown back to the besiegers outside the city walls.¹⁸⁴ When Patrikios' soldiers dug tunnels secretly, an Amidene woman saw them and shouted 'Look, the Romans are coming into the city!'.¹⁸⁵ Even the Persians' counteroffensive actions proved to be successful later and these Romans failed to recapture Amida immediately; they must have been aware of the possibility of revolts or uprisings among local people.

Being an important city of northern Mesopotamia, Amida must have served as temporary headquarters for the Persians after its fall in 503. In the same year the Persians, under the leadership of Kawād himself, again tried to seize other cities in Roman Mesopotamia, such as Edessa and Konstantia.¹⁸⁶ While at the beginning the Romans seem to have been unprepared for the sudden attack launched by Kawād, clearly Anastasios noticed the siege of Amida, and reacted by employing both diplomatic¹⁸⁷ and military strategies. Prokopios reported that upon learning this news, the emperor 'dispatched with all speed an army of sufficient strength'.¹⁸⁸ The Roman forces must have arrived at the frontier zone of the Empire at the beginning of 503 to 'spend the winter in these cities and guard them (i.e. local people)'.¹⁸⁹ For the Persians, the presence of such a mighty armed force in the nearby area must have been quite threatening. Considering all these issues, it would have been unwise to raze the remaining fortifications of Amida and other Roman cities for the newly-arrived Persians needed them to protect themselves from any counteroffensive attacks undertaken by the Romans. A similar strategy seems to have been adopted by Kōsrow I 70 years later at Dara, and his decision must have resulted from his shrewd

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Prok. Wars 4.23.18-25, in which Hadrametum, a city which was recently taken by the Moors, was reoccupied by the Romans with the help of local aristocrats and the bishop Paulos.

¹⁸⁵ Josh. Styl. 71.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 58, Prok. Wars 2.13.8-15.

¹⁸⁷ Josh. Styl. 50, Lee 1993b: 115 for the discussion of the timing of the emperor's reactions.

¹⁸⁸ Prok. Wars 1.8.1. See Greatrex 1998: 94-101 for the counter-offensive of the Romans.

¹⁸⁹ Josh. Styl. 54.

considerations of military and political circumstances in northern Mesopotamia at that moment. Having conquered one of the Empire's most important frontier cities, a garrison manned by substantial armed forces inside the existing fortifications to cope with the possible attacks from the Romans would have been a better choice for the Persians than the thorough destruction of all these defence works.

The treatment of the Empire's inland cities which the Sasanids seem not have intended to occupy permanently was different, and both Antioch and Apamea were reported to have been burned in 540 and 573 respectively. Sometimes there is evidence that the shah threatened to destroy the cities he targeted even before the campaign. When Κosrow I was about to invade the Empire in 543, he threatened, while still staying in his palace, that 'he would make slaves of all the inhabitants of Edessa and bring them to the land of Persia, and would turn the city into a pasture for sheep' (Ἐδεσσηνοὺς μὲν ἀνδραποδιεῖν ἠπειλήσεν ἅπαντας ἐς τὰ Περσῶν ἦθη, τὴν δὲ πόλιν μηλόβοτον καταστήσεσθαι),¹⁹⁰ but we do not know whether Κosrow I and his general wanted to raze both Antioch and Apamea to the ground at the beginning of his military activities.

As a contemporary historian, Prokopios' statement probably offered a plausible explanation: although 'he [Κosrow I] should be able to gain some other Roman city, he would still never be able to establish himself in the midst of the Romans while many strongholds were left behind in the hands off his enemy'.¹⁹¹ Therefore, while we may never know the extent of destruction caused by the Sasanids in 540,¹⁹² the shah might have ordered the destruction of some buildings of Antioch and then have his soldiers depart from Roman Syria because it was difficult for the Persians to keep their grip on the cities they conquered in Syria Prima.¹⁹³ More than 30 years later, the forces led by Adarmahan again destroyed Apamea rather than occupying this metropolis or any other places in Roman Syria as temporary headquarters for further military operations.

¹⁹⁰ Prok. Wars 2.26.4.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 8.7.10.

¹⁹² Cf. above, pp. 128-35 for the discussion of literary and material data.

¹⁹³ Prok. Wars 8.7.11.

Even though Adarmahan's forces arrived in the vicinity of Antioch in 573 and were reported to have destroyed certain buildings,¹⁹⁴ perhaps including the house of Mar Julian and other estates, he did not manage to enter this metropolis and sack it. The possible situation inside this city in the reign of Justin II deserves further examination in order to establish why the Persians chose to attack its vicinity rather than besieging it and attempting to destroy it for the second time. First, Antioch might have not recovered from the natural disasters and K̄osrow I's first invasion in the past three decades. Therefore strategically speaking, it would be fruitless for the forces of Adarmahan to conduct a siege in order to plunder valuable goods from it. Second, the enemies might have observed that it was not easy to subdue the resistance of the Antiochenes this time. While many Antiochenes escaped and deserted their hometown,¹⁹⁵ it seems that those living there would have taken advantage of such chaos and revolted in the city, and the bishop's flight resulted from either the weakness of the city's fortifications or the situation of anarchy inside Antioch.¹⁹⁶

Finally, possible strategic considerations for the ransoming of prisoners in K̄osrow I's campaign in 540 should be addressed. It is understandable that the shah wanted to sell the captives from Sura because to carry off so many Romans at the very beginning of his campaign would have impeded the invaders from looting the cities and villages in the subsequent months. The timing of his decision to sell the Antiochenes several months later is noteworthy. Leif Petersen argued that what the Persians did was a kind of delaying tactics: while the Romans were occupied with the details of ransoming their fellow citizens, the Great King could transport these captives to Persia as soon as possible without being hindered by the Romans.¹⁹⁷ However, according to Prokopios, it was not until the shah's proposal was ultimately rejected by the Romans that K̄osrow I began to move forward (διὸ δὴ ὁ Χοσρόης τοὺς

¹⁹⁴ On the invasion of the Persians and subsequent destruction, see Joh. Epiph. 4, Th. Sim. 3.10.8, Chr. 724 a.884/112, Greg. Tur. Hist. 4.40.

¹⁹⁵ Euagr. HE 5.9.

¹⁹⁶ Whitby 2000: XVII. On the Romans' morale in 573, see Menander fr. 26.1 for an optimistic viewpoint.

¹⁹⁷ Petersen 2013: 351.

αίχμαλώτους ἅπαντας ἐπαγόμενος πρόσω ἐχώρει).¹⁹⁸ Here an alternative explanation can be provided. If we take the routes of the Persian troops into consideration, it is clear that after leaving Edessa K̄osrow I and his soldiers would have possibly expected to encounter possible counterattacks from Konstantia, the garrisoned base of the *dux* of Mesopotamia,¹⁹⁹ and Dara, a well-fortified citadel near the frontier. Considering the possible threats from these fortresses, it would have been prudent for the Great King to leave these Romans behind.

The removal of surviving Romans from the frontier cities could have been an important and practical strategy for the Persians. In 503, the victorious Kawād removed some, if not all, civic leaders from Amida. According to Prokopios, there were no soldiers when the Persians arrived, ‘seeing that it was a time of peace and prosperity, and in other respects were utterly unprepared’.²⁰⁰ However, as Geoffrey Greatrex stated, being an important city in the eastern frontier, the lack of any armed force seems beyond belief.²⁰¹ A certain John, who has been a soldier in Amida, was tonsured later and became a master of a *xenodocheion* of the newly-established Dara.²⁰² However, since no further information was provided, it remains unclear whether he stayed in Amida in 502-3 or not.

While it is difficult to say whether substantial armed forces had ever been stationed inside Amida on the eve of its siege, and we will never know how the civilian populations managed to use professional siege engines which could ‘hurl enormous stones’²⁰³ against the invaders effectively,²⁰⁴ such a stubborn resistance must have astonished both Kawād himself and his forces. Since certain social elites

¹⁹⁸ Prok. Wars 2.13.6.

¹⁹⁹ After signing the so-called Eternal Peace, the base of the *dux* was transferred from Dara to Konstantia, Prok. Wars 1.22.16.

²⁰⁰ Prok. Wars 1.7.4.

²⁰¹ Trombley and Watt 2000: 54, Greatrex 2007: 93, cf. Haarer 2006: 55, Lenski 2007: 220.

²⁰² Zach. HE 7.6. I owe this information to Greatrex et al. 2011: 235.

²⁰³ Josh. Styl. 53. Recently Conor Whately pointed out the possibility of a civilian audience of late antique military manuals, Whately 2015: 260-1, cf. Dennis 1985: 3.

²⁰⁴ See *Strategikon* 10.3 for the use of such machines in warding off the besiegers.

must have stayed in Amida and subsequently become the subjects of the newcomers, the deportation of their peers could have been adopted to frighten and intimidate these remaining Romans to maintain their loyalty to the newcomers. In addition, as shown above, as Amida was meant to become a temporary military base for the Persians in the near future, it was necessary for the Persians to grasp the fruit of victory as firmly as they could. To remove potential leaders, therefore, was a possible way to quash the possibility of revolts and uprisings in the following periods.

The importance of adopting such policies by the Sasanids can be explained by what Kōsrow I did in the middle of the sixth century. In 541 he had invaded Lazica, where the dissatisfaction with Roman rule was considerable at that point, and the king of the Lazi, Goubazes, 'did obeisance to Kōsrow...putting himself together with his palace and all Lazica into his hand'.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the conflicts between zealous Christians in this area and Zoroastrianism perplexed both the Persians and their subjects since 'all the Persian views regarding religion are the exact opposite of theirs'.²⁰⁶ Kōsrow I's measures can be divided into three different stages: first, the assassination of Goubazes in order to crush his rule, second, the deportation of all the Lazi out of their country, and finally, the colonisation of this area with Persian settlers and other groups of people.²⁰⁷ While his project ultimately failed,²⁰⁸ it is clear that sometimes the Great King managed to force the inhabitants of certain areas to leave in order to ensure that his grip on these regions would be secure enough. In other words, such a policy could have eradicated both potential threats from the local population and conflicts between the rulers and the ruled.

The Sasanids' attitudes towards the control of frontier communities can be further illustrated by their treatment of the Christian inhabitants of Nisibis, a city which was ceded to the Persians after the treaty of 363. When Marcian invaded the Persian Empire in 573, the *marzbān* of Nisibis began to take some measures to withstand the coming siege, and, presumably for security reasons, expelled the

²⁰⁵ Prok. Wars 2.17.2.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.28.26.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 2.28.30. See Braund 1994: 298 for the analysis of the Sasanids' targets and Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 273 for a more skeptical view on Prokopios' account.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.29 1-9.

Christian population from this city.²⁰⁹ His concern was justified by what had happened at this frontier city throughout the sixth century. When the Romans launched a counteroffensive and attacked Nisibis, the citizens, according to the continuator of Zachariah, ‘favoured the Romans and showed themselves lazy in battle’.²¹⁰ At the very end of the sixth century, a certain Gregory was appointed as the metropolitan of Nisibis by K̄osrow II because the shah wanted to have someone trustworthy at this frontier city between Rome and Persia.²¹¹ Therefore, clearly it was crucial for the Persians to exert control over the frontier cities of both the newly annexed regions and their empire. Having conquered Dara, it would have been conceivable for the Sasanids to secure control over this citadel by removing its population.

The slaughter and removal of Roman civilians at Dara in 573, together with the fierce opposition and state of anarchy within this frontier city, illustrate first the possible situation inside a newly conquered city and second, the Persians’ strategies in coping with these problems. At the beginning K̄osrow I’s soldiers were frightened by what happened inside this city for many of them had been killed.²¹² Since the suppression of the desire to revolt by the survivors and the maintenance of order was extremely important, the Persians might have used such a bloody suppression to terrify the remaining inhabitants in order to secure their control of this Roman frontier citadel. The reason is two-fold. While the strategic role played by Dara was not unique,²¹³ the Romans did try to recapture it through either military or diplomatic means several times.²¹⁴ In addition, the Roman troops who were stationed in the surrounding areas must have been a threat for the Persians. After their unsuccessful siege of Nisibis, some of them retreated into a fortress at Mardin which was not far

²⁰⁹ Chr. 1234 65. On this event, see Lee 1993a: 575, 583-4.

²¹⁰ Zach. HE 7.5.

²¹¹ Chr. Seert 2.74.

²¹² Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Chr. 1234 66.

²¹³ The role played by Dara was replaced by other important citadels in Tur Abdin, Whitby 1986a: 729, 1988: 212.

²¹⁴ See the accounts in Menander fr. 20.2, 23.8-9, 26.1.

away from Dara.²¹⁵ Therefore the more quickly the conquerors took control over both the territories they conquered and their population, the more safely they could keep the fruit of victory. The slaughter of the Romans could thus have been considered as a way of terrifying the survivors so that the Persians could ‘get possession of the city and take its spoil’.²¹⁶

As John Lydus commented that ‘unless God by the former’s hand had heavily fortified it...long ago the Persians would have seized the domains of the Romans inasmuch as these are adjacent to them’,²¹⁷ Dara was arguably one of the Empire’s most important citadels at the eastern front. While it was impossible to remove all the citizens from Dara, as stated above, it was highly likely that the shah did try to empty this frontier city as far as he could by transporting local Romans to his empire. As we have learned from different sources, he left a strong garrison, possibly together with some Persians in Dara.²¹⁸ He might have wanted to establish either a sort of ‘armed colony’ or a headquarters in this newly conquered frontier city. In 575, having ravaged Roman territory successfully, the Sasanids retreated to Dara.²¹⁹ Moreover, when Hormozd IV was preparing for war several years later, the Persians could even have regarded this city as a stepping stone for launching attacks against the Romans because supplies were stockpiled at that time.²²⁰

Geoffrey Greatrex argued that the Amidenes were sent by Kawād to the Caucasus in order to help the Persians guard their northern frontier, presumably the Transcaucasus, and to ward off the Caucasian Huns.²²¹ At first glance, this argument seems to be quite plausible. The examination of Greek and Syriac texts shows that the situation of the north-western frontier was always of serious concern to the shahs in

²¹⁵ Joh. Epiph. 5, Th. Sim. 3.11.2, cf. Euagr. HE 5.10 for further details. Whitby 1986b: 751, *PLRE* III: s.v. Marcianus 7.

²¹⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5.

²¹⁷ Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.47.

²¹⁸ Joh. Eph. HE 6.5, Joh. Epiph. 5, Euagr. HE 5.10, Chr. 724 a.884/112.

²¹⁹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.13.

²²⁰ Menander fr. 23.9. The benefits from obtaining this city, however, might have been moderate, see Whitby 1988: 270, 276.

²²¹ Greatrex 1998: 93.

the fifth and the sixth centuries.²²² Moreover, resettling defeated groups of people to strategically important places and then recruiting them into the Persian army was not uncommon in the sixth century. In fact, some examples were preserved in al-Ṭabari's text. For instance, having been defeated by the shah, the people of the Jabal Bariz, the southeastern part of the Kermen province, served in the infantry of Kōsrow I's troops. When he defeated the Sul and other nomads, the Persian king selected the greatest soldiers and settled them to the frontier as 'he could call upon them for his military campaigns'.²²³

However, this argument should be reconsidered for the following reasons. First, while to garrison their frontier with Roman captives might lessen the burden of Sasanian troops,²²⁴ it could have been highly risky for Kawād, at least in the case of Amida, to recruit these newly-conquered Romans, who had just defended their country assiduously several months ago, into the defence system of his empire.²²⁵ Second, while we will never know the mortality rate of the Roman deportees by the Persians in the sixth century, many of them must have perished during their captivity.²²⁶ If Kawād ever intended to deploy these captives at the frontier of his territory, his soldiers had to capture as many 'able-bodied men' as possible from the places they conquered, but only Pseudo-Joshua pointed out that Kawād had ever managed to search for all those 'potential armed forces' in Amida,²²⁷ and both Pseudo-Zachariah and Prokopios remain silent about it. The existence of numerous survivors, both men and women, inside Amida after the departure of Kawād was attested by the narratives of all three of these texts. In short, since the shah seems not to have captured many people from Amida, and, more significantly, most captives would have perished before reaching their destinations, it is almost impossible for the

²²² See Toumanoff 1963: 362, Thomson 1996: 145-6, Greatrex 1998: 125-6 for the raids from the north in the fifth century.

²²³ al-Ṭabari 1.894. On the defence of the Sasanids' northern frontier, see Sauer et al. 2013: 4-6 for the literary accounts pertaining to these buildings.

²²⁴ Lieu 1986: 478.

²²⁵ Cf. McDonough 2011b: 301.

²²⁶ See above, pp. 157-9 for relevant discussion.

²²⁷ Josh. Styl. 53.

Persians to have deployed the surviving Romans effectively in their existing defence line in the Transcaucasus.

Propaganda

Military victory was a good way to legitimise the Persian kings' sovereignty.²²⁸ While similar information regarding Kawād and Hormozd IV is meagre, Kōsrow I's attitude towards both the Roman Empire and his military success can be mined from contemporary texts. The ideology of constant international competition between the 'two eyes of the earth' in Late Antiquity²²⁹ must have been decisive; being a young, energetic and ambitious Great King, the shah must have intended to conquer those 'slaves of Caesar' (νικήσας μὲν αὐτὸς τὸν Καίσαρος νικήσει δοῦλον).²³⁰ Belisarios' success in the 530s, particularly the submission of the Vandals,²³¹ might have annoyed the Sasanids.²³² Kōsrow I sent envoys to Justinian 'to receive his share of the spoils...on the ground that the emperor would never have been able to conquer...if the Persians had not been at peace with him'.²³³ The Great King may have done something to establish Persian superiority over the Romans after observing the victories of Justinian, his greatest rival.

Clearly Kōsrow I must have appropriated the propagandistic value of his military victory. In the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī, the Great King visited the fire temple dedicated to Ādur Gušnasp at Takht-e Soleymān in Azerbaijan²³⁴ and prayed for victory before embarking on his Roman campaign.²³⁵ Although nothing similar has been preserved by al-Ṭabari and other important Arab writers, Prokopios reported that in 543 the Great King proceeded to Adarbiganon (Ἀδαρβιγάνων), a place where a

²²⁸ Wiesehöfer 1996: 169.

²²⁹ Whitby 1994: 245, Rubin 1998: 181-2, 184, cf. Wiesehöfer 2005b: 111.

²³⁰ Prok. Wars 2.21.14.

²³¹ Blockley 1985: 71, cf. Prok. Wars 2.2.8-9 for the persuasion made by the envoys of Vittigis, the king of the Ostrogoths.

²³² Prok. Wars 1.21.1-2.

²³³ Ibid., 1.21.3.

²³⁴ On the Ādur Gušnasp, see Boyce 1983: 475-6.

²³⁵ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 7.250-1.

great fire temple was established, from Assyria before his invasion.²³⁶ The war between Rome and Persia in the 540s, therefore, could have become a war between the Christians and the Zoroastrians.

Such ideas, more importantly, would possibly have affected the Persians' strategy in treating the surrendered Romans. Although we do not know to what extent the Great King understood the polytheistic tradition within the Empire, he occasionally showed goodwill to the polytheists, the enemies of Christianity, in his Roman campaign in 540. After leaving Antioch, K̅osrow I 'bathed himself alone' in the Mediterranean Sea,²³⁷ and offered sacrifices to the pagan divinities, including the sun god, at the neighboring area of Antioch.²³⁸ Later, the shah refused to accept the ransom from the inhabitants of Carrhae, saying that as most of the Romans there were non-Christians, the money did not belong to him.²³⁹

Henning Börm claimed that the decision to bathe in the Mediterranean Sea was reminiscent of what the rulers of ancient Near East had done after their conquests.²⁴⁰ However, since nothing is known about the spread and preservation of these traditions by either the Achaemenids or the Sasanids, it is better to reserve judgment about this interpretation. Another tempting, but still conjectural, explanation would be that since the Romans considered the Mediterranean Sea as the *Mare Nostrum*, K̅osrow I might have demonstrated his victory and authority by bathing in the inner lake of the Empire. In addition, both the Great King's worship of the pagan deities and his leniency towards the Empire's polytheists could have been regarded as a way to challenge Justinian's authority.

Through the examination of K̅osrow I's strategies and decisions, I will further argue that he seems to have exploited the capture of booty and prisoners of war from the Empire for their propaganda and ideological value. Recently, the possible propagandistic issues in the armed conflicts have been raised. Henning Börm argued that the Romans' payments to the Sasanids in Late Antiquity would actually have

²³⁶ Prok. Wars 2.24.1-2.

²³⁷ Ibid., 2.11.1.

²³⁸ Ibid., 2.11.6.

²³⁹ Ibid., 2.13.7.

²⁴⁰ Börm 2006: 310.

played a minor role in the economy of Persia.²⁴¹ Instead, the Great King pursued political and propagandistic connotations, by which his superiority over the Empire was established.²⁴²

The focus of the following discussion, however, will be limited to what the Great King's soldiers snatched from the Roman cities during the conflicts. While the Sasanids must have obtained economic profits in the Romano-Persian wars,²⁴³ the acquisition of booty must have had considerable social, economic and political appeal in the Persian Empire.²⁴⁴ The shah had the ultimate authority over what his soldiers plundered from the Romans: according to Pseudo-Zachariah, the victorious Persians entered Amida prior to Kawād himself, probably in order to maintain order inside the city and, more importantly, to guard valuable goods for the shah because the acquisitions were 'given to the treasurers of the king'.²⁴⁵ Additionally, the Persian forces, both foot soldiers and cavalry, might have had the chance to share the booty and make profits from it.²⁴⁶ Therefore, while we do not know how the booty was divided among the hierarchy of the Persian army, clearly both the shah and his soldiers would have benefited from waging a successful war against the Romans. We know little about where and how the Sasanids deposited the booty transported from the Empire, but some of them could possibly have been presented in Ctesiphon. If Theophylaktos is right, a decorated cross that was snatched by Kōsrow I from Sergiopolis in 542 was eventually deposited in the Great King's palace,²⁴⁷ presumably in order to commemorate the Sasanids' victory over the Romans.

Admittedly, unlike his father Kawād, who apparently knew what he needed from the sack of Amida in 503, neither Prokopios nor other contemporary writers have mentioned Kōsrow I's motivation for capturing the defeated Roman civilians. In the

²⁴¹ Börm 2008: 340. I thank Geoffrey Greatrex for drawing my attention to this article.

²⁴² Börm 2008: 338-41.

²⁴³ See above, pp. 209-21.

²⁴⁴ Isaac 1990: 266.

²⁴⁵ Zach. HE 7.4.

²⁴⁶ Morony 1984: 58, Greatrex 1998: 54.

²⁴⁷ Th. Sim. 5.13.2.

previous sections, I have demonstrated that economic profit and strategic considerations could have motivated Kosrow I to transport the Romans from the Empire's cities and to remove the inhabitants from Dara, respectively.²⁴⁸ These arguments, however, cannot fully explain the deportations made by Kosrow I and his commanders. In the last years of Justinian, Yesdegusnaph, the shah's chamberlain, came to Dara to negotiate peace with the Romans. According to Menander the Guardsman, the ambassador insisted that 'Kosrow...does not use the capture of Antioch for his own self-advertisement or glorification...the reduction of yet another Roman city does not make us haughty'.²⁴⁹ While we can glimpse the stance of a high-ranking Persian diplomat from this piece of information, such statements should be considered as diplomatic parlance. Below, I will further argue that the capture, transportation and resettlement of Roman prisoners of war during the reign of Kosrow I could have had significant propagandistic value for the Sasanids.

The difficulties and risks the Sasanids faced in capturing and transporting the Roman prisoners of war should be summarised. The high mortality rate of these Roman prisoners has been previously discussed.²⁵⁰ Therefore, even if the Great King managed to capture as many Romans as possible from the conquered cities, many of them would have perished before reaching their destinations. In addition, these captives would have been a burden for the shah's army because carrying them would surely have slowed down the Persians' movement. Given the Persians invaded the Empire's heartland in 540 and 573, respectively, the slower they moved, the higher the risk of being attacked by the Romans. Therefore, practically speaking, it would have not been a cost-effective expertise for the Persians to transport numerous Romans back to their territory.

In spite of these possible difficulties and risks, the Great King kept deporting the survivors from the Empire: having failed to sell the captured Antiochenes in 540, the shah transported them back to Persia, and Adarmahan took numerous civilians from Apamea and other places more than 30 years later. We know much less about the route taken by Adarmahan, and it remains unclear whether the Persians, having

²⁴⁸ See above, pp. 217-22, 235-6.

²⁴⁹ Menander fr. 6.1.

²⁵⁰ See above, pp. 157-9.

sacked Apamea, passed or assaulted as many Roman cities as possible and collected ransom from the Romans. What we know for sure, however, is that in 540 Ḳosrow I passed many other Roman cities across the Roman Near East, and he repeatedly asked for money. If Malalas is to be believed, the Great King entered other Roman cities aside from Apamea in 540 (Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Περσῶν εἰση̄λθε καὶ ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ καὶ ἐν ἑτέραις πόλεσι τῆς ἀνατολῆς).²⁵¹ Therefore, apart from the surviving Romans who stayed in Antioch, the inhabitants of these places would possibly have noticed the presence of numerous prisoners of war who had recently been captured from the Empire's metropolis and other cities. For Ḳosrow I, the transportation of Roman prisoners of war, particularly from the Empire's inland metropoleis, could possibly have been served both to demonstrate his soldiers' capability of capturing numerous Romans and a vivid display of his own victory.

Ḳosrow I seems to have seized any available opportunity to proclaim his victory. Having arrived in Mesopotamia, the captives now became the leading cast of his propaganda scheme. Obviously it is impossible to know why he chose to locate these Romans near Ctesiphon, the political nucleus of his empire, but the shah must have chosen this site shrewdly, for he was probably the first King of Kings who resettled Romans near his royal residence. The shahs in the third and fourth centuries also transported their prisoners of war from the Empire to cities in Persia, but in most cases these new places would serve as either provincial capitals or temporary political centres, and none of them would replace the importance of Ctesiphon and Eṣṭakr, a city which played its ceremonial role for the Sasanids in the province of Fārs.²⁵² The propagandistic reason thus definitely played a considerable role in choosing the site where these Romans were resettled.²⁵³ While the Romans' diplomatic protocols were

²⁵¹ Mal. 18.87.

²⁵² On the Romans' deportation and their treatments in Shapur I and Shapur II's reign, see Ṭabari 1.826-7, 830-1, 840, 845, Ammianus 18.10.2, 19.9.2. For other historical accounts, see Dignas and Winter 2007: 254-61.

²⁵³ This manner was adopted in the seventh century by Ḳosrow II, who removed the Romans from Edessa, Alexandria and other places to his newly-established capital Dastgerd in 614, see Theoph. A.M. 6118.

preserved well into later periods,²⁵⁴ the Sasanids must have had similar ceremonies or activities²⁵⁵ which could have been performed at the palaces at Ctesiphon. From the fourth clause of the peace treaty of 562, we know that ‘ambassadors and all others using the public post to deliver messages...shall be honoured each according to his status and rank and shall receive the appropriate attention’,²⁵⁶ but the lack of similar texts makes it difficult to establish the diplomatic procedures of Sasanian court.

Even though we have no idea about the architectural styles of the Great King’s palace, the possible decorative style was described in one medieval Arabic source, and it is reported that K̄osrow I had the victory depicted on the wall of his palace to commemorate his success in subduing Antioch.²⁵⁷ Al-Buḥturī, a ninth-century Arab poet, wrote down what he observed:

When you behold the picture of Antioch, you are alarmed (as) between
Byzantium and Persia,
The fates there waiting, whilst Anushravan urges on the ranks under the
royal banner.
(Robed) in green over gold, proudly flaunting the dye of the (red) turmeric,
And the press of men before him, all silent, lowering their voices,
Some cautiously reaching out the foreshaft of a lance, some fearfully
averting the spear-points with a shield.²⁵⁸

The construction of K̄osrow I’s ‘Better Antioch’ should be placed into this context. We will never know whether the shah built this Persian Antioch simply because he was, as suggested by Patricia Crone, a ‘Byzantiniser’, that is, a Persian who appropriated Byzantine culture.²⁵⁹ However, propagandistically speaking, this portrayal in the palace and the embodiment of his victory, i.e. the construction of this

²⁵⁴ The details were preserved by emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos (r. 913-59) in his work *De Cerimoniis* in the tenth century, also see Canepa 2009: 127-53 for an updated discussion.

²⁵⁵ Canepa 2009: 167.

²⁵⁶ Menander fr. 6.1.

²⁵⁷ I owe this information to Shahîd 1995: 235-6.

²⁵⁸ Trans. by Arthur John Arberry 1965: 76.

²⁵⁹ Crone 1991: 30.

‘Persian Antioch’ in the capital of his empire, might have been considered either as a way to challenge the dominions of the Romans or to convey the greatness of their empire to foreign ambassadors and to his own subjects.²⁶⁰ As pointed out by Prokopios, the captured Antiochenes were ‘subordinated to no-one of the magistrates, but to the king alone’ (τῶν ἀρχόντων οὐδενὶ ὑποχειρίους εἶναι ἢ βασιλεῖ μόνῳ).²⁶¹ Having been transported and, as the centre pieces of the Great King’s showcase, resettled near the political centre of the Sasanian Empire, these Romans would thus have been a precious political asset for the Great King in both consolidating his personal and political authority and winning power struggles with other Persian magnates.²⁶²

In Late Antiquity, the military victories of the Empire were usually celebrated in the hippodromes through the exhibition of booty and captives, the acclamation of the audience and ensuing games and spectacles such as chariot races.²⁶³ In 534, a grand ritual was convened in the hippodrome of Constantinople to celebrate Belisarios’ conquest of the Vandal kingdom,²⁶⁴ which the Persian envoys attended.²⁶⁵ When Gelimer, the king of the Vandals, was led into the hippodrome, he saw Justinian, accompanied by attendants and ministers, watch all these ceremonies from his lofty seat. Later he was compelled to perform *proskynesis* (προσκύνησις) to the emperor.²⁶⁶ Regardless of how the Persian king understood what happened in Constantinople,²⁶⁷ such scenes must have been impressive. From 540 onwards, the triumphant Persian shah built a hippodrome in a Pseudo-Roman city near the political nucleus of Persia, Rome’s most deadly enemy. The musicians and charioteers captured from Antioch,

²⁶⁰ Cf. Wiesehöfer 2007b: 131-2.

²⁶¹ Prok. Wars 2.14.3.

²⁶² McDonough 2011b: 301-2.

²⁶³ See, for example, McCormick 1986: 47-79, Canepa 2009: 166-74, Dagron 2011: 241ff.

²⁶⁴ Prok. Wars 4.9.4-13.

²⁶⁵ Zach. HE 9.17.

²⁶⁶ Prok. Wars 4.9.11-2.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 1.26.3-4.

though possibly used to entertain the shah himself,²⁶⁸ could thus have been a shrewd way to recreate and re-celebrate his victory against the Romans in the Pseudo-Roman city near his capital.²⁶⁹

The dearth of contemporary Middle Persian sources makes it impossible to analyze why Kōsrow I, as reported by many late antique and medieval texts, chose to treat the displaced Antiochenes kindly²⁷⁰ in his empire. While some medieval Arabic or Persian authors implied that these policies came from his generosity and benevolence,²⁷¹ such images could in fact have been an idealised portrait of the Great King. The ideology of competition between Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity might have been a crucial factor as well. If Shapur I's motivation for constructing Gondēšāpur was to build a city which could ultimately outdo the original Roman Antioch,²⁷² then Kōsrow I, as a shah who, like Shapur I, named the newly-established place after the Roman city he conquered, might have had similar ideas in mind as well.

Roman responses

As well as Sasanid economic, military and political ambitions and responses to events during the sixth-century Persian wars, the Roman authorities' operations and decisions would also have affected the fate of urban civilians in this period. While the presence of a wide range of authorities has been noted before, during and after a city's siege, the possible roles played by the most frequently mentioned ones, including bishops, army and emperors, deserves to be analyzed in detail.

Bishops

²⁶⁸ Agath. 2.28.1-2 for the shah's fondness of literature and philosophy. More testimonies have been collected in Dignas and Winter 2007: 263-5.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Canepa 2010: 135.

²⁷⁰ See chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of relevant passages.

²⁷¹ Cf. *Sirat Anusharwan* 3, trans. by Mario Grignaschi 1966: 17.

²⁷² Chaumont 1986: 121, 123-4.

As a prominent figure in a city's public life in Late Antiquity,²⁷³ a bishop's involvement in secular affairs can be proved by numerous laws issued in the sixth century.²⁷⁴ For example, the testimony of their involvement in the military and civic building works of the Empire's eastern provinces can be unearthed from literary and documentary sources.²⁷⁵ The endeavours and personal supervision of Thomas, the bishop of Amida, in the construction of Dara's buildings were reported in Pseudo-Zachariah's *Church History*, and more similar examples can be noted elsewhere.²⁷⁶

More information regarding the bishops' role in local communities during wartime can be noted in contemporary texts. In many cases they were the first social elites to face the invading Sasanids. Some of them acted as spiritual leaders for the defenders. Such a kind of role was illustrated well by what Bar-Hadad, the bishop of Konstantia, did in 503. According to Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, he 'would go round visiting them, praying for them and blessing them... (he) praised their diligence, gave them encouragement, and sprinkled holy water on them and on the city wall'.²⁷⁷ In

²⁷³ The literature on bishops in Late Antiquity is rich: for some recent publications, see Brown 1992: 89-103, Allen and Wendy 2000, Liebeschuetz 2001, Rapp 2000: 379-99, 2005, Izdebski 2012: 158-75.

²⁷⁴ Liebeschuetz 2001: 151-5, Rapp 2004: 171, 176-7.

²⁷⁵ Local non-military personnel sometimes were involved in the construction of military buildings, Di Segni 1995: 312-32. For translated inscriptions, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 240-5. For the role played by other non-bishop cleric, see, for example, the construction of a place of refuge at Bouz el-Khanzir, a site near Lake Gabboul, Trombley 1997: 187, Trombley and Watt 2000: XLIX, Greatrex and Lieu: 320. For the text, see *IGLS* 270. See Mango 2008: 78-9, 2011: 98, 121-2 for the patronage of Thomas, a rich local layman who built both the *kastron* and bath at Androna in the middle of the sixth century.

²⁷⁶ See, for example, above, p. 112 for the construction of granary at Konstantia and *IGLS* 288, Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 322 for Anasarthā (Khanāzīr, modern Syria).

²⁷⁷ Josh. Styl. 58. For similar examples in Late Antiquity, see Whitby 1998: 191-208.

Ḳosrow I's campaign in 540, the bishop of Apamea rallied the citizens' morale by presenting the True Cross.²⁷⁸

In some cases the bishops negotiated with the Great King on behalf of their people.²⁷⁹ In this case the role of Bar-Hadad in persuading Kawād to retreat is again impressive.²⁸⁰ The situation was similar in the following decades. In 540 the bishop of Sura, bringing fowls, wine and loaves with him, supplicated Ḳosrow I to spare this city.²⁸¹ It is worth noting that in both cases the bishops carried nothing but food and beverages, as a demonstration of local inhabitants' loyalty, to the Great King.²⁸² Later, the Antiochenes sent Megas, the bishop of Beroea, to negotiate with the Persians.²⁸³ In fact, this bishop entreated not only on behalf of the Antiochenes but also those living in the East²⁸⁴ and persuaded Ḳosrow I to withhold from attacking Beroea's acropolis.²⁸⁵ More than thirty years later, Apamea's bishop, together with 'the princes of the city', presumably the members of city council, negotiated with Adarmahan.²⁸⁶

While many civilians must have been captured in the conflicts, few bishops had ever endeavoured to ransom these prisoners of war back to the Empire. Malalas recounted the details regarding the intervention of Ephraem, the patriarch of Antioch, in ransoming the Romans captured by al-Mundhir in the first years of Justinian,²⁸⁷ but the bishops of eastern cities seem to have played less prominent roles in rescuing the prisoners of war captured by the Sasanids in the sixth century. Some of them, as was the case with the bishop of Apamea in 573, could have been captured together with

²⁷⁸ Euagr. HE 4.26.

²⁷⁹ See Nechaeva 2014: 108-110 for further cases in which bishops acted as envoys during wartime.

²⁸⁰ Josh. Styl. 58.

²⁸¹ Prok. Wars 2.5.13.

²⁸² Nechaeva 2014: 178.

²⁸³ Prok. Wars 2.6.17.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.6.25.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.7.23-33.

²⁸⁶ Joh. Eph. HE 6.6.

²⁸⁷ Mal. 18.59.

other inhabitants, and in other cases, like with Theodosiopolis and Kallinikos the fates of bishops remain unknown. Kandidos, who was forced to ransom the captives from Sura by the Great King in 540, even refused to do so at first.²⁸⁸ When K̄osrow I wanted to sell the captured Antiochenes, the Edessenes managed to collect their wealth and brought it to the sanctuary (τὸ ἱερόν), that is the church.²⁸⁹ While local clerics would have been in charge of collecting these assets, nothing pertaining to the decision or the presence of Edessa's bishop was mentioned.

In addition, not every bishop would defend his city together with the citizens or managed to protect his fellow Romans. In fact, some of them chose to desert their post in the Persian wars. The bishop of Dara had left the city before the siege began, and the patriarch of Antioch, Gregory, escaped to safer places with sacred vessels. The most detailed account is the escape of Ephraem, the patriarch of Antioch, to Kilikia before the arrival of the Sasanids in 540.²⁹⁰ Both Euagrios and Prokopios suggested that the treasures served to ransom the church at Antioch. The picture in Euagrios' *Church History* of the patriarch's actions to save his dioceses in 540 is positive: he decided to leave the church treasures, hoping that these precious goods would attract the invading Sasanids so that they would not destroy this sacred building to search for further booty.²⁹¹ For Prokopios, the patriarch seems to have played much less of an active role, and he attributed the decision to ransom Antioch to the populace.²⁹² Additionally, when K̄osrow I did find 'stores of gold and silver so great in amount'²⁹³ in the church of Antioch, it was the Roman ambassador's plea rather than the 'deliberate decision' of Ephraem to save this building.²⁹⁴ Since it is impossible to know whether the Romans left the precious goods intentionally, the role

²⁸⁸ Prok. Wars 2.5.29.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.13.3-4.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.7.17. Since the bishops usually played crucial roles in negotiating with the invading enemy, it was not impossible that Gregory removed the treasures because they might serve as a ransom, Allen 1981: 222.

²⁹¹ Euagr. HE 4.25.

²⁹² Prok. Wars 2.6.16.

²⁹³ Ibid., 2.9.15.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.9.17.

of the patriarch remains obscure. Given the havoc caused by the siege, it is possible that the priests just left the gold and silver unattended and ran away. No matter what he had tried to do on the eve of siege, Ephraem chose to escape, possibly because ‘none of his objectives succeeded’.²⁹⁵

Army

In the conflicts between Rome and Persia during the sixth century we have seen that armed Roman forces were present in many Roman cities. Sometimes they defended these places with civilians,²⁹⁶ while in other cases the soldiers were hidden by civilians.²⁹⁷ We are also informed that in 540 many soldiers in Hierapolis became deserters because of ‘their grievance that the government owed them their pay for a long time’.²⁹⁸ Later they followed Kōsrow I and went to the Persian Empire. In any case, however, there is no clear link between the garrisoned soldiers’ performance or presence and civilians’ post-siege experiences.

Both Anastasios and Justinian sent an army to the Empire’s eastern front to cope with the pressures caused by the Sasanids’ invasions. It should be noted, however, that while the Roman soldiers sent by Anastasios would not have intended to starve their compatriots inside Amida, their presence and operations could possibly have resulted in the lack of food and famine inside this frontier city. At the beginning clearly the Persian garrison had a sufficient supply of necessities. The expeditionary force led by Kawād in person carried livestock and goods with them.²⁹⁹ Later, when a garrison was established to rule the remaining Amidenes, the supply of provisions was sufficient as the shah left certain important generals inside in this city,³⁰⁰ possibly in the spring of 503. However, the situation seems to have deteriorated not long

²⁹⁵ Euagr. HE 4.25.

²⁹⁶ Prok. Wars 2.5.11 (Sura), 2.13.16 (Dara).

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 2.12.2 (Chalkis).

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.7.37, cf. Prok. Anecd. 24.12-4. This might result from the slack defence of the Empire’s eastern front, see Liebeschuetz 1977: 498-9, Greatrex 1998: 219ff, cf. Whitby 1995: 111-4, 2005: 361-2.

²⁹⁹ Zach. HE 7.4. Some commodities were even snatched by a certain Roman thief.

³⁰⁰ Prok. Wars 1.8.7.

afterwards. If the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* is right, the forces of Anastasios managed to win Amida back from the Sasanids after it was captured by the Great King.³⁰¹ A certain Roman general Farzman, who arrived at Amida together with 500 horsemen, spied on the enemies' activities, slaughtered those who went to the villages and even carried off the Persians' livestock. Two possibilities can be suggested here: the Sasanids might either have led the cattle out of the city and grazed them in the surrounding areas or simply plundered them from the vicinity of Amida³⁰² to feed themselves inside the fortifications.³⁰³ However, in any case what the Persians possessed had been seized by the Romans.

Moreover, the Romans' military activities not only halted private commercial activities but also resulted in the closing of local markets. Meanwhile, crops would have been destroyed and farmers might have been prevented from going out of the city and cultivating the *territorium* outside the fortifications. For example, in the summer the approaching Romans set fire to the gate of Mar Zaura³⁰⁴ in order to get access to Amida and harass the Persians.³⁰⁵ At that time a certain merchant entered Amida secretly and sold fowls, loaves of bread and other kinds of foods at high price to the Persians, and possibly, to Glonos himself.³⁰⁶ After Glonos was killed at Thilasamon, a place which, according to Prokopios, lay in a hilly, wooded area not very away from Amida, because of the collaboration between Gadana, a merchant from Amida, and the Roman generals, the *marzbān* prohibited the inhabitants (i.e. the Amidenes) from leaving the city to buy wine, wheat and other commodities from the markets of the villagers.³⁰⁷ In Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle*, Farzman cunningly set a trap for the Persians inside Amida by 'sending a flock of sheep to pass by near

³⁰¹ Josh. Styl. 56, cf. Prok. Wars 1.8.7, where the Roman generals' reluctance was emphasised.

³⁰² Greatrex 1998: 98.

³⁰³ Zach. HE 7.5.

³⁰⁴ It was probably the south gate of Amida, Greatrex 1998: 97, cf. Greatrex et al. 2011: 243.

³⁰⁵ Zach. HE 7.5.

³⁰⁶ Prok. Wars 1.9.5, cf. Zach. HE 7.5.

³⁰⁷ Zach. HE 7.5.

Amida'.³⁰⁸ The Persians, meanwhile, managed to seize such valuable livestock: 400 Persian soldiers were selected and went out of the city to catch them. However, when they opened the gates and tried to seize these sheep, they were crushed by Farzman's forces who were lying in ambush nearby, and the *marzbān* was captured and executed. Although it remains controversial whether they were independent events or not,³⁰⁹ both of them illustrate the negative impact on both local commercial activities and the Sasanids' endeavors to obtain provisions.

In the winter of 503-4, the Romans departed from the neighboring areas of Amida temporarily, and presumably returned to their headquarters at Melitene.³¹⁰ Clearly it would have been a respite for the Persians: they opened the gates, went out and 'entered wherever they wished, selling brass, tin, iron, tattered clothing and anything they could find in (the city) to merchants, even setting up a warehouse'.³¹¹ At that time the villagers in the markets 'sold for whatever (price) they wanted... (and) received compensation in money and in goods from the city'.³¹² The Persian troops must have sold these commodities to replenish their stock of food and provisions to face the possible attacks from the Romans in the coming spring for it was impossible to cultivate anything in the wintertime. We cannot tell whether the Sasanids faced the lack of food or not at that time, but clearly they would have plentiful supply of other resources. When Patrikios noticed such commercial activities, a foray was made by the Romans soon afterwards, and these activities were again interrupted: not only the local merchants who were exchanging food and oil with the Persians' goods but also the Persians who were in charge of bringing these necessities such as arms, grain, and animals to Amida were all killed.³¹³

The Sasanids thus endeavoured in vain to acquire what they needed in the wintertime, and their failure could have been the main reason which led to the lack of provisions in the following months. The situation must have been worsened by the

³⁰⁸ Josh. Styl. 56.

³⁰⁹ Greatrex 1998: 99, *contra* Trombley and Watt 2000: 68.

³¹⁰ Josh. Styl. 66.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Zach. HE 7.5.

³¹³ Josh. Styl. 66.

Romans' renewed attacks: from the winter of 504 onwards, several branches of Roman forces were deployed to besiege Amida. Patrikios' detachments came first,³¹⁴ and then a larger force arrived.³¹⁵ Here the changing strategies of Anastasios' generals deserve to be examined. When the Romans launched the first tide of counter-offensive in the first half of 503, Patrikios and Hypatios were dispatched in order to re-conquer Amida. The first thing these generals did was to construct siege engines, such as expensive wooden towers, to lay siege to this city rather than intercepting the supply of provision and water of the inhabitants, including the Persians, and of course, the remaining Romans, inside this city.³¹⁶ Later on, the generals decided that 'it was not appropriate for them to fight with (the garrison at Amida), as victory would not be achieved by the Romans by killing them...but if Kawād was defeated, (the garrison at Amida) would (have to) give themselves up or die in their blockade'.³¹⁷ Such strategies were adopted by the Romans in the sixth-century battlefield. In the reign of Justinian, Dorotheos, the *magister militum per Armeniam*, managed to starve the defenders in a Persian cidatel on the top of a mountain by blocking the only pathway through which goods and provisions could be delivered.³¹⁸ The author of the *Strategikon* pointed out that it was important 'to keep the necessities, such as food and water, from getting to the people within the walls'.³¹⁹ While we cannot know whether the Roman generals bore such tactics in mind in besieging Amida,³²⁰ what they did from then on can be corroborated by the tactics mentioned in the very same military manual: 'If the besieged possess these supplies in abundance, then it is necessary to resort to siege engines and fighting'.³²¹ The lack of provisions inside Amida might thus have been the result of the Romans' second wave of siege and attack. The arrival and presence of Romans in winter and spring must

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 56.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 73.

³¹⁸ Mal. 18.66.

³¹⁹ *Strategikon* 10.1. See also Vegetius *Epitome of Military Science* 3.26, 4.7.

³²⁰ Josh. Styl. 73, 75, 79, cf. Ps. Dion. II. 6.

³²¹ *Strategikon* 10.1.

have prevented the Persians inside the city from obtaining and hoarding what they needed.

Emperor

Although in the sixth century the emperors never visited these war-torn zones or cities in person, their attitudes and decisions could have played an important role in the subsequent fate of the deported Romans.³²² As noted earlier, the exchange and release of prisoners of war for both the soldiers and civilians between Rome and Persia was not an unusual practice during the sixth century.³²³ However, apart from the terms of the Eternal Peace,³²⁴ the details of such activities could possibly have escaped the attention of contemporary authors.³²⁵ Surely either the social elites or the emperors themselves would have expectedly noticed the deportation of Romans during the Persian wars. However, in most cases, the Empire's ruling class seems to have been ignorant of such cases. If Probus reported what he had seen in the northern frontier of the Persian Empire, including the existence of these prisoners of war of the previous period, why did Justinian choose to ignore this information at the beginning of his reign? When the peace treaty was concluded in 562, nothing about the return or exchange of prisoners of war between Rome and Persia had been included.³²⁶ Although diplomatic activity between Constantinople and Ctesiphon in the last quarter of the sixth century was rather frequent, and the Romans raised the issue of Dara many times,³²⁷ nothing regarding the prisoners of war from Dara and Apamea in the reign of Justin II had ever been mentioned, and clearly the main concern of the Empire's ruling class was merely the re-conquest of such an important frontier

³²² Cf. Whitby 1992: 295-303 for the emperor's role in diplomacy.

³²³ For the ransom of captives in late antique diplomatic negotiations, see Nechaeva 2014: 111.

³²⁴ See above p. 187 for the terms of the Eternal Peace.

³²⁵ I owe this point to Geoffrey Greatrex.

³²⁶ Menander fr. 6.1.

³²⁷ Ibid., 20.1-2 (576-7), 23.8-9 (579), 26.1 (581-2). All these claims were made by the envoys of Tiberios II, cf. Th. Sim. 3.17.2, Joh. Eph. HE 6.22, in which both the details of negotiations and the shah's attitudes were preserved.

stronghold. Finally, why did Tiberios II decide to ignore the request for help from those living in the city Better Antioch rather than sending his soldiers to rescue these Romans?

Legally speaking, whenever Romans were captured legitimately by foreign enemies, they would immediately lose their original legal status, both political and private, unless they returned to Roman territory successfully.³²⁸ More importantly, as ‘a state theoretically equated with slavery’,³²⁹ the citizens in captivity would have been regarded as the property of their captors,³³⁰ that is, the Persians. Therefore, there might have been no reason for them to rescue the Persians’ slaves. Other factors, such as the Empire’s strategic and military considerations and the political situation of the sixth-century Mediterranean world, seem to have played vital roles. For the newly-enthroned Justinian, to send gifts to the potential ally of the Empire at the northeastern frontier was an important diplomatic policy, and his efforts paid off soon afterwards.³³¹ Having captured two other Hunnic kings who stood with Kawād, the queen of the Sabir Huns Boas, together with her forces, came over to the Empire.³³² Meanwhile, it was both difficult and risky to send soldiers to the Caucasus, and such an action would have provoked the Persians.³³³ Thus it was not practical for Justinian to use military or diplomatic means to rescue the deported Amidenes in the 520s.

More than half a century later, Tiberios II failed to rescue the captured Romans in the Sasanian Empire. Since John of Ephesos praised the emperor in other parts of his work,³³⁴ John seems to not have intended to use this event to blacken the

³²⁸ Ammianus 19.9.6. Levy 1943: 159, cf. Rotman 2009: 34-5, cf. Grey 2011: 496 on the enslavement of the captured enemies in the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.

³²⁹ Sessa 2011: 413. On relevant legal issues, see Buckland 1969: 291-317, Watson 1991: 37-54.

³³⁰ Blockley 1985: 257.

³³¹ See Greatrex 1998: 133-4, 143-4 for more details for recruiting the nomads to fight for the Romans.

³³² Mal. 18.13.

³³³ Greatrex 1998: 143-4.

³³⁴ Joh. Eph. HE 3.22.

emperor's reputation.³³⁵ Again, the political circumstances between Constantinople and Ctesiphon may have been an important factor. Having been raised as the sole ruler of the Empire in 578, Tiberios II intended to show goodwill to K̄osrow I and arrange a new truce,³³⁶ and it is said that he released the Persian prisoners of war, 'especially those of rank, of whom some were even related to the king', as a gift.³³⁷ Menander the Guardsman asserted that 'the Romans and the Persians would have made peace had not K̄osrow I left this life'.³³⁸ As the Avars and the Slavs ravaged the Balkans almost without experiencing any setbacks,³³⁹ the barbarian pressure on the northern frontier was noticeable. Therefore it was not a suitable time for the emperor to resume hostilities and prepare to march into the heartland of the Persians.

As shown already, only Justinian managed both to negotiate with the Sasanids and to rescue these Roman elites back to the Empire in the mid-540s.³⁴⁰ We know that Tribunos took twenty *kentenaria* with him and approached the shah,³⁴¹ but the details of the negotiation between him and the Persians remain unknown, nor can we tell whether it, or at least part of it, were regarded as ransom or not. While Prokopios did not indicate who had ordered Tribunos to make such a request for releasing the prisoners of war in the reign of Justinian, the imperial authority must have played a vital role: it was nearly impossible for a physician, as a special envoy, to act on his own without authorisation from Constantinople. The fact that Justinian is not mentioned or connected to these events by our sole source, Prokopios, is remarkable. One thing is clear: Prokopios might have chosen to downplay the role of the emperor deliberately because liberating the deported prisoners of war, i.e. those who had

³³⁵ van Ginkel 1994: 328-9.

³³⁶ Menander fr. 23.8, Joh. Eph. HE 6.21, Th. Sim. 3.17.2.

³³⁷ Menander fr. 23.8.

³³⁸ Ibid., 23.9.

³³⁹ Ibid., 20.2, 21. See Whitby 1988: 87-9, Liebeschuetz 2007: 114-8 for the synthetic account about the precarious situation the Romans faced at the end of the sixth century, cf. Whitby 2007b: 135-61. For the situation from the early sixth century onwards, see Sarantis 2005, 2009: 15-40, Sarris 2011: 169-82.

³⁴⁰ See above, pp. 198-200.

³⁴¹ Prok. War 2.28.11.

become slaves legally, though perhaps temporarily, from the enemy by sending an ambassador could have been ignominious.

For Justinian, the custody of these distinguished subjects by his opponents must have been quite embarrassing. It was not cost-effective for the Romans to liberate these captives by military means: from the end of the third century onwards, no Roman general had ever successfully launched an attack on Ctesiphon, a city with formidable walls and fortifications.³⁴² Having been humiliated by the sack of one of the Empire's greatest metropoleis in 540, it is not surprising that Justinian would exploit such a rare chance to win back his reputation and dignity by liberating certain aristocrats of the Empire from captivity.

Second, to liberate the Romans from Persia might have been an important part of Justinian's religious policies. Having experienced failures in persecuting the Miaphysites in the Empire, the Emperor might have adopted other milder policies in the hope that compromise and harmony between the Chalcedonians and Miaphysites could ultimately be achieved. The close examination of the royal couple's religious policies showed that Justinian not only tolerated but also even encouraged Theodora's pro-Miaphysite strategies, because most Miaphysites lived in regions of crucial importance, both militarily and economically, and it would be highly risky for the Emperor to alienate them altogether.³⁴³ We cannot rule out the possibility that, as implied in the *Chronicle of Seert*, Theodora took the initiative for philanthropic acts for Roman subjects, such as sponsoring the building of churches and saving girls from being sold as prostitutes,³⁴⁴ and then interceded on behalf of the Roman captives. Since there is some difficulty in establishing which sources were used in this section,³⁴⁵ whether the compiler's account was based on the empress' image as 'believing queen'³⁴⁶ remains unclear.

³⁴² Cf. Ammianus 24.7.1, saying that the Persians' capital was impregnable with its fortification.

³⁴³ Foss 2002: 171.

³⁴⁴ See the information preserved in both contemporary and later texts, Prok. Aed. 1.2.17, 1.9.5-10, Mal. 17.19, 18.24-5, Euagr. HE 4.10, Joh. Nik. 93.3.

³⁴⁵ Some primary texts have been mentioned by the author, see, for example, Sako1987: 158, 160 for the reign of $\text{K}\ddot{\text{O}}\text{srow}$ I. However, since many of them were

While literary contexts and historical details of relevant accounts have been examined in previous chapters respectively, the aim of this chapter was to establish a taxonomy³⁴⁷ of the shared features and particularities of civilians' wartime experiences and, furthermore, to show whether and how various factors would have affected these Romans' fates. The result indicates that while the Persians' battle experience and different considerations would have affected Roman civilians' fates, sometimes the decisions and reactions of the Empire's elites proved to be equally important.

lost nowadays, such a historiographical question remains unsolved. Cf. Wood 2013a: 13, 119, 121.

³⁴⁶ Pazdernik 1994: 273-81, Harvey 2001: 209-34, Foss 2002: 147-52, Croke 2005: 73, van Rompay 2005: 251, Menze 2008: 209-27, Wood 2010: 168-9.

³⁴⁷ See Appendix 1 for further information.

Conclusion

My thesis set out to study the wartime experiences of the Empire's urban civilians in the conflicts between Rome and Persia and to investigate what might have happened at the conquered Roman cities. These issues have been discussed through the examination of available literary and material data.

This thesis contributes to the study and evaluation of the sources from which our information and data were extracted. What we can know from literary and material data is doomed to be merely a small part of the whole picture. Many writers adopted characteristic literary motifs or alluded to well-known passages from their predecessors in portraying the scenes of a conquered city. As Catherine Holmes argued, 'the choice of the linguistic register could have been driven by the expectations and pre-existing literary experiences',¹ and such ideas must have been shared by both the authors themselves and, more importantly, their readers. In addition, many writers' descriptions of civilians' fates are highly selective in terms of themes, locations and details. While they focused on certain themes such as the Romans' slaughter, deportation and the cities' destruction, the information about other aspects is scarce. Therefore, while precious information about the sacks of Roman cities can be mined from their works, these authoritative texts clearly affected the understanding of future authors and their readers. As Cyril Mango stressed in his inaugural lecture 40 years ago, we are all doomed to conduct historical researches through these 'distorting mirrors' of literary accounts.²

Despite a series of archaeological excavations having been conducted in the east Mediterranean world, the evidence is almost invariably inconclusive. The examination of buildings in Antioch and Apamea suggests that these cities could have been either burned or destroyed by the Sasanids, but the scale of destruction is still open to debate. Furthermore, data from other places has proven to be equally uncertain. The importance of archaeological campaigns, however, should not be underestimated, and they have proven to be indispensable in confirming accounts and in estimating the destruction caused by the Great King's army. Sometimes,

¹ Holmes 2002: 21.

² C. Mango 1975: 1-18.

epigraphical texts can yield relevant information, such as the construction of fortifications in the frontier region and the participation of social elites in building activities, but they add nothing new to what we can observe from literary and archaeological data.

As the first systematic study to examine civilians' wartime experiences in detail, this thesis generates important findings in the research of Roman social history. At first glance, a straightforward and, of course, simplified taxonomy of Roman civilians' wartime experiences in these conflicts can be established through the examination and analysis of available sources: first, loss of life, whether through massacre and/or famine; second, the loss and/or destruction of personal/communal goods, both movable and immovable; third, sexual violence against female citizens; and finally, the Romans' forced movement in the form of hostages, refugees and deportees. Clearly, these fates in the Persian wars were variable, and the interaction of multiple factors affected them. Changing political circumstances in the Eastern Mediterranean world must have had a profound impact on the Empire's inhabitants, and, if Hennig Börm is correct, the campaign of 540 was actually the watershed of Romano-Persian relations.³ However, there is no sign of significant alteration regarding the Sasanids' treatment of the defeated Romans in the sixth century: in most cases, the Sasanids seem to have had similar incentives and strategies, and the acquisition of booty and captives seems to have been consistently important.

The comparison of the Great Kings' treatment of the Empire's frontier cities with what their ancestors had done in the previous centuries suggests certain common features. Indeed many Persian kings in the third and fourth centuries were not always keen to occupy the vast territory they conquered. Having been defeated by Kallistos and others, the forces of Shapur I retreated from the Empire.⁴ Also, Shapur II returned to Persia with booty and captives not long after the fall of Amida in 359.⁵ Nevertheless, sometimes the Sasanids purposed to occupy the Empire's frontier citadels. For instance, the Great King's soldiers were garrisoned in Bezabde with

³ Börm 2007: 333, cf. Howard-Johnston 2008: 80.

⁴ Zon. 12.23, Petr. Patr. 11, cf. Fowden 1993: 30-1, Shahbazi 2002.

⁵ Ammianus 20.7.16. For the Sasanids' claim of the territory which belonged to the Achaemenid dynasty previously, see Ammianus 17.5.3-8, 25.4.24.

plenty of supplies in the middle of the fourth century. Although the Sasanids seem to have seldom intended to permanently seize the Empire's strategically important frontier sites in the sixth century, the occupations of Amida, Theodosiopolis and Dara—the first two only for a short period—during the reigns of Anastasios and Justin II, respectively, are significant, and such decisions, as shown above, must have played an important role in the Romans' fates.

While the Persians treated the defeated Romans in similar manner, some particularities can be noted. Although ransoming captured Romans was practised in the early Empire,⁶ the sixth-century emperors never managed to buy back their subjects from the Persians, and we cannot be sure whether Tribunos, a physician who was sent by Justinian in 545 to negotiate peace with the Persians, ever tried to use the *kentenaria* he carried to ransom the captured elites from Antioch. Another distinctive feature of the sixth-century Persian wars is the settlement of the Empire's prisoners of war. In the third and fourth centuries, the Sasanids continued transporting the captured Romans back to their empire. In the sixth century, however, Roman prisoners of war were resettled near the Sasanids' political centre for the first time and, more importantly, were regarded as a critical part of the captors' propaganda plans.

Scholars have argued that the sixth and seventh centuries witnessed the decline of city and civic life in the eastern Mediterranean world. Although the study of possible long-term repercussions of the Great King's military activities is beyond the scope of this research, the results from the study of available sources definitely provide new insights into the transformation and changes of the Empire's society and cities in Late Antiquity. For those living in the Empire's eastern provinces, the arrival of the invading Sasanids at the very beginning of the sixth century marked the end of the *détente* between Ctesiphon and Constantinople in the previous decades. As noted in the analysis from chapters 3 to 5, at the local level, the Great King's military activities must have had significant effects upon the Empire's society. For example, as the first targets of the Great King, many strategically important places at the Empire's frontier region were taken. The Persians—aiming to capture these sites through sieges—vehemently attacked them upon their arrival. Kawād took Theodosiopolis in

⁶ See, for example, Levy 1943: 169-70 for the case of the Marcomanian War in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-80).

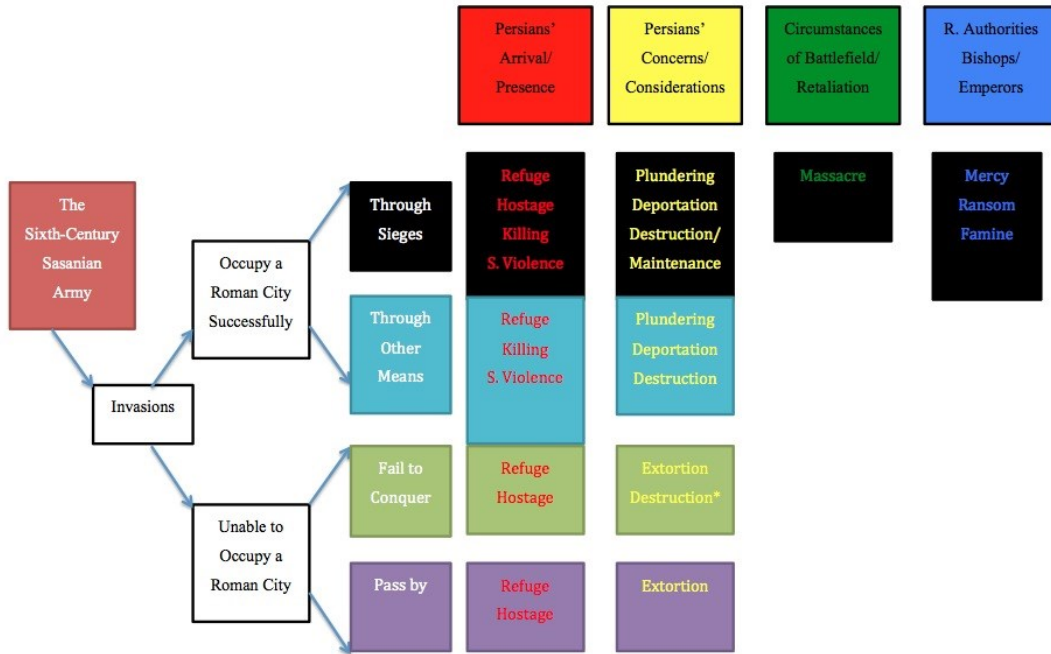
502 and sacked Amida in the next year, while his son Ḳosrow I sacked Sura, Kallinikos and Dara in 540, 542 and 573, respectively. Therefore, it goes without saying that the invasion of the Sasanids must have had immediate negative effects for the Empire; the survivors' deportation led to the loss of manpower, and the Great King's plundering and looting activities, together with the destruction of Roman cities in the Persian wars, would entail not only the decrease of revenue but also the increase of expenditure.

This, however, is merely half the story. Despite such atrocities that were reported to have been committed by the Sasanids at the Empire's cities, in chapters 2 and 3, I have argued that given the limitation of and the contradiction between available sources, such information should be treated cautiously. I have shown that in many cases the scale of massacre, destruction and deportation caused by the Great King's military activities could possibly have been much less significant than what is recorded in literary texts. The Empire's local society proved to be resilient in the Persian wars: no important settlement had been abandoned, and clearly civic life persisted throughout the sixth century. However, the inhabitants of many cities remained unharmed, as they surrendered promptly and paid ransom to the Persians.

This thesis not only re-examines the nature of the armed conflicts between Rome and Persia in the sixth century but also contributes to our understanding of the Romano-Persian relations in Late Antiquity. As noted earlier, in many cases the Sasanids seem to have been restrained from committing indiscriminate violence against the Romans living in Syria Prima and Secunda. Instead, as suggested in chapters 3 and 6, the Sasanids' thirst for wealth, either by making repetitive requests of payment or by plundering valuable goods, was a distinctive feature during the sixth century. Apart from Dara, which was occupied by the Sasanids for 18 years, the Great King never managed to annihilate the Romans and challenge their sovereign and governance in the eastern Mediterranean world. In addition, despite certain Roman cities' sackings being tied to retaliation, the Persians committed many atrocities in the sixth century for political and propagandistic purposes. As argued in chapter 6, both the Persians and the Romans appropriated the potential propagandistic appeal of treating the inhabitants from Antioch and Apamea, the Empire's two metropoleis. Hence, the prisoners of war from Antioch were housed just near Ḳosrow I's capital as demonstration of the shah's victory. The Great King's Roman campaigns in the sixth century were comprised of a series of depredations/raids, and the conflicts between

Rome and Persia should be regarded as a war for looting and propaganda rather than a war for conquest. Such circumstances changed in the first decade of the seventh century, and Kosrow II and his commanders intended to uproot the Romans' rule in the eastern Mediterranean world through a war of attrition.

Appendix 1: Taxonomy of urban civilians' fates in the six-century Persian wars



Appendix 2: Figures of deportation and massacre in historical texts

This section discusses the numerical details relating to the Romans' massacre and deportation in the Persian wars.¹ Of course, it is impossible to know exactly how many people were killed or removed from any captured place in the Persian wars, nor can we, as Bryan Ward-Perkins has rightly pointed out, quantify civilians' horror by examining these accounts.² These figures, however, deserve further investigation to examine how and why such information was preserved in our texts. This appendix will use both literary and material data to gauge—though necessarily tentatively—these cities' likely capacities for accommodating inhabitants in wartime.

The figures provided by our authors are often tantalising. In the sack of Amida, both Pseudo-Joshua and Pseudo-Zachariah recorded that more than 80,000 citizens were killed;³ the author of the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysios of Tel Mahre, who presumably acquired this information from the *Church History* of John of Ephesos,⁴ wrote that 85,000 corpses were carried through the North Gate.⁵ In the case of Dara, we have information from Michael the Syrian, who recorded that approximately 150,000 Romans had been killed in 573;⁶ however, the author of the *Chronicle of 1234* never wrote about the postwar massacre in Dara.⁷ Further numerical details regarding the scale of deportations can be found in both Greek and Syriac texts. In Prokopios' *Wars*, Kōsrow I removed 12,000 people from the frontier city Sura at the

¹ Some scholars tended to accept these figures. For the deportation of the Romans in 573, see Trombley 1997: 176-7, Morony 2004a: 161-179; for the inhabitants living in Persian Antioch, see Kröger 1993: 447, Kettenhofen 1996, Morony 2004a, *contra*, for example, Luther 1997: 183, Lenski 2007: 224.

² Ward-Perkins 2005: 20.

³ Josh. Styl. 53, Zach. HE 7.4.

⁴ Cf. Greatrex 1998: 93.

⁵ Ps. Dion. II. 5.

⁶ Mich. Syr. 10.9, see also Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.83.

⁷ Chr. 1234 66.

beginning of his Roman campaign in 540,⁸ and thousands of Roman farmers were enslaved at Kallinikos two years later.⁹ Michael the Syrian offered the figure of 90,000 captives from Dara in 573,¹⁰ and the author of the *Chronicle of 1234* stated that 98,000 people were captured. The figures in John of Ephesos were even higher. He reported that the total number of deportees in Kōsrow I's campaign in 573 was 275,000,¹¹ and 292,000 Romans were captured from Apamea and other sites.¹² Al-Ṭabari reported that Kōsrow I led around 90,000 soldiers against Justinian,¹³ while in the *Šāh-nāma*, a higher figure was provided: 300,000 Persian soldiers were dispatched in the shah's campaign, and eventually they deported 30,000 Romans from the Empire to their king.¹⁴ In short, whereas the preservation of such details in recounting civilians' experiences was not uncommon for Syriac-speaking historians, those written in other languages seem to have been reluctant to mention similar information.

Indeed, sometimes the demographic details of these Roman cities in Late Antiquity can be glimpsed from literary accounts. As an important city in the Empire's eastern frontier zone,¹⁵ Amida could have accommodated many people in wartime. In the fourth century, Caesar Constantius conducted a series of fortifying works at this city, thinking that those who inhabited the nearby areas 'might have a secure place of refuge'.¹⁶ When the Persians obtained certain strategically important frontier cities and provinces from the Romans after Julian the Apostate's death in 363, the inhabitants of Nisibis were forced to move to Amida¹⁷ and other places. In

⁸ Prok. Wars 2.5.29.

⁹ Prok. Anecd. 3.31.

¹⁰ Mich. Syr. 10.9. The same figure was preserved in Bar Hebraeus *Chronography* 8.83. cf. Chr. 846 a.885, 174.

¹¹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19.

¹² Ibid., 6.6.

¹³ al-Ṭabari 1.959.

¹⁴ Ferdowsī *Šāh-nāma* 8.47.

¹⁵ See Crow 2007: 443-6 for an estimation of the size of Amida.

¹⁶ Ammianus 18.9.1.

¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., 25.9.1-6, Mal. 13.27. According to Zosimos, 'many (of the Nisibenes) emigrated to Amida', Zos. 3.34.1.

addition, many people fled into Amida after noticing the Persians' movement and arrival in 502-3. If John of Ephesos' account is to be believed, approximately 300 refugees escaped from the monastery of the house of Mar John to Amida and stayed in 'the school called that of the Urtaye', while others escaped elsewhere.¹⁸ Nevertheless, we have no idea how many people inhabited this important frontier city either in the fourth or the sixth century. The only figure we have regarding Amida's population in wartime comes from Ammianus, who related that approximately 120,000 people were staying in this city in 359: 'within the limits of a city...there were shut seven legions, a promiscuous throng of strangers and citizens of both sexes, and a few other soldiers',¹⁹ but this information is again of little use for deducing the situation in the reign of Anastasios.

At the beginning of the first century, an equestrian officer named Quintus Aemilius Secundus took a census and reported that at that time, more than 100,000 citizens lived in the *civitas* of Apamea.²⁰ Nevertheless, this number, as David Kennedy recently argued, 'is the count of all but slaves, resident foreigners and nomads'.²¹ Such information did not accurately reflect this city's total population,²² and all we can know is that Apamea could have been a rather populous city at that time. In the sixth century, there was no census data for this metropolis, but certain events' effects on demography could have been significant. The deadly earthquakes seem to have been less destructive for its inhabitants, but the pestilence in the Empire from 542 onwards would surely have resulted in a decrease of its population.²³

¹⁸ Joh. Eph. *Lives*, *PO* 19.218-9.

¹⁹ Ammianus 19.2.14.

²⁰ See Sherk 1988: 38-39 for the translation of this inscription. I owe this information to Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 283. For the population of Antioch, another metropolis, see Downey 1958: 84-91, Liebeschuetz 1972.

²¹ D. Kennedy 2006: 117.

²² On the issue of slave population of the Empire, see Harris: 1999: 65, MacMullen 1987: 375, Scheidel 1997: 158.

²³ As a schoolboy, Euagrios himself was infected by the plague, but whether he contracted it in Apamea or Epiphania remains unclear, Stathakopoulos 2004: 283.

In addition, epigraphical evidence is of some importance in investigating certain demographic features of the war-torn regions around Apamea during the sixth century. Judging from the lack of epigraphic record of Apamea's surrounding areas in the post-540 period, Frank Trombley argues that such a halt of economic activity may be attributed to the depopulation during Kōsrow I's campaign in 540.²⁴ John Lydus reported that so many Romans were deported in 540 that 'there was no farmer nor contributor any longer for the public treasury'.²⁵ Some local inhabitants must have become refugees and escaped, while others could have been captured by the Great King's army. In the second half of the sixth century, the *territorium* of Apamea again witnessed the paucity of inscriptions in the five years following Admarhan's invasion.²⁶ Therefore, although it is impossible to provide any accurate demographic data, the decline in the local population of this metropolis' nearby areas in the aftermath of the Sasanids' military expeditions can still be observed.

The data related to Sura and Dara's population is sparser. In Late Antiquity, the existence of Sura, as one of the Empire's easternmost frontier citadels, has been attested already by Pliny the Elder in the first century,²⁷ but little information regarding its civilian settlement can be gleaned from literary sources. Having been established in the frontier in the early sixth century,²⁸ Dara was never conquered by enemies before 573, and neither Greek nor Syriac texts ever mentioned the outbreak

Also see Morrison and Sodini 2002: 193-5, Hays 2007: 36-42, Kennedy 2007: 91, for further discussion with bibliography.

²⁴ Trombley 1997: 178, cf. Foss 1997: 204-6, 232-4, 2003: 159 for the situation of Roman Syria's rural areas in the seventh century, where the life seems to have continued.

²⁵ Joh. Lyd. De Mag. 3.54.

²⁶ Trombley 1997: 178.

²⁷ Plin. HN 5.87.

²⁸ See Lauffray 1983 (Zenobia-Halebiyye, Mesopotamia), Poulter 1992 (Justiniana Prima, northern Illyricum), Zanini 2003: 201-20 (discussion) for other cases of these new cities, which were founded to serve as citadels at the frontier of the Empire in the sixth century.

of plague or other natural disasters inside this frontier citadel or its nearby areas. The possibility of depopulation caused by severe disasters can thus be ruled out.

In short, even though we know that some of these Roman cities could have accommodated many inhabitants in the postclassical era, late antique authors remained silent about the populations of these communities when the sieges were in progress in the Persian wars. Nevertheless, the results of archaeological campaigns prove to be helpful in measuring first the physical dimensions of these places and, if possible, their population sizes in the sixth century. Also, the reliability of what we have from late antique or medieval texts can be judged.

The size of these eastern cities can be deduced from the results of archaeological excavations. As the metropolis of Syriac Secunda, Apamea sprawled approximately 255 hectares,²⁹ while the fortifications of Amida enclosed approximately 180 hectares. The size of other eastern cities would have been much smaller. For example, the enclosures within the old city walls of Sura, which were probably established before the invasion of K̄osrow I, measured approximately 26.25 hectares (375 m × 700 m).³⁰ The study of the physical boundaries of Dara,³¹ compared with other Roman cities in Late Antiquity, shows that it was clearly not a large city:³² judging from the sketch plan in the early twentieth century (Map 8), the walls of this frontier citadel stretched across three hills and enclosed approximately 50 hectares.

While the scale of these cities can thus be roughly deduced, it should be noted that some areas of these places must have been occupied by public buildings such as cisterns, churches and public baths. Of course, some of them could have served as temporary shelters for the refugees in wartime, but these buildings would surely have reduced the living space available to civilians. As previously shown, we know that many grand public buildings, such as the cathedral and the colonnade street, were built inside Antioch and Apamea, but the results of archaeological excavations of

²⁹ Balty 2000: 171.

³⁰ Konrad 2008: 435.

³¹ Preusser 1911: 44.

³² See Zanini 2003: 214-5 for the plans of several important cities at the same scale.

other frontier cities such as Amida, Dara and Sura were frustratingly meagre,³³ and it is impossible to know how many public buildings existed in these places.

Therefore, it is necessary to resort to literary sources to examine the building schemes of these Roman cities.³⁴ The fortifications of Sura were rebuilt by Justinian,³⁵ and certain barracks and the bishop's residence³⁶ would have been established, but neither Prokopios nor other contemporary authors mentioned relevant details in their texts. We are better informed about the situation of other cities. In Amida there was an amphitheatre in which the remaining Romans were detained during famine,³⁷ and the baths of Paul were built somewhere in this city, as well.³⁸ More information regarding ecclesiastical buildings³⁹ can be gleaned from contemporary or medieval texts. The Church of the Forty Martyrs was built at the end of the fifth century,⁴⁰ and both the Church of the Virgin and the Church of Mar Cosmas was built in the sixth century.⁴¹

From the early sixth century onwards, many military buildings such as camps and barracks were established to accommodate armed forces and military officials in Dara, one of the most important frontier cities of the Empire.⁴² Being the base of the *dux* of Mesopotamia, the residence of such an important officer might have taken up the walled area. Ecclesiastical buildings such as the Great Church and the Church of

³³ See above, pp. 128-38 for the situation of these eastern cities.

³⁴ Cf. Mango 2000: 924-55.

³⁵ Prok. Aed. 2.9.2.

³⁶ See, for example, Miller 2000: 16-53, Berenfeld 2002, Ceylan 2006: 169-94.

³⁷ Zach. HE 7.5.

³⁸ Ibid., 7.4.

³⁹ For the list of these buildings, see Keser-Kayaalp 2009.2: 11, 2013: 408-9.

⁴⁰ Chr. 819. a.795/4, cf. Zach. HE 7.3-4.

⁴¹ The exact date of the church of the Virgin's construction, however, cannot be ascertained. Keser-Kayaalp 2013: 416, cf. van Bercham and Strzygowski 1910: 187-95, Keser-Kayaalp 2009.1: 69-73. On the church of Mar Cosmas, see Bell and Mango 1982: 106, Keser-Kayaalp 2009.1: 30, 46-7.

⁴² Prok. Aed. 2.3.26.

the Apostle Bartholomew were established⁴³ within the fortifications, as well.⁴⁴ Finally, a huge public bath,⁴⁵ a large storehouse⁴⁶ and ‘other things with which distinguished cities are adorned’,⁴⁷ such as the colonnades,⁴⁸ were erected by Anastasios.

Despite the information above, our knowledge of these cities’ population sizes in the sixth century will inevitably be limited by several factors. First, while the construction of these public buildings would possibly have reduced these urban settlements’ living spaces, it is impossible to examine the topography of these cities in great detail. Given the fact that the features and natures of the Empire’s cities could vary greatly, the results would merely act as a basis of reference, and the figures should not be taken at face value. Second, as noted above,⁴⁹ since many inhabitants of a city’s surrounding areas would have taken refuge in the city in wartime, their presence would surely have contributed to the total number of inhabitants inside a besieged city. Nevertheless, while in many cases the walled areas of a Roman city can be attested by the results of archaeological excavations, it is not always easy to assess the situation of a city’s *territorium*, let alone the number of refugees who stayed inside the fortifications in wartime.⁵⁰

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Keser-Kayaalp 2009.1: 31, 56-61, 129. On Dara’s topography and lists of churches, see Keser-Kayaalp 2009.2: 251-2, 14 respectively. Cf. Liebeschuetz 2001: 80-2 for further similar examples in other parts of the Empire.

⁴⁵ Cf. Mal. 16.10, in which two baths were constructed.

⁴⁶ Zach. 7.6.

⁴⁷ Euagr. HE 3.37.

⁴⁸ Mal. 16.10.

⁴⁹ See above, p. 10.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Trombley and Watt 2000: XLV-XLVI for an estimation of Amida’s population in 502-3.

The focus of my discussion, therefore, will be limited to the walled areas of these Roman cities, without making allowance for public space,⁵¹ and the population from the extramural areas will be excluded. As the extrapolation of population density proves to be a relatively reliable method in estimating a city's population,⁵² I will use certain demographic multipliers to estimate the overall size of these eastern cities. Recently David Kennedy has provided a thorough discussion on the possible gross density numbers in estimating the Empire's urban populations.⁵³ Given that there are few relevant research works on Roman Mesopotamia,⁵⁴ it is necessary to resort to the results of previous studies on the population of the Empire's other cities to check the reliability of ancient accounts. Tony Wilkinson argued that a figure of 100-200 persons per hectare may be applied to the cities in Mesopotamia in the Bronze Age.⁵⁵ The research results of the Oxford Roman Economy Project, which was based on the examination of certain Roman cities in North Africa and Pompeii, suggests that a range of 150 to 250 people per hectare would be a reasonable figure to estimate the population of a Roman city.⁵⁶

Table 1. The areas and estimated populations of eastern cities from which the figures of massacres and deportations during the Persian wars were provided.

⁵¹ Cf. Koder 2001: 153-4 for the methodology of Johannes Koder, in which the average population density was provided regardless of the distinction between villages and cities.

⁵² Wilson 2011: 170, Hanson 2011: 251, cf. Wilkinson 2003b: 39. On the discussion of other approaches, see, for example, Duncan-Jones 1974: 261-2.

⁵³ D. Kennedy 2006: 118-9.

⁵⁴ From the updated bibliography provided on the website of the Oxford Roman Economy Project (OXREP) (http://oxrep.classics.ox.ac.uk/bibliographies/ancient_city_populations_bibliography/); there is but very little research on the settlements of Roman Syria and Mesopotamia.

⁵⁵ Wilkinson 2003b: 39-51.

⁵⁶ Hanson 2011: 252, Wilson 2011: 176-7. See, for example, Hassan 1981: 66 on the previous scholarship on this issue. For other case studies in the classical world, see Packer 1967: 81-95, 1971, Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Storey 1997.

Thus, a table with the possible demographic figures of these Roman cities is provided. Nevertheless, David Kennedy has rightly argued that considering the space occupied by public buildings, the low end of the range of the possibility should be applied. As shown in the table, 100 people per hectare would give Apamea a

City	Area (ha.)	Population at 100/ha.	Population at 150/ha.	Population at 200/ha.	Population at 250/ha.
Apamea	255	25,500	38,250	51,000	63,750
Dara	50	5,000	7,500	10,000	12,500
Sura	26.25	2,625	Ca. 3,938	5,250	Ca. 6,563

population of 25,500, with 5,000 and 2,625 at Dara and Sura, respectively. Therefore, it is shown that only several thousands of people would live in Sura, and Dara was definitely not a large, populous city. Although the total population of these cities must have been temporarily increased by the arrival of refugees during wartime, it would have been difficult for these two frontier cities to accommodate tens of thousands of people. Both Greek and Syriac authors, therefore, seem to have provided exaggerated figures in their accounts to emphasise the scale of the Romans' massacres and deportations during the Persian wars.

The case of the Romans' deportation by Adarmahan and Ḳosrow I in 573 requires further discussion. The figures provided by John of Ephesos consist of the prisoners of war from Apamea, Dara and other Roman cities. Indeed many, if not all, Romans from Dara would have been deported in November 573. Also, as the metropolis of Syria Secunda, Apamea could surely house tens of thousands of inhabitants. However, the forces led by Adarmahan seem to not have conquered any populous cities. In fact, the deployment and allocation of the Sasanian army in 573 must have made it difficult for the *marzbān* to capture numerous Apameans; he could possibly have never led a substantial army to strike the Empire, and the aim of his detachment was not to engage in any serious or prolonged siege or battle but to launch another unexpected attack at the heart of the Empire. If John of Epiphania's report is to be believed, the Great King only sent 6,000 soldiers and other ethnic groups of

people to attack the Empire's villages and cities.⁵⁷ The Sasanids would have never been able to capture and transport so many Romans at once.⁵⁸

As noted, the prisoners of war were removed from the Empire and transported *en masse* to Persia or the Caucasus. However, we will probably never know the size of these communities in Late Antiquity. In the last quarter of the sixth century, John of Ephesos reported that more than 30,000 people inhabited the city Better Antioch of Κosrow.⁵⁹ Because this city was never completely excavated, neither the living area of its inhabitants nor the feature of its buildings can be securely confirmed. The difficulty is further aggravated by the fact that it is impossible to know how many people were resettled by Κosrow I in the sixth century. However, several data—though not directly related to this place—can be provided. Robert McC. Adams identified several hundred settlements on the Diyala plains,⁶⁰ and based on the results of this research, an estimate of the Jewish population has been proposed by Jacob Neusner.⁶¹ As the network of irrigation systems could have fed a dense population in the sixth century,⁶² Ctesiphon, together with its nearby cities, could have accommodated many inhabitants in Late Antiquity. Al-Ṭabari reported that more than 30,000 families inhabited this city when it was conquered by the Arabs in the second half of the seventh century.⁶³ If he is to be believed, Ctesiphon would have been a rather populous city.

Although the Great King must have captured and killed the inhabitants from no less than five major cities or frontier citadels of the Empire in the sixth century, how many people were generally slaughtered or transported by the enemy was not the focus of classicising historians: neither John of Epiphania nor Theophylaktos provided his audience with any information about it. This does not, however, mean that these authors never mentioned such details in their works, and Prokopios did note

⁵⁷ Joh. Epiph. 4.

⁵⁸ D. Kennedy 2006: 115.

⁵⁹ Joh. Eph. HE 6.19.

⁶⁰ Adams 1965: 72.

⁶¹ Neusner 1966: 246-50.

⁶² Adams 1965: 69-70.

⁶³ al-Ṭabari 1.2467.

the Roman citizens' casualties in the *Gothic Wars*.⁶⁴ In addition, although numerical details regarding the armed forces or their casualties can be observed in Prokopios' accounts of the conflicts both in the Empire's eastern provinces and Lazica,⁶⁵ it was only in the case of Sura where the number of civilian deportations was mentioned. The analysis of the Sasanids' military operations and Prokopios' text suggests that he might have intended to stress the scale of deportation. Because Sura was merely a tiny frontier city of the Empire, it must have accommodated fewer people than other larger places like Amida or Antioch. Therefore, the Sasanids would possibly have captured many more citizens from these Roman cities than from Sura. Prokopios' concern could thus have possibly lain in the significance placed by the Romans on the sack of this frontier city: after the sack of Amida in 503, it the first Roman city to be sacked by the Sasanids, and from that point, many civilians must have become victims in the Persian wars. Such clearly exaggerated numbers of captives from this small city thus could have been mentioned to imply the Romans' subsequent turmoil and calamities in the middle of the sixth century.

The situation of Syriac historiography is different: both contemporary historians, such as Pseudo-Joshua, and the compilers and chroniclers of medieval times were inclined to preserve such figures in their works. At the very beginning of the sixth century, the author of the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua could have collected information about the sack of Amida from the archives of important cities such as Edessa.⁶⁶ On the other hand, whereas scholars pointed out the existence of a common source between Prokopios and Pseudo-Zachariah,⁶⁷ only the latter mentioned that 80,000 people perished in the post-siege massacre. Mauriel Debié suggested that a Greek material with Persian viewpoints might have been used by both authors,⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See Whately 2007: 350-4 for a list of relevant details, cf. Kaldellis 2014: XIII-XIV.

⁶⁵ For a short examination on the figures provided in Prokopios' *Wars*, see Whately 2007: 133-7.

⁶⁶ See Trombley and Watt 2000: XXXI- XXXIV for the source materials used in Pseudo-Joshua's text.

⁶⁷ Haury 1896: 22-3, Greatrex 1998: 73-4. See Greatrex 2010: 229-43 for the detailed comparison between these two texts.

⁶⁸ Debié 2003: 615.

while Geoffrey Greatrex argued that a local Amidene source written in Greek might have been used by Pseudo-Zachariah, Prokopios, and perhaps Eustathios of Epiphania,⁶⁹ another important work used by Malalas and Theophanes the Confessor.⁷⁰ Significantly, neither of these historians had ever mentioned the numerical details regarding the sack of Amida, and even Prokopios, who tended to preserve the most entertaining parts from this Amidene text,⁷¹ kept silent on relevant issues. The difference between Greek- and Syriac-speaking authors in recounting the Amidenes' calamities is thus significant.

In the middle ages, John of Ephesos' *Church History* became the core text for subsequent historians such as Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus.⁷² We know much less about the data or sources John used in his *Church History*, but his correspondence with other clergy or churchmen⁷³ could have been an important channel through which precious information was transmitted and preserved. As natives of northern Mesopotamia, events that happened far from their localities might have been less important. More importantly, because most Roman citizens who suffered in the frontier zone were Miaphysites, local churchmen such as the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* and John of Ephesos must have been shocked by the atrocities caused by the shahs' soldiers.

However, it is noteworthy that John did not provide any figure regarding the scale of the massacre in Dara. Therefore, whereas the compiler of *the Chronicle of 1234* could have used another source in which nothing related to the massacre of Dara was mentioned, other writers such as Michael the Syrian could have used another text in which relevant information was preserved. Such figures might have served as literary embellishments through which the cruelty of K̄osrow I's forces was stressed. Interestingly, whereas Syriac texts usually stressed the atrocities caused by the Sasanids' invasions in Amida and Dara by providing casualty numbers, neither they nor the Greek-speaking writers provided the casualties in the sack of Antioch, one of

⁶⁹ Greatrex 2010: 244-5.

⁷⁰ See also above, p. 32.

⁷¹ Greatrex 2010: 246.

⁷² See the discussion of van Ginkel 1995: 80, 1998: 351-8.

⁷³ van Ginkel 1995: 77.

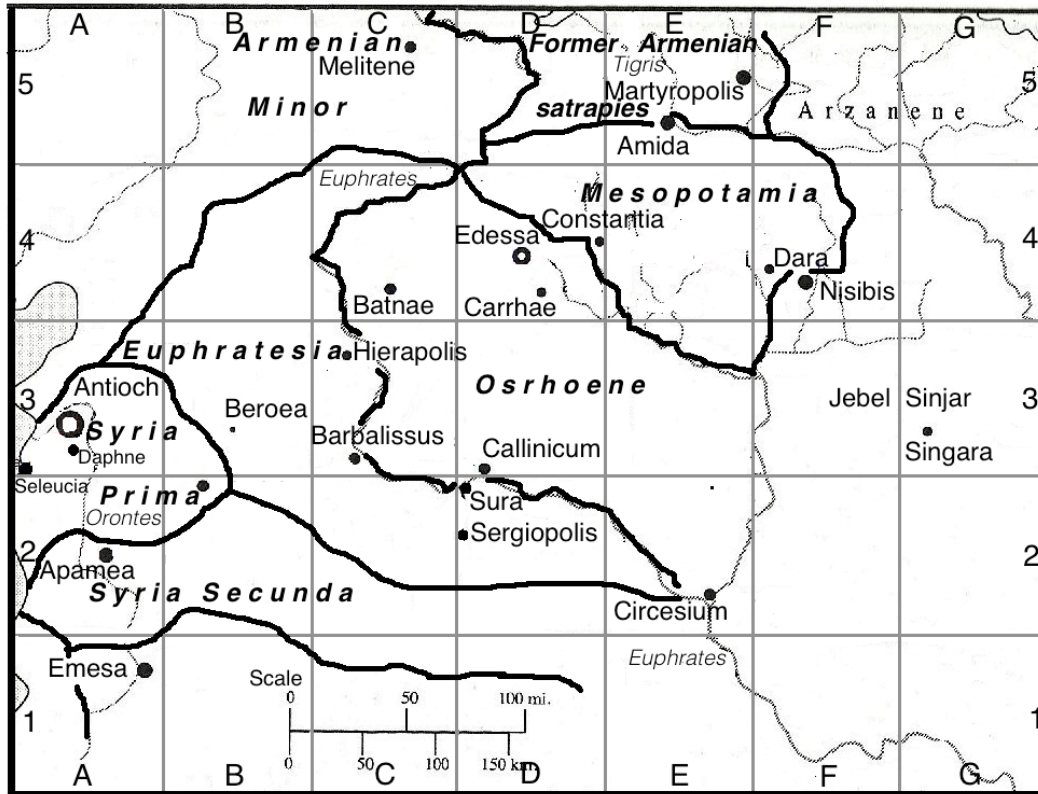
the most important cities of Roman Syria. I will argue that the narratives of Amida's and Dara's casualties could have been a deliberate literary strategy. As shown above, the attention of these Syriac-speaking authors and their listeners/readers would have been focused on the Mesopotamian cities and eastern affairs. Moreover, while Amida was not a tiny city, clearly Dara was a small frontier citadel in Late Antiquity. Therefore the emphasis on high—and perhaps sometimes exaggerated—casualties in post-siege massacres may have been thus used to create significant dramatic effects among these works' potential audiences.

To conclude, owing to the lack of any systematic archaeological excavations and reliable demographic statistics of these sixth-century cities, we cannot establish precise numbers of lost or deported civilians in these conquered cities. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have reservations about the figures provided by Syriac authors, because it would have been difficult for these two relatively small cities to accommodate so many people in wartime. Clearly, Sura's physical size as a citadel was much smaller than Dara, and it is difficult to believe that more than 10,000 inhabitants could stay there on the eve of Kosrow I's invasion in 540. Since the forces led by Adarmahan might have been relatively small, it would have been impossible for them to capture more than 200,000 Apameans and send them back to the Persian Empire. Further remarks on the preservation of figures regarding massacres and deportations in different linguistic milieux can be made. Among classicising historians, only Prokopios mentioned figures of deportation in the sack of Sura, and neither Malalas nor other Greek-speaking historians related how many civilians were killed or captured after these sieges were concluded. By contrast, such information was reported not only by contemporary Syriac writers such as the author of Pseudo-Joshua's *Chronicle* and John of Ephesos but also in the works of medieval historians. While the details in the sack of Sura, together with other types of atrocities, could have acted as signpost to alert Prokopios' readers to Roman civilians' calamities in Kosrow I's invasion,⁷⁴ focusing on the situation of Upper Mesopotamia, Syriac authors' preservation of such exaggerated figures in their texts could have resulted from their compassion towards their co-religionists.

⁷⁴ See above, pp. 67-8.

Maps and figures

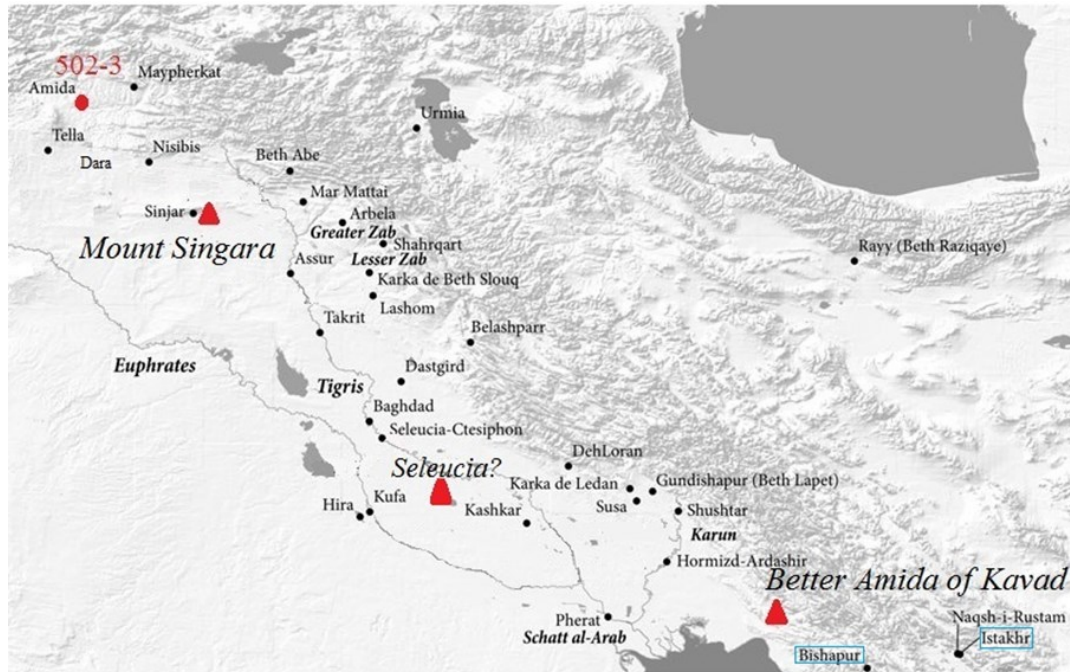
Map 1 Cities of the eastern frontier region of the Empire in the reign of Justinian, adapted from G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu (eds), *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: a Narrative Sourcebook Part 2: A.D. 363-628*, (London, 2002), map 2, with some additions.



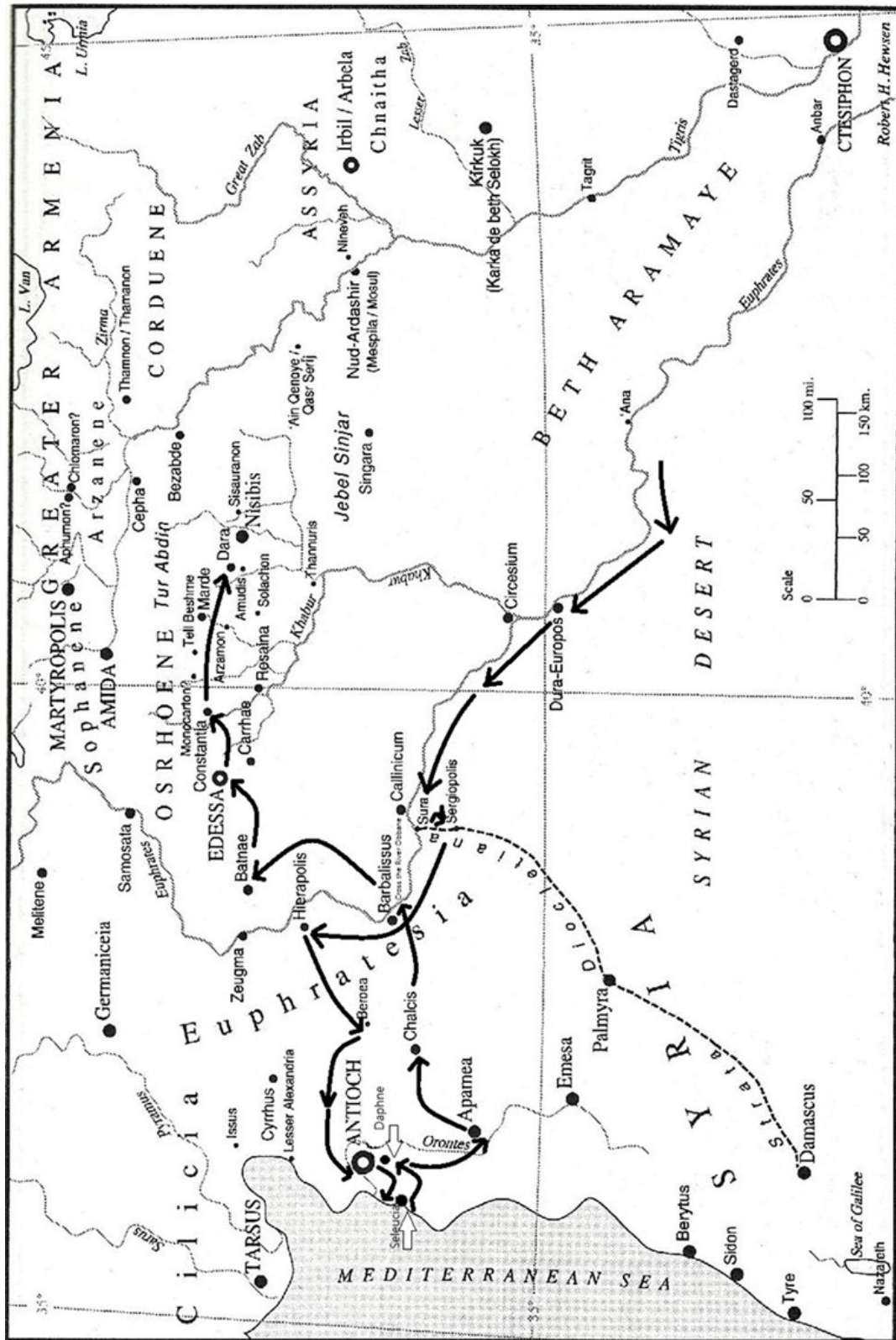
Map 2 Northern Mesopotamia and Transcaucasus, adapted from G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu (eds), *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: a Narrative Sourcebook Part 2: A.D. 363-628*, (London, 2002), map 3, with some additions.



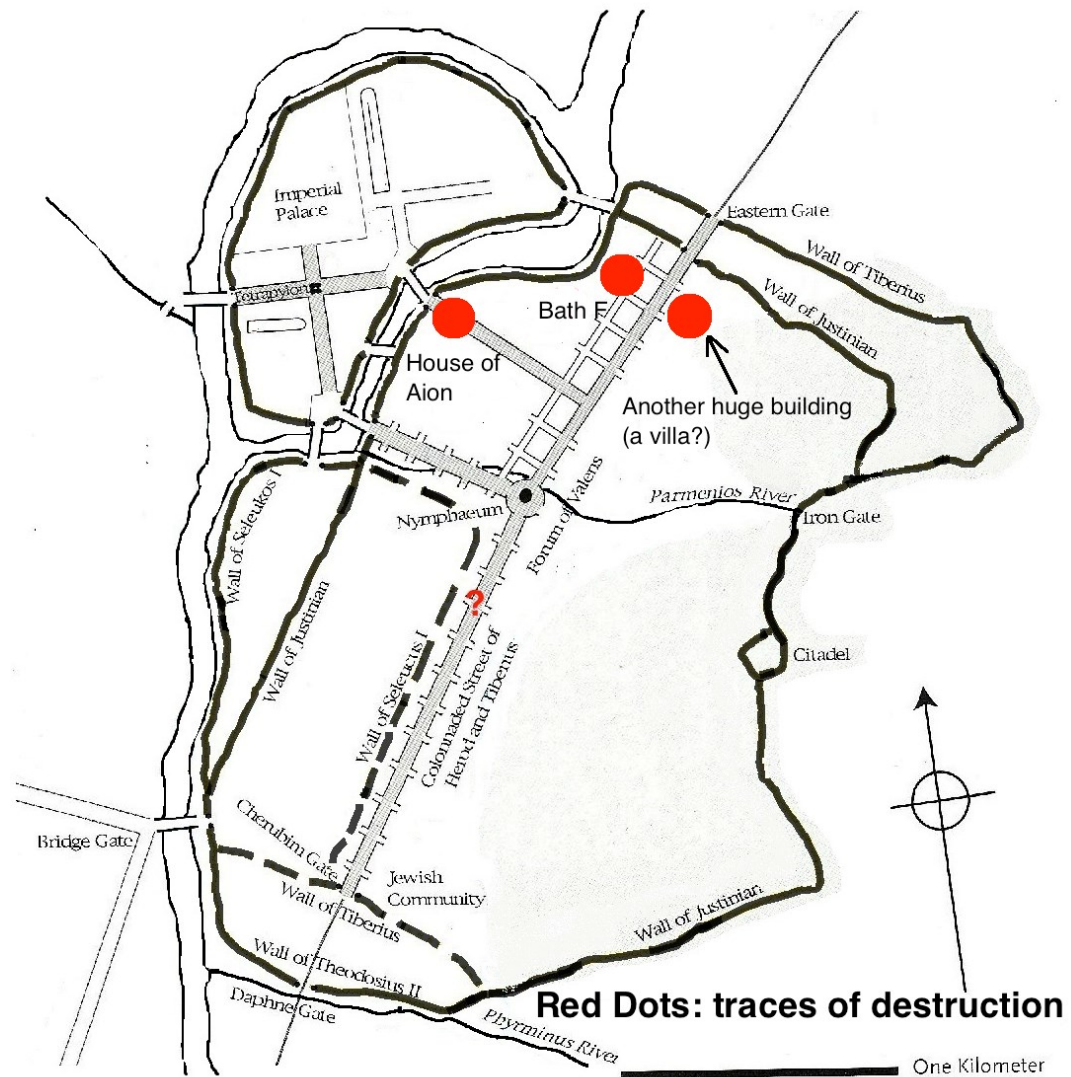
Map 3 The sites of the Amidenes' deportation (southern part) and the neighboring area, adapted from P. Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert, Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford, 2013), with some additions.



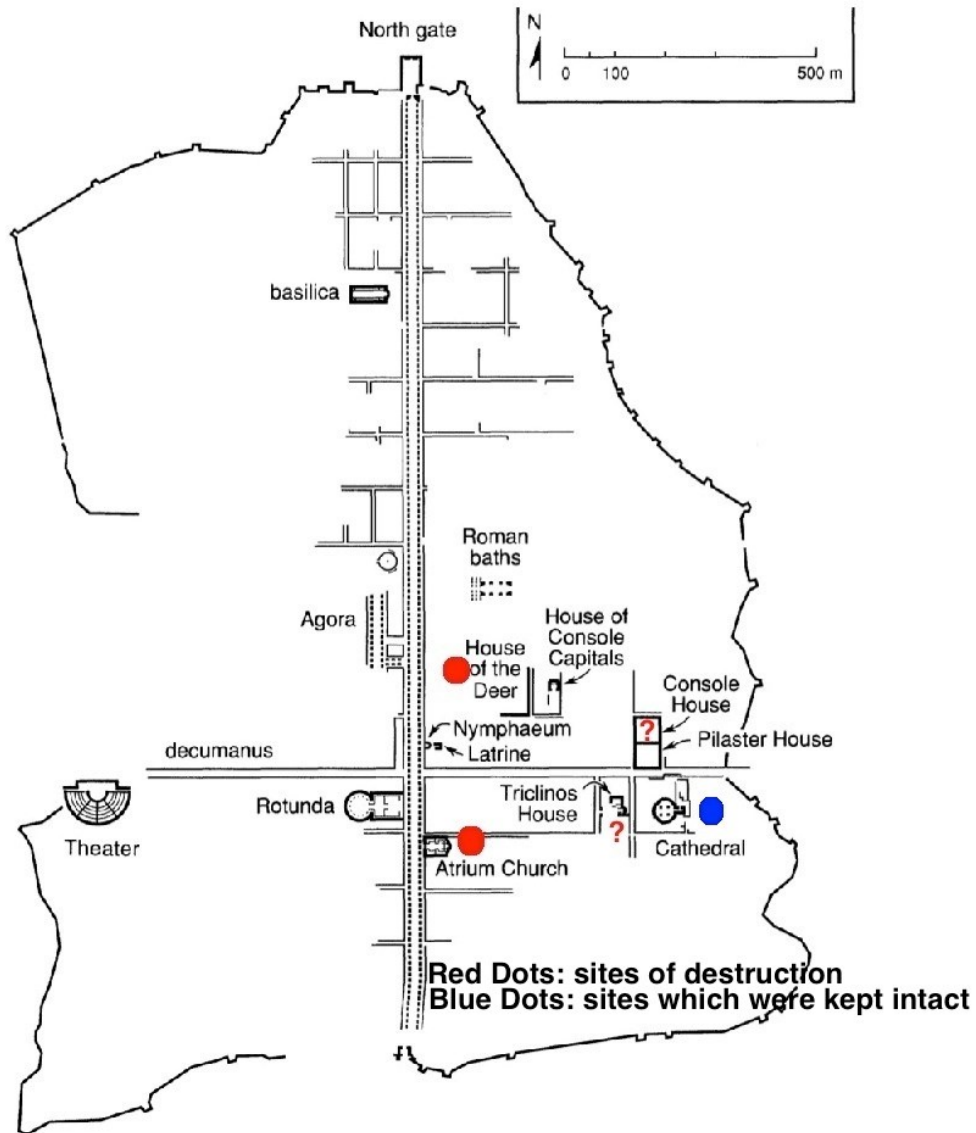
Map 4 The invading route of Kōsrow I in 540, adapted from G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu (eds), *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: a Narrative Sourcebook Part 2: A.D. 363-628*, (London, 2002), map 2, with some additions.



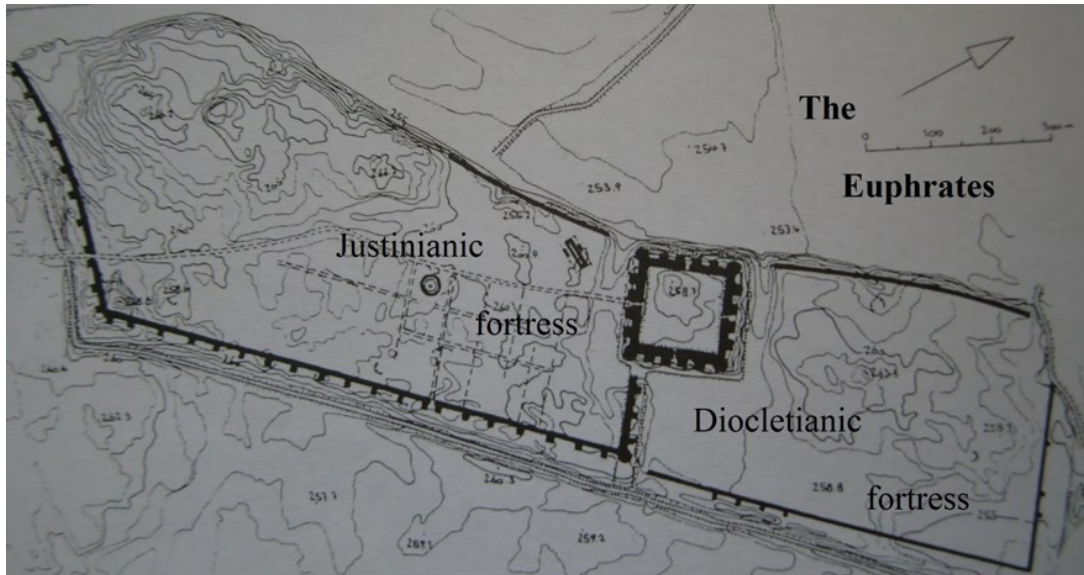
Map 5 Ancient Antioch, adapted from C. Kondoleon (ed), *Antioch: the Lost Ancient City*, (Princeton, 2000), with some additions.



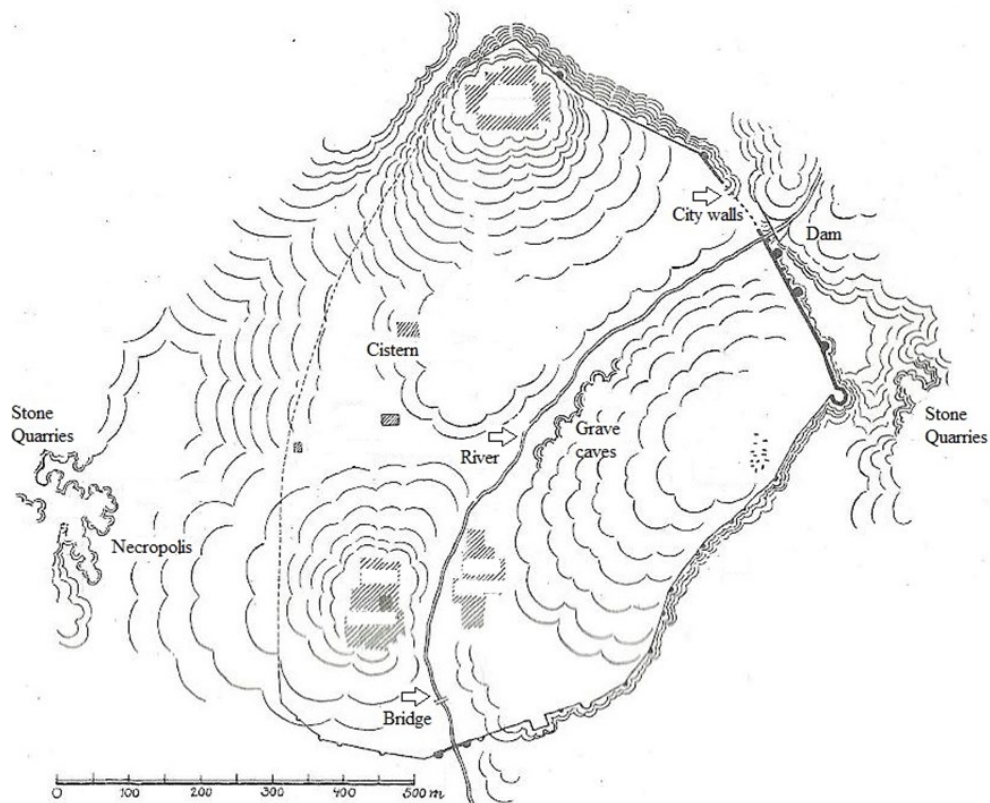
Map 6 Ancient Apamea, adapted from C. Foss 'Syria in transition, A. D. 550-750: an archaeological approach', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 189-269, fig. 7, with some additions.



Map 7 Ancient Sura, adapted from M. Konrad 'Research on the Roman and early Byzantine frontier in North Syria', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 12 (1999): 392-410, fig. 9, with some additions.



Map 8 Ancient Dara, adapted from C. Preusser, Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler, altchristlicher und islamischer Zeit (Leipzig, 1911), map 12, with a few modifications.



Map 9 The surrounding area of Ctesiphon in the sixth century AD, adapted from J. M. Fiey, 'Topography of Al-Madai'n', Sumer 23: 37 (1967), map 1, with some additions.

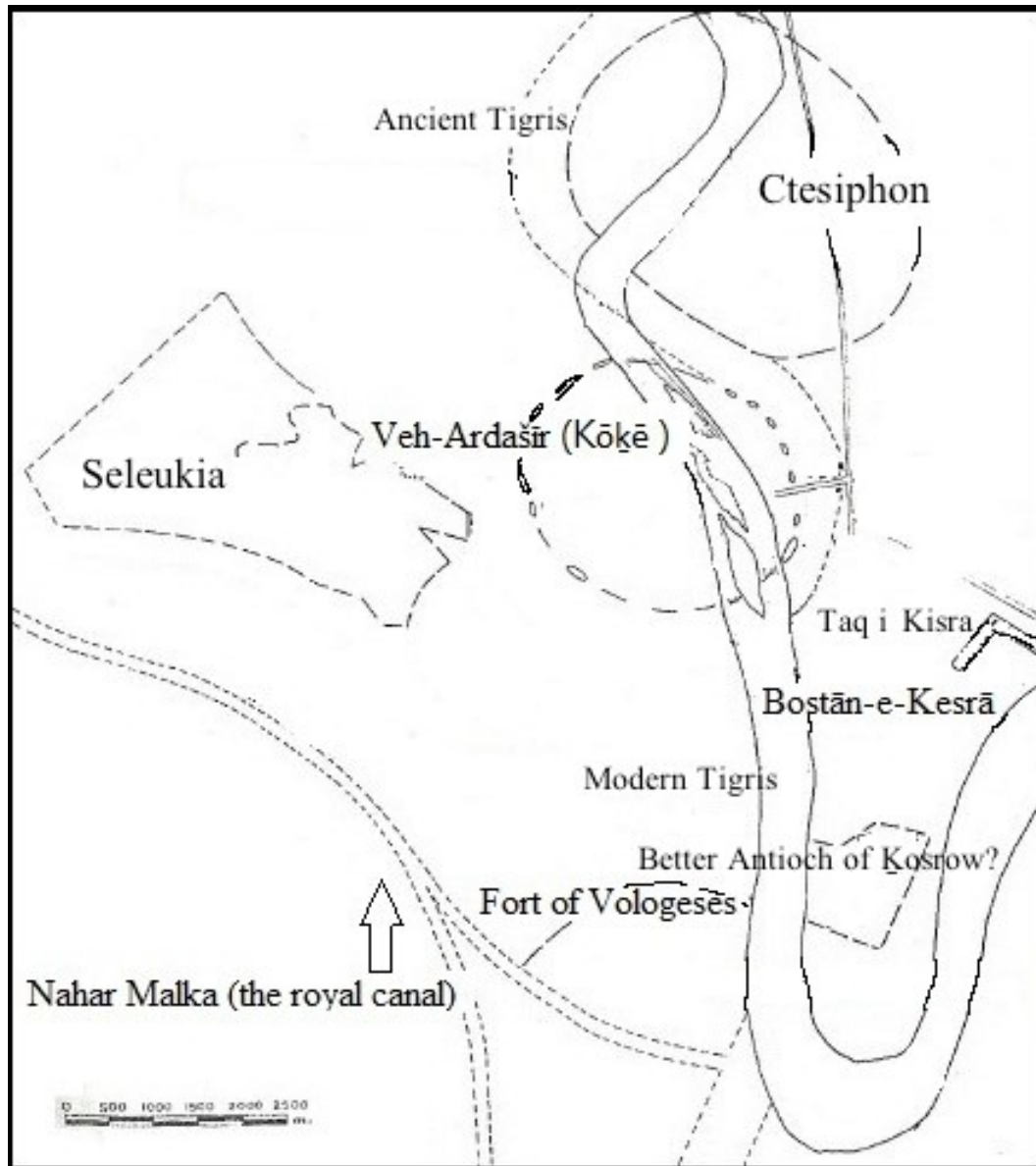


Figure 1 The decorative figures of a tomb at Dara, image from C. Preusser, Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler, altchristlicher und islamischer Zeit (Leipzig, 1911), figure 61.



Abbreviations

<i>CFHB</i>	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
<i>CSCO</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>CSHB</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
<i>FHG</i>	Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum, ed. C. Müller, vols 4-5 (Paris, 1851-70)
<i>GLRBP</i>	<i>Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)</i> , ed. E. A. Sophocles 2 vols. (New York, 1957)
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> , edd. L. Jalabert, P. Mouterde et al. (Paris, 1929-)
<i>MGH</i>	Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores
<i>ODB</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. A. Kazhdan et al., 3 vols. (Oxford, 1991)
<i>OLD</i>	<i>The Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , second edition, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford, 2002)
<i>PLRE II</i>	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire. vol.2, A.D. 395-527</i> , ed. J. R. Martindale (Cambridge; New York, 1980)
<i>PLRE III</i>	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire vol. 3, A.D. 527-641</i> , ed. J. R. Martindale, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1992)
<i>PL</i>	Patrologia Latina, vol 16 (Paris, 1845)
<i>PO</i>	Patrologia Orientalis (Paris, 1903-)
<i>TS</i>	<i>Thesaurus Syriacus</i> , ed. R. P. Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1879-1901)

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